

**DISEASES OF THE HEART:
THEIR DIAGNOSIS AND
TREATMENT**

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Diseases of the heart: their diagnosis and treatment by David Wooster

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DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT.

BY

DAVID WOOSTER, M. D.

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY OF TURIN,
Assistant Surgeon in the "Mexican War," Surgeon (Major) in
the late Civil War, Author of "Diphtheria and Congen-
ital Asphyxia" (1869), Founder and former
Editor of "The Pacific Medical and
Surgical Journal," etc., etc.



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MAIN

to

WILLIAM HENRY PATTERSON, Esq.,

of San Francisco, I dedicate this volume, as a token of
admiration and long personal friendship.

DAVID WOOSTER.

14 Geary street, San Francisco,
September, 1867.

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P R E F A C E .

In writing the following pages, I have been scrupulously careful not to place my own unsustained assertions in opposition to the results of clinical demonstrations or extreme probabilities. I have also endeavored to give the anatomy, or topography, of the structures under consideration, with as much accuracy as possible.

There are no such obstacles now, in the way of writing intelligibly on diagnosis of diseases of the heart, as there were even twenty-five years ago. If medicine has not yet become a science, it has, at least, so far advanced as to recognize its own defects, and to be conscious of its absolute knowledge. Physicians now know where their knowledge ends and their theories begin; and in this they are far in advance of their forefathers.

My aim has been to limit myself, as closely as possible, to known facts, and to indulge in no idle speculations, for the purpose of introducing some favorite theory of my own, in order to make myself seem original. I need not tell my intelligent readers that this treatise is merely an abstract; but it is hoped that they will find it what the author designed it to be, a careful and conscientious epitome of the knowledge now possessed by the profession on the subject of which it treats. My only claim to their commendation will consist in having placed, the knowledge already possessed in a more accessible form, of having made the facts we daily need to use more tangible, by stripping them of some of their garniture, and grouping them in closer and more obvious relations to each other.

I have endeavored to condense the statement of facts into a much smaller compass than they appear in the standard authors, without omitting anything necessary to a clear understanding of the subject treated. In the process of condensation, I have frequently used several successive words, just as they occurred in the authority consulted, and perhaps occasionally a full sentence, without quotation marks. But, while I make no pretence to having written a work original in material, I have endeavored to avoid the crime of plagiarism.

I have ventured to make some suggestions in diagnosis, not of a radical kind, but merely as to applicability and import of certain signs, and also to indicate additional treatment in some forms of heart disease to that which authors generally recommend; but, as I have at the same time pointed out wherein I have ventured to differ with the masters, the reader will not be beguiled into mistaking my treatment for that of authors whom he may with just reason hold in higher estimation. I have insisted with some pertinacity on the reflex treatment of unsoundness of the heart, but for my opinions on the value of this kind of treatment, I am indebted to Radcliffe, Brown-Sequard, and others who have investigated the more recondite departments of human physiology.

I have had much less to say of treatment than of diagnosis, because in reality much less is known of the former than of the latter. We are yet entirely ignorant of the manner in which, or of the prime cause why the heart becomes unsound by the deposition of analogous tissues, in most cases, and until we have acquired this knowledge, we cannot do much more than treat certain symptoms, which are common to either acute or chronic inflammations. But thanks to our almost exact knowledge of the beginning and process of acute inflammations, derived from a multitude of clinical

cases, carefully observed in all countries, by eminent and conscientious physicians, we are now able to treat symptoms with a degree of rationality which will accomplish a purpose predetermined on the part of the physician, and which will generally result in success in curable cases, and in the alleviation of the most hopeless.

Cases of heart disease are of alarming frequency in California, yet, in the absence of statistics, it would be improper to say categorically that this affection is excessively frequent here; still I feel convinced that it is, and were its etiology within the scope of this treatise, I think it could be satisfactorily shown why disease of the heart is more likely to be prevalent in newer than in older civilizations, and in this climate than in many others; and under the special, moral, mental and hygienic influences which characterize us, than under those which predominate in other centres of population. For example: the physical aspect of the country and metropolis—mountainous and hilly—reverse of fortune and the vital depression consequent upon it; family ties rudely sundered, and the despair resulting; the insatiable thirst for riches, and the unusual energy employed in acquiring them, to the deprivation of mind and body of essential rest; the exposure, night and day, to which our mining population is subject; the tunnel and deep drift work of the quartz miner; the excessive intemperance in drink—the thousand disappointments, and misfortunes, and endless unrest to which a population anxious to become rapidly rich, like ours, must ever suffer, are so many reasons why the heart should become diseased and exhausted under the great labor of providing for such extravagant use of all the functions of life.

It is on account of my opportunities for observation during the seventeen years I have been practising medicine in California, and the hope that I might add some little to the facility of diagnosis, and the success in the treatment of