

I can recall at least one case in my own practice where enforced continence in a married woman seemed to be the chief cause of severe palpitation, and I heard later that the continence and the palpitation came to an end about the same time.

A recognition of the cause of an irritable heart may usually be attained after a careful consideration of the history, the habits, the physical signs and the symptoms. The athletic proclivities of the individual must be carefully enquired into. Cardiac pain and flatulence should excite suspicion of tobacco poisoning, although the cause will frequently be found to be unsound teeth. The presence of sighing or gasping respiration in a man is almost pathognomonic of tobacco poisoning, as pointed out by the writer elsewhere.³ This is especially true if there be a subjective complaint that the air cannot be drawn into the chest. A history of emotional shock and enlargement of the thyroid gland are frequently found together. It is sometimes difficult to decide which is the primary cause and which secondary. An interesting point I have noticed in cases of enlarged thyroid is that in the jugular pulse the systolic wave is usually higher than normal, rising above the auricular wave. I fancy this is to be explained by the arterial pulse being transmitted through the dilated capillaries of the gland to the veins.

With regard to treatment it is of first importance to remove the cause whatever it may be, if it can be determined. Rest to the heart is desirable, and to attain this we may have to order physical rest, or we may have to devise some plan for promoting mental and emotional rest, which is not so easy. Of direct medication I have had excellent results in the athletic heart from ammonium bromide and digitalis. In the tobacco heart I have been led by theoretical considerations to employ preparations of opium, and I think I have seen decided benefit result. I have used both laudanum and codeine for this purpose, but for obvious reasons these drugs must only be used after due consideration and must not be continued too long, especially the former. In the emotional and thyroid hearts I have had the best results in relieving symptoms from thyroid gland tablets. The administration of iodothyryn is said by Cyon⁴ to slow the heart and lower the blood pressure. Numerous authors claim to have seen benefit from it in certain forms of goitre, although in other forms it seems to do harm. The best way is to try it carefully and observe the effect. I have been much impressed by the testimony of patients that it has a marvellous effect in calming their nervous feelings. In some cases I have seen the heart