

Temperance

GOLD CURES IN INEBRIETY.

Alcohol
Physical
Effects

Presented to the Section on Materia Medica, Pharmacy and Therapeutics,
at the Forty-ninth Annual Meeting of the American Medical Association,
held at Denver, Colo., June 7-10, 1898.

Compliments of
T. D. Crothers M.D.

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GOLD CURES IN INEBRIETY.

Any remedy introduced, surrounded by mystery and sustained by falsehood and deception, is unworthy of notice. Yet a number of physicians have expressed confidence in the value of gold as a remedy, both in inebriety and allied brain affections. This theory has been recognized by reputable druggists, who have prepared several preparations of gold for administration chiefly by the needle. The empiric preparations called "gold cures" whenever analyzed are found to contain no gold whatever. The assertion that no chemist can ever make an analysis of such preparations is absurd. As a medicine gold has been rarely used by the regular profession. In the first century of the Christian era Pliny mentions it only to doubt its value unless taken with large quantities of drink, which destroys its potency for evil. The Arabian physicians for hundreds of years mentioned gold as an elixir of life, believing it of value in renewing youth and prolonging life. This doubtful theory continued and appeared in old works of chemistry down to the last century. No one made a test of it, but simply repeated it in terms of vague doubt. The alchemist charlatans have always been defenders of gold as a remedy. It is a curious repetition of modern experience that at least three much vaunted remedies contained no gold at all. In 1540 Gallus, a physician of Paris, claimed to have a gold cure for syphilis and gave the formula an impossible combination. Glaser, a London doctor in 1663, claimed to have a diaphoretic powder of gold for intermittent fever. This was equally fraudulent and no gold was found in the preparation, although it was used for many years with great popularity. From 1725 to 1780, Lamotte's

gold drop was famous throughout Europe and was called a tincture of gold, but contained no gold. Neuman wrote nearly two hundred years ago: "Gold has been held to be possessed of extraordinary medicinal virtues, and many preparations dignified with the name of this precious metal have been imposed on the public, but the virtues ascribed to gold have apparently no other foundation, than credulity and superstition and most of the golden remedies have no gold in them." Even when gold has been employed in their preparation none of it is retained in the product.

Gold is non-assimilable, and its modern use is confided to quacks who trade on the name. The modern craze for gold as a remedy is simply a repetition of charlatans' schemes of the past centuries, who sought to meet and supply the demand for elixirs of life, renewing youth and postponing old age. Croll, a German physician in the sixteenth century, mentions over a hundred different preparations of gold; each if made by the formula would be absolutely free from gold. This was illustrated in the modern gold cures, which from their names were found to be chemically impossibilities. Their value in inebriety depends on credulity. A yellow mixture of some vegetable extracts injected in the arm, followed by general relaxation and diaphoresis so profoundly impressed the inebriate chemist that he has ignored all teaching and experience for the belief that the hidden virtues of this drug have been discovered and will revolutionize pharmacy in the future. I have tried three of the known preparations of gold made by reputable authorities, on cases of inebriety, with no results whatever. When strychnin, cinchona and other remedies were given, associated with gold, the effects were marked. The same results followed when gold was not used. Infusion of cinchona in large doses at frequent intervals resulted in rapid subsidence of the drink craze and a distaste for both the flavor and effect of spirits. Injections of gold were not noticeable for any effects on the taste or desire for spirits.

By impressing the mind of the patient with profound conviction of the value of the drug, and detailing the expected results which would follow, and by using colored water the exact effects would appear. In some cases this impression is so powerful as to materially change the disease. Supposing gold to be used, it must be combined or given with some other drug of pronounced effect on the body, or preceded by expectancy and credulity, to be followed with any results. This would be the same in any other disease of the body; to specialize any effects from the drug alone would be impossible. Inebriety is more than alcoholism; it includes disorders of which the desire for spirits is only a symptom. The real trouble is some central disease of the brain so complex and obscure that no drug or therapeutic agent can reach it specifically. For a quarter of a century a great variety of remedies have been used in inebriety, with the same results as in all other empiric efforts to reach an unknown disorder by remedies whose action was largely unknown. Some drugs like strychnia have some influence in checking the drink symptom, but beyond that nothing is known.

Gold, whose effects are unknown and even to its defenders are surrounded by mystery, can not possibly be of any service in checking an unknown disorder. Its use must be empiric and irrational always, except as a mental remedy to influence the mind. Experience indicates that it is extremely doubtful if any remedy exists for this obscure neurosis of the brain. Combinations of therapeutic measures are valuable and their action marked in many cases, but no single drug can have any curative influence. The checking of the drink symptom is the same as using opium for pain, leaving the cause uninfluenced. On general principles, gold or any single drug can have no specific influence in cases of inebriety and all specifics—either single remedies or combination of remedies—are fraudulent and empiric. Inebriety is not reached by drugs alone or special, concealed plans

of treatment. It is a neurosis to be treated as other affections of the brain and nervous system. Even under the most skillful care, with the best appliances known to science, it is often incurable and only temporarily influenced by therapeutic measures. The degenerations which precede and follow the use of alcohol are organic changes of cell and nerve tissue, and restoration is problematic, depending on causes and conditions largely unknown, therefore, the discovery of a remedy to check decay is impossible with our present knowledge of medicine. It will require a century of study and experiment before we can speak positively and authoritatively on the pathology and therapeutics of inebriety. Yet a number of men are confident that drugs are found—or will be soon—to cure and restore the inebriate to health again. This expectation is met in the gold cures, where color and price are accepted as evidence. This, with the hysterical assertions of cure and statements of health, reiterated with great positiveness, becomes a mental contagion difficult to resist by unstable defective alcoholics. The acceptance of this testimony by persons not inebriated is ignorant credulity difficult to explain. Why gold should have any influence in these complex drug neuroses, and not in the more common affections is a mystery; why the use of gold should be confined to irregular and doubtful practitioners is also a mystery. Why should gold be wanting in the preparations said to contain it? Even when present, its combination with powerful drugs makes it difficult to know the value of any one of them, unless the physiologic effects of that drug appear.

A physician who reported ten cases of inebriety cured from the use of gold used barks and strychnia freely at the same time, and yet seemed to think the action of gold was prominent. Another physician used colored water injection as gold and impressed the mind of the patient with the certain effects which would follow. The drink craze subsided and the patient recovered. In many cases under my care, who

have been cured in the gold-cure asylums at different times, there is concealed periodicity. The drink symptom is limited, and disappears naturally both with and without drugs. Such cases always make rapid recovery from the use of any drugs, and assert their final cure most positively. They pose as examples and illustrations of the effect of remedies, and the medical man becomes bewildered with the faith of a new discovery of some new effects of drugs. If it is gold or any unusual medicine, he is more convinced. These cases continue cured for irregular intervals, then relapse again and after a drink paroxysm of uncertain duration recover. The first subsidence of the drink storm makes them willing to be treated medically. Or when forcibly taken away and put under treatment they suddenly acquiesce, and after the first few days recover, no matter what is given. This is popularly called the sobering-off process, and in all the quack asylums is limited to four weeks. It is not scientific treatment, but a mere preliminary to the full restoration, which only comes from months and years of medical care. The use of gold in this period would not be a final test, and its virtues could not be known from its supposed effects at this time. There is no gold cure for inebriety. There are no facts to show that gold has any value in this disease. All the assertions and statements concerning gold as a remedy are delusions, and will not bear the test of critical examination.



