



Sydenham on Gout*

1. Either men will think that the nature of gout is wholly mysterious and incomprehensible, or that a man like myself, who has suffered from it 34 years, must be of a slow and sluggish disposition not to have discovered something respecting the nature and treatment of a disease so peculiarly his own. Be this as it may, I will give a *bona fide* account of what I know. The difficulties and refinements relating to the disease itself, and the method of its cure, I will leave for Time, the guide to truth, to clear up and explain.

2. Gout attacks such old men as, after passing the best part of their life in ease and comfort, indulging freely in high living, wine, and other generous drinks, at length, from inactivity, the usual attendant of advanced life, have left off altogether the bodily exercises of their youth. Such men have generally large heads, are of a full, humid, and lax habit, and possess a luxurious and vigorous constitution, with excellent vital stamina.

3. Not that gout attacks these only. Sometimes it invades the spare and thin. Sometimes it will not wait for the advance of age. Sometimes even the prime of life is liable to it. This happens most where there is an unhappy hereditary tendency; or, even where (without such being the case) the patient has over-indulged in premature venery. The omission, too, of any customary violent exercise brings it on. So, also, does the sudden change from over-hearty diet in the way of meats and drinks, to a low regimen and thin potations.

4. When it attacks a person worn out by old age, it is neither so severe as it is when it takes hold of a young man, nor has it such stated periods. They say it is because generally life passes away before it comes to a climax, and also because the native heat and vigour of the body being diminished, it breaks out upon the joints both less regularly and less vehemently. But if it attacks any person late in life, although it neither fix upon its seat so regularly, nor handle him so severely, it still takes its ground by degrees, so as to lay down a law for itself and choose a type. This it does both in respect to the time of the year in which it intends to open the campaign, and in respect to the duration of the fit. Uncertain as are its periods, slight as may be the torture for a few days, irregular as may be its invasion and retreat, it is still gout, and its later attacks are worse than its earlier.

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