

SURE SIGN OF DEATH.

ONE SIMPLE TEST THAT, IT IS ALLEGED, NEVER FAILS.

A Physician Who Says He Has Tried It In More Than a Thousand Cases Explains His Method of Preventing Premature Burial.

The question of an absolutely sure sign of death has troubled mankind from ancient times. It has been most variously answered, but never to entire satisfaction. The difficulties we meet with are: First, that not all organs of the body die in one moment, and second, that the action of some of the vital organs may be so diminished that by ordinary means it appears almost impossible to decide whether the life in them is in fact extinct or not.

The actual causes of physiological death are three: First, cessation of brain function; second, cessation of respiration or failure of the lungs; third, failure of the heart.

The first, involving immediate death of the central or animal nervous system only, is not at once followed by the inactivity of the peripheral nervous system and its special so-called vegetative centers, as long ago was demonstrated by Brown-Sequard, Schiff and others.

So the lungs may continue to contract and expand, the heart may continue to beat, even if with greatly diminished power. We know further that the life of the skin is not extinct. Hair and nails continue to grow, the stomach continues to digest, the liver to secrete bile, etc. Respecting the second cause of death, we well know that respiration may cease for quite a while if the brain is not affected and the circulation not interrupted. And of the third cause, by heart failure, the same may be said. So we see that we may speak of true, absolute physiological death only after the cessation of function of the three organs together or at least of two of them, the lungs and the heart, without the life action of which the brain certainly cannot operate.

Now, as regards respiration, we have very simple means to demonstrate its cessation. So remains, in fact, as the only one to show its true death the heart. This to prove indeed with absolute certainty is quite a difficult problem. Upon the absence, therefore, of any and all traces of circulation in the body have been concentrated most experiments. And as regards the same we have to take into consideration that by disease the heart beats might be diminished to but a few faint pulsations per minute, might become so imperceptible, that without the aid of special instruments and long continued observations nothing of their existence may be detected.

In the following I shall give the simple means by which any person easily enough may convince himself of the absence or presence even of the slightest traces of circulation:

If we ligate tight a member of the body—best, for example, a finger between the first and second joint—in the living we will soon notice, beginning almost at once, a reddish coloration of the portion above the ligature. It becomes darker and darker red and finally assumes a dark bluish-red color. The entire upper portion will be thus affected, and only directly around the ligature there will be a small, colorless, white ring. Now, as sure as this discoloration will be observed in the living being, as sure will all traces of it be absent in the dead. The bluish discoloration occasionally observed of and around the finger nails in some corpses is of no influence upon, nor does it interfere in the slightest with, the phenomenon and its correct interpretation.

The phenomenon of course is easily enough explained in the living by the stagnation of the blood in the veins and the capillaries when a new supply through the arteries and the backflow through the veins is cut off by the ligature. The white ring around the latter is produced by the partial arterial, partial venous anæmia.

In place of a finger, if, as it at times may happen, the skin seems too thick and horny, to show the phenomenon plainly, though this will but seldom occur, one may use the toes, the earlobe, even the tip of the nose. If desired, the member must be only thin enough in order to make the ligature as tight and perfect as possible.

I have used this means in about 1,300 to 1,400 cases previous to post mortem examinations.

In one case only I observed the mentioned discoloration, though it was impossible to notice any heart action by any means. I at once resorted to venesection, and, sure enough, the blood flowed, and after a short time faint heart beats up to seven per minute could be distinguished. Everything was done to start respiration. Yet it was too late, and the heart beats within half an hour gradually diminished. The corpse had been lying for dead for over two hours.

A Lesson.
At a lesson in a medical college the other day one of the students, who was by no means a dillard, was asked by the professor, "How much is a dose of —?" (giving the technical name of a strong poison), was the reply.

The professor made no comment, but the student, a quarter of an hour later, realized that he had made a mistake, and straightway said:

"Professor, I want to change my answer to that question."

"It's too late, sir," responded the professor curtly, looking at his watch. "Your patient has been dead 14 minutes."—London Telegraph.



The "Albert" Toilet Soap Co's Baby's Own Soap makes youngsters, clean, sweet, and fresh.

It keeps their delicate skins in good order. Made entirely from vegetable fats, it is an emollient and is as useful on a lady's toilet as in the nursery. Faintly but exquisitely aromatic. Beware of imitations.

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OPPOSED TO BAIL VALVES.

An Old Detective Tells How One of Them Was Used in an Escape.

"I never had but one prisoner escape from me," said an old railroad detective, "and that was under very peculiar circumstances. In 1882, when I was working for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe road, I captured a fellow named Jim Lake, who was wanted for robbing freight cars. I got him near Trinidad, Colo., and after securing the requisition papers started east with him for Kansas City. Lake was a little, consumptive chap, as frail as a woman, and I didn't consider it necessary to even put the handcuffs on him. With one twist I could have broken him in two. Besides, I didn't care to cause him needless humiliation by exhibiting him before the other passengers in the role of a prisoner, so we simply sat side by side, like two fellow tourists, and nobody in the cars had any idea of his real position."

"Naturally we did a good deal of talking, and at about dusk of the first evening out Lake turned the conversation to curious mechanical contrivances and described several remarkable machines he had seen. He had been a skilled engineer earlier in life, and being a good talker, soon got me deeply interested. Among other things he told me about an air pump with a singular ball valve. 'The ball lies in a socket,' he said, 'and the greater the air pressure behind it the tighter it sticks.' To illustrate, he twisted an old envelope into a cone and dropped a paper wad into the mouth. 'Now when I blow,' he continued, 'you'll see that the wad stays right where it is.' Like a fool, I stared at the thing, and he blew violently into the little end. At the same instant I felt as if a raging furnace had suddenly belched its flames right into my face. I couldn't see, I couldn't breathe; for a moment or two I couldn't even move. My throat and nostrils were on fire and I felt sure my eyes had been burned literally out of their sockets."

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