

Gold as a Therapeutic Agent.

BY C. J. S. THOMPSON.

The use of gold as a medical agent is of considerable antiquity, dating back to a very early period, and, like mercury, whose action it much resembles, it was accounted of great value by the alchemists of old.

Centuries ago, both precious metals and stones were credited with wonderful healing properties; and the diamond, the sapphire, ruby and amethyst were supposed to have marvelous virtues. The apothecaries of the seventeenth century used it largely as a stimulant, also in the treatment of epilepsy, and it entered as an ingredient into many of their compound elixirs and other preparations.

Culpeper, in his "Physician," says, "Gold is temperate in gravity. It wonderfully strengthens the heart and vital parts. In cordials it resists melancholy, faintings and swoonings, also fevers and falling sickness, and all such like infirmities incident either to the vital or animal spirit."

An ancient poet quaintly remarks:

"For gold is cordial, and that's the reason
Your raking misers live so long a season."

Down to the very early part of this century it was in most of the pharmacopoeias of Europe, and was prescribed largely for syphilis; but like musk and other expensive remedies once frequently employed in medical practice, the internal administration of the precious metal has almost entirely dropped out of use.

The physiological action of the salts of gold may easily be tested, and it is also stated to have diaphoretic properties. It was frequently used by medical men fifty years ago in the treatment of syphilis, many of whom believed it to be superior to mercury in severe cases.

One of the oldest preparations of gold was known as *crocus solis*, and prepared in several ways. The *crocus solis* of Germany was directed to be made by first making an amalgam, composed of 1 part of gold and 6 parts of mercury, and triturating it with twice its weight of sulphur. It was then heated in a crucible till the mercury and sulphur became dissipated, and the gold remained in the form of a brown powder. Another method of preparation, also, was by precipitation, as follows:

R—Divided gold.....q. s.
Acid. nitro-hydrochlor.....q. s.

To dissolve the metal, dilute the acid solution with 12 parts of water, then add a solution of potash to excess. Wash and dry the precipitate thrown down.

A frequent old fashioned method of administering a preparation of gold was by rubbing it into the gums or over the tongue.

Crocus solis formed the base of several preparations, such as Kornmann's panacea, in which it was combined with hydrargyrum sulphureum and oil of cinnamon; also gold en hartshorn, that had great reputation as a cordial and sudorific, and was composed of *crocus solis* and prepared hartshorn.

The stannate of gold, well known as the purple of Cassius, was formerly prescribed internally, to be taken in progressive doses of $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 grain, from $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 grain being also recommended to be rubbed over the tongue. The metal itself was used in the form known as divided gold, made by forming an amalgam of mercury and gold leaf, in parts of 1 to 6, the mercury being taken up by hot nitric acid, then dried, and the residuum pulverized.

Divided gold was administered in doses of $\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 grains daily, by rubbing on the gums. It was used also to make the syrup of gold, a preparation recommended in lotions for application to syphilitic ulcers. The formula is given as follows:

R—Divided gold.....21 grs.
Simple or gum syrup.....1 oz.

Mix intimately.

The chloride of gold was once frequently ordered in medicine, and usually given in doses of $\frac{1}{10}$ to a $\frac{1}{2}$ of a grain daily, and was also used in making the pills. Combined with starch it formed the powder of chloride of gold. The tinctura auri was a somewhat expensive preparation, and made in the following manner.

R—Pure gold.....1 dr.
Acid. nitro-hydrochloric.....1 oz.

Dissolve and add

Ol. rosmar.....2 oz.

Set aside until the color of the acid disappears, then add

Rectified spirit.....8 oz.

The dose of this tincture was from 5 to 10 drops. Another form of aurate of ammonia, known as *aurum fulminans*. It was made by precipitating divided gold from solution in nitro-hydrochloric acid with ammonia and was prescribed as a diaphoretic, in doses of from 3 to 6 grains. It was used in the preparation of the balsam of gold made by dissolving one part of aurate of ammonia in 4 parts of oil of juniper. A popular remedy largely used in continental countries was known as General La Motte's drops, and consisted of aurate of ammonia dissolved in nitric acid, and diluted with rectified spirit. It was regarded as a sovereign remedy in more senses than one.

The bromide of gold has been recently prescribed by several medical men in cases of epilepsy with success. It is given in doses of $\frac{1}{20}$ to $\frac{1}{10}$ of a grain, so it is quite probable we may see gold again come into use in medicine, and its preparations once more on the shelves of the pharmacy. —*Pharmaceutical Journal and Transactions.*

TO DISTINGUISH ARTIFICIAL FROM GENUINE MUSK.—*Nouv. Revue* gives the very simple expedient of placing it in contact with sulphate of quinine.

The artificial musk gives up its odor to the quinine, while the true musk remains unaffected, retaining its penetrating odor in its entirety.

Quinine will preserve mucilage, paste, &c.

Are You Aware of the Fact that CHRISTMAS Is Coming?

And with its approach the raising of that puzzling question: "What is the BEST gift I can make to my friends and relatives?" As filling all these requirements what could be more appropriate than a year's subscription to

"THE COSMOPOLITAN"

the brightest and cheapest of all the monthlies. Such a gift will bring the memory of the giver to mind with each recurring month. You cannot possibly make a present of a more useful and delightful character. Send in your subscriptions now, so that they can begin with the superb Christmas number.

The Cosmopolitan Magazine

\$2.40 A YEAR.

By a special arrangement with the Publishers we are enabled to offer THE COSMOPOLITAN and the CANADIAN DRUGGIST together, till December, 1891, for

\$2.40 A YEAR.

Remit by P. O. Order or Registered Letter to

CANADIAN DRUGGIST,
STRATHROY, ONT.

MARTIN, 
ROSSER
 & CO.
IMPORTERS

—AND—

Wholesale Druggists

MCDERMOTT ST. EAST,

WINNIPEG, MAN.