

*Digitalis.* No drug is used more frequently in heart lesions than digitalis ; no drug is capable of doing more good in these conditions, and no drug can do more harm. The cases in which it is to be employed must be carefully selected with a due regard to the condition of the heart and blood vessels, and a full appreciation of the action of the digitalis upon these organs. Digitalis acts upon the muscular structure of the heart and vessels, causing them to contract with greater force and it lessens the frequency of the heart's beats. On account of the slower action of the heart a longer time is given for the supply of blood to the heart, and therefore the tone of the heart muscles is increased under the action of digitalis. If the contraction of the blood vessels went hand in hand with the contraction of the heart, the resistance to the onward flow of blood would be increased on account of the increased blood pressure, and but little advantage would follow the administration of digitalis, but fortunately when a valvular lesion occurs there is hypertrophy of the ventricular walls, and hence the contractile power and its force are increased so that the increased blood pressure is more than counterbalanced by the increased powers of the contractions of the hypertrophied heart muscles. Now in some conditions of the heart we wish to increase the power of these contractions, and in others we do not. Quoting from Broadbent: "The special indications for its use are frequency, weakness and irregularity of pulse, and oedema of the extremities, with scanty, turbid, concentrated urine. When these are absent it is rarely of service."

Now gentlemen, I am aware that I have brought before you much that you know as well as I. I know that I have spoken of but few of the drugs that are capable of being misused. My aim has been to bring up for discussion the principles upon which the selection of a drug should be made in a given case. If I have succeeded in directing your attention to this important subject, and if what I have said leads to a discussion of this fundamental principle in the treatment of disease, I will feel that you will pardon me for having asked you to listen to well known truths.

JOHN HERALD.