

of acute cerebral anæmia are also rapidly relieved by them—such as syncope and anæmic epilepsy.

Many other similar conditions which will suggest themselves are greatly benefited by the use of the nitrites. Cardiac dyspnoea, attended by high arterial tension, will be greatly relieved by their employment. The pain due to aneurismal pressure is sometimes alleviated by them. Generally, if they will do good in a certain case their action is prompt.

Having thus briefly glanced at a few of the indications for the use of this class of remedies, I will now turn to their abuse and contra-indications, also certain pathological conditions in which they are sometimes employed, and in which their administration is detrimental to recovery. This has been the chief motive which caused me to write this paper.

Some time ago, speaking to a somewhat eminent surgeon of this city, he informed me that he considered nitro-glycerine the best remedy he was acquainted with to combat the condition known as surgical shock. Let us look into this and ascertain what is the condition of affairs which obtains in shock :

We find the surface pale and cold, the heart beating extremely feeble, and often greatly increased in frequency, complete muscular relaxation and depression of all the vital functions. The pale, cold surface is caused by the paralysis of the vaso-motor system, and by the recession of the blood to the muscles and abdominal viscera. Now, why, in such a condition, should such paralyzing and depressing agents as the nitrites be given, except we believe in the law of similars? Is it prudent or good therapeutics in such a case to give a remedy whose chief action is to still further depress that weak heart, to still more paralyze the vaso-motor system with which the integrity of the circulation and blood-pressure is in such intimate connection and relation? I firmly believe the procedure wrong, and regret to say that the practice obtains with some, and men, too, who are not tyros in medicine, but who neglect to bear in mind the physiological action of remedies

During the past year, two eminent men have died in this country, and the public press informed us that when they were in extremis, "nitro-glycerine, a powerful heart stimulant," was given to brace up the flagging heart and prolong their

lives. Let us investigate this statement and see if we can elicit the distinguishing characteristics of heart stimulants. We find they cause, (a) increase in the number of heart beats, (b) rise in the blood-pressure, (c) increase the blood in the cerebral arteries. Do we find such to be the specific action of the nitrites on the circulatory system? No, except that the heart beats are greatly increased in frequency, caused by paralysis of the inhibitory nerve, and the dilatation of the peripheral vessels from relaxation of their muscular coats through vaso-motor paralysis. Consequently there is a loss of resistance in front which immediately results in a great fall in blood-pressure, and the resultant action serves only to intensify the already existing state of cardiac insufficiency and adynamia.

If the physiological action of a remedy is to serve as a guide for its intelligent administration in disease, I am totally at a loss to understand why the nitrites are given in cases of genuine intrinsic cardiac failure.

"A perfect circulation" is one which empties the veins and fills the arteries, the very antithesis of the condition produced by the use of the nitrites. I am, therefore, of the opinion that their employment in essential cardiac adynæmia is one fraught with great danger. In threatened heart failure from alcoholism, and when it has actually taken place from chloroform or ether, I believe the administration of the nitrites to be prejudicial to recovery, as their dominant action is to weaken the pulse and lower the arterial tension.

There are many other similar pathological conditions to which I might direct your attention, in which the nitrites are sometimes employed, with no benefit, but injury; and while I do not wish to pose as an iconoclast, or breaker of idols, my object will be attained if I succeed in directing your attention to the proper use of this group of remedies, and thereby prevent the perpetration of mistakes committed in the name of good therapeutics.

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THE North-Western University of Chicago has received the handsome sum of fifty thousand dollars from Wm. Deering, the harvest machine manufacturer. The objects of the donation were, first, the enriching of the medical school, and, secondly, the perpetuation of the name of Dr. N. S. Davis in connection with a new chair.