

experienced persons believe such a person to be really dead. In many cases not even the most experienced physician, coroner, or undertaker can distinguish a case of apparent death from real death, neither by external examination, nor by means of the stethoscope, nor by any of the various tests which have been proposed by this or that writer, for all those tests have been proved fallible, and it is now useless to discuss them at length, because many of the most experienced members of the medical profession have already agreed that there is no certain sign that a person is really and not apparently dead, except the beginning of a certain stage of putrefaction. All other tests ought to be set down as delusive and unreliable."

Moreover, there are so many conditions which simulate death to such an extent, that sometimes several physicians, called in to diagnose the case, have been deceived, and have certified the patient to be absolutely dead. For this reason many persons now provide for cremation, as a safeguard against live sepulture, the regulations with regard to which require the examination of the presumed corpse by one independent medical practitioner, in addition to the regular family doctor (neither of whom must be related to the deceased), who are obliged to certify to the cause as well as the fact of death.

A remarkable case will be found on page 76 of "Premature Burial, and how it may be Prevented," recently published by Swann Sonnenschein. Dr. Johnson, of St. Charles, Illinois, in the hearing of Dr. Tanner, and in the presence of a large audience, in Harrison's Hall, Minneapolis, stated that when a young man he was prostrated with a fever. He swooned away, apparently dead. His attending physician said he was dead. His father was faithless and unbelieving, and refused to bury him. He lay in this condition, apparently dead, fourteen days. The attending physician brought other physicians to examine the apparently lifeless form, and all stated unqualifiedly, "He is dead." *Some fourteen physicians, among them many eminent professors, examined the body, and there was no ambiguity in the expression of their conclusion that the boy was dead.* But the father still turned a deaf ear to all entreaties to prepare the body for the grave. Public feeling was at last aroused. The health officer and other city officers, acting in their official capacity, and by the advice of physicians, peremptorily demanded that the body be interred without delay. On the fourteenth day the father yielded under protest; preparations were made for the funeral, when the emotions of the living subject, who was conscious of all transpiring around him, were so intense as to be the means of his deliverance. He awoke from his trance.

Until some one discovers an infallible sign that life has departed from a body no one should be buried, cremated, or otherwise disposed of until putrefaction sets in. In the present condition of scientific knowledge on the subject no other remedy for living burial can be considered trustworthy. "How comes it about," says Celsus, "that patients, given over as dead by their physicians, sometimes recover, and that some have even returned to life in the very time of their funerals?" Pliny wrote: "Such is the condition of humanity, and so uncertain is men's judgment that they cannot determine even death itself."

That the people have a right to protection by the State against preventible sources of danger all civilized nations have acknowledged by the making of

laws that guard their citizens from the invasion of diseases of domestic or foreign origin, as well as many other perils.

From the widespread interest created by the ventilation of this absorbing subject in the Press, both at home and abroad, it is hoped that the Chamber of Deputies in France will be induced to extend the time between certified death and burial, while in the United Kingdom an effective system of death-certification and death-verification ought to be speedily introduced in Parliament, and passed into law as a matter of urgency, being of much more pressing importance than half the Bills that engage the attention of that august assembly.

Yours faithfully,
MEDICUS.

SEWING FORBIDDEN IN WORKHOUSE INFIRMARIES.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—It is becoming only too evident as more light is being thrown on the internal management of Workhouses and their Infirmaries, that the time is near at hand when a just demand must be made that an equal number of women as of men shall sit on Boards of Guardians. I am very much astonished to find that in one large London Union Infirmary (there may be many more that I do not know) sewing, mending, or making is strictly forbidden to the patients. I found it out through wishing to help a young woman who, through long illness and trouble, has become a patient in such an Infirmary. She is recovering, and is desirous of setting to work again, to aid in which it is necessary for her to have a new outfit. On my suggesting getting some material to send her, so that she might, during her convalescence, make a few garments for herself, I was astonished to find that "no making or mending is permitted by the rules of the Infirmary."

Now this appears to me to be a preposterous regulation, and one which would almost certainly be speedily abolished were there to be half a dozen sensible women on the Board of Guardians of the parish in question.

Presumably the patients in a Workhouse Infirmary are badly off—presumably it is desirable that, when they are strong enough, they shall leave the wards and make a fresh start in the world, and thus become self-supporting and take off the burden of their maintenance from the rates.

But, if a woman patient be not allowed to mend or make any articles for her wardrobe, how can she possibly start again. Suppose she wants to go into service, how can this be done unless she be permitted to put her belongings into a neat, tidy condition?

There are hundreds of women without friends to go to, or homes where the necessary sewing and mending to fit them to earn their living can be done. And the question arises if these women—who are quite capable of earning their living if they are given the chance—are to be kept indefinitely as paupers just by a senseless bit of red-tapeism on the part of the authorities, which prevents them from putting their clothes into such a condition as would warrant their obtaining a respectable situation.

Truly yours,
A FRIEND OF THE FRIENDLESS.

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