

THE HEART AND SUDDEN DEATH

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The Heart and Sudden Death by Theodore Fisher

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THEODORE FISHER

**THE HEART AND
SUDDEN DEATH**

THE HEART
AND
SUDDEN DEATH

BY
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P R E F A C E.

THIS little book comprises in the main some articles which appeared in *The Hospital*. They are based upon experience gained in performing nearly 2,500 autopsies. Although the morbid anatomy of the heart in its relation to sudden death is chiefly dealt with, it is hoped that some of the observations here contained may not only be of interest to medical men when considering disease of the heart in its broader aspects, but may be of aid to medical students in calling to mind facts not always clearly dealt with in textbooks of medicine.

T. F.

May 1, 1908.



1
2
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47
48
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52
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58
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60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE MITRAL VALVE	1
Fallacies Regarding the Mitral Valve	2
The Nature of Inflammation of the Mitral Valve	4
Sudden Death in Mitral Regurgitation	9
THE AORTIC VALVE	14
Three Varieties of Disease of the Valve	14
THE CARDIAC MUSCLE	27
The " Flabby " Heart	28
The Fatty Heart and Anesthesia	33
The Fibroid Heart	34
Aneurism of the Heart	37
A Case of Stokes-Adams' Disease	39
The Enlarged Heart without Noteworthy Disease of the Muscle Wall	42
The Alcoholic Heart	42
Hard Work as a Factor in Enlarged Heart	44
ANEURISM OF A SINUS OF VALSALVA	48
CONCLUDING REMARKS	51



10

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14						
15	16								
17	18	19	20						
21	22	23	24	25					
26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
36	37	38	39	40					
41	42	43	44	45					
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55
56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65
66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75
76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85
86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95
96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105

THE HEART AND SUDDEN DEATH.

THE MITRAL VALVE.

WHEN we speak of sudden death, both medical men and those without medical training generally think at once of the heart. And it is needless to say that they are right to regard it as all-important to the maintenance of life. The presence or absence of the beat of the heart for more than a few moments of time is synonymous with the absence or presence of death. In passing, it may be remarked that formerly, in reports of inquests in the daily papers—and occasionally I think it is so still—apoplexy is mentioned as a cause of sudden death. Absolutely sudden death from such a cause, however, is extremely rare. It is necessary to remember that cardiac action is virtually independent of the brain. The emotions of the mind acting through the brain may disturb the heart's rhythm, and such impulses may temporarily, or in very rare instances even permanently, arrest cardiac action. Yet the brain itself is not responsible for the steady continuance of cardiac systole and diastole, as it is for the respiratory movement of the chest; and consequently if an