

## Drowning.

BY L. GODDARD, S.R.N.

IN GREAT BRITAIN the number of deaths by drowning is roughly about 2,800 and accidental drowning is the most frequent cause.

Asphyxia being in the majority of cases the cause of death, roughly about 94 to 97 per cent., and may take place in only an inch or two of water should the victim be a child, or in an adult due to epilepsy, or even intoxication.

As a rule it may take only two to five minutes after complete submersion for the heart to cease beating.

In some cases shock may be the cause of death, occurring before the patient enters the water, owing to falling flat on the surface, the blow striking the solar plexus.

Or owing to the sudden immersion the coldness of the water causes reflexes of the nerves to inhibit the action of the heart and lungs, when this occurs the signs of asphyxia are not usually present, as the lungs have very little water in them and there is every chance of recovery with treatment, as no struggling has taken place, and the patient may have been submerged in the water for as long as twenty to thirty minutes.

Sudden coldness may even cause apoplexy, owing to the blood vessels being diseased. The blood is driven into the interior causing the hæmorrhage to take place into the brain.

Patients suffering with heart disease may have a syncopal attack due to the sudden cold.

Spasm of the muscles and of the arteries may occur due to cold and exertion, this severe form of cramp could be the death of the swimmer by the cessation of the heart muscles.

Extreme exhaustion of swimming or of keeping afloat too long may be the cause of drowning.

As the specific gravity of the body is very slightly heavier than the water, the body just slowly sinks when drowning is taking place, and the next attempt at inspiration causes the drawing in of air and water into the lungs, usually struggling takes place to reach the surface again, the intake of water into the lungs causes coughing and more water is taken in and the body becomes heavier and gradually sinks until only the top of the head can be seen, blood, air and mucus is coughed out, the body rises to sink again, till gradually it sinks to the bottom.

Resuscitation is not hopeful, the colour of the face is pale, later becoming brick red, there is froth in the nose and mouth, the tongue is swollen and rigor mortis appears very quickly, the stomach may contain foreign bodies, such as sand, mud or seaweed.

Treatment: When rescuing a drowning person, approach them from behind if possible, raise the head above the water by placing one hand under the occiput, care being taken that the drowning person does not grasp hold of the rescuer's arms, or both may drown.

The instant when safely brought to the shore, without any delay all clothing must be loosened and the air passages cleared of any sand or seaweed, the tongue brought forward as the body is turned on its face for artificial respiration, this must be continued for hours, if necessary, every moment being precious, even if all signs of life are extinct and the pulse and action of the

heart and respiration appear to have stopped and the pupils of the eyes dilated and do not respond to light.

Professor Schafer method is usually used, as it is less likely to rupture the congested liver.

To stimulate the heart's action, Silvester's method of artificial respiration may be applied in alternative intervals.

Atropine, strychnine, pituitrin or adrenalin may be given by the doctor if present, the Drinker respirator may be used if available in hospital.

When respiration has been established, treatment must be given for shock warmth and sips of hot brandy or coffee given.

Resuscitation must be continued until the doctor pronounces it useless to continue, life being declared extinct.

After recovery death may ensue due to pneumonia or exhaustion.

## Worms in Young Children.

Apropos the paper on Worms in Young Children (writes M.) there has been a growing suspicion among nurses, doctors and chemists on the Rand that internal parasites are often attributable to having eaten vegetables or fruit fertilised with sewage sludge, especially in the case of young children. In consequence, considerable researching has been proceeding to discover the species and quantities of worm eggs and cysts occurring in the sludge, in South Africa.

The Medical Officer of Health of the Cape Divisional Council has announced that there is no longer any doubt that sludge as a fertiliser of poor sandy garden soils is a definite factor in the spread of round-worm infestation among children. Child Welfare workers urge that sandpits or other playgrounds should be arranged for.

## The Festival of Britain.

This year of 1951

We try to celebrate  
Achievements of a hundred years,  
And bring them up-to-date.

We've had a war which no one thought  
Would ever come again.  
Nothing but sorrow and pain it brought,  
With thousands cruelly slain.

We radio from shore to shore :  
Outwing the birds in air.  
In commerce and in industry  
Britain excelleth there.

But thousands never pull their weight,  
Producing what they should.  
Private gain and ease they seek,  
And not their country's good.

Health and social services,  
So much that now is free,  
Make not the finest character—  
Or so it seems to me.

To the Festival of Britain go,  
For there 'tis plain to see  
What a hundred years of progress  
Have done for you and me.

JESSIE HOLMES, S.R.N.,  
British Home for Incurables.

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