

**CLINICAL DISORDERS OF THE  
HEART BEAT: A HANDBOOK  
FOR PRACTITIONERS AND  
STUDENTS**

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Clinical Disorders of the Heart Beat: A Handbook for Practitioners and Students by Thomas Lewis

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# CLINICAL DISORDERS

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# HEART BEAT.

*A HANDBOOK FOR PRACTITIONERS AND  
STUDENTS.*

BY

THOMAS LEWIS, M.D., D.Sc., F.R.C.P.,

*Assistant Physician and Lecturer in Cardiac Pathology, University College  
Hospital, Physician to Out-Patients, City of London Hospital  
for Diseases of the Chest.*

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## PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

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**T**HERE can be but few, engaged in the active practice of medicine, who are not aware that a new and important chapter has been added to our knowledge of the mechanism of the heart beat during recent years. The newly-acquired information has been gathered by the employment of precise graphic methods. Those who are engaged in studying the heart and its defects by means of special instruments, are fully conscious of the burden which awaits the student or practitioner who has yet to bring himself abreast the times in this field of knowledge.

A question is often put to some of us. In what degree is an acquaintanceship with the new methods essential or expedient in the routine of busy practice ?

The graphic study of heart affections is but one of many clinical and pathological subjects which has forged ahead of late years. While a medical man can ill afford to neglect the advance of a subject in which he practises, he may act, in a too vigorous pursuit of one branch of medical science, to the detriment of his knowledge in other directions. A universal and detailed acquaintanceship with medical science as it exists to-day is no longer possible, but it behoves all practitioners to grasp new principles and to be aware of their influence upon the care of patients afflicted with common maladies.

If I am asked whether it is essential that a practitioner of general medicine should be trained to record the movements of the several heart chambers, I am inclined to reply that the acquisition of the special manipulative skill and the necessary experience, which the obtaining and accurate interpretation of graphic records involves, entails too great an expenditure of time and energy adequately to repay him or the patients he serves. And my reply is dictated by the belief that most of those disturbances of the



heart's mechanism which are met with in everyday practice can be identified by simpler means.

Reflections of this kind influence me in offering to medical men a small handbook, which I trust may inform them of the new facts and conclusions which are of chief service at the bedside.

I have confined the reproduction of graphic records almost to such as illustrate what may be seen and felt, for many disorders of the heart can be identified by sight and touch when these senses are aided by hearing. A single and portable piece of apparatus may be used in cases of doubt and difficulty, to supplement the observations so obtained. The Dudgeon sphygmograph is probably familiar to most medical men; fitted with elastic bands of attachment, and preferably with a time-marker also\*, it readily allows a short strip of radial pulse curve to be obtained. Such a curve, alone, will usually place the observer in possession of facts, which are sufficient for an analysis of the common disturbances of the heart

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\* The complete apparatus is supplied by S. Shaw, Esq., of Padiham, Lancashire, at a moderate cost.

beat. The use of the sphygmograph encourages accuracy ; yet, as I hope to show, a great deal can be accomplished without it.

In the succeeding chapters, I have not attempted to acquaint the reader with the evidence\* upon which the diagnosis of the several cardiac disorders rests, but have recounted such physical signs as I have found serviceable in identifying these disorders, prior to the application of more precise methods in individual instances.

To ascertain the nature of the heart's mechanism in a given patient is, as we shall see, of twofold value. It is of importance in elucidating the remaining physical signs, especially those of auscultation ; and it seriously affects the attitude towards the patient, for it often influences the prognosis and treatment profoundly. The recognition of the existing mechanism is, as experience has so often shown, one of the very first essentials in the care of cardiac cases.

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\* A full account of such evidence may be found by those who desire it in my recent publication, "The Mechanism of the Heart Beat," published by Messrs. Shaw and Sons, London.

Such new facts as may be found in the chapters, have been collected largely during the tenure of a Beit Memorial Fellowship, to the Trustees of which it is my desire to state this obligation. That the reader may benefit from a fuller experience, I have not hesitated to take advantage of the published works of other writers on the same subjects. It is pleasurable to acknowledge the kindness of my friend and colleague Dr. T. R. Elliott, for his criticism of the chapters and for his careful perusal of the proof sheets; and I am grateful to all my colleagues at University College Hospital for the generous manner in which they have placed their material at my disposal.

TH. LEWIS.

*December, 1911.*