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Selections: Medicine.

LATENT ALBUMINURIA: ITS ETIOLOGY AND PATHOLOGY.

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It is a matter of common and in fact everyday observation, that the urine of persons apparently in perfect health is often found to contain more or less albumen. The discovery of what had been a latent and unsuspected albuminuria is often made by accident. Within the last twenty years, at least half-a-dozen members of our profession have come to me with essentially the same statement, which was to this effect: "I was testing some albuminous urine, when it occurred to me to compare the action of the tests upon a presumed healthy specimen. I therefore tested my own urine; and to my dismay, I found it highly albuminous." During the last few months I have been consulted by three men, each of whom believing himself to be in good health, and having proposed an insurance on his life, had been found to have albuminuria by the medical adviser of the insurance-office. Quite recently, an apparently healthy young man told me that, seeing his medical brother testing some albuminous urine, he said to him jokingly, "You may as well test mine"; and the result was that it was found to contain an abundance of albumen. About the same time, a surgeon called on me and said that he had been made very anxious by the accidental discovery that one of his children had albuminuria. The eldest son, who was studying prac-

tical chemistry, had busied himself in testing the urine of every inmate of the house, when he discovered that a younger brother, apparently in good health, and attending a day-school, had albuminuria.

These are a few instances out of a large number that have come under my observation in which the existence of albuminuria, heretofore latent and unsuspected, has been discovered as it were by accident.

The attention of the profession has recently been especially directed to the subject, of what I propose to call latent albuminuria by several physicians, especially by Dr. Moxon (*Guy's Hospital Reports*, 3rd series, vol. xxviii), by Dr. Clement Dukes (*British Medical Journal*, Nov. 30th, 1878) and by Dr. Saunby (*British Medical Journal*, May 10th, 1879; also *Birmingham Medical Review*, July and October, 1879). My main object in this communication is to maintain, first, that this latent albuminuria—albuminuria, that is, unassociated with any other evidence of functional disorder or structural disease—may, by a careful inquiry, be traced back, in a very large proportion of cases, to some probable exciting cause; secondly, that the presence of even the smallest trace of albumen in the urine is always pathological, never physiological, as I have somewhere seen it suggested that it may be; and that the neglect of this indication of a pathological condition and tendency, especially such negligence as involves repeated exposure to the exciting cause, may convert a temporary and occasional into a persistent albuminuria, which sooner or later, though it may be after many years, will result in a fatal disorganization of the kidney.