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ON THE DETERMINATION OF THE CAUSE OF
DEATH AND SOME CASES OF SUDDEN
DEATH.

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The determination of the cause of death is one of considerable importance, at the same time frequently a difficult and perplexing question to solve. The cause of this difficulty lies in the number of complicating circumstances which enter into its production. Death is never a simple, single phenomenon occurring suddenly during an individual's life. It is the result of a chain of events which finally ends in a climax; the latter, by syncope or asphyxia, initiates the general extinction of all the phenomena of life.¹

If, therefore, we investigate the problem in detail, we see that ultimately the immediate cause of death is only the last link of a chain and may well be separated from the remote. But the knowledge of the former may not necessarily allow us to form an opinion about the latter. A physician, for instance, may be called to a patient suffering from the symptoms of a well marked œdema of the lungs. The patient is acutely ill and may die with it. Here, the immediate cause of death is apparently perfectly plain, but no scientific physician or recorder of vital statistics would be satisfied with this knowledge. Indeed, it may on further investigation even appear

¹For a discussion of the definition of the conception of death, see Jores, *Feststellung der Todesursache aus dem Leichenbefund in Ergebnisse der allgemeinen Pathologie und pathologischen Anatomie*, xiii Jahrgang II Abteil., 1909, and Orth, *Was ist Todesursache?* in *Berliner klinische Wochenschrift*, No. 10, 1908.