

brain is deprived of its normal supply of good blood. To this fact some say the anæsthesia of nitrous oxide is due. However, although to a certain extent it is true, I do not altogether believe that theory.

Now, under an anæsthetic we have the blood in an impure state from two causes. One is the CO₂ and effete matter taken into it in the natural way, and another is the anæsthetic which is forced into it to a greater or less degree, according to the anæsthetic used. It paralyzes, to some extent, the powers of the brain, and also of the muscles of the heart. This is done by acting on the great nerve-centres in the brain. No living cells are destroyed, only the functions. Now, it seems quite clear that as long as the organs are in their perfect state they can be induced to move again. For example: You take the leg of a man that has died, to all outward appearances, and inject into it oxygenized defibrinated blood, and immediately you can detect nervous irritability, and get response by applying a battery. However, if you wait till the cell-life is dead, which takes place as soon as *rigor mortis* has disappeared, you will get no response. This, to my mind, is a strong proof that life has not left the body till after *rigor mortis* has left.

There is one thing certain: that is, that *rigor mortis* is either a part of life, or is a result of life, because we never have it unless immediately after, or at least a short time after, we know positively the person was alive.

There is one fact that goes very far to prove that life does not depart, at least, till *rigor mortis* sets in, and this is the fact that a person who dies without great exhaustion requires a much longer time for the phenomena of *rigor mortis* to show itself than one who dies after great exhaustion. This is exemplified on the field of battle. If you notice, the men who are slain at the beginning of the fight are not in a state of *rigor mortis* as soon as those slain in the evening, for the reason that they are then fresh, the cells of their bodies are still alive in great numbers; whereas, those killed towards night are worn out, half dead anyway. They have a great overplus of dead cells, both of the tissue and of the blood; consequently, *rigor mortis* follows almost immediately.

I may as well here describe what "*rigor mortis*" is supposed to be. I say "supposed to be," for I find a great divergence of opinion. Probably, like life, no man knows just what it is, or why it comes. However, the one opinion I was most taken with was this: that *rigor mortis* is the effect of chemical change which takes place after the nerves have ceased to have power any longer, making the muscles stiff and rigid in something the same manner as blood coagulates.

Now, this fact of life remaining, at least till *rigor mortis* sets in—if it be a fact, and I firmly believe it is a fact—is of the greatest