

# CANADA

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ON SUBSTITUTES FOR DIGITALIS.

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### I.—CAFFEINE.

The alkaloid *caffeine* has been known to the profession for a number of years as an agent possessing more or less cardiac tonic powers. Neither it or any of its salts have come into anything like general use, however. This appears to be owing more to the very general trustworthy effects obtainable from digitalis, than from any positive knowledge that caffeine is not a powerful cardiac stimulant. The excellent results obtainable from the judicious use of digitalis in cases of heart failure were fully set forth by the writer in a lecture published in the December number of this JOURNAL.

In the present article, it is proposed to describe the physiological action and uses of caffeine, and to compare it with digitalis. The salts of caffeine hitherto in use—the citrate and the hydrobromate—are unstable combinations, and, therefore, not to be relied on. The alkaloid itself is, on the other hand, so insoluble that it is not well adapted for therapeutic purposes. This unsuitability of the preparations hitherto in use for therapeutic purposes is another reason why this drug has not been more generally employed. Recently there have been introduced a number of new caffeine salts which appear to possess all the