

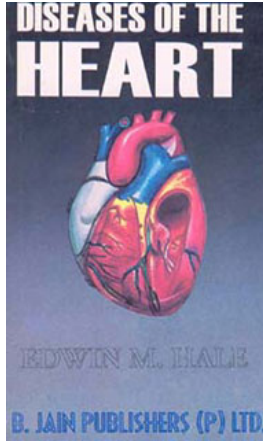
Edwin M. Hale Diseases of the Heart

Reading excerpt

[Diseases of the Heart](#)

of [Edwin M. Hale](#)

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LECTURES ON
DISEASES-OF THE HEART.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

The Wonders of the Heart—Its Functions—Increased Frequency of its Diseases—Its Anatomical Peculiarities—Its Circulation—Its Innervation—Its Nervous System—When it Begins to Beat—Pathological Deductions.

GENTLEMEN : I approach the subject upon which I have been appointed to lecture with the fullest and deepest sense of its importance. Diseases of the heart, from their very nature, and the paramount importance of the organ affected, should claim the interest and profound attention of all thinking and conscientious physicians. I do not wish to exaggerate the importance of cardiac diseases, or give a false estimate of their frequency, but I have no hesitation in asserting, that my observations in a large practice of twenty years have convinced me that diseases of the heart, and especially functional disorders of that organ, have largely increased within the last decade. It may be owing to the fact that the latter half of my years of practice have been spent in a great city, that I have come to this conclusion. The intense strain upon the nervous energies incident to the business and pleasures of a city life, do certainly have much to do in the causation of certain heart diseases. In the country, life is calmer, and its tide flows slower, and the vital energies are less subjected to violent aberrations.

In view of these facts, it becomes us to study well this organ—the heart—in all its relations not only anatomically, physiologically, but psychologically. And in order to do

stronger than the auricles, consisting of very thick muscular walls, the reason of which we shall see presently.

THE CIRCULATION OF THE BLOOD.

The heart is a peculiar muscle, and when any of its four cavities contract, they have the power of expelling their contents, the force of the expulsion being the prime mover of the circulation of the blood. We may begin the circle where we please and we shall find that it returns into itself. Starting, for instance, from the *left* ventricle, we see that the blood is driven, by the contraction of that cavity, into the aorta—the highway which leads into all the arteries of the body; through these the blood is discharged into the veins, which unite to form at last only two great trunks the *veinæ cavæ*, which are again the thresholds of the heart, and debouch into the right auricle. The blood which has now passed from the left ventricle to the right auricle, has still a journey to make before it completes its course. Accordingly, from the right auricle it is forced into the right ventricle, and by the right ventricle into the pulmonary artery, which conveys it to the lungs, where it ramifies through the multiple branches of that artery, and whence it is brought back by the pulmonary veins, forming ultimately four large trunks, which empty into the heart's left auricle, by the contraction of which the blood is next forced into the left ventricle, to the place from which we began.

Without entering into a description of the complete circulation of the blood throughout the body, with which you are all doubtless familiar, we will consider a more important and interesting subject, namely: the circulation of the blood the heart *itself*.

THE CIRCULATION IN THE HEART.

That there *must* be a circulation in and through the heart is evident; for how else could the heart be nourished? The heart is supposed to be nourished by the *coronary* vessels; they are called coronary from *corona*, a crown, because they run in crowns or coronal circles around the heart. They

which seem to require *iron* and *digitalis*. This meets the indication for both, and may be given in grain doses of the 1st decimal trituration, repeated every few hours. It is peculiarly suitable in those cases of dilatation aggravated by venereal excesses. In doses of 10 or 15 grains every five hours it soon destroys all sexual desire and power, (while its use is continued) and arrests the cardiac irritation.

We next come to the remedies of Class III., namely: *nux vomica*, *ignatia*, *collinsonia*., *cimicifuga*, *china*., *hydrastis*, *ferruni*, *cuprum*, *hypophosphite of potassa*, *phosphoric acid*, *sulphuric and, mwialic acid*, etc.

Nux vomica, and its alkaloid, *strychnia*, are the most important of this class. By referring to your notes on the treatment of hypertrophy with enlargement, you will find *nux vomica* recommended for its primary symptoms. Allusion was made to its secondary effects, which are very profound and important. The reaction from the intense stimulation (primary) induces a condition of nervous and muscular irritability in proportion to the weakness which obtains in the nerve-centres. To make matters worse, all the important organs of the body partake of the prostration and loss of tone. The liver, stomach, intestinal canal, renal and sexual organs, and even the brain, become the seat of morbid irritability and perverted function.

I will not attempt here to give you all the symptoms which indicate its use in hypertrophy with dilatation. They are too numerous for me to mention and for you to remember. Suffice it to say, that the general mental and physical condition, the weakness and irritability of the heart, the aggravations after meals and from emotions, and the dyspeptic symptoms, must be your guide. First be sure of your diagnosis, then consult the *Symptomen Codex*, or the excellent *materia medica* cards of Prof. Hoyne, and prescribe for the *ensemble* of the symptoms.-

The dose of *nux vomica* is quite important. As a rule, the lowest dilutions or triturations will give you the best results. The 1st or 2nd decimal dilution, or trituration, one drop or one grain every three or six hours, will, in a few days or weeks, produce a notable curative result.

particulars, although theoretically he had to agree with Oertel in many instances. He formulated his own observations in the following conclusions:

1. Oertel's method is a veritable panacea in those cases of chronic heart disease which owe their origin to want of proper exercise.

2. In diseases of the heart which, on the other hand, are due to overexertion and continual strain on the body, or in any case where the increased expansibility of the cardiac muscle is due to other causes, Oertel's method is not of the least value. Bodily exertion should be allowed only to a very mild and gradual degree in compensatory affections. Great care must be taken to prevent undue dyspnœa. Such cases must be treated with far greater caution than those with valvular troubles alone.

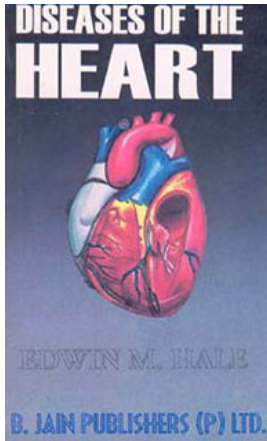
3. The medical treatment of compensatory affections with Digitalis, Strophanthus and Caffeine must be recognized as the most reliable manner of treating such cases. Where this treatment fails the "mechanical-dietary" treatment will also be powerless to render any aid. In its action in causing the absorption of dropsy, Oertel's method can augment the medical treatment, but in no case can it ever substitute it.

4. During the period of intact compensation all medication is superfluous, aside from possible symptomatic indications. It is in such cases where the mechanical-dietary treatment may prove to be of great value, and Oertel's method may be looked upon as a model of such a treatment.

The discussion that followed was to the effect that Oertel's treatment cannot be proceeded with too carefully; it should never be used without a thorough knowledge of all the patient's symptoms. The main wish expressed was that precise indications warranting the use of the treatment should be formulated.

It is evident that this treatment should not be undertaken by any patient without the watchful care of a competent medical attendant. The altitude at which such treatment is conducted is an important factor. Hill-climbing should be commenced at a low altitude, and not until the heart has become stronger should mountain-climbing at a moderate altitude be attempted.

At the recent Congress of German Physicians in Wiesbaden considerable time was given to the discussion of Oertel's treatment of chronic disease of the cardiac muscles. In addition to the use of diet, great stress was laid upon the employment of gymnastic measures, especially those which imply the practice of the rising from various grades of a stooping or bending posture. As a means of attaining this result, mountain-climbing has been strongly recommended, but it is needless



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