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MONTREAL, DECEMBER, 1893.

## THE CAUSES OF RHEUMATISM.

It seems strange that after so many years of study of this disease, with an abundance of clinical material, it should still be so little understood. We have more than once in these columns endeavored to show that the disease is entirely due to the supersaturation of the blood with uric acid, which is the last stage of oxydation of nitrogenous food before the final one of urea. We have shown that the malady is entirely preventable in one or all of three ways: First, and most important, by abstaining from such articles of diet as are known to consist very largely or almost entirely of nitrogen, such as lean meat, cheese and milk; second, by taking in as much oxygen by means of active exercise as may be necessary to oxydize all the nitrogen in the blood; and third, if one is unwilling or unable to eat less meat and take more exercise, then the next best thing to do is to drink enough pure water to dissolve as much of the unoxydized nitrogen as possible, and thus to eliminate it by means of the kidneys from the blood.

This subject has been brought prominently to mind by the appearance in the Journal of the American Medical Association, 4th November, 1893, of an interesting and exceedingly instructive paper by Sir James Grant of Ottawa, on "Some rare forms of gout and rheumatism." After relating several rare and interesting cases of pulmonary gout, perityphlitic gout and rheumatic perityphlitis, he goes on to say: "Errors

in diet, as an etiological factor, have much to do with the production of both gout and rheumatism, and such strengthens the metabolic theory that rheumatism depends on a morbid material, produced within the system, the result of defective processes of assimilation. True, Prout, Latham, Richardson, Mitchell and Dr. William H. Porter of New York have thrown much light on the subject of rheumatism, and certainly the present case points to rheumatic complications as the outcome of defective assimilation,—an important factor in its production. Thus the chemical laboratory of the human system becomes disturbed, resulting in false products, enabling us to establish a connecting link between even perityphlitis and rheumatism. In the structure of the intestinal walls there is undoubtedly a large amount of fibrous tissue, just as in the fascia and the tendons of the joints, and it is reasonable to suppose that these structures should be influenced in the same manner. Assuming that the case under consideration was even quasi-rheumatic in its character, it affords one more illustration as to the importance of giving due consideration to the line of action embraced in medical or surgical treatment under like circumstances."

One of his most striking observations is the following one, which Sir James Grant is especially qualified to make, for Ottawa is not only the official residence of the Governor General, to whose family he is the attending physician, but it is also the greatest lumbering centre in Canada, and Sir James has practised there for at least 40 years. "After noting," he says "the life history of many thousands of our lumbermen I have been amazed at the few attacked by rheumatism. Bread, pork and strong tea constitute their chief articles of diet, and the general inference is that the tea enables them to digest the pork with remarkable comfort, and certainly after a hard winter's work they return home well nourished and healthy in every particular." How can we explain this apparent anomaly? These men pass six or eight months of winter in the forests about the head waters, of the Ottawa river, very near the latitude of Hudson Bay; and although the cold is intense, and they are out in it from daylight to dark, still, rheumatism is almost unknown among them. If cold would cause rheumatism, then every lumberman ought to have it.