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ON SO-CALLED FUNCTIONAL HEART MURMURS.¹

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Among the signs of organic disease which perplex the diagnostician by appearing when the organism is in health, or at least upon its borderland, cardiac systolic murmurs take a prominent place. Their occurrence as significant of a purely functional disturbance without any underlying valvular lesion, is of course well recognised, but their frequency in this connection is perhaps scarcely appreciated by the profession. In the discussion on "The Prognosis of Cardiac Disease in its Bearings upon Life Insurance," led by Sir Wm. Gairdner at the recent meeting of the British Medical Association² systolic murmurs are barely mentioned among all the doubtful signs of cardiac disease complicating an "estimation of life." Yet it is chiefly in relation to such questions as those of life insurance that the subject is of special interest and assumes some proportions as a difficult problem demanding solution. Indicative on the one hand, of that form of organic disease which most seriously threatens longevity, yet, on the other, consistent with nothing more serious than a temporary lowering of the general tonus, a well marked systolic murmur is capable of plunging the conscientious medical examiner into most uncomfortable doubt. For the subject is unfortunately as obscure as it is important.

Not only is the murmur subject to all the variations governing the principles of sound, but further, one's conclusions can have but a relative worth, for they are rarely verified by autopsy, and can only be

¹ Read before the Montreal Medico-Chirurgical Society, Nov. 21st, 1898.

² British Medical Journal, Sept. 17th, 1898.