

Poisoning by Digitalis.—Two young men wishing to escape conscription, obtained a large number of pills from a person who professed to be able to exempt recruits from military service, with instructions to take 2 to 4 pills daily for eight or ten days before their enrolment. One of them reported himself ill three days after entering the service, six days later he was sent to hospital, where he died quite suddenly and unexpectedly after three weeks' illness.

A careful investigation of the case elicited the following facts:

The post mortem revealed no pathological change sufficient to account for death. The blood was thin and fluid, of a cherry-red colour, and without a trace of coagulum. There were ecchymoses in the coats of the stomach and intestines, and the brain was anæmic.

A chemical examination of portions of the œsophagus, stomach, duodenum, and liver, gave the reaction of digitalin most decidedly; that of the blood contained in the right ventricle was negative.

The pills were found to contain pulv. fol. digit. purp. gr $1\frac{1}{2}$ in each. It appeared that the unfortunate young man had taken 137 pills, or upwards of 200 grains of digitalis within five weeks, and he probably died in consequence of the cumulative action of the drug.

The symptoms presented during life were pains in the stomach, loss of appetite, nausea, constipation, pain in the head and giddiness. The patient, moreover, looked very ill. The pulse was 50 to 52 per minute, the temperature normal. The odour of the breath was peculiar, and on one occasion some greenish material was vomited.

In addition to this there was dimness of vision, tinnitus, and great debility. The pupils were alike and acted well. The skin was pale and sallow.

Death occurred suddenly whilst the patient was being raised up in bed by one of the attendants. The day before he had a sudden and severe attack of syncope. The other recruit suffered in a similar manner, but recovered, having taken only 75 pills in the four or five weeks.—(Dr. Könräd Kühnhorn, Vierteljahr schrift f. gerichtl. Medizin, April, 1876.)