

of great value. In such an urgent case, however, it is doubtful if the hypodermic injection of ether would not be of more use than either strychnanthin or digitalis.

There is no more potent benefactor of mankind than digitalis. For more than a hundred years it has been regarded as a sovereign remedy for dropsy. There is an idea in the minds of very many medical men that it is a dangerous cardiac sedative. This is entirely erroneous. We now know that digitalis acts as a tonic on the muscular fibres of the heart and arterioles; and it is in its capacity as a tonic in this way that it does its work.

Digitalis in every form is absorbed with difficulty and slowly eliminated from the system. If the drug be given at too short intervals, it accumulates within the system, and toxic symptoms may very readily appear. This tendency to accumulate must be guarded against. It must never be forgotten that this drug is of special value in a class of cases where sudden deaths are liable to happen; and this has been unfortunate for the reputation of digitalis. With ordinary care no fear need be entertained on the ground of accumulation.

Thin and anæmic persons are more quickly saturated than plethoric people. The average tonic dose for most cases is one grain of powdered leaves every twelve hours. Such a dose may be continued as long as there is any need for the drug. Under such a dose the feeble heart slowly gains tone, and the weak impulse becomes a strong one. There is an increased sense of well-being.

In many young persons, after febrile or exhausting diseases, and when chlorotic or anæmic, there are dilated hearts. Far too often these cases are regarded as merely functional and left to time and nature to cure. It is painful to find that later in life many of these persons are debarred from entering upon any active form of life, that a little timely attention and a course of digitalis would have cured and obviated a life of comparative invalidism.

Our forefathers gave as much as ten grains or twenty grains at short intervals in bad cases of dropsy. This would be followed in two or three days by diuresis. We now know that digitalis has no action on the kidneys, and the diuresis is due to the improved state of the circulation. As the arteries fill and the veins empty, the effusion is absorbed, the blood becomes more watery, and this excess of water is excreted by the kidneys. We should not run any risk by giving dangerously large doses: the good can be obtained by safe quantities of the drug. A dose of three grains every eight hours will be found efficient in cases of dropsy. The symptoms of saturation may be looked for when the patient has taken about thirty grains or forty grains. The symptoms are: Diminution of primary diuresis, slowing