

A CASE OF CARDIAC ARRHYTHMIA.*

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Arrhythmia is the term applied to an intermission in the cardiac rhythm when one or more of the beats of the heart are dropped. Osler, in his "Practice of Medicine," states that seven varieties of arrhythmical action may be recognized, but the phenomena observed in the following case do not correspond with any one of them. The story of the man's condition is so extraordinary, that, had not the writer's observations been fortunately confirmed by those of a consultant, he would hardly have had the temerity to relate it. Furthermore, a search through the literature of the subject has failed to discover the report of a case presenting a similar state of affairs.

The subject of this note was a well-preserved man of 70 years, although he did not appear to be of that age. He had always enjoyed good health, living well, using alcohol but sparingly, and tobacco not at all. He was by occupation a clerk in an office, but his habits were not sedentary, for he was very fond of walking, and got over the ground at a speed quite unusual for a man of his years.

On Friday, August 16th last, I was called to see him and learned that two days before, on the way to his office, to gain time, he had run about two blocks. This indiscreet action was almost immediately followed by shortness of breath, and, what were described as "fainting attacks with more or less delirium," lasting from a few seconds to a minute or so. He had just recovered from one of these attacks when I saw him for the first time. He was sitting in an arm-chair breathing rather hurriedly, and with a somewhat anxious expression of countenance. Upon examination he was found to be a well-nourished man, with indications of but slight senile changes in his vessels. The heart was beating quite regularly, the pulse was 80, soft and compressible, the cardiac dulness was increased and the apex beat was ill-defined just outside the nipple line. The heart sounds were very faint, and a soft mitral murmur could be heard. The lungs presented no signs of disease. The digestive organs were, however, a good deal out of order, as he had been suffering from a sense of fullness and oppression in the epigastrium, with flatulency and constipation. Examination of the urine, on several subsequent occasions, proved that that fluid was free from abnormal ingredients. His mental condition was perfectly

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