

# OBSERVATIONS

CONCERNING THE

MEDICAL VIRTUES OF WINE,

IN A

LETTER TO DR. BUCHAN,

BY A

GENTLEMAN OF THE FACULTY,

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

An ACCOUNT of some REMARKABLE CURES  
performed by the TOKAY DE ESPAGNA,  
with other Matters, which are NEW, and well  
worth the Attention of the Public.

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*Si quis vero Stomacho laborat—non aquam sed vinum  
bibere oportet. CELSUS.*

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OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE  
MEDICAL VIRTUES OF WINE.

S I R,

YOUR letter to Mr. JOHN CAMPBELL, at No. 190, Strand, concerning the medical virtues of the TOKAY DE ESPAGNA, having accidentally fallen into my hands, I immediately resolved to make trial of it on some of my patients, and as its success has far exceeded my most sanguine expectations, I beg leave to communicate to you some of the most extraordinary cures which, under my eye, have been performed by its use.

I agree with you, in thinking that there is no production of art or nature which possesses so many medical virtues as good wine. But when I say wine is the best medicine in the world, I am sorry to add, that no one thing is so difficult to be obtained genuine and of a good quality. This circumstance, which often disappoints the hopes of the patient, and blasts the character of the physician, has rendered wine a very suspicious medicine, and sunk its reputation even with those who wished to support it. Wine has of late become so extensive an article of commerce, that the inducements to adulterate it are too powerful to be resisted; besides, the modes of sophistication are so numerous, and of such difficult detection, that there is reason to fear very little, if any genuine wine is to be obtained, in the course of trade.

If by adulteration wines were only rendered weaker, the consequences would not prove so pernicious; but it is beyond a doubt that many hurt-

ful, and even poisonous ingredients, are used to restore spoilt wines, and to render them fit for the market. Litharge, and other preparations of lead, are said to be in general use for restoring wines which, by running into the acetous fermentation, have become sour or prickt; while it is affirmed with equal confidence, that the mercurial sublimated, and even arsenic itself, is often mixed with the sweet wines. That I may not be thought to exaggerate, or to speak from prejudice, I beg leave to insert the following remark, taken from the Dictionary of Chemistry, a work which no one will suspect of partiality\*.

I am far from extending this censure to the wine which you have been pleased to recommend. I know your candour too well to question the truth of any thing you assert. But as the most conclusive proofs of the virtues of a medicine are drawn from its effects, I shall, after enumerating the beneficial consequences of generous wine on the human constitution, adduce a variety of cures which have happened under my own eye, and which amount to a full demonstration that the Tokay de Espagna possesses all those excellent medical qualities for which the best wines have ever been celebrated.

\* Sugar of lead, as possessing the property of forming with the vegetable acid a salt of a sweetish and not unpleasent taste, which does not alter the colour of the wine, and which likewise tends to check fermentation and putrefaction, is very proper to remedy the sharpness of wine, if lead and all its productions were not highly pernicious, by inevitably exciting the most horrid colics, and even death itself, in those who have the misfortune to take them internally. Any wine-merchant, aware of the destructive qualities of such drugs, who is capable of employing them for the sake of gain, ought to be treated as a public assassin. *Dict. de Chimie*, vol. ii. p. 636.

*Effects of Wine on the Human Body.*

GENEROUS WINE, taken in a moderate quantity, is found, in the first instance, to act as a stimulus to the stomach and bowels. Hence it promotes digestion and increases the nervous energy, by which the body feels refreshed, the mind soothed, the strength recruited, and the spirits exhilarated. The celebrated Van Swieten elegantly observes, that the stimulus of wine upon the human body, when taken in moderation by those who are not accustomed to it, is truly astonishing, not only exciting all the functions of the body, but even restoring fresh vigour and alacrity to the mind, when exhausted with deep study or attention.

Wine not only acts as a stimulus to the stomach and bowels, by which means it exhilarates the spirits and restores the actions of the system; it likewise exerts a tonic power, by means of which more lasting effects are produced on the constitution.— From this quality of good wine flow all its beneficial effects, in bracing the solids, increasing the strength, and rendering the body more firm and robust.

The secretion of urine, and the insensible perspiration, are likewise promoted by the moderate use of generous wine. But this property the ingenious Dr. Lewis observes, all wines do not possess in the same degree; that some are quite destitute of it, and that others are endued with an opposite quality; that the Rhenish wines prove not only diuretic, but likewise open the body. The celebrated Hoffman also asserts, that the Mosell and Rhenish wines prove more beneficial in consequence of their tendency both to keep the body open and to increase the insensible perspiration.

Generous wine not only acts as a stimulus to the stomach and bowels, increases the tone and vigour of the solids, and promotes the different secretions, but likewise tends to nourish and support the body. Physicians have been less attentive to the nutritive qualities of wine than to its powers of promoting secretion, in consequence of which it is not so generally prescribed as a restorative as it ought to be. It must indeed be acknowledged, that the nutritive powers of wine depend in a great measure on the qualities it possesses of exciting the appetite and strengthening the organs of digestion; but as these are of the utmost importance to life, wherever a nourishing wine can be obtained, it ought, in decayed and debilitated constitutions, to be administered.

*Influence of Wine as a Preserver of Health.*

FROM the effects of generous wine, both on the solids and fluids, its influence, as a preventive medicine, will be obvious to every one. Whatever induces a regular and free circulation of the blood, while it promotes the different secretions, must be conducive to health. But the influence of wine, in preventing diseases, depends more on its effects on the mind than the body. The most eminent physicians, of all ages, agree in thinking, that the most fatal diseases are often induced by grief, sadness, excessive fear, and other depressing passions and affections of the mind, which it is the province of generous wine to remove. Hoffman asserts, that the debilitating and enervating influence of fear is so great, as even to prove more fatal in the plague than the contagion itself; and the celebrated Rivinus carries this idea so far, as to say, that contagion is nothing else besides the operation

ration of fear. Though this is carrying the matter too far, yet nothing is more certain, than that wine-drinkers are less liable to be attacked by infectious diseases, than other people. The late Dr. Gilchrist, speaking of a contagious fever which raged in his neighbourhood, says, "It was the poorer sort, and those a degree above them, who were subject to this fever. I knew but few instances of it amongst those who lived well; and, of wine-drinkers, do not remember that there was one seized." Mr. Coldon, in his history of America, makes the same observation, with regard to an epidemic fever which raged in those parts. His words are, "It was observable, that though many people were seized with this distemper, no one Madeira-drinker had it."

Wine is not only an antidote to infectious diseases, but, by counteracting the tendency of the climate, it is often known to keep off intermitting and other fevers incident to the inhabitants of low marshy countries. Of this Dr. Gregory, in his lectures, gives a remarkable instance, in twenty-five British students, at Leyden, where an intermitting fever was epidemical. Of these, twenty-four drank two pints of wine at dinner every day, and one drank only water. The water-drinker alone was seized with the fever.—It is necessary, however, to observe, that all the beneficial effects of wine depend on the manner of using it. All excess is to be avoided, otherwise wine will do more harm than good. Nothing, Ramazini says, strengthens the body so much as the moderate use of wine, or weakens it so much as excess. He compares it to fire, than which nothing is more beneficial, or more destructive. The celebrated Pliny seems to have been of the same opinion.

His

His words are, "Nec viribus corporis aliud, si  
 "modus adest, utilius; nec aliud perniciosius  
 "vino, si modus abfit."

*Influence of Wine in the Cure of Diseases.*

THOUGH the influence of wine, in the cure of diseases, may be inferred from what has been already said, yet, it may not be improper here just to name a few of those maladies, in the cure of which it has been found the most successful, and at the same time to throw out a few hints concerning the manner of using it.

Diseases are sometimes excited, and often aggravated, by means of a putrid colluvies lodged in the stomach, or from an excess or too acrid a quality of the bile. Few things are more likely to relieve the patient in this situation, than the liberal use of some generous diluting wine. This serves at once to stimulate the stomach, to correct the putrid tendency of its contents, and to carry off the redundant bile.

But the action of wine, in diseases, is by no means confined to the first passage; it extends to the whole vascular system, renders the circulation more free and uniform, removes spasms in the smaller vessels, excites the action of the nerves, and promotes the secretions and excretions in every part of the body; nor are physicians wanting who say, it has the power of correcting a putrid state of the blood. Though this idea may be too extravagant, yet, there can be no doubt, but that good wine is possessed of very great antiseptic qualities.

On the supposed antiseptic quality of generous wine, is grounded the idea of its usefulness in putrid and pestilential fevers; but the benefits derived

ved from it. in these dreadful maladies would be with more justice attributed to its cordial, than its antiseptic qualities; nor can its place here be supplied by any of the shop-compositions. These may answer the purposes of the prescribers, compounders and venders; but they will disappoint the hopes of the miserable patient, and suffer him to sink into an untimely grave.

Most modern authors allow, that wine ought to be given in fevers; and the fevers which have for some time prevailed in this country being chiefly of the nervous and putrid kind, there can be no doubt but this advice ought to be followed.— Pringle says\*, “For a grateful and efficacious cordial there was nothing comparable to wine; indeed, so great is the virtue of it, that I have seen many recover by its free use, from the lowest condition.” Hoffinan expresses himself in words to the same purport; and Huxham in the following manner:—“In these fevers † I cannot but recommend a generous red wine, as a most noble, natural, and subastringent cordial; and perhaps art can hardly supply a better.”

In fevers, attended with the following symptoms, it will generally be proper to administer wine, and indeed pretty freely; languor and weariness, a defect of the voluntary motions, a countenance sad or pale, dullness of the eyes; a pulse weak, unequal, small and frequent; loss of appetite, dejection of mind, trembling of the hands and tongue, giddiness, frequent faintings, starting of the tendons, spasmodic contractions of the eyes and other parts, disorder of the senses, constant delirium, restlessness, stupor, deafness,

\* Diseases of the Army,

† Huxham on Fevers,

forgetfulness,

Forgetfulness, noise or ringing in the ears, indistinct vision, coldness of the extremities; low, frequent, and deep breathing; cold or clammy sweats; low, inarticulate, or muttering voice.— The more violent these symptoms are, the more they shew, that the powers of life are diminished; that the patient is in imminent danger, and stands in need of the reviving influence of generous wine.

The quantity of wine to be given, must be regulated by the violence of the symptoms, the effects it produces, and the former habits of the patient. There is no better criterion for the administration of wine in fevers, than the appetite of the patient himself. Where the inclination for wine is strong, there is generally reason to believe it will do good; but it ought seldom to be given where there is an aversion to it. Pringle observes\*, when the fever is protracted, with a low and slow voice, the sick have a particular craving for something cordial; and nothing is so acceptable and cordial as wine.

To enumerate all the cases in which wine is proper, would be to recount half the diseases incident to mankind. Suffice it to say, that in all cases of morbid debility, or wherever the powers of life are to be roused or supported, generous wine, properly administered, will be found the best medicine.

The manner of administering this cordial will depend so much on the age, strength, and other circumstances of the patient, that it must, in a great measure, be left to the discretion of those who attend him. Pringle says †, he allowed each soldier about two pints a day. Gregory and Whi-

\* Diseases of the Army.

† Ibid.

taker recommend a more free use of it; and I have often administered wine in twice the quantity mentioned above. The best way is to give it often, and in small quantities; when the wine sits easy on the stomach, refreshes the patient, does not overheat him, renders his pulse more full and regular, removes anxiety, disposes him to rest, takes off delirium; when it is swallowed with greediness, and the patient seems to desire more, it may then be considered as the safest and best medicine he can take, and ought to be administered with a liberal hand.

It may seem strange to recommend wine in delirium and violent affections of the head; yet, in these states of fever, I have often seen it succeed wonderfully; and Gilchrist\*, a man of observation, is of the same opinion. His words are—  
 “ This I can confirm, from my own experience, having given wine in high ravings, head-ach, tossing and watching, and where the eyes were much inflamed, with wonderful success; the sick having been composed by it, and sleep procured, when opiates failed me, or I durst not give them.”

*Account of some Remarkable Cures performed by the Tokay de Espagna.*

THE first patient on whom I had an opportunity of trying this wine was a gentleman aged eighty-four, worn out in the service of his country, and, like many others, meriting a better reward than starving on an ensign's half-pay. This gentleman had for several months been afflicted with a severe disorder in his bowels, attended with gripes and a constant diarrhœa, which had reduced him to skin and bone. He had taken great quantities of tinc-

\* Med. Ess.

ture of Rhubarb, and other medicines which had been recommended to him, without effect. I mentioned to him the Tokay de Espagna, and begged he would make trial of a few bottles of it. He followed my advice, got well in a few days, and, as far as I know, has continued well ever since.

### C A S E II.

The success attending the Tokay de Espagna in the above case, induced a young lady, who lived in the same family, and was subject to complaints of the stomach and bowels, to make trial of it. This lady is of a very delicate nervous habit, weak bowels, low spirits, and is very much afflicted with indigestion and bile. She had not used the wine long before she found her spirits and appetite restored, and by continuing to drink three or four glasses of it every day, she enjoys better health than she had done for many years before.

### C A S E III.

I shall only mention one other affection of the bowels, which was likely to have been productive of the most serious consequences, being not only attended with gripes and violent purging, but bloody stools, loss of strength, appetite, &c. This patient having heard that the Tokay de Espagna was good in complaints of the bowels, asked my leave to make trial of it, to which I very readily agreed. The first night he drank half a pint of the wine at bed-time, which threw him into a profuse sweat, and stopped the flux. Having taken no wine the following night he did not sweat, and the flux returned. This induced him to return to the use of the wine, which, being repeated for a few nights successively, entirely carried off the disease.

C A S E

## C A S E IV.

This wine seems not only to possess extraordinary powers in removing disorders of the stomach and bowels, but likewise in obstructions of the urinary passages. I notice this the more particularly, as wines are seldom administered with this view. It is without a doubt, however, that several patients of mine, and some of them of a very advanced age, have been cured of obstructions in the urinary passages by the Tokay de Espagna, after immense quantities of laudanum and other narcotics had been administered in vain, and when no urine had been discharged for many days without the assistance of a catheter. In these cases a few glasses of the wine generally induce sleep, which removes the spasm, and when the patient wakes he passes his water with ease. In all the cases where I have seen this tried it has succeeded, and I think it a much safer medicine than ardent spirits, or dosing the patient with laudanum.

## C A S E V.

I have not had occasion to try this wine in a great variety of fevers, but notwithstanding have had sufficient proofs to convince me of its being a very powerful febrifuge. A young lady who, for near a twelvemonth, had laboured under an intermitting fever, had taken the usual medicines by the advice of men of character in the profession, without the least effect, was at last advised by me to make trial of this wine, a few bottles of which effectually removed the complaint, and she has continued well ever since. I wish this practice to be taken particular notice of, as many obstinate agues would, I make no doubt, yield to the use  
of

of a generous wine, which promotes all the secretions, where the bark and other astringents either fail of success or tend to render the disease more obstinate.

#### C A S E VI.

The only opportunity I have had of using this wine in a fever of the low or nervous kind, was in a man far advanced in life, who seemed to be in that situation where the astringent wines are generally recommended, but not always with judgment, as they obstruct the secretions, and sometimes increase the tension of the skin. But the Tokay de Espagna, while it acts as a generous cordial, takes off the tension and spasm from the cutaneous vessels, and promotes all the secretions.— That a wine possessed of these properties should succeed better than the common red port is not any matter of wonder. It had indeed the most happy effects upon this patient, who, notwithstanding his advanced age, recovered more speedily than I remember to have seen any one do in similar circumstances.

#### C A S E VII.

I have recommended this wine to several of my patients in the gout instead of Madeira, and, wherever wine was proper, it answered extremely well. One gentleman in particular, who had the gout in his stomach, was greatly relieved by taking a gill in the morning fasting, as much at noon; at dinner he drank it in negus, and half a pint at bed-time without water. He has now used the wine pretty freely for several months, and finds it agree so well with him, that he is in hopes of getting quit of the gout altogether. Indeed there is  
reason

reason to believe, that by a proper use of this wine the gout might in many habits be greatly mitigated, if not wholly removed. I have not had sufficient experience of its effects in this disorder to speak with confidence, but a medicine which acts as a tonic, while it promotes all the secretions, is certainly well calculated to obviate or remove a complaint which arises chiefly from debility.

### C A S E VIII.

To relate all the cases which have fallen under my eye where this wine has proved an effectual remedy, would swell this letter to an enormous size; I shall therefore conclude with mentioning the deplorable condition of a respectable citizen and his wife, who, by a complication of the most cruel nervous disorders, had been reduced to a state wherein life could hardly be any longer supported. They were afflicted with indigestion, loss of appetite, and lowness of spirits, to such a degree that they could not keep at times from crying. Their weakness was so great as to render them unable to go abroad, and absolutely incapable of managing their business at home. With such a complicated load of affliction had this worthy couple struggled for several years, during which period they had taken almost every medicine, and had even tried a vast variety of wines, without effect, as none of them would remain on the stomach. Hearing the Tokay de Espagna mentioned, they resolved to make trial of it, and found it very soon succeed to their utmost wishes. When I saw them they had used it for some months, and were so altered for the better, that I could not have known them to be the same persons I had seen before. They continue to use a few glasses  
or

of this wine every day, and by this means remain so well, that while they can afford to drink the Tokay de Espagna, they think they can set every disease at defiance.

From these few cases it is obvious, that the Tokay de Espagna possesses all the medical virtues which have at any time been attributed to the best wines. It strengthens the stomach, restores the appetite, removes obstructions, promotes all the secretions, and cures the most obstinate maladies: When all this can be effected by the most pleasant liquor in the world, we cannot but wonder at the absurdity of those who swallow disagreeable drugs, at the risque of their lives, and often to the ruin of their health and constitution.

Nor is it less astonishing, that physicians, who in all ages have acknowledged the wonderful powers of wine as a medicine, should not so much as give it a place in their dispensaries, unless in a medicated form; I mean, combined with metals, gums, and other detestable drugs. Would they prescribe wine to their patients in proper quantity, and take care that they should have it pure, generous and good, they would find it worth all the other articles of the *Materia Medica* put together.

By these observations, we do not mean to make men wine-bibers, but merely to recommend it as a medicine. The medical virtues of wine are totally lost to those persons who take it to excess.—Whoever wishes to reap the benefits of this *divine medicine*, when sick, must use it with moderation while in health.

I hope you will forgive the freedom of these remarks, and believe me to be, with great esteem,

SIR,

Your, &c. &c.