

acid plays an important role in the production of the symptoms is exceedingly improbable.

The appearances of the urine demonstrate nothing, except that its condition is unfavorable to the complete solution of the uric acid or urates. Its appearance does not prove that the amount of uric acid varies in any way from the normal, for it is well determined that a deposit may occur from many causes besides increase in the amount of uric acid; and actual estimations of the uric acid—which, with others, I have repeatedly made in such cases—have shown no frequent or notable variations from the normal. In other words, the study of uric acid in the condition which bears its name, when carried out by proper methods, has been fruitless; and this study, by itself, would indicate that uric acid bears no definite relation to the diathesis.

Hence, if we believe that uric acid is the cause of this condition, we must hold this belief upon the strength of two hypotheses: That these cases are really instances of gout, masquerading in strange costumes; and that gout is due to uric acid. As to the latter hypothesis, it is unnecessary to repeat myself further; as to the probability that these cases are really irregular instances of gout, I think that the testimony is wholly unsatisfactory, so far as drawing any definite and positive conclusions is concerned. That some of these patients develop gout is insufficient ground for stating that all of them have been of gouty diathesis from the beginning, or that even those that do develop gout had originally any condition that was, in itself, related to that disease. Were the tendency to gout more constant with them, it would be of more importance; but I do not believe that actual gout occurs in a large proportion of these cases, unless the term gout be made to include all those disorders that are due to civilized life — a method of using the term that has been adopted by some authors.

I think, in other words, that we have been calling a large number of varied disturbances of metabolism by one name, and by one that, so far as we yet know, is not actually deserved by many cases in this class. We are obliged to group them together at present, because we have, as yet, no way of distinguishing them; but there is probably no more successful means of limiting knowledge concerning any disorder than by giving a name which implies a knowledge of its cause. I think we should admit that we have no good reason for believing that uric acid causes the disturbances attributed to it, and that we do not know the true cause. We should then be much more likely to