

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, MARCH 27, 1897.

A CHOICE OF TWO ILLS.

THE DANGERS THAT ATTEND BURIAL AND CREMATION.

Mr. Strange Thinks There is not Much of a Choice Between Them—the Innocent State of Modern Burials—a Simple Test by Watch to Prove Death.

The subject of premature burial, is one that is engaging a large share of public attention at the present time. The fear of being buried alive seems to be gaining ground year by year, and the terrible stories that come to light from time to time, of people who have been discovered beyond the possibility of doubt to have been buried while merely in a state of trance, or catalepsy, tend to make the danger of such a thing seem very real, and the necessity for some safeguard against it one of the crying needs of the day.

Statistics show that the number of people who are buried alive in the run of a year, is sufficiently large to make the stoutest heart quake at the thought of the additional horror surrounding death, and the numerous "reliable tests" which have been submitted from time to time to those in authority have usually proved utterly worthless that the opinion was generally accepted in medical circles that a really infallible test of death had yet to be discovered.

Some of the methods suggested for guarding against the danger have been unique, but the most popular as well as the most drastic, has been cremation, and reams of good paper have been spoiled by people who were anxious to convince the public that the one sure method of avoiding the danger of being buried alive, was to have our bodies burned after death. There is no doubt that this would be effectual, but it savors too much of hanging a man, in order to prevent him dying of consumption, to appeal very forcibly to the general run of people. Of course there is a certain satisfaction in being given one's choice of the death he is to die, but when the choice lies between being buried alive, or burned alive, it seems to me that most of us would hesitate for some time over our decision, and a few would even be ungrateful and unprogressive enough to declare themselves in favor of the former, as being on the least objectionable.

The feelings of the helpless victim of catalepsy who lies motionless and apparently dead, but in reality thoroughly alive to everything going on around them, and hears the arrangements for his own funeral discussed have been frequently and widely portrayed; but who shall describe the sensations of the wretched being condemned to hear his grief-stricken relatives discussing the length of time he would have to be left in the furnace, and the dimensions of his wicker coffin and the decoration of the urn in which his sacred ashes were to be finally preserved? Who shall picture the thoughts racking through his brain as he is borne, not to the cemetery but to the crematory; or the unimaginable anguish of the moment when the slight coffin is placed in the iron chute which slides it into the furnace, and the red hot doors thrown open? It would take the pen of a Dante to do justice to his emotions and a Dante I think, who had gone through the experience, and been rescued at the last moment! One turns with relief to the gentler but none the less deadly art of the embalmer, as a pleasing contrast to this picture, and the thought of his sharp lancet and potent little syringe sending the poisonous fluid through the veins of the supposed corpse, and placing him forever beyond all danger of being buried alive, is almost pleasant, by comparison. At least the mental agony of the victim is short lived, and his death an easy one.

But after all is said and done, what we really want is not an easy and painless method of making sure of matters by placing the supposed corpse beyond all danger of reviving; we require some means of accurately determining whether death is actual, or only apparent, and it is a question fraught with the deepest interest for us all. Owing to conditions of climate, custom, or convenience, I know not which, we have a barbarous custom in Canada of burying our dead within forty eight hours after the breath has left their bodies. We scarcely give them time to grow cold before we hustle them into the ground, and indeed it would almost look, sometimes as if we were afraid they might revive if we left them above ground long enough and hastened to make assurance doubly sure by getting them buried as soon, as possible. Occasion-

ally we give them but thirty six hours, and it is by no means uncommon to hear of a person dying in the early morning hours of one day, and being comfortably disposed of by the next afternoon. "It was absolutely necessary" you hear, but all the same it is a very extraordinary thing if rigor mortis sets in the day after death in a climate like our own, when in the moist damp atmosphere of England and Ireland it would be considered absolutely indecent to bury the body of a relative under at least five days, and the usual time for lying in state, is a week. Even amongst the poorer classes where embalming would be out of the question the same decorum and respect are observed in the treatment of the dead, and it seems quite clear to the reasoning mind, that if the custom were such as to menace the health of the survivors, it would not be allowed in a country where the law exercises a so much closer surveillance over the individual than it does in Canada. The dread of premature burial is a sort of nightmare to many people, haunting them throughout their lives, and, as I remarked before, the subject has claimed widespread attention during the last few years, and rewards and prizes have been offered for a really reliable test. Lately the upper Canadian papers notably the "Toronto Mail and Empire" have taken the matter up, and many communications on the subject of premature burial have appeared in its pages.

Last week a physician writing from Springhill, Nova Scotia, sends a communication to "The Flaneur" of that journal, drawing attention to the fact that a few years ago the French academy of sciences was so alive to the danger of premature burial, as to offer a large reward to any person discovering an unmistakable sign of death. This reward was shortly afterwards claimed by a Frenchman whose name is not mentioned, but who declared and proved, that the one unerring test of death consisted of the very simple experiment of holding the open hand of the supposed corpse up against a bright light, with the fingers closely touching each other. If the blood shows brightly through the skin in lines of rosy light where the fingers touch, the person is alive as the blood ceases to circulate and begins to congeal the moment death takes place; but if the hand is opaque and leaden, there is no doubt that life has fled. The test is more satisfactory if made in a darkened room, and anyone who has never tried the experiment will be surprised at the transparency of the flesh, and the ease with which the blood can be seen coursing through it.

A most thorough investigation of this test was made and as it has proved conclusively that neither in catalepsy, trance, nor any other form of apparent death was this one sign wanting; the reward was paid and the simple expedient accepted as the one unerring test of death than which science had nothing better to suggest.

If this be the case, it would be well that the knowledge should be spread as widely as possible, as once it became generally known our fears of being buried alive would be allayed, and the need of such radical measures as cremation and embalming cease to exist.

GEORGE CUTHBERT STRANGE. POKER AND SALVATION.

All the Men in Town Lost Their Money to the Preacher.

"The strangest episode in the sporting life of the Southwest," said the man from Arkansas, "occurred at a little mushroom town that sprang into life about forty miles to the south of Camden before the Iron Mountain Railroad was laid down in our State. Everybody knew that a railroad was going to be built somewhere through that region, and bands of grangers from Texas and northern Louisiana, as well as river men from the Ouachita district, used to travel about taking up claims and laying out little villages, so as to sell out at a good round profit in case they were in luck enough to get in the way of the railroad company. There's nothing like the report of a railroad's going through to start activity in a God-forsaken district, like that, and it half the land schemes down there had ever got any further than wind and paper and a few cabins and tents the loss by flood during the next spring freshets would certainly have been appalling. The town where Preacher Pellet made his remarkable crusade against poker and cleaned the entire male population out of money and wickedness was about the most hopeful settlement of this

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Manchester Robertson & Allison, St. John

mushroom class, and while it lasted made a record for evil and good that wasn't approached by any other village in Arkansas. "After staking out the home claims and building a few cabins and hanging a general store sign over the wagon that carried the provisions, we didn't have anything to occupy the citizens' time at first except to sit around and speculate on which would get to the town first, the railroad or the spring freshets. Eventually time began to hang pretty heavy on the corporation's hands, and it was the most natural thing in the world that all the men took to playing poker to drive away the blues. For the same reason the women took to religion.

"There was only about \$200 in cash in the entire outfit, and the way that \$200 circulated in that poker game was something to arouse the envy of a bond syndicate. One day one man had most of the \$200 and the next day the money lodged in somebody else's clothes, and then for a change the cards would run evenly and the coin would be distributed pretty equally. It got to be the secret ambition of every male inhabitant, from the oldest down to the youngest, to get hold of every one of those \$200 and have his seat at the town meeting vacant the next morning. Every player in the game had been brought up on poker and could cheat, but a game like that is apt to be pretty square, for one man is likely to be as smart as another and afraid of his neighbor and the consequence is that an Arkansas game among Arkansas people is generally on the dead level. The town ought to have erected a monument to those \$200, for certainly everybody owed them a big debt of gratitude for the time they killed for us while we were waiting to hear something definite about that railroad. They would certainly have been missed if they had taken wings and departed, and the chances are that the entire colony would have gone in pursuit of them, without waiting to have to swim away in the springs washouts. As it was, they seemed to be perfectly inexhaustible, and every one of them opened more jack pots and backed more pairs and got away with more bluffs than fifty times the amount has done in other sessions of poker at which I have been present.

"Meanwhile the women in the colony were about as industrious in their religious exercises as their husbands and male kin were over fifty-two cards. They built a platform near the general store wagon, about 100 yards from the poker game, and testimony and hymn singing and exhorting went along like a continuous performance, only there was a noticeable absence of men from the proceedings until Preacher Pellet came on the scene. He was very tall and very thin, and as pale as if he had lived all his life in a cellar. He had a decent, open sort of way of giving you the glad hand when he met you near the general store in the morning that made the men rather like what little they saw of him. The women folks had got to be rather tired of home talent at their meetings, and the way he managed to rouse them and put new life into their gatherings was wonderful. They began to beg us to go just over and hear him, saying that if we would only put in an appearance he would do the rest, but of course we were too busy trying to get hold of the \$200. Then he sent us messages asking us to come to the platform just for one Sunday, and even went so far as to print a handbill with a varnish brush and

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tack it up on the general store wagon. We couldn't help admiring his grit and the way he stuck to trying every way to get us but nobody paid any attention, and we thought he would give it up as a bad job. But he didn't. One night after the meeting was over, he dropped in at the poker game, and without saying anything, pulled out a handful of coin and sat down at the table.

"If there's anything on earth more unpopular down in Arkansas than a man from Missouri it's a hypocrite, and the thought passed around the table like an electric shock to get hold of Preacher Pellet's money and treat him to a suit of tar and feathers and give him a ride out of the town on a thorn-apple rail after the game was over. The \$200 happened to be about evenly divided when he sat down, and we made a jack pot in his honor. Nobody opened it until the deal came round to him. He took the cards. I have seen magicians do tricks with cards over and over again, but I never before or after saw anything that could begin to touch that preacher. Everyone of the fifty-two cards seemed to recognize him, and know him, and find an old friend in him the very moment he placed his hands on the deck. The way they sizzled, and whistled, and flapped, and darted in and out under those long, pale fingers of his was enough to make a man dizzy. You may be very sure that his neighbor on the right gave those cards a good, deep, careful cut before passing them back to the preacher, who picked them up again with a sort of an electric jerk, and began to deal them so fast they seemed to fly off the pack of their own accord. The eyes of a Navajo scout couldn't have seen whether they came from the top, bottom, or middle as they landed in front of each man at the table. There were a flush of diamonds, a flush of spades, a flush of hearts, and a flush of clubs, at the finish, and the men who held these, of course, stood pat. The fifth Arkansas man had only two pair, but on drawing one card made his full. The preacher also drew one card, and soon after the pot had been opened by the man with the diamond flush all the \$200 of the home circle were in the centre of the pine board. At the showdown the preacher produced four aces, rolled up and pocketed the money, and, as nobody produced any more, rose from the table and walked away.

"It wasn't in the least necessary for him to ask the men to be on hand at the religious exercises the next day, and the chances are that he knew it. The sudden appearance of railroad engineers or of a locomotive at full speed couldn't have kept a single man in the directory away from the ceremony. The entire finances of the community, which had done such faithful service, were going to be at the meeting, and, although they were in the preacher's pocket, they were enough to draw the entire population.

"Preacher Pellet walked past the crowd with his usual hearty 'Good morning, boys,' and mounted the platform. His opening prayer just struck our fancy, because it was so short, only about two sentences, asking for help. Then he began a hymn about being far from home and wanting to be led on, and sang it so softly and well that it was a question whether he was earth and didn't belong to Arkansas, or the biggest hypocrite on the face of the whole world and ought to be in Missouri. All the men were getting mighty interested by that time. When the hymn was over he picked up a Bible to look for a text. Everybody took a fresh piece of tobacco and crossed his legs to listen. It was marvellous to see how his fingers ran over the leaves of the book and pulled out the page he was looking for just as they had ripped and shuffled the cards. He opened up and went at it tooth and nail, told us all about what a bad man he had been, and how he had preferred to play poker at one time and drink and steal horses than to sleep and eat and be in good health. He said he had been a pretty good hand at such things, and that he could pull four aces out of a pack of cards as easy as rolling off a log, and could do up any poker game in Arkansas for any amount, only that money, wasn't what

he was after just then and didn't cut any figure. He was a dead shot. He told how he had made an ace out of a five spot at twenty yards, and offered to prove it right there if any man would hold the card. Probably everybody believed him, for I didn't hear anybody offer to hold the card. After the experience of the night before we didn't doubt his skill at gambling.

"It was all mighty interesting and I don't believe there was a man in the crowd who even remembered about the \$200 which was talking. Then he began to talk nicely like a tenderfoot, and everybody began to feel bad and the women folks cried a little, I can't remember what he said, but he ended by telling how the railroad wasn't going to come down that way after all, but that the spring freshets were sure to, and that we had better let the old town die. There wasn't any more poker in that particular place in Arkansas for a long time, although before he closed the revival meeting that night he gave back to the citizens all the money he had won from them.

"I have always wondered since then whether or not it's the correct thing once in a while to do evil, that good may come of it. If that man had stuck to gambling he might have had all the money on earth."

HOOKING THE WOLF.

How the Brute can be Lured on by the Imposition of the Howl of its Mate.

Law Wilmot, who lives almost anywhere in the State of Washington, is a Westerner of the old type. He tells in Forest and Stream about fooling wolves by imitating their cries.

"One Sunday morning," he writes, "while we were mining on the Clearwater along about the first of May, I took my revolver and went over to the cabin of my partners, and proposed that we go to the hills and kill some grouse. While going up the hill we saw a very big wolf's fresh track in the trail we were climbing. The trail forked, one branch going up the river, the other turning back into the hills. We stopped, wondering what a wolf could be doing in that part of the country at that time of the year. Suddenly the beast began to howl, and shivers crawled along my back—they always do when I hear a wolf howl. When the sound died away I mocked it, and was answered with quick vigor. Again I answered it. I told the boys if we would wait the beast would come, but they laughed at me, and we went on after grouse. The wolf howled back to our left after we got to hunting, and was plainly looking for its mate. We went to a low voice, because I feared it would notice the deception. It did not answer, but pretty quick came trotting through the small brush.

"As it ran along on a fallen rotten pine tree I shot it with my revolver and over it went. We ran up and found it badly wounded, and wolflike, sulking. It's skin made a pretty good rug.

"A while after that I was going from Mount Oregon one morning on a cayuse when a big wolf came into the trail and kept on before me, turning to the left after a while where I had to go to the right. I went on a way, got off my animal, and answered to see what would happen. An answer came back quick and long, and though I knew I was perfectly safe, I felt lonesome with the dread of a wolf howl gives me. I started on after a bit, and on reaching the divide looked back, and there was the wolf on my trail. I kept on till I came to a thicket, howling once in a while in a way that made the wolf follow, though suspiciously. When I was half way through the brush I dismounted and crawled back. When the wolf came to the edge of the brush I pulled on him with my revolver and over he went, shot through the heart."

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