

Students attending their first midwifery case sometimes go astray in making the necessary examination. Shyness has made a young practitioner mistake an indiarubber bag for an ovarian cyst. Perhaps the most appalling misadventure of this kind befell the physician of the Emperor Rudolph the Second, who, in trying to feel his illustrious patient's pulse under the bedclothes, grasped a different part of the Imperial anatomy, and was informed of his mistake by His Majesty in the following dignified words: *Erras, amice, hoc est nostrum imperiale membrum*. How the doctor got out of his embarrassing position is not recorded, but presence of mind will often save an apparently hopeless situation. If a student who finds himself exploring the rectum instead of the vagina will calmly rebuke the patient for not paying more attention to the condition of her bowels he will change an imminent defeat into a victory. Coolness will extricate a man from almost any difficulty.—*Brit. Med. Jour.*

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SIMULATION OF DEATH BY FAKIRS IN INDIA.—“Herr Kuhn not long ago presented a communication on this subject to the Anthropological Society of Munich,” says *The British Medical Journal*, May 4. “He had the opportunity of personally observing two cases, as to the genuineness of which he had no doubt whatever. One of the fakirs referred to had been buried alive for six weeks, the other for ten days. The condition which the fakir has the power of producing artificially is in all respects identical with the cataleptic trance. The fakirs, who are all hysterical subjects of a very pronounced type, put themselves through a regular course of training before the performance, weakening themselves by semi-starvation, taking internally various vegetable substances known only to them, keeping their bodies motionless in the same position for several hours at a time, etc. The details of this preparation are given in the *Hathayoga Pradīpikā Strātāmāmas*, which has been translated by Walter. When the fakir has by these means got himself into the proper condition, he has only to lie down in one of the positions enjoined by the sacred books, and fix his eyes on the end of his nose, to fall into a state of trance. The fakirs are also believed to use hashish for the purpose of lessening the force of respiration; that hypnotic agent associated with other vegetable substances and used in a special manner is believed by them to supply the want both of air and nourishment. At the beginning of the trance the fakir has hallucinations, hearing heavenly voices, seeing visions, etc. Gradually, however, consciousness becomes annulled, the body becomes rigid, and, as the fakirs themselves say, ‘the spirit rejoins the soul of the world.’ In short, the condition is one of auto-hypnosis in hysterical subjects specially prepared for the experiment.”