

## THE REVIEW



CIRCULATION

Perils of Premature Burials. We remember vividly the horror produced, while yet in our boyhood, when an elder sister read from the Utica *Observer* a story entitled "Buried Alive." The person had fallen into a cataleptic condition, becoming cold and rigid while yet conscious, and was duly confined and buried. He was exhumed by "resurrectionists," carried to a medical college, and placed on the table of the demonstrator of anatomy; a few shocks of the galvanic battery partially aroused him, and on the wounding of his breast with the knife, he gave signs of life, and by proper treatment he was fully resuscitated. Ten or twelve years afterward a relative whom we were visiting, told us of having been present when the body of her son-in-law was made ready for the coffin, and perceiving, as she imagined, a warm spot on the left breast, a daughter who was sitting by as this was told, cried out with horror, "Do not talk any more of it; the idea is too dread-  
ful to think of." But we did think over and over again of the horror of interring a living person. It was hardly probable, in the case in question, that such a case did occur, for the body remained unburied long enough to allow a return to consciousness. But in this country the peril of interment, before death has actually taken place, is often very great. For years past it has been very common for persons in supposed health to fall down suddenly, with every appearance of having died. We do not regard sudden death with horror, as it is often painless, and exempts the person from the anxiety and other unpleasant experiences which often accompanies a lingering dissolution. But there is a fearful liability of being prostrated by catalepsy—

THE COUNTERFEIT OF DEATH—under such circumstances that the persons having the body in charge will not hesitate at a prompt burial. We could wish that the old Oriental practice of cremation was in fashion among us. There would be at least the comfortable reflection of no suffocation in a coffin; besides, the application of fire would generally arouse the cataleptic person to a manifestation of life. Some two years ago a story was copied into the Rochester *Democrat*, purporting to be the experience of a man in a low state of health, who was compelled to seek shelter in a deserted house in Illinois, where he fell asleep. He was found there in a cataleptic trance, and supposed to have died. In this condition he was removed and prepared for burial, conscious all the time of what was going on, but unable to utter a sound or make a sign of life. His condition was fortunately discovered before it was too late. The story may be a fiction, but it did not read like it. We have several times repeated the story, although it is too serious for a jest, except when regarded entirely on the ludicrous side, of a woman, who, while borne to the place of interment, was aroused to consciousness by the jostling of the coffin against the walls of a house, as the bearers clumsily turned the corner. She was speedily released from her cements and conveyed home, where she lived several years longer. She fell into a decline and died; the funeral again took place and the procession set out for the grave. As it drew near to the house at the corner, the husband wiped his eyes hastily, and cried out to the bearers, "BE CAREFUL AS YOU TURN THE CORNER!"

It is, however, no topic for a jest when we consider the subject from the proper point. Persons are buried alive, and have a terrible period of agony before death comes to their relief. We execrate the old Roman law which authorized the magistrates to bury alive their incontinent vestal virgins. The Thracians, after the practice of India, buried widows. Amestris or Esther, queen of Xerxes of Persia, caused fourteen living children to be interred, and till late Hindoo widows were buried or burned alive at Suttee. But we, in our reckless carelessness, do as badly as they. A writer in the *Nineteenth Century* informs us that at the public mortuaries of Paris is about one in every three hundred persons supposed to be dead actually comes again to life. At that rate one hundred persons must be buried alive annually belonging to the city of New York; and here, too, not a tithe of the precautions are taken that are required in France and England.

A well authenticated case is on record of a strong man dropping away suddenly, whose grave or tomb was opened four days after, and the body found twisted around in the coffin, and a hip dislocated, the hair turned white and torn out, and the features distorted in a horrible manner. Fearful was the struggle of the man in his ghastly conflict for life with every odds against him. A young woman also, beautiful in person and intellect, was buried in the usual hurry, some ten years ago. The body was afterward taken up for removal to a distant cemetery. She, too, had been engaged and worried in a terrible struggle for life. Her face was gashed, her hands and arms frightfully torn, her feet drawn up in a wild endeavor to extricate herself from the horrible prison, her face furrowed and lacerated by her finger-nails, so desperate had been the struggle. A young man in another city was thus buried, and his grave opened six days afterward. The body had turned upon the face, and the arm was bitten to the bone, and there were other

DANIEL WEBSTER'S ESCAPES. In connection with the recent calamities on the Mississippi, the following passage from the exordium of Daniel Webster's address in the Supreme Court, in opening the case of the Merchant's Bank of Boston vs. the owners of Steamboat Lexington, will be of interest.

In January, 1840, the steamboat Lexington was destroyed by fire in Long Island Sound, on a voyage from New York to Stonington, in Connecticut. The Merchant's Bank of Boston owned a sum of money in specie, which had been shipped on board the Lexington, and brought his action, in the form of a suit in Admiralty, against the owners of the boat, to recover the amount so lost. On the 14th of February, 1840, just after my return from Europe, I left Boston for Washington, and expected to embark at Stonington on board of the Lexington for New York. On the evening of that day I arrived at Stoning-

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rated with his blood. We know nothing of the accuracy of the story. Bodies have been removed from old to new burying-grounds, several of them having turned over in the coffin. Perhaps this phenomenon is produced by the mechanical force of the gases which are generated by decomposition, but who knows? We have reflected much upon this subject, and not without much anxiety. There is actually little protection for any of us from this terrible peril. We exhaust our energies by overwork, excitement, too much fatigue of the brain, the use of tobacco, sedatives and anesthetics, and by habits and practices which hasten the three sisters in the spinning of the fatal thread. Apoplexy, epilepsy, are likely to prostrate us at any moment; and catalepsy, perhaps, is not far from any of us. This last affection is characterized by a loss more or less complete of consciousness, with a peculiar rigidity of the muscles, causing the body and each part of it to retain the position in which it may have been at the moment of attack, or in which it may afterward be placed. It may attack both sides of the body at once, or a single limb or organ. Sometimes it is preceded by signs of nervous disorder, and at other times it occurs without any previous warning symptoms.

ANY STRANGE EMOTION, and unusual or protracted intellectual exertion, great physical exhaustion, unsatisfied sexual desire or excessive indulgence, the retrocession of a cutaneous eruption—in short, anything that debilitates the system will produce this singular attack. Of course, as with most disorders, it is occasional in males by disorders of the digestive system, and in females with disease of the womb. Caution should, therefore, be observed, and surfeiting, undue exposure to extreme heat or cold, overtaxing the brain, excessive bathing, mental excitement, sexual appetites, the use of tobacco or anesthetics, unwholesome postures in bed, &c., should be carefully avoided.

Moving amid the scenes of human life so near to disaster and accidents—if accidents they can be called—it may well be supposed that I approach a subject like this with an earnestness beyond that arising from professional duty. In one aspect of the case, it involves an important discussion—a discussion respecting the responsibility of the steamboat owners, who are bound to use extraordinary care and vigilance in the preservation of the property and life intrusted to their hands.

Anecdote of Stephen A. Douglass.

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"To him I am indebted for my first and only speculation—the better to be reconciled because it was successful. And the incident is the more interesting because, just now, the region where I made my money is the point whence one of those empire lines is going forth to penetrate the wilderness and to convert it into a garden—I mean the North Pacific Railroad.

Stephen A. Douglass came to me one day in 1853, and said, looking up at the map, 'How would you like to buy a share in Superior City, at Pond du Lac, the head of Lake Superior?' and, before I could answer, he got on a chair and told me that from that point, or near it, would start the greatest railroad in the world, except in the one on the thirty-second parallel, just surveyed by Captains George B. McClellan, John Pope, and others, which was to open up the South. 'But,' said 'old fellow,' I have no money, and to buy a share in the proposed location will require much.' No, he replied, 'I can secure you one for \$2,500, and you can divide it with me—naming the best of the future Confederates, and he will be greatly obliged.' I knew nothing of the location, had never been there, had no money of my own, but I saw Judge Douglass was in earnest, and wanted to serve me, and when he left I borrowed the \$2,500, bought a share, divided it with the Southern gentle man referred to, who honorably paid his \$1,250, and after cutting my share into five parts, sold and gave three-fifths to other friends, and with my two fits bought the Waverly House in Washington. The proceeds of my moiety of the share of Superior City was realized at \$1,000. For that I was indebted to Stephen A. Douglass—God bless him! I believe my Confederate friend has held out to his interest, and I shall be glad if he is as fortunate as I was."

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The fact of through railroad travel from New York to the Pacific has its influence already upon the city restaurants in the way of the introduction of delicacies not hitherto served at tables eastward of the Plains. For instance, "antelope steaks" are now on the bills in several restaurants, and buffalo meat is to be had almost anywhere.

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When a peculiar feeling of stupor is perceived, the limbs "fall asleep" without apparent cause, or there is an unceasing and rigidly of any of the muscles, with vertigo, lassitude, debility, and caprice of the mind, a susceptible person should be on the alert, for there may be no time to waste. These are incipient symptoms of an attack. The signs of

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