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## Special Selections.

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### EMPLOYMENT OF CARDIAC SEDATIVES IN HEART DISEASE.\*

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The writer desires in this article to call attention to the treatment of heart disease in its various forms by the use of drugs utterly different in their physiological and therapeutical effect from digitalis or other cardiac remedies of a *stimulating* character. He refers chiefly to the use of aconite, veratrum viride, and gelsemium, and, while he is well aware that these drugs have been largely used for such a purpose by others, he is also confident that they are not employed by as many of the profession as so useful a method deserves.

We are inclined to believe that a diseased heart needs stimulation rather than sedation. It has often seemed to me that those who use

nitroglycerin for its stimulant power over the heart were in reality getting good effects because it acted as a sedative.

There is no doubt that digitalis is much abused in heart disease. We see it prescribed for the patient in whose chest a cardiac murmur exists, without any effort on the part of the physician to determine whether it is really needed. In other words, digitalis is used as if it would grow a new valve and so remove a murmur by stopping a leak, when in reality the murmur must always exist. The object to be attained is the preparation of the heart so that it can make up for the leak by greater and more accurately adjusted effort. In many instances a condition of nervous flurry seems to seize upon the heart muscle which is exposed to the irritation of a leaky valve. These nervous flurries are divisible into two classes: *first*, those in which the demands of the system are greater than the heart can meet, and in which the heart fails because it cannot stand the strain; *second*, those in which the heart is able to meet the demands made upon it upon ordinary occasions, but be-

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