

unpardonable sin against the heart. It is but an added goad to an already overworked organ. Moreover, if the stomach, whence the disturbing impulses often proceed, is already irritated, the presence of digitalis will augment the difficulties in geometric ratio by increasing nausea and heightening the cephalalgia and other symptoms of gastric distress. Cardiac arrhythmia of myopathic origin, or reflex, toxic, or nervous in its nature, cannot present a reasonable cause for employing digitalis. If it be exhibited in palpitation due to neurotic conditions, there will be a possibility of converting the curable disorder into an incurable malady.

One of the most universal abuses of digitalis is the habit of prescribing it for a patient without advising him to abstain from exercise while under its influence. There are very few physicians who have not been disappointed by its results from the counteracting influence of exercise. All patients taking digitalis should live in perfect physical and mental quietude, as otherwise there is danger of adding to the perils of the diseased conditions demanding its use.

In mitral regurgitation there is a time when the administration of digitalis achieves its greatest clinical good. The opportunities for its good action are often permitted to pass by on the one hand, and upon the other the drug is sometimes administered so prematurely that its most effective opportunities are lost. It must be remembered that in mitral regurgitation the two chambers of the heart are practically one, and increased vigor of the ventricle augments its suction power during diastole as well as its propulsive energy in systole. Through this dual service the engorged pulmonary circulation is unburdened and the anæmia in front is also relieved. This is the only condition in which it can secure such results.

In aortic regurgitation it is sometimes employed in a thoughtless and careless manner. It is a dangerous medicine, and often harmful in this valvular malady. If the diastole is increased and prolonged, the period of regurgitation and its force are augmented, and the difficulties multiply.

The only excuse for prescribing it in aortic stenosis is to give vigor to the myocardium when the tendency to dilatation is pronounced. If it slows the action of the heart notably, it may add to the valvular systole or occasion tetanic contraction.

It is deplorable to see a well-informed physician employing it in conditions of compensation. Many a case of benign hypertrophy has thus been goaded into myocardial weariness and weakness that disabled the heart from keeping up its work. In the absence of dropsy, in all cases where the urine is voided freely, there is little, if any, call for digitalis.