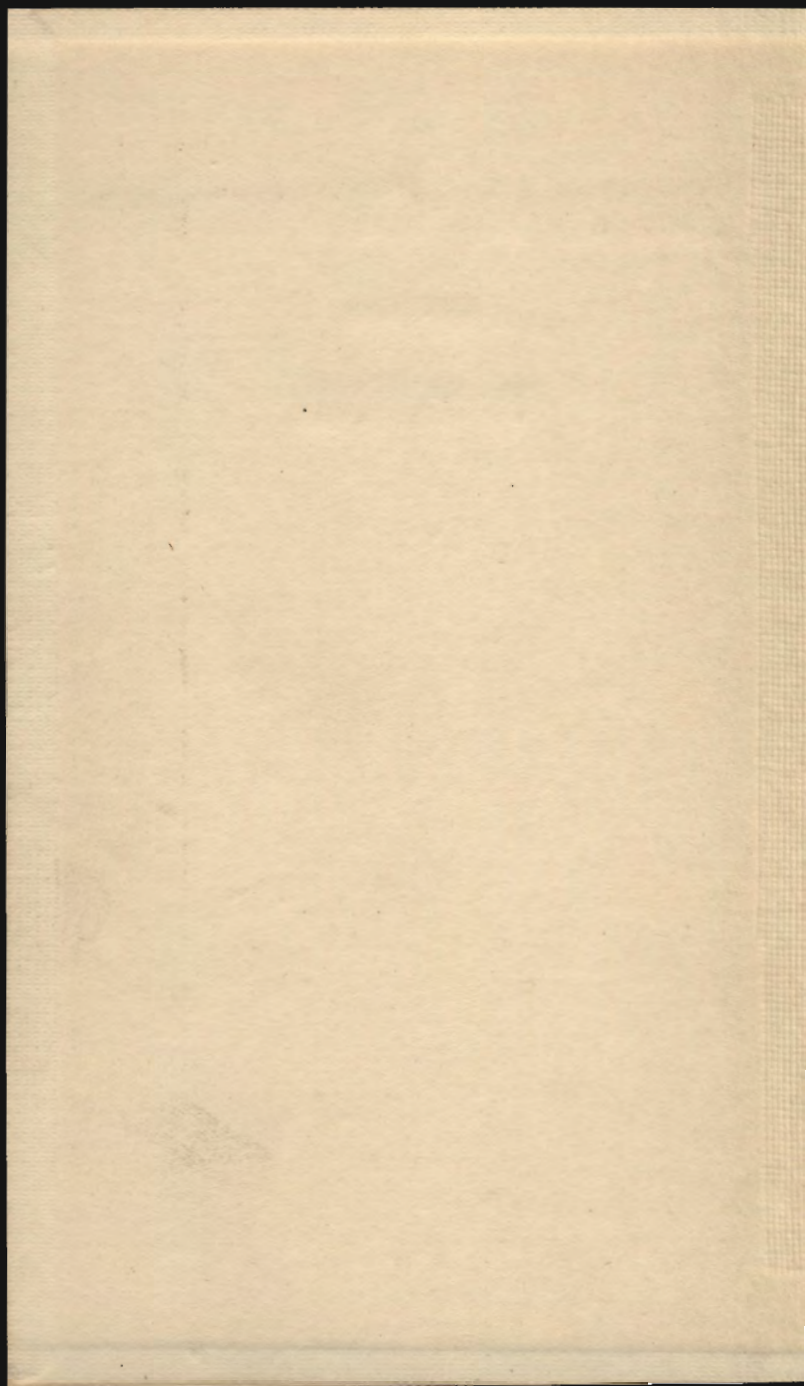


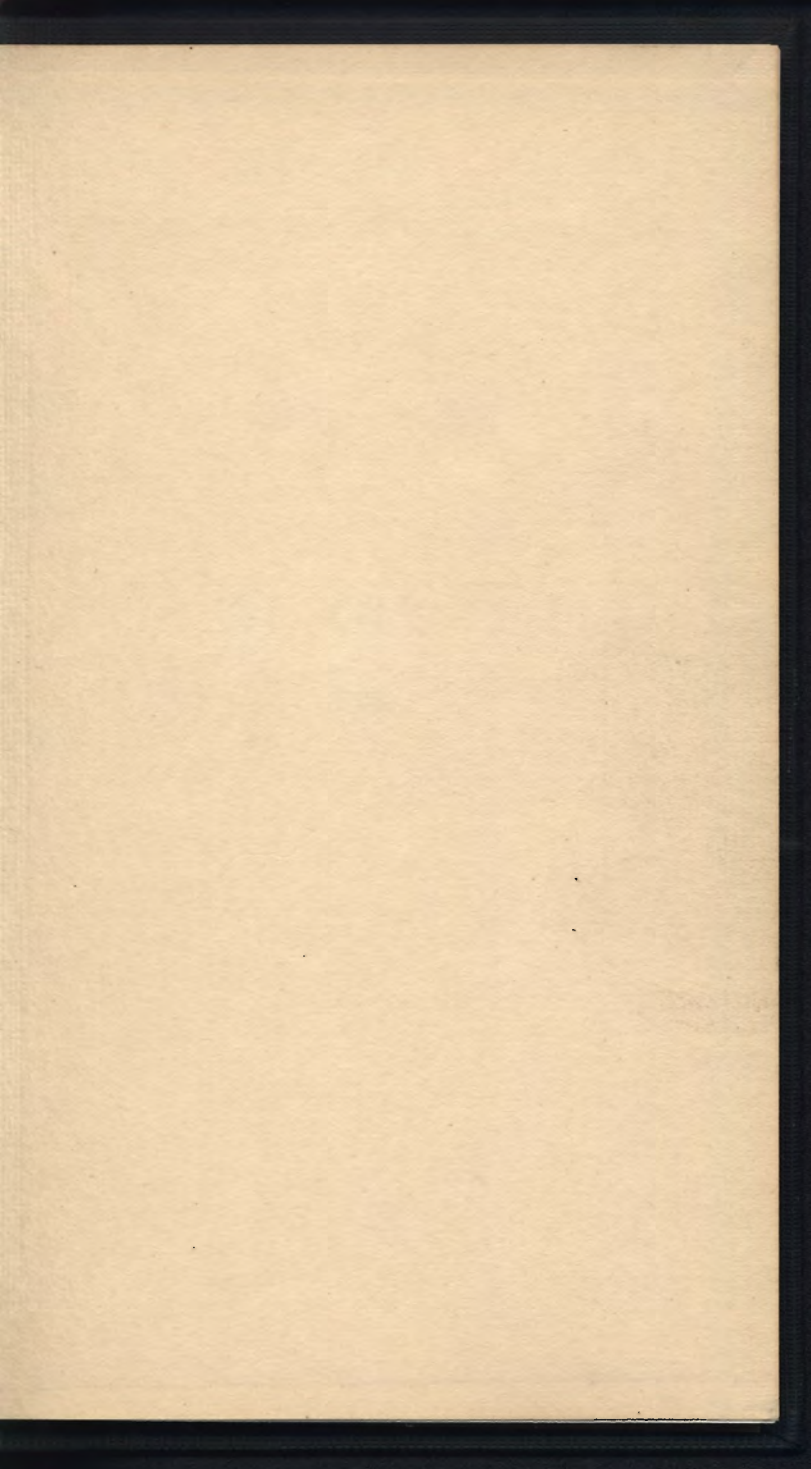
# BURIAL CUSTOMS

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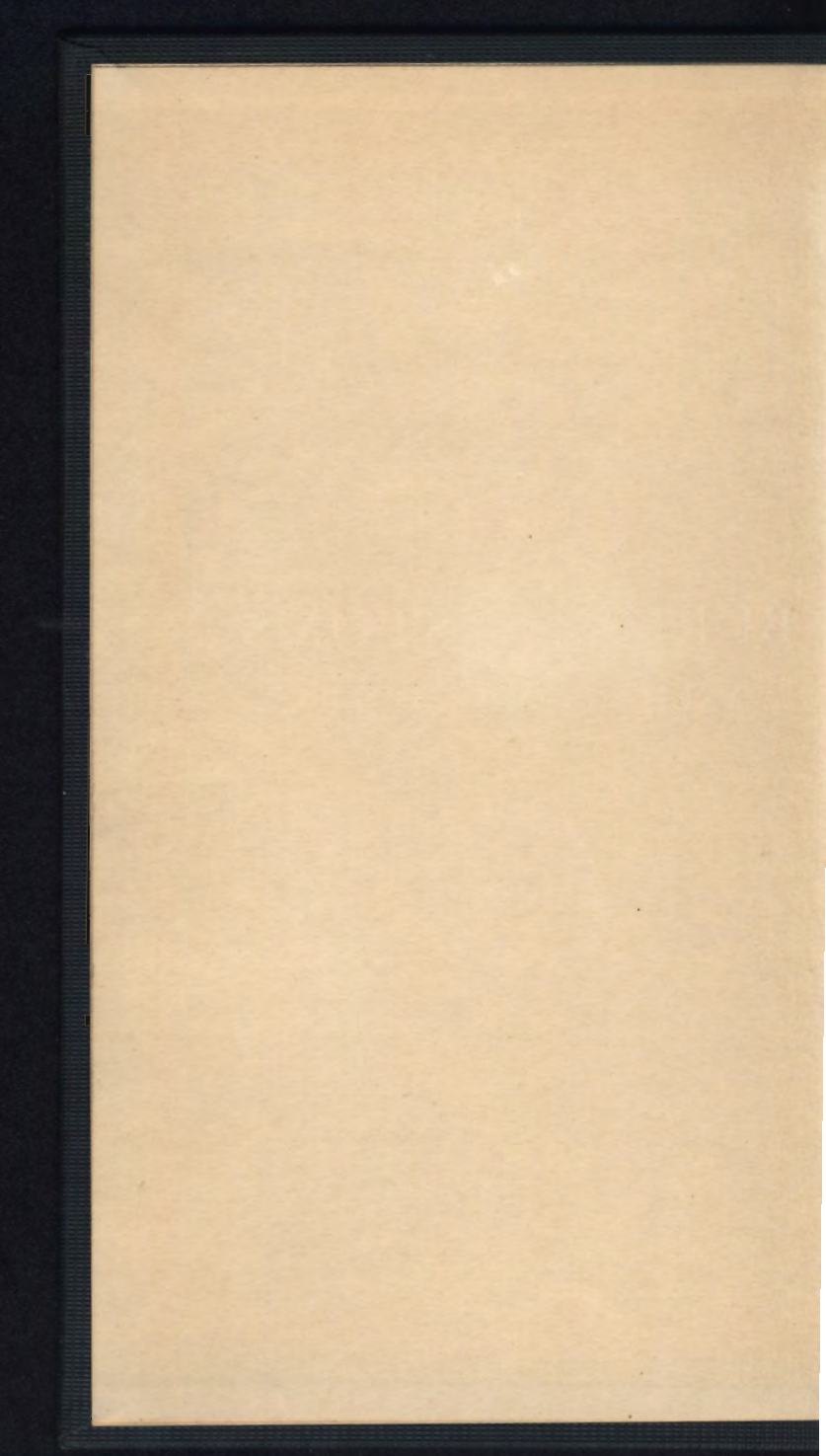
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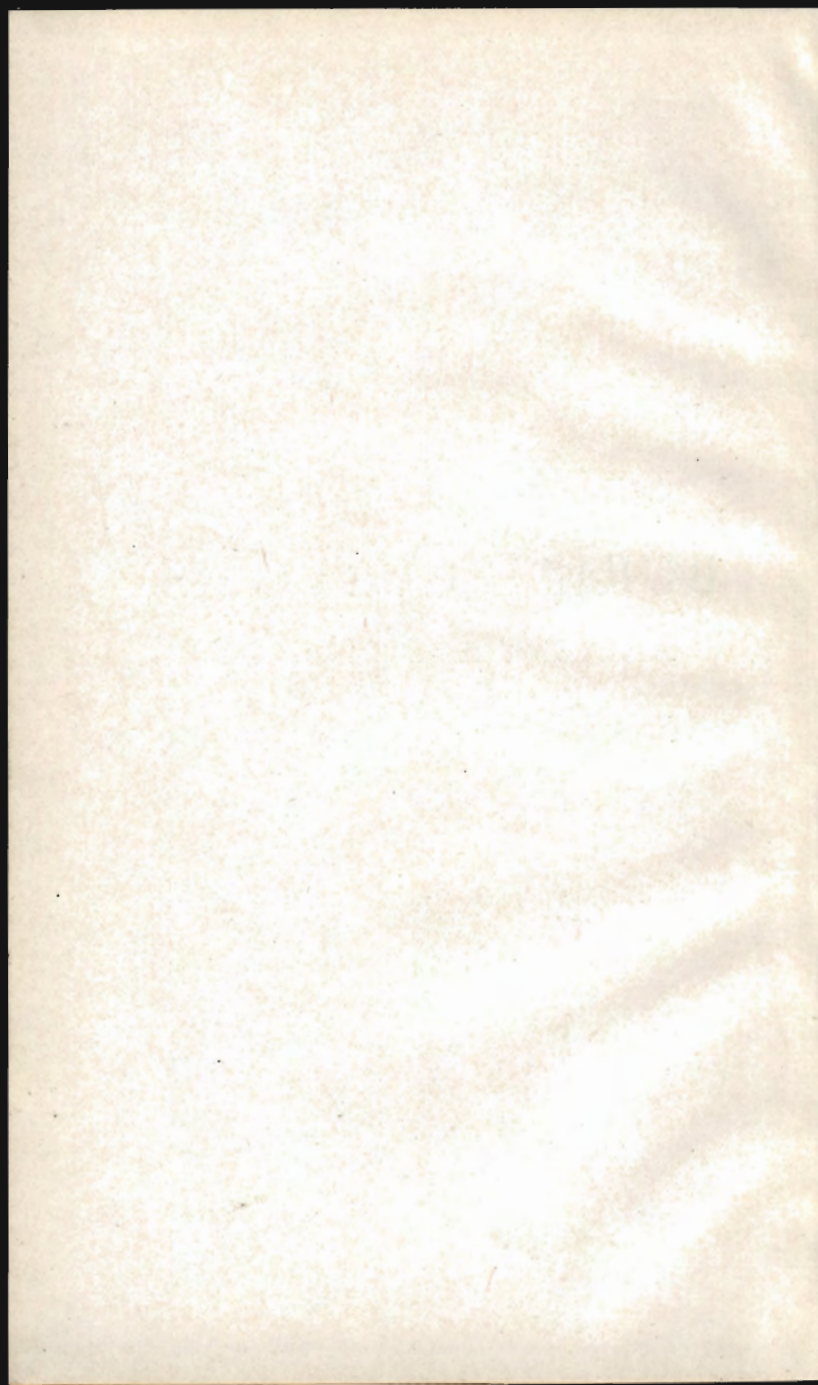






# BURIAL CUSTOMS

ANCIENT AND MODERN



# BURIAL CUSTOMS

ANCIENT AND MODERN

BY

R. P. LEE  
FUNERAL DIRECTOR  
Minneapolis, Minnesota



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1929



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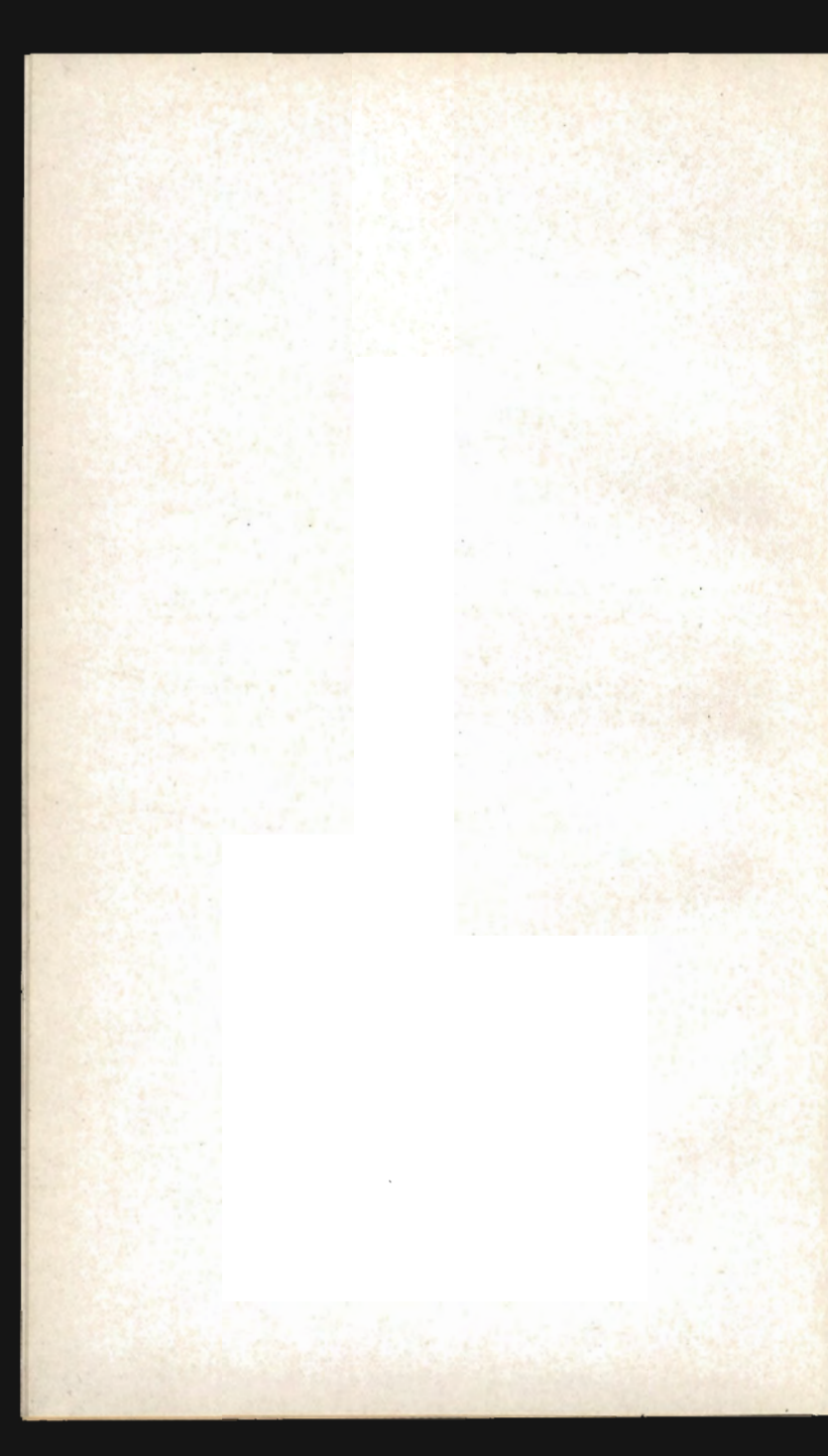
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



DEDICATED  
TO THE  
UNIVERSITY *of* MINNESOTA

PRESENTING  
AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND  
FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

IN THE  
SCHOOL OF EMBALMING AND  
FUNERAL DIRECTING



## PREFACE



Several years ago I became interested in the study of burial customs, ancient and modern. While serving as the Chairman of the Educational Committee for the Minnesota Funeral Director's Association, my attention was drawn to the development of the course of instruction offered the Funeral Director and Embalmer at the University of Minnesota. I attended the various classes and lectures given by members of the faculty, and through their splendid co-operation many practical suggestions for the betterment of professional training for the Funeral Director and Embalmer were developed.

Professions, such as medicine, dentistry, and nursing, have recognized that in their courses of training it is necessary that the student have a comprehensive historical background upon which to build his knowledge. Many different customs have governed funeral services throughout the world. They seem queer to many persons, but we learn that they are merely age-worn customs originating from the superstition and fear of man. Through enlightenment on the subject we



have come to understand the reasons for these various customs that are observed in many funeral rites, and we no longer look upon them through an eye of ignorance.

History is essential for the foundation of our professional training. After a survey of the curricula of various schools I found this subject treated only slightly, if at all. I suggested to the University of Minnesota that they add this subject to the curriculum. Owing to the lack of suitable assembly of the material available, no research work had been undertaken. I have endeavored to prepare a history of the origin of burial customs, ancient and modern, showing the distinct stages through which they have passed, the gradual development in the scientific preparation and care of the dead, and the modern trend of higher education for Funeral Directors.

My primary aim in the publication of this book was to assemble historical facts for the benefit of students of embalming and funeral directing, and also for public enlightenment. I regret that the concise brevity of this presentation has made it impossible to make direct quotations and specific references to the many authorities which were consulted during the preparation of this work. I acknowledge my deep indebtedness to such authors for their contributions.

Members of the Faculty of the University of Minnesota have given helpful suggestions, and the Publishers have rendered invaluable services. The gathering of this material involved years of experience and practical observation, intensive study, and painstaking analysis of ancient and modern customs throughout the world.

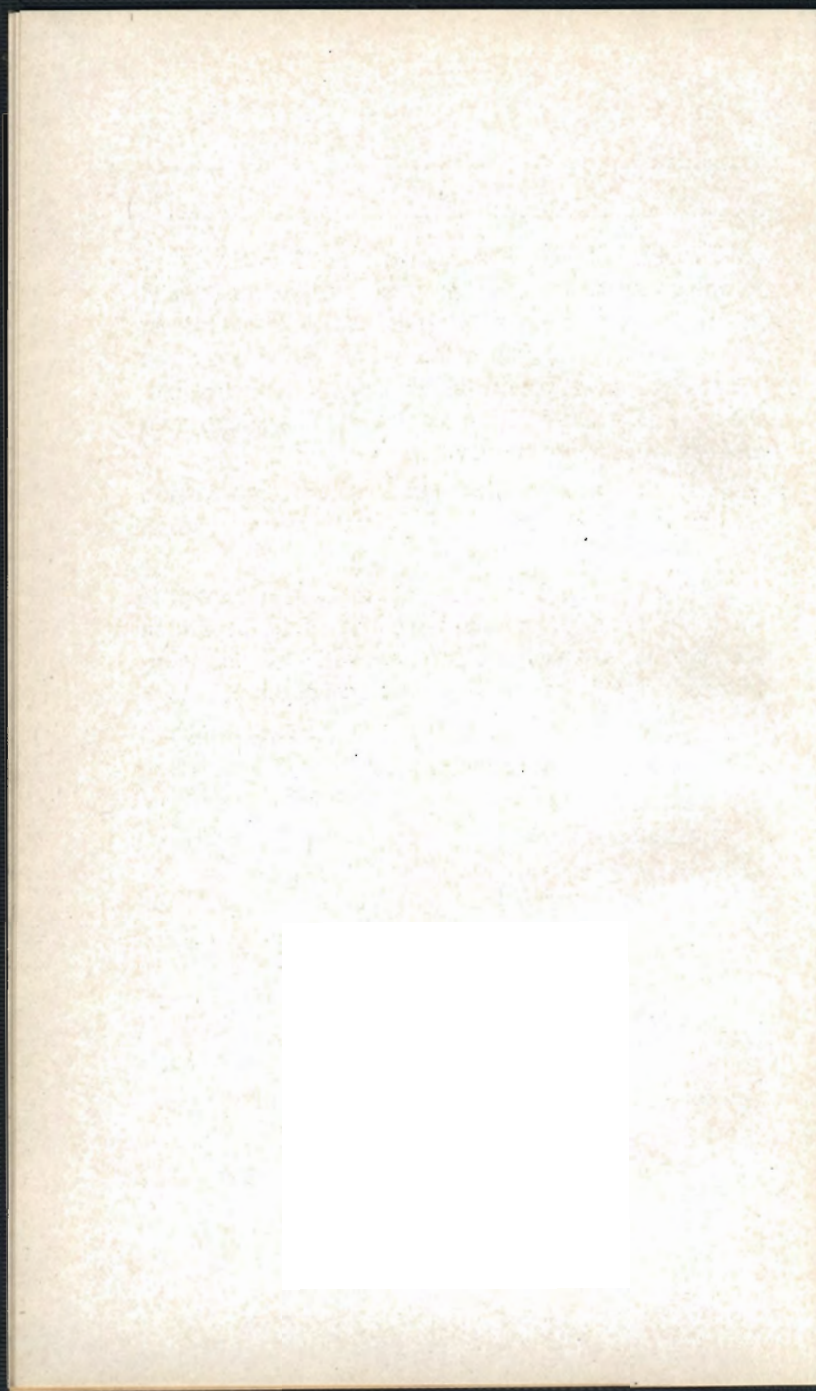
I am indebted to The Studebaker Corporation of America for some of the illustrations used in this work.

I sincerely trust that the reader will accept this work with an open mind, in the same spirit in which it is offered, and that he will find this contribution both interesting and instructive.

R. P. LEE.

Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1928.

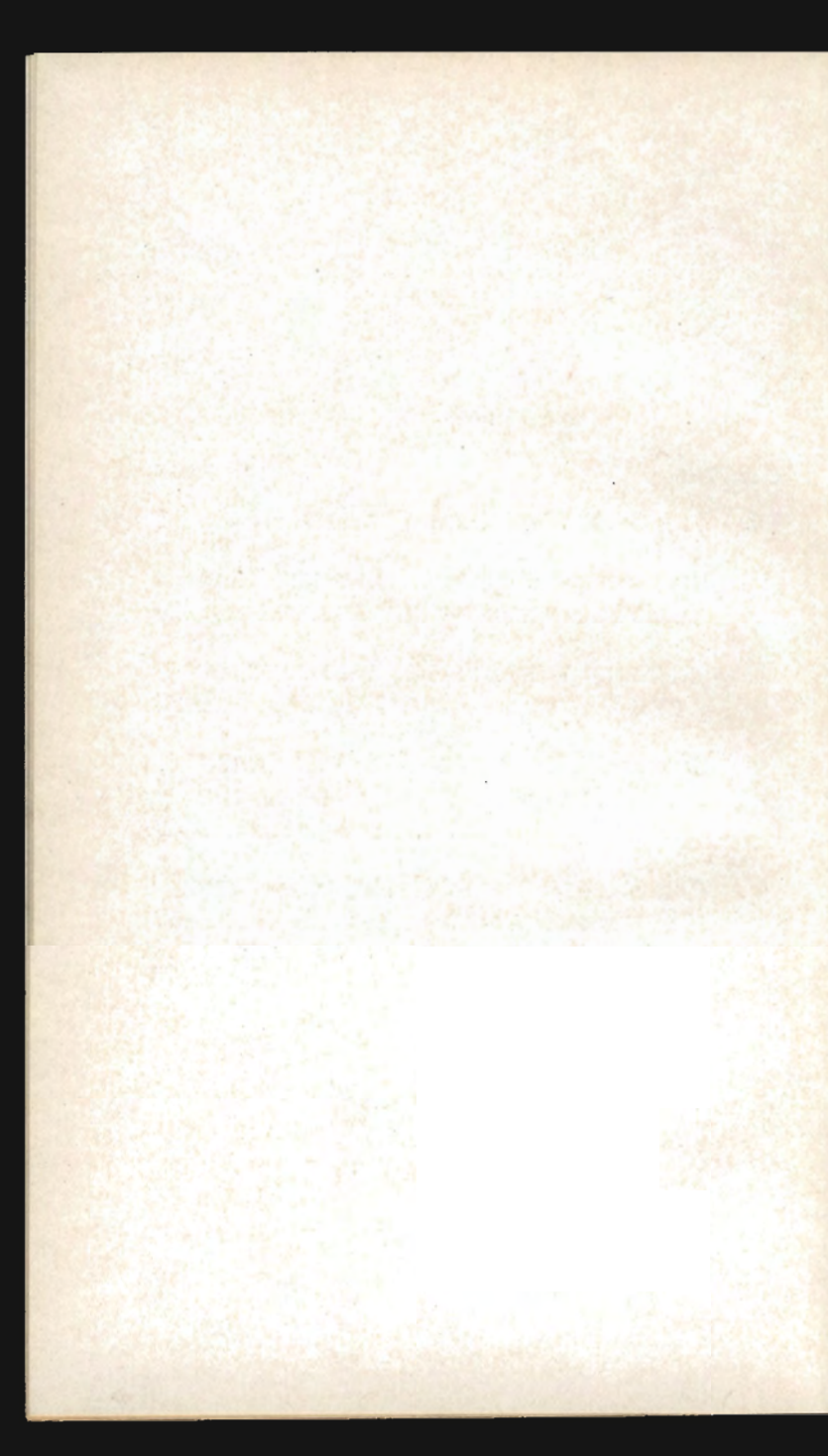




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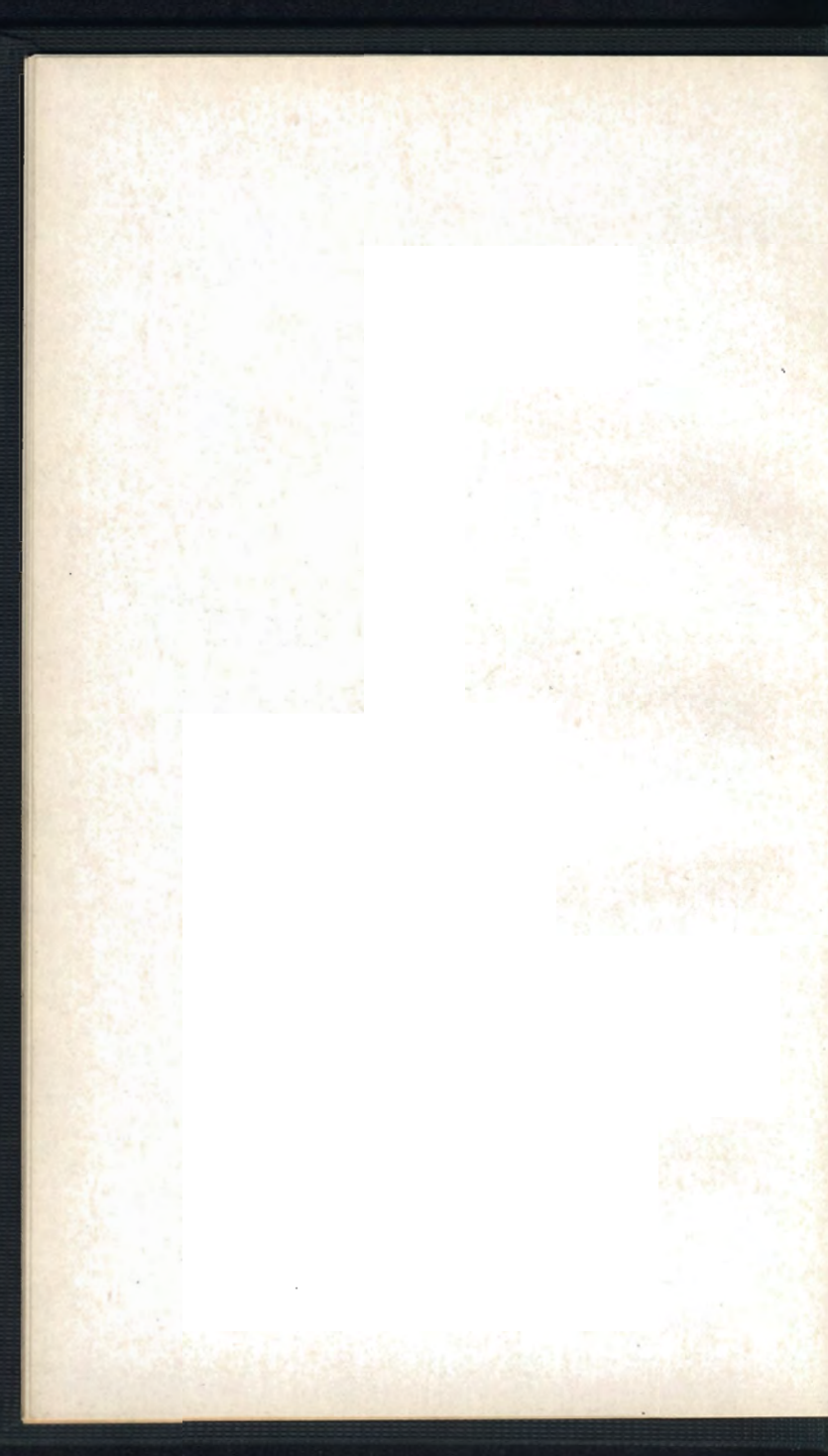


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# BURIAL CUSTOMS

ANCIENT AND MODERN





# Burial Customs

## ANCIENT AND MODERN



### CHAPTER I

#### THE ORIGIN OF BURIAL CUSTOMS

The greatest mystery of life is death. From the beginning of time man has stood in awe of the inevitable end, the strange power which overtakes every living being, stilling the tongue, stopping the ear, and rendering the hand impotent of action. Death is an adventure and an enigma.

Primeval man lived in a world of fear. He was frightened by the manifestations of nature, by the storms which threatened him, by the lightning which flashed and killed, by the floods which swept away his frail shelter. Many were the unknown terrors which assailed him, against which he had little or no defense, and of which he had the most abject fear.

Slowly, ever so slowly, the mind of early man began to advance hypotheses which explained the existence of these strange phenomena. To his primitive mind each mysterious circumstance was

the result of a spirit's action. Because man did things that he wanted to do, he believed that the rocks, the trees, the streams and the winds did things that they wanted to do. To him everything inanimate, as well as living, was possessed of a spirit; he saw spirits everywhere. The will of the spirits was reflected in everything that happened.

Because he was unable to see these spirits and was aware only of their presence when he suffered pain (a circumstance that he attributed to spirits), he lived in a state of constant fear. He was ever in combat with invisible enemies; he lived in perpetual ambush.

In an effort to establish a truce with his unknown enemies, he devised charms, ceremonies, rites, disguises and subterfuges with which to outwit or cajole the spirits. These practices in time crystallized into superstitions and customs, many of which persisted through the ages to form social and religious customs of our day. Few of our highly educated men and women are free from superstitious beliefs; many of these superstitions persist as survivals of childhood practices, while others are retained as amusing, playful fancies.

Many of our present day superstitions are uncertain in origin. In modern times, particularly within the present era of scientific reasoning, the

persistence of superstition conflicts sharply with the findings of science. As contrasted with the development and application of scientific knowledge, superstition is a relic of the childhood thoughts and fancies of the human race. Science presents an orderly and systematic conception of the world and human conduct; superstition presents a strange, disordered world governed by chance. The practices of superstition are directed to propitiate mysterious or lawless powers.

Today we hear much of luck cauls, as well as the rabbit's foot, horse-chestnuts, the horse shoe, lucky rings, and various other charms which are reputed to bring good luck. The caul is a membrane which sometimes envelopes the head and face of a new-born child. It is regarded as an omen of good luck, and a talisman against drowning. Sailors have been known to give large sums of money for these lucky cauls. Whence the superstition arose is unknown, but its antiquity is revealed by the fact that St. John Chrysostom (347-407 A. D.) writes that the midwives of his day sold these cauls to those who wished their protection. The common jocular custom of rapping on wood when a possible disaster is mentioned is a survival of ancient superstition.

Many people of today are averse to having a funeral service on Friday, particularly if it falls on the thirteenth. They consider thirteen an



unlucky number as it was associated with rebellion. This superstition about Friday may have originated with the Norse who regarded Friday as sacred to the goddess Freya. They believed that anyone who undertook a journey or devoted himself to business projects on this day was subject to the wrath of the outraged goddess. Among Christians, no doubt, this irrational fear of Friday is associated with the death of Christ. Astrologers have also declared Friday as an unlucky day. It is interesting to note that Friday is the Moslem Sabbath, and is generally regarded by Mohammedans as a lucky day. The Mohammedan peasants in the northern sections of Hindustan have a particular reverence for Friday because of the tradition that God rested from the work of creation on Friday.

The deliverance of the modern Western World from the delusions of witchcraft began in the seventeenth century. The superstition is very ancient and widespread among untutored and savage peoples, and assumed persistent forms in the cultures of ancient nations. A witch was a woman who was believed to be in league with evil spirits, with the power to foretell events and work evil through her magical powers. Among primitive folk the terror inspired by the supposed witch protected her from harm. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe, both Cath-

olics and Protestants combined in a systematic persecution of witches. Hundreds of old women were executed and tortured in Europe, and the practice found an echo in New England.

It is impossible to determine just when pre-historic man developed a fixed belief in the existence of the spirit after death. As the human mind developed and strengthened, man began to believe that he had a soul which continued to exist after death. The development of this belief, however, was very slow. No records exist to show the process of reasoning which accompanied this conception, but anthropologists have suggested that dreams played a large part in its fixation. The mother who saw her child killed by a falling tree saw him again, months afterward, in a dream, well and strong; this might lead her to believe that the child still existed.

Primitive men were unable to dissociate entirely body and spirit in their thinking. Ignorance of the physiological functions of the body led to many strange beliefs and customs. It was thought that strength originated in the heart, for it was observed that the heart ceased beating at the same time that death occurred. This was a common supposition among the Jews, Egyptians and other early races. The Jews believed that the heart was the seat of all emotions, and that a man's character changed with his heart. The



Bible is full of quotations which bear this out, as "The fool hath said in his heart," and "Keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it cometh the issues of life." This conception, because of the influence of the Bible, has continued to the present day in spite of physiological information.

Among ancient tribes who cremated their dead, the liver was held to be the seat of the soul, because it was the last organ to succumb to the flames. Thus the belief came that if a warrior was to eat the heart of his enemy, that the strength of the fallen foe would enter the body of the victor, endowing him with the strength of two men. The same idea forms the basis of the custom of the American Indian in scalping enemies and wearing scalps into battle.

The customs of savage tribes today afford pathetic examples of this early belief. Ojibway Indian mothers cut hair from the heads of their dead babies and fashion a "doll of sorrow." They carry this doll about for twelve moons following the death of the child, in the belief that the soul of the child has entered the doll.

Hair had a great deal of significance to the ancients, the result, perhaps, of observations that the beard did not develop on boys until they had reached, or were approaching, maximum physical strength; the idea that strength and hair had a vital and significant connection in this way be-

came widespread. An echo of this belief is revealed in the Old Testament story of Samson and Delilah.

The Chauvante mother of Uruguay believes that to eat a portion of her dead child is to regain its soul; this act of maternal love is performed with great reverence. Many cannibal tribes devour portions of the bodies of slain enemies to secure strength. Some tribes believed that by eating certain parts of the body they might gain strength which they particularly desired; they devoured eyeballs to improve their sight, or ate the muscles of the arms to gain strength.

Spirit origin was attributed to diseases of all kinds which caused death or pain. Those who were skilled in devising charms by which the afflicted might be protected against the wrath of the spirits were held in high esteem and exercised tremendous power. They were thought to have influence with the spirits and supernatural knowledge concerning matters in the spirit realm, and their favor was assiduously courted. Thus developed the medicine man, the witch doctor, and finally the priest.

Treatment of the sick became a magical process of weird performances by the medicine man. Survivals of this primitive magic are to be found among the ignorant of all countries. One of the



tasks of modern medical science is to banish the suffering and cruelty which are attached to these ancient practices.

The savage doctor often attempts to frighten away spirits by loud noises, using rattles and drums to accomplish his ends. Physical torture is thought to accomplish the same result, and exorcism, or the banishment of spirits by using magical formulas of words, is also a frequent practice. Sympathetic magic finds its place in these primitive treatments, as in the prescription of a flower resembling the eye in the case of eye trouble, or of a nut resembling the brain for diseases of the brain. A more primitive belief leads to applying cooling lotions to a weapon that has made a wound, rather than to bathe the wound itself. There is also a widespread belief that by contact or wishing, a disease may be transmitted to an animal, relieving the human sufferer.

A persistent belief ascribes potency to a medicine in proportion to its disagreeable taste. Similarly, the wearing or carrying of onions, bits of sulphur, or camphor gum is regarded by many as a charm against various diseases.

The close association of the medicine man and priest with disease and death inevitably led to the use of religious ceremonies in burials. The ancient Hebrews, Egyptians, Babylonians and Assyrians believed that death, pestilence, plague

and all other calamities were the visitations of divine wrath or jealousy. The Hebrews believed that Jehovah's wrath could be appeased by the sacrifice of sheep, goats, oxen and other blood offerings. The greater the favor to be won from the Deity, the greater the sacrifice; this is borne out in the Old Testament story of the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham's son, on the altar at the top of the mountain.

The development of burial customs passed through three distinct stages, which will be treated in the succeeding chapters.



## CHAPTER II

### PREHISTORIC BURIAL: FEAR OF THE DEAD AND PROTECTION OF THE LIVING

The first ceremonies were rude efforts to protect the living from the spirits which had caused the death of the deceased. Many of our modern funeral customs and superstitions, in spite of our scientific knowledge, are deeply tinged by these ancient fears. It is still bad luck if the procession halts between the chapel and the grave, and the sight of dead bodies is still believed to be highly dangerous to pregnant women.

It was noticed that the breathing of the ill became more and more difficult with the approach of death, ceasing entirely with death. Many ancients, particularly the Greeks, who used the word "Pneuma," as a name for the spirit, believed that the breath was intimately associated with the soul. Today Greenlanders burn everything which belonged to the deceased person and cremate the body almost before it becomes cold, avoiding, with the greatest care, the inhalation of any of the fumes, lest they breathe in the evil

spirits. They believe that there is danger of pollution until the smell of the corpse has entirely passed away.

Cremation, today, although gaining in favor with a few, is not widely used, because it seems to destroy all tangible evidence of the existence of a loved one. Many feel that cremation is a bit too suggestive of the consignment of souls to a fiery hell, while others maintain that the practice is unchristian, because the soul will be unable to find a body in which to greet the Lord on the day of the resurrection. Some reason that a body which once housed an immortal soul is too sacred for such barbaric desecration.

The Aryan tribes which followed the Iberian race in the East burned their dead and placed the ashes in urns built in the shape of huts, and these graves, known as "round barrows," have been found in ancient Aryan burying grounds during the last decade.

Fear of the dead caused the burning of bodies to destroy evil spirits. Many savage tribes, including some American Indians and many African peoples, preferred burning to earth burials. Some of the most primitive tribes to this day do not attempt to dispose of the body but run away, allowing it to rot where it lies; this practice prevails among certain of the Australian bushmen. Others throw dead bodies into the jungle to be

devoured by animals and birds. Some Mongolians throw their dead to a horde of dogs, wolf-like beasts, that inhabit barren spots just outside their city walls. The Zulus burn all the belongings of the dead to prevent evil spirits from hovering in the vicinity.

This fear of the dead is evinced in the Hebrew belief that one who touched a corpse was unclean for a certain period of time. One who had thus become unclean might become clean and mingle with his fellows only after elaborate ceremonies of purification. Orthodox Jews in many parts of the world still follow an ancient racial custom of allowing the spirit to escape from the house after death. The next of kin opens the window immediately after death that the spirit may escape. Various devices and practices were created by man to protect the living from the contamination of the dead.

The Navajo Indians smear their bodies with tar, believing that the evil spirits escaping from the dead body will not be able to penetrate the tar. Some savage tribes set up a circle of fire about the bodies of their dead to singe the wings of the spirits and prevent their attacking other members of the community. Other tribes throw spears and arrows into the air to kill vampires



and hovering spirits, and eat bitter or nauseous herbs to drive out spirits which get into their bellies.

The military custom of firing a salute of guns over the dead soldier's grave is today a tribute to the dead hero, however, it would seem closely related to the ancient belief of protecting the living from the dead, as herein related.

Some savage tribes believed that the spirit escaped from the body through the ears, eyes, mouth and nostrils. Hence the Marquesans held the mouth and nose of the dying person, hoping to prevent the spirit's escape and to delay death. The same custom is recorded of the New Caledonians. The Bagabos of the Philippine Islands put brass bracelets on the arms and ankles of the sufferer in an effort to shackle the soul. An echo of the Greek belief that the breath constitutes the soul is found among the natives of Celebes, who sometimes fasten fish-hooks in the nostrils of the dying, to catch the escaping soul.

The natives of the island of Carpathua never button the clothes of the dead, and remove all rings from the fingers, for they declare that the spirit "can even be detained in the little finger, and cannot rest." This belief was reflected in the frequent requests that were formerly made of undertakers that the shroud have no buttons or



fastenings of any kind. But the Funeral Director today generally dresses the body as it would be in life.

It is not improbable that the modern custom of covering the face of the dead with a sheet may be traced to the ancient belief that the soul leaves the body through the mouth. Its modern significance is entirely different, however lowly its origin. Savages of various tribes stuff the mouths of their dead with earth to prevent the return of the spirit.

The natives of Guiana dance upon the graves to stamp into the ground any evil spirits which might have dodged the earth clods as they were hurled into the grave. The Congo natives do likewise, and also keep fires burning over the graves for a month. Many Christians today burn a candle, or several candles, for weeks following the death of one of their family, a custom which is now symbolic, but which had its inception in a crude doctrine.

These fears and superstitions, however, exercised a tremendous power for good. Primitive man took precautions for health and sanitation which he did not understand, but we, today, have learned by scientific research the value of those early precautions, which have led to a better understanding of health regulations.

Striking archeological discoveries of the nineteenth century were due to the unearthing of the remains of men who lived in the very remote past. Geologists have established the fact that the earth has passed through four glacial periods in which the polar ice moved far southward. These periods were of great duration and were separated by warm periods, called the interglacial ages.



*Ancient Greek Grave*

It was during the second of these ages that the earliest human type arose, the so-called Heidelberg man. In the third age there appeared a race known as the Piltdown men, and toward the close of this era evidences of the Neanderthal men have been found. During the last glacial periods various races made their appearances. The course of their fortunes and the development of their arts may be traced with a measure of certainty by the implements and weapons which they left



behind. Through archeological discoveries we have learned a great deal about the habits and burial customs of different primitive men.

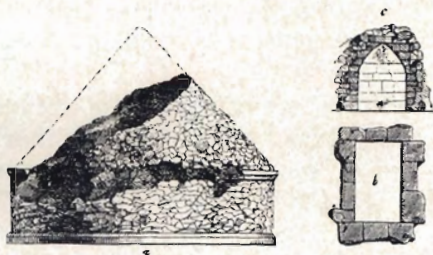
The first authentic records of earth burial date back to the latter part of the Paleolithic period (350,000-30,000 B. C.), and are indicated by the great number of human skulls buried in groups with stone weapons, trinkets, food urns, and charms.

The burial customs of the Neolithic period (30,000-6,000 B. C.), which are revealed by excavations and relics, point to a considerable mental development as shown by great burial caverns and barrows marked by megaliths or huge stone crosses. Of these, Stonehenge, in Wiltshire; and Carnac, in Brittany; are the best known. The graves were lined, sides and bottom, with stone slabs; and the bodies were buried in a sitting posture and a stone slab was placed over the top. Enormous mounds were placed over the graves surmounted by a megalith. As many as a hundred bodies have been found in a single grave, and thousands of urns, stone implements and trinkets have been uncovered in these ancient burial sites.

The early Vikings frequently buried their dead under inverted ships which were later covered with earth. One such Viking barrow was recently uncovered by an Oseberg farmer while cultivat-

ing his land. Similar barrows have been found in Greece, Asia Minor, Great Britain, Ireland, France, Spain, North Africa, and Italy.

Paleontologists, who conducted a recent expedition in the frozen north of Alaska in behalf of the American Museum of Natural History, report the most recent discovery and evidence of the burial of man during the Stone Age. On a frozen island, they found bodies preserved in a



*The grave of Tantalus in Ancient Lydia*

large wooden tomb which was constructed of logs, mortised and fastened with bone pegs. The vault was lined with well cured otter skins, surfaced by fine woven grass fabric. With these bodies were found weapons and implements and other prize possessions which were undoubtedly intended to be used by the deceased in the next world.

It is evident that the Stone Age Man, Mastodon, and Mammoth, all of which, according to



geologists have been extinct for thousands of years, inhabited this part of the world at the same time. Many of their remains have been kept intact in a frozen condition by the white glaciers of the North.

The custom of wearing mourning originated in the fear of the dead. Dr. James Frazier, an authority on matters relating to the superstitions, customs and social rites of antiquity, states that mourning costumes were originally worn as disguises. This explanation seems to hold true in all parts of the world.

Fearing the return of the spirits, the survivors, believing they would deceive them, either painted their bodies or wore strange and unusual clothing. They thought that the returning spirit, failing to find them in their usual attire, would be confused and would overlook them. Black was used in some parts of the world, brilliant red in other sections, and in others—particularly the Orient—chalk-white. Among Europeans black is the commonly used mourning color. Funeral directors in America are advocating the use of grey or neutral colors.

The men among the Blackfellows of Australia smear their bodies with pipe-clay, and the women cover their faces with a chaplet of bones. The Melahesian widow smears her face with mud and wears a costume of grass which covers her body

completely. The modern expression, "widow's weeds," may have here found its origin. Men and women in Guiana wear veils which cover them completely. The Congo Kaffir roasts a species of nut-oil until it becomes a paste and smears his body with the preparation. Among the ancient Celts all relatives of the dead painted their bodies black, that they might blend into the night and be overlooked by the spirit.

Many primitive peoples thought that handling of the dead was contaminative, and various ceremonials were devised to meet the situation. In the homes of Hebrews in many sections of the world the body is placed upon a floor which has been covered with straw; immediately after burial this straw is taken out and burned, and all those who have attended the rites wash their hands. Although this custom originated as a religious ceremonial, it has a high sanitary value. The ancient Jews wore sackcloth to denote their sorrow and to warn others that they were unclean. During some of the cholera epidemics in foreign countries, laws were enacted requiring the wearing of some identification to warn the public that the wearer had been exposed to disease.

Kaffirs, believing that they are contaminated when one of the family dies, and that they are endangering the lives of those about them, are

forbidden to mingle with their fellows for a specified period of time. This belief is common among most peoples and is perhaps the root of the modern social custom which grants the bereaved a period of isolation following a death. Some tribes in equatorial Africa tattoo and mutilate their bodies to proclaim that they have been contaminated by death. The Andamanese disinter bodies after a certain length of time and wear the bones in mourning, during which time they are religiously avoided by other members of the tribe.

Many authorities agree that the priest, who was undoubtedly a chemist or a doctor, directed the preparation of the dead for burial. Some historians state that when the embalmer had mastered his profession he was admitted to the priesthood. He then became the head embalmer or funeral director and was highly respected by his people. The workers who performed the menial tasks of embalming lived isolated lives. They were shunned because of superstition and fear aroused by their contacts with the dead.

The term "Undertaker" in ancient Britain meant a contractor, one who was willing to undertake the obnoxious task of preparing dead bodies for burial. The Funeral Directors in general throughout the United States are making an effort to eliminate the word "Undertaker," although many of our legal records, insurance affidavits



and statutes refer to the Funeral Director and Embalmer as an "Undertaker." Inasmuch as the profession is endeavoring to raise its standards and impress the fact upon the public, it would seem to justify co-operative effort on the part of



*Cliff grave at Myra in Ancient Lycia.*

the funeral directing profession to have the term "Undertaker" dropped from the modern vocabulary. In its place some believe it is much better to use the words "Funeral Director." A few believe that it is well to be designated as a "Mortician." To this day there are some who look with



revulsion upon the men who have dedicated their lives and talents to the work of scientifically preparing the dead for burial. This last service that human hands may do for those who have departed this life is deserving of a greater consideration.

Fear of the dead is again reflected in a custom of the ancient Greeks. They throw handfuls of dust upon a dead body on the battlefield, whether friend or foe, to prevent the spirit from following and plaguing the passerby. In China, a band precedes the funeral procession. The procession not only passes by the house of the deceased, but also his place of business. This ceremony is to entice away evil spirits and to free the premises of unwelcome spiritual guests. Some Orthodox Greeks also insist upon having the funeral procession pass by the residence and the place of business.

Among the ancient Romans there was a belief that death contaminated a house and all that belonged to it. A sprig of cypress or evergreen, therefore, was placed in front of the door as a warning. This custom is the forerunner of our modern custom of placing a wreath, crepe or flowers on the door of a home visited by death, and our custom of wearing a band of mourning about the sleeve or hat. These customs are gradually being discontinued as the public becomes enlightened as to their origin. Green symbolizes

the hope of immortality. Some of the modern fraternal societies use a sprig of evergreen or acacia in their burial services to symbolize the hope of immortality because of their perennial green color.

The body was covered with stones by some primitive tribes to prevent the evil spirit, which caused the death, from returning to harm the survivors. These stones also warned the living to turn aside. Later on it became a common custom to inscribe the names of the deceased on these piles of rock and stone. The custom of erecting monuments and grave markers is reflected in the traditional customs of some primitive tribes. Some African tribes, believing that evil spirits caused death, burned the house together with the dead. As a measure of economy, this practice was modified, and makeshift houses were erected to burn the dead. It is entirely possible that the funeral pyre may have found its origin in this custom.

Certain diseases frequently leave the ill in a state of coma which closely resembles death, from which the patient recovers after a number of hours, and in extreme cases, days. The Romans had a custom of washing the body in hot water and sprinkling it with fragrant oils for seven days following death, to awaken the deceased if he were but slumbering. The original "Irish

wake" was a precautionary measure to prevent, if possible, the accident of burying a live person. The belief that the soul of the dead might depart from the body for a short time and return gave rise to the custom of "sitting up" with the dead to be able to determine whether the person was actually dead or merely in a trance. Tradition has it that the wake grew into a hilarious occasion because St. Patrick, as he lay dying, begged his weeping friends to forego their grief and rejoice at his comfortable departure for another world.

The ancient Scots, Australians, Hebrews, French and Aztecs, all appear to have shared the custom of spreading fine dust about the body to discover the footprints of the ghost in the morning. If the watchers found the slightest trace of disturbance in the dust, they believed that the ghost had left the body. In Macedonia and the old Balkan states there is a common superstition that if a cat jumps over a dead body, that the spirit of the dead will be transformed into a vampire, and great precautions are taken against this possibility. The purely Slavonic races believe that if a boy jumps over a corpse it is fatal to the soul of the dead person. In the Kentucky mountains the flight of a bird into a house is a sign of bad luck, particularly an omen of death.



## CHAPTER III

### INSURING THE FUTURE HAPPINESS OF THE DEAD

The second step in the development of burial customs came in the increasing solicitude on the part of the survivors for the happiness and good fortune of the dead.

Belief in immortality was strengthened by the rapid development in religious thought, leading to a search for measures which would preserve the body, in the event that the spirit should return. Fear was displaced by hopes whereas the survivors had first disposed of the body as quickly and unceremoniously as possible, they now began to make provisions for the needs of the dead. Since there was no ability to think in abstract spiritual terms, as yet, these preparations consisted of providing for physical needs. Prehistoric man buried his dead with food and weapons at their side. He believed that the spirit would return sometime after death and would have need of these supplies.

For centuries, Greenlanders have buried live dogs with the bodies of their children, believing that the dog will find its way into the next world

and lead the child. This custom reveals a beautiful bit of sentiment for it displays their unwillingness to allow a helpless child to find its way alone.

Many American Indian tribes bury their dead in mounds, covered with wooden slabs or other protections. A small hole is always found at the head end of the coffin and in the wooden roof; this is to allow the spirit to come and go at will. One may find these burial mounds in various parts of Minnesota, Iowa, and other Middle Western states which were inhabited by the Chippewa, Ojibway, Menominee, and other Indian tribes.

Still other American Indian tribes buried their dead in crude boxes and hollow logs, placing these aloft either on boulders, suspending from trees, or on standards in order that the spirit might escape from the body. In some tribes the body was left exposed to the elements until the flesh began to drop, whereupon designated members of the tribe scraped the flesh from the bones, which were then placed on an elevated point and exposed to the wind and sun to be purified. Following this exposure, they were deposited in wicker caskets and buried in the tribal bone house. Then the bones were carried about as the tribe moved from one spot to another, in order that the spirits of the dead might not be deserted, and that the heroic dead would not be desecrated by enemy

hands. These conceptions represent a distinct advance over the fear and suspicion which the dead formerly aroused.

The distinguished member of a tribe became honored at his funeral ceremony as the development in thought continued. In ancient Abyssinia it was customary to have "mourning bees" whenever a person of rank or prominence died. The mourners would gather in a great circle in the center of the village and begin the ceremony by giving utterance to a low moan which gradually developed into a frantic display of grief, ending the ceremony by frenzied barbaric dances. This ceremony was invented in order to relieve the minds of the mourners and to allay their fears of the unknown. Most peoples, advanced beyond the rudimentary stages of life, have a history of ceremonies in which the slaughter of children, widows, slaves, animals, was associated with riotous orgies of feasting, drinking and dancing. Mingled with the rumble of drums, the wailing of wind instruments played a prominent part.

Ancient gods were held to be wild, daring warriors, quite like their worshippers in their jealousy, wrath and passion. It was not unnatural, therefore, that chieftains of unusual valor came to be regarded as gods after their death, and were worshipped with appropriate ceremonies and rites. Having known these gods in the flesh, the



survivors sought to win their favor with elaborate gifts and sacrifices. They brought offerings as a token of respect for the departed heroes, and from this practice arose the modern custom of presenting floral offerings at funerals. Today flowers have come to mean an expression of sympathy for the bereaved persons, and often represent the friend who is unable to attend the service. Since flowers express the sentiments of people, they should be handled with great care and reverence.

Burial rites which were inspired by fear, gradually evolved into ceremonies of pomp and solemnity planned for the benefit of the dead. The mourners sang and feasted, in order that the spirit of the departed might have a proper introduction into the next world. It was believed that kings needed a royal escort in the next world. Favorite slaves of the kings were killed and buried in nearby graves. Since kings would need wives in the next world, these were also gladly sacrificed for them.

The Egyptians entombed everything that the dead would need, such as food, jewelry, weapons, luck charms, seeds, medicines, chariots, boats, together with horses, cattle, medicines, cats and other animals. When slaves were buried it was customary to break their legs, obviating all possi-

bility of flight. The American Indian often interred the favorite horse or hunting dog beside the body of his master.

As civilization progressed, social customs became better organized and social ties grew stronger. The affection existing between persons came to exert a more powerful influence, and this is now reflected in the funeral customs. In the



*Sphinx and Pyramid at Gizeh, Egypt.*

Middle Ages, professional mourners were employed to precede the body and express, with loud wails, the grief of the survivors. This practice, though still followed in Europe, is seldom seen in America. The musicians who play at modern services, providing solace for the mourners, represent a modification of this custom.

Money is buried with the Chinese, to pay their passage into the celestial kingdom. A band accompanies the funeral cortege, and when possible, the funeral procession crosses a bridge, symbolizing the crossing of the river of life. The body is



sprinkled with water before the procession begins, and one of the mourners tosses a live fish into the river, so that it may spread the news that the water, taken for this purpose, has been returned. Simultaneously with the release of the fish, an urn of water is emptied into the stream.

When a funeral occurred among the Romans, a crier went through the streets announcing the fact, and the body was carried out of the house by the nearest male relatives, followed by the children, kindred and friends; all of whom were clothed in mourning garb. The next of kin delivered a funeral oration. When this was concluded the corpse was placed upon a funeral pyre and consumed by flames. When all was burned, the flames were quenched with wine, and then the ashes gathered and placed in an urn. Before returning to their homes the relatives stepped over the fire to insure their purification.

The band of the Chinese funeral finds its counterpart in an ancient European custom of tolling bells to frighten away unclean spirits in order that the dead may not be disturbed and that devout Christians may pause for a moment and pray for the repose of the departed soul. In Britain, as in Egypt, the town crier announced the death of a citizen and invited the community to the obsequies. He also headed the funeral ceremony, ringing a bell. In many communities it is



still customary to ring the church bell when a death has been announced. Neighbors then call at the parsonage to inquire about the death. The former custom of employing a crier is replaced, at the present time, by the publishing of the obituary notice.

Another custom which reveals interest in the welfare of the dead is exemplified in the Chinese practice of planting trees on graves so that the soul of the dead may be strengthened and guarded from corruption. The evergreen, cypress and pine are preferred for this purpose, since they are thought to have greater vitality than other trees. Some species of the yew tree are poisonous and have a gloomy appearance. They are used in certain sections of China and in other parts of the world for decorating burial places. Again in modern practice the evergreen is used in cemeteries because it symbolizes immortality through its unchanging color and verdure.

Among the Jews, as well as the Chinese, the egg has peculiar significance because it is held to be symbolical of resurrection. The Chinese place a hard boiled egg near the dead to facilitate the attainment of immortality, while the Jews smear the white of an egg into the hair of the body that is to be committed to the grave. As a further aid to the attainment of immortality, the Chinese bury a large red envelope with the dead body, in

which the soul is supposed to take refuge. The name, rank and moral standing of the dead person is written on the outside of the envelope. No detail of his earthly importance may be overlooked in this preparation for the new life. Priests of the Greek Church write a certificate of character for the dead, and place this "passport into eternity" in the casket with the body. Copies of texts which appear in the Egyptian "Ritual of the Dead," were inscribed on the inside of their caskets.

To this day the tradition persists among many Europeans that dire calamity will befall the soul of those who die by accident and whose bodies have not been properly buried. It was believed that one who died by drowning would wander along the shore of the River Styx until he was properly buried. The Greeks have a custom of placing a small coin in the hands of their dead to pay the fare over the River Styx, into which legendary river, all the tears flow, that have been shed in this world. Some Orthodox Jews place a small bag of dirt, preferably from Jerusalem, under the heads of their dead. If the head of the dead person rests upon a bag containing soil from some part of Palestine, then, according to Jewish belief, the soul of the deceased will be resurrected at the time of the appearance of the Messiah.

The Sakai, an aboriginal race of the Malay Peninsula, sought the most attractive burial place to be found, so that the souls of their dead might rest in peace. As the body was being carried to the burial grounds, it was supported on a stretcher made of poles and the skins of wild beasts. The body was buried in the earth, the clothes were burned, rice was sown over the grave and herbs and bananas were planted nearby to provide sustenance for the spirit of the departed. A miniature hut was then built at the foot of the grave as a home for the spirit. Every convenience, including a ladder for the use of the spirit, was included in the hut.

The ancient Persians and the Parsees built "towers of silence" on the hilltops far away from their dwellings. The dead were deposited on heavy gratings on top of these towers and left to the mercy of the vultures and other birds of prey. When the flesh was plucked from the bones, they dropped through the gratings to the floor below. When one tower became filled with bones another was built nearby. Several of these towers are still standing on Malabar Hill, near Bombay.

The belief that the spirit might wish to return to its physical shell, inspired many races of prehistoric men to take pains to preserve the bodies of their dead. The use of caskets and other receptacles developed out of this belief. The cas-



ket has taken many shapes and forms during the long ages. Mention of wooden coffins is found in the story of the burial of King Arthur of England, in 542 A. D. His casket, or coffin, as it was then called, was made out of an entire trunk of a tree. Some Chinese historians speak of the use of caskets for burial, many years before the Egyptian period. There are a number of interesting details concerning the construction of their caskets in accordance with the then prevailing superstitions.

The Chinese, like the Egyptians, were concerned about the durability of the material used in the making of their caskets. It has been estimated by an authority that wealthy Chinese have paid \$20,000, and perhaps more, for enough wood, of exceedingly durable species, for one casket. The high cost was undoubtedly due to slow transportation and lack of adequate tools and machinery. The caskets were custom built. Frequently the logs were submitted to prolonged treatment, sometimes up to a twenty-year period of seasoning, before they were manufactured into caskets. The casket makers displayed great skill and craftsmanship as wood workers. The various grades of caskets represented the wealth of the Chinese family.

The earliest fabricated wood caskets of which we have any record have been found in Egyptian

rock tombs. They were placed there, perhaps 1,000 years before the building of the pyramids. The caskets used for Egyptian nobility generally were made of heart wood of cedar and cypress. Like the Chinese, their caskets displayed remarkable craftsmanship and were works of art.

In contrasting the manufacturer of the modern casket with the process of making the Egyptian and Chinese caskets, it must be considered that, today, one man is doing the work which probably required hundreds or even thousands of men in the pre-industrial period. The present-day progress of industry has given us rapid transportation, wood-working machinery, kiln drying ovens for seasoning lumber, high speed saws and planers, waterproof glue, textile mills, blast furnaces, rolling and stamping mills, electrical welding, and chemical products of various kinds. These modern advantages have facilitated production, thus making the cost of appropriate burial, in our time, a mere trifle when compared with the expenditures of the nobility in ancient times.

The Egyptians, 4,000 B. C., and perhaps earlier, buried their nobility in caskets which were entombed. Writers on mythology speak of Osiris as being buried in a tree trunk. Patented coffins were introduced into Europe and America in 1796, and the first air-tight casket was invented in 1861. According to Thucydides, the coffins of

the Athenians were made of cedar, because of its aromatic and incorruptible qualities. The Romans used marble and other stones, and occasionally a peculiar stone brought from Assos, in Troas, which was said to consume all of the body except the teeth within forty days. Hence it was called "sarcophagus," which means in Greek, flesh-consuming or flesh-devouring.

The Hebrews provided for their burial places during their lives, and it was considered a great honor when one family invited another to use their tomb. Among the Chinese a casket is regarded as an appropriate gift for an aged or ill relative. The Chinese believe that they will be judged in the next world by the quality of the caskets in which they are buried. The son would sell himself into slavery in order that he might purchase an expensive casket for his father. Many orthodox Jews do not wish to be buried in caskets which contain glue made from animal matter, because such substances are regarded as unclean and polluted.

The question is often asked, "Why do we generally use six pallbearers to carry the casket at a funeral?" According to some students the number five was the symbol of vital spirit and man; and six, with the Chinese, was symbolic of



danger and, perhaps, approaching death. It is a well known fact that both the River Styx and the cross were emblematic of sorrow and death.

During the Middle Ages the use of six pallbearers to carry the dead was a symbolic custom. Today the use of six pallbearers is reflected in this practice. The use of extra pallbearers began in that age. It was the custom of the clergy to carry the casket on their shoulders while the mourners walked beside them holding the tassels of the pall. The pallbearing clergy were completely covered by the velvet robes or scarfs, and when weary, the relief bearers carried the casket. The modern honorary pallbearer is a survival of this custom.

Today the dead are usually buried with the head to the West, and the feet to the East so that they may face the East at the time of resurrection. Some modern cemeteries do not follow this custom. The early Aryan tribes, however, observed this custom, believing that the dead should face the East to greet the return of the spirit when it appeared with the rising sun. The Romans escorted their dead from the dwelling, feet foremost, toward the street in token of the fact that the dead had nothing more to do with life or the home. For some time before the funeral the body rested on a richly covered couch. Among the orthodox Jews the custom persists to

the present day; a sick patient is carried from the home head first, while the dead is carried out feet first.

It is interesting to study the designs and types of conveyances which were used in the various parts of the world to carry the caskets with the deceased to their last resting place. From them



*Funeral procession of Chow Tzu-chi.*

have gradually developed the modern hearse and funeral coach. The hearse has had its significant part in the funeral processions of all peoples of the world.

In the Far East and European countries, the peasantry and the poor were obliged to carry their dead to the graves. The casket of Chow Tzu-chi, the former premier of China, was placed in a catafalque which was temple shaped and covered

with rich crimson and gold embroidery costing several thousand dollars. This was carried by a relay of sixty-four men to the premier's last resting place.

Among the Roumanian peasantry, a crude farm wagon served as a hearse. The hearse in South American countries was usually a decorated horse-



*A Roumanian funeral procession.*

drawn coach. This type was also favored in many European countries. Funerals in Venice are distinctive for their use of the picturesque gondola, or especially constructed boat, in place of the hearse.

The funeral service of ex-queen Liliuokalani of Hawaii was a typical royal funeral of Hawaii, and the special symbolically designed hearse, drawn by the natives of the island, made a picturesque part of her funeral procession.



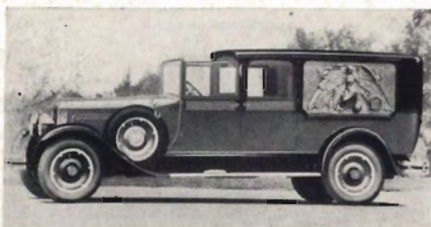
In northern Germany, during the winter time, a sled sometimes serves as a hearse. The gun carriage or caisson with its flag draped casket and guard of honor is a distinctive feature of a typical military funeral. In France, there are



*The Royal Funeral of Queen Liliuokalani of Hawaii.*

nine types of horse-drawn hearses available, depending upon the price which is to be paid. The funeral processions of America show contrasting simplicity. There is an impressive dignity reflected in the funeral service, dress and funeral equipment of the American people.

Within the past generation, we have witnessed the passing of the black horse-drawn hearse and the first automobile hearse with their old-fashioned ornateness of carved embellishments. The modern limousine hearse, or funeral coach, with



Courtesy Sayers & Scovill Co.

*Manufacturers have designed a new hearse, reproducing in bronze the "Angel of Memory" in order to bring back the lost language of Symbolism and to restore dignity of appearance to the funeral cortege.*

all its simplicity, has become a part of the practical funeral equipment for up-to-date service.

Symbolism, referring to cherished memories in honor and reverence, however, is of vital significance to man. Therefore, it is not advisable entirely to abandon symbolic representation.

## CHAPTER IV

### GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE SCIENTIFIC PREPARATION AND CARE OF THE DEAD

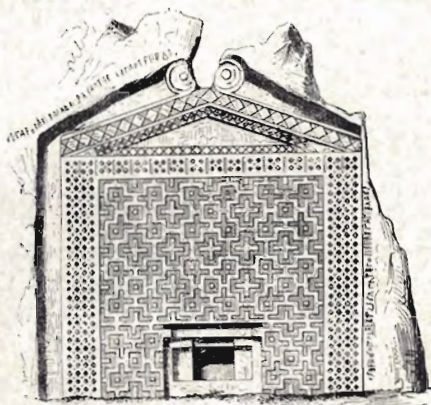
The modern funeral service is devised to serve a two-fold purpose, protection and sanitation for the living, and solace and sympathy for the bereaved persons.

In ancient Egypt it was customary to cast upon the body a handful of sand, repeated thrice, a custom which is still observed among the moderns, though with different significance, in the "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," ceremonial at the grave. Many clergymen and funeral directors have sought to soften the implications of this rite by using flowers instead of earth.

The Greek priest, in token of the body's return to the dust from whence it came, throws a spadeful of earth into the open casket and sprinkles olive oil and wine on the body before the casket is closed. This is a reversion to the days when bodies were burned on a funeral pyre, when precious oils were burned with the remains, and the flames extinguished with wine. The Greeks



considered it an act of great disrespect to pass anyone bareheaded, and wear their hats at all funeral services. As reminders of the days when Christians held their meetings and funerals underground to escape the wrath of Roman emperors, the Greeks carry candles at funeral serv-



*The grave of King Midas of Ancient Phrygia.*

ices. Orthodox Jews wear their hats at a divine service believing that they should not stand before God with uncovered heads.

During the Middle Ages the dead were often buried near or under the church, in order to console the bereaved persons and to insure the reward of the dead. These burial grounds were

always east or south of the building, a practice existing today in country churchyards. This was done to provide a sunny resting place for the dead. Murderers and suicides were always interred (if burial in the churchyard was allowed) on the north side of the church, away from the sun. This regard for the sun seems to be a relic of sun-worship, the north side of the church being considered a place of eternal darkness. In Switzerland and in many other European countries the body of a suicide or executed man was always buried at the junction of crossroads, where crosses indicating the direction had been already erected.

The process of embalming is the most common method of caring for the dead. This art seems to have been originated and practiced by the Egyptians, who used it in 4,000 or 5,000 B. C., and perhaps earlier. When one considers the warm, dry climate of Egypt, it is not difficult to understand the success of those ancient embalmers. The Egyptians are generally thought to be the masters of this art. Embalming owes some of its popularity to the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. The tribe of the Gaunches, of the island of Teneriffe, an off-shoot of the Berbers, embalmed their dead and sewed them in several layers of goat skin. Some eminent historians are of the opinion that they learned

from the Egyptians and Phoenicians how to preserve human bodies by the use of lumps of balsam and resinous substance.

Desiccated bodies, preserved by atmospheric conditions or by artificial means, have been found



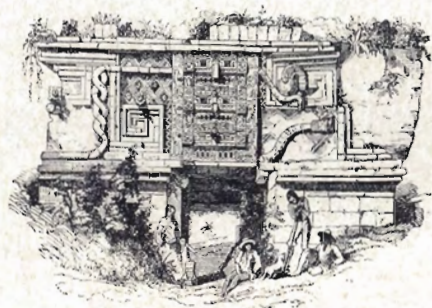
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*In Mexico, a special flat car supplied by the local street railway line is sometimes used as a hearse. Relatives and mourners follow in trolley cars, specially decorated for the purpose. Ex-President Obregon attended the funeral pictured above which is that of Jesus Ureuta, late Mexican minister to Argentina.*

in France, Sicily, England and America. In Africa the Loango tribe smoked their corpses as a preservative measure. In Central America and Peru many mummified remains have been found which have evidently been preserved because of favor-



able natural conditions. A specimen of natural mummification was unearthed, not many years ago, along the banks of the Missouri River, in South Dakota. The body of an infant had been weighted down with copper ornaments, and it is presumed that the chemical action of the copper, which is a natural preservative, had produced the mummification. The body had turned green (the



*Las Monjas Ruins from the Ancient Mayan Civilization at Uxmal in Yucatan.*

typical copper color), and with the exception of a slight desiccation of the flesh, the specimen is considered perfect.

The art of embalming, as taught by the early Egyptians, was probably never wholly lost in Europe. Tribes in Europe and Asia were attracted to Egypt because of its wealth and climate at various periods during the time that the art of

embalming was flourishing. They carried back to their native lands some of the Egyptian teachings of embalming. The Phoenicians who were under Egyptian rule for a time, also carried back the art of embalming to Greece and Italy, and other countries of Asia.

The body of Edward I, buried in Westminster Abbey in 1307, was found entire and in a good state of preservation in 1770. The body of Canute, who died in 1031, was found to be in excellent condition when disinterred at Winchester Chapel in 1776. The bodies of William the Conqueror and his wife, Matilda, were found entire at Caen in the 16th century. The two most perfect specimens of embalming, known at the present time, are preserved in the Royal College of Surgeons in London; one being the body of Van Butchell, preserved by Dr. John Hunter, who injected camphorated spirits of wine into the veins and arteries; the other being the body of a young woman who died of consumption in the Lock Hospital in 1780.

In 1880 Chaussier discovered the preservative power of corrosive sublimate, the use of which causes animal matter to become hard, grey and rigid. His discovery ushered in a new era of embalming, but owing to the desiccation of the flesh, the features did not hold their shape. Then

followed the discovery of the preservative power of a mixture of equal parts of acetate and chloride of alumina, or the sulphate of alumina, by Gannal in 1834, and of arsenic by Tranchini. These dis-



© Ewing Galloway

*In Japan, cremation is the general custom. Note that the funeral palanquin is temple-shaped and painted white. Pall-bearers wear pure white kimonos. Only the Shintoists bury the bodies of their dead in Japan. Buddhists bury the ashes in the yards of their temples.*

coveries led to the application of these chemicals for the embalming of bodies which were to be kept for a comparatively short time. Until recently ice was used to preserve the body tem-



porarily. Chilling the body retarded the action of the gas-forming and putrefying bacteria which produce chemical changes within the body.

No nations have surpassed China and Egypt in the duration of their national life. Millions were spent annually in these countries in the preparation and care of their dead and for the materials used in the construction of caskets and tombs. These huge sums represented much time, labor, and material; the fruits of which were distributed among the laborers and craftsmen throughout the country.

While these millions seem like large sums when spent by a nation in order to perpetuate the national life through the burial and honor of the dead, it is apparent that they were expended for a more noble purpose than if like sums had been used in conducting warfare, as other nations have done. May we not enlarge upon the Bible statement and in the light of history say, "Honor thy ancestors and the life of the nation shall be long."

Confucianism was responsible for the restoration, in the fifth century B. C., and for the perpetuation of the ancient Chinese funeral customs and ancestral worship which has been referred to in preceding chapters. There has been little change, if any, in their funeral rites and burial customs in the past 2,500 years.

The Egyptians frequently held their bodies for a considerable period of time, exhibiting them at entertainments and public occasions as a reminder of the transient nature of all humanity. The Persians embalmed their dead in wax, the Assyrians used honey for the same purpose, and the



Courtesy Southern Funeral Director

*The funeral hearse in South American countries is usually the decorated horse-drawn coach favored by many European countries. In this picture, taken in Buenos Aires, it is palm-decked and drawn by eight horses. Mourners follow in coaches.*

ancient Jews employed aloes and spices. Alexander the Great was embalmed in honey and wax, and entombed in a casket of solid gold. The body of Jesus was anointed with precious oils, em-

balmed in aloes and spices, and swathed in a long linen sheet which was wound about the body many times.

Much of the success of the Egyptians in embalming may be attributed to the dry climate. The great enemy of flesh is bacteria, but these cannot multiply when moisture is excluded. The ancient method of embalming was simple. The intestines were drawn out through an incision in the side, and the brain was removed through the apertures of the nostrils. The priest used a hooked wire for this operation. The cavities were then filled with a mixture of balsamic herbs, myrrh, cassia and other materials. Balsams were injected into the arms and legs. At a later date the Egyptians began filling the cavities with aromatics, saline and bituminous stuffs and then soaked the body in a solution of nitre, after which it was wrapped in long strips of coarse cloth which had been smeared with pitch. Sometimes, instead of making incisions in the body, the priests injected cedar oil. The dead of the poorer classes were salted. The Egyptian process of embalming required from forty to seventy days for completion, and its effectiveness is attested by the fact that mummies still exist in the museum at Cairo which are elastic and soft to the touch, despite the passage of two or three thousand years. Embalming in Egypt practically ceased



about 700 A. D., and up to that time it has been estimated that at least 730,000,000 bodies were mummified. According to Rawlinson who quotes Herodotus, 420,000,000 bodies are calculated to have been mummified between the years 2000 B. C. and 700 A. D., in Egypt.



Courtesy Southern Funeral Director

*The gun carriage with its flag-draped casket and guard of honor is the distinctive feature of military funerals which the war made familiar to many of us. This picture illustrates the funeral procession of a British officer.*

Cremation then became the method of disposing of the dead, and substitute bodies were manufactured out of the ashes of the dead. This custom did not meet with favor, and was followed by earth burial without embalming, a practice which persists to this day.

According to Herodotus, the most reliable of the ancient authorities, three methods of embalm-

ing were customary among the Egyptians. The first method cost approximately twelve hundred dollars and consisted of the removal of the viscera and the cleaning of the abdomen with palm wine, then filling the cavity with the herbs already mentioned. The body was then steeped for seventy days in a solution of *natron*, a neutral carbonate of soda which is found in the natron lakes of upper Egypt. The body was then washed and swathed with long strips of gummed cloth.

The second method, which cost about five hundred dollars, consisted of injecting cedar pitch (liquid distillate of pitch pine) into the abdomen. This pitch had a corrosive effect and dissolved the viscera. The body was then steeped in natron.

The third method, reserved for the poor, was far simpler. The abdomen was rinsed with *syrmaea* and allowed to steep for seventy days. Priests took charge of the dead at all stages until the swathing, an operation reserved for especially trained workers. If the dead man had been wealthy, the internal organs were preserved in glass jars, four in number, which were buried with the mummy.

The first jar, with a head like that of a human, contained the stomach and large intestines; the second jar, with a dog-headed lid, contained the

smaller intestines; the third jar, jackal-headed, contained the lungs and heart; the fourth jar, hawk-headed, contained the gall and liver.

The Egyptian funeral was an elaborate ceremony. The mummy of Tutenkhamon was enclosed in three coffins. Portraits of the dead were also interred with the mummies that the mummy



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*Funerals in Venice, Italian city of lagoons, are distinctive for their use of the picturesque gondola in place of the hearse. Five or six black and gold gondolas form the cortege, the first carrying the crepe-hung coffin with pall-bearers who wear black uniforms trimmed with gold braid. One of the islands, two miles north of the city, is known as Cemetery Island, and has been used for burial purposes for centuries.*

might be recognized even though injured. To this day, some occasionally place a life photograph of the deceased in the casket with the body.



Dr. William Harvey, an English physician, who discovered the circulation of the blood about 1615, opened the way for scientific embalming by the use of the artery and vein. It became a common method in the United States during the Civil War period, though it can be traced back to about the middle of the 18th century.

Until quite recently the Hindu widow was required to sacrifice herself on the funeral pyre of her husband, but this custom has been abrogated by the British government. The widow now shaves her head, gives away her jewels and valuables, and retires from social life to become a menial servant in the home of her mother-in-law. The Egyptians also shaved their heads and did not mingle in society for a short period of time. Among the Tacullies, the widow constantly carries the ashes of her husband with her for two years, and may remarry after that period. Certain North American Indians require the widow to cut her hair, and forbid remarriage until the hair has grown out again.

Modern social custom excuses mourners from all social obligations during the mourning period, and etiquette requires that certain colors be worn during this time. An authority upon this question writes, "For three weeks after a bereavement women seclude themselves and receive no

visitors except their most intimate friends. After this they are expected to be sufficiently resigned to receive calls of condolence from friends and acquaintances. They make no visits until six months after the death. The length of the mourning period depends upon the tie which existed between the deceased and the bereaved. In the case of an elderly woman whose husband has died, and who never intends to take off the black; the longest period is usually two years, the first year in deep mourning, and the next year in 'second mourning'; during which time grey, lavender and white may be worn. This may be shortened to six months of deep mourning, followed by six months of semi-mourning."

Today, many persons do not go into mourning for more than a few weeks. Customs change with time and many people do not believe in wearing mourning garb of any kind.

## CHAPTER V

### THE MODERN TREND OF EDUCATION FOR FUNERAL DIRECTORS: COMFORTING THE LIVING

The modern funeral service strives to perform a two-fold duty—protection and sanitation for the public, and solace and sympathy for the bereaved persons. The progress of the Funeral Director, to serve the public better, and to aid the members of his profession, has been accomplished primarily because of the practical application of scientific knowledge. Science has made rapid strides during the past century, and the Funeral Director has enlisted the sciences to aid his profession. He realizes that a comprehensive training course, such as that offered at the University of Minnesota, produces trained men who will be capable of leadership in their profession.

Customs of funeral rites of the people throughout the world have been dominated by their superstition and fear of death. This is a natural instinct which is inherited from our ancestors and education alone can lessen our dread of these.

Men take chances and gamble with death many times in their every day lives, yet, until such



time as the Grim Reaper finally overtakes one of their family circle or social group, they reservedly withdraw from anyone who has dedicated his life to funeral directing. When this sad occasion arrives they seek comfort from one who has been trained to render this service. Through contact with the Funeral Director, in the hour of need, the public is showing greater appreciation for his services. People have gradually learned to discriminate between different types of Funeral Directors and their institutions, just as in other lines of endeavor.

The histories of all professions reveal the fundamental truth that organized effort, directed toward educational requirements, has resulted in higher standards. The student who is of high caliber will be benefited by systematic education, and will become a potent factor in raising the standards of the funeral directing profession to a still higher plane. When he is admitted to the profession he obligates himself to maintain its dignity, and to extend its field of usefulness. These obligations require loyal and cheerful adherence to the ethical principles which govern his work. He must have moral character and must conduct himself as a worthy member of his profession. He must realize that he is in contact with humanity in its hour of deepest grief, when

only a spiritual ministry can afford relief. In order to accomplish this end, therefore, he must not forget his solemn duty in behalf of the stricken, ever maintaining an attitude in keeping with the standards of the profession. The Funeral Direc-



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*When President McKinley was buried at Canton, Ohio, in 1901, the horse-drawn hearse shown above was the most up-to-date funeral vehicle. In the last 25 years, it has become practically obsolete, being replaced by the automobile hearse. Today, the automobile hearse is being rapidly superseded by the simple, dignified motor coach—a development climaxed by the new-type Studebaker Funeral Car.*

tor is entrusted with the most intimate secrets of his clients, and must accept this confidence as a sacred trust. Any breach of such a trust is a betrayal of confidence and is a stigma upon his personal and professional honor.

The Funeral Director of today will serve better his clientele if he will bear in mind the importance of considering his work from a professional rather than a business point of view. Yet it may be said that both are essential for success. If considered only from a business point of view, the profession is likely to become commercialized. On the other hand a professional man can also be a good business executive.

Today there is a general improvement in the *name* used to designate an establishment engaged in funeral work. Only a few years ago it was a common custom to refer to such establishments as "Undertaking Parlors." In keeping with modern ideas, Funeral Directors are generally designating their establishments by the use of the words "Mortuary" or "Funeral Home." "Mortuary" literally means a place for the preparation and care of the dead. Fault cannot justly be found with the use of this term. This word is generally applied to an establishment exclusively designed and equipped for this particular work and for the comfort of the bereaved. The name "Funeral Home" is generally thought of as a residence place.

The attitude of the public, as well as of the funeral directing profession, is changing as it becomes enlightened in respect to the customs sur-



rounding the burial of the dead. The day of the undertaker, clad in Prince Albert coat and high



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*In the cities of the Near East, particularly in Greece, Asia Minor, Turkey and Balkan countries, the spectacle of a man carrying a black-covered coffin is common. For the poor, this is the only means of conveying the body to the grave. Among the very poor, a relative performs this service but an effort is always made to hire a carrier from the coffin-supplier.*

silk hat, clumsily attending to the last needs of the dead, has passed. One of the tasks of the

Funeral Director is to banish the mental suffering caused by the practice of ancient customs. When he is called into the home visited by death, he should offer his services unobtrusively. The undertaker of the past, merely handled the mechanical details of burial. His work consisted chiefly of making and selling caskets and transportation of the deceased to the burial grounds. The friends and relatives of the bereaved family attempted to care for most of the detailed arrangements. Today, in the course of the various phases of a funeral service, the modern Funeral Director performs more than one hundred twenty-five items of service for the bereaved family.

The universities of our country, which are operated for service and not for profit, have been largely responsible for higher professional standards. Various professions have raised their standards through the invaluable aid of these educational institutions. The National Embalming Boards of the United States, recognizing the need of educational background in the profession, require that students taking courses in funeral directing and embalming, in an "A" class school, must have four full years of high school education, or its equivalent, as a prerequisite.

The university, in order to develop a course of instruction for professional training, must devote

a great deal of time, co-operation and effort to its task. Gradually, through findings of practical experience and research, members of the faculty who specialize in the major subjects offered, become authorities on their subjects. Through the practical application of their teachings the student gains a more comprehensive understanding of his profession. The school of funeral directing and embalming at the state university may tap the resources of other colleges in the university.

The medical school gives courses in anatomy, thus offering to the student in funeral work an opportunity to familiarize himself with the organization of the body, the functions of its organs and blood circulation. An understanding of bacteriology qualifies the student to practice sanitation in his work, and to guard against the action of the various bacteria or molds which are responsible for the organic changes which take place in and about bodies of the dead. The student informs himself about the action of pathogenic bacteria which produce diseases in man, and acquires knowledge concerning nonpathogenic bacteria which bring about the discomposition of dead bodies. The study of pathology gives knowledge as to the nature of diseases, their causes, their action, and their effect upon the body. The Funeral Director co-operates with the medical



profession by aiding physicians in autopsies. The autopsy increases scientific knowledge for the direct benefit of the physician, the Funeral Director and the public in general.

A knowledge of chemistry explains the chemical changes which take place in the body, before and after death, as well as in many of the acts of everyday life. There is nothing mysterious about chemistry; various phenomena are explained by a study of this science. A knowledge of chemistry is an invaluable adjunct to the equipment of the embalmer and Funeral Director.

From the Department of Public Health the student gains knowledge of the principles of first aid, health laws and regulations, preventable diseases, public sanitation, vital statistics, and hygiene.

A knowledge of the fundamental principles explaining the reconstruction of the physical features of the body, and the importance of color and light, all-important in derma-surgery, is drawn from the Department of Fine Arts through the teachings of the sculptor and artist at the university. The elements of artistic choice and arrangement of colors, as taught in the University of Minnesota, are important factors in the makeup of funeral furnishings and in the arrangement of flowers at funerals.

The Department of Psychology gives the student knowledge which enables him to direct and comfort the bereaved. Psychology may be applied in our daily lives, for it is the science of human behavior. It plays an important part in the study of grief, explaining that the bereaved are not sorry for the deceased, but sorry for themselves, heartless as this explanation may seem.

The commercial side of the student's training is not overlooked. He is taught Business English, the fundamentals of commercial and funeral law, the elements of accounting, and knowledge of operating costs. These subjects are in the curriculum of the School of Business.

The student from lectures in the Department of Forestry learns the quality and resistance to decay of various woods used in the construction of caskets and boxes. The School of Mines provides information concerning the merits of various metals used in burial goods. From investigations along these lines he is enabled to distinguish those metals which are the least susceptible to corrosion, and the effect of soil conditions on all materials, including cement. This research work has improved the style, quality, and design of funeral furnishings and service.

The course in embalming and funeral directing teaches the purpose of embalming, the effect of

decomposition and putrefaction, the effect of fluids upon the various capillaries and tissues of the body, the causes of discoloration, the proper treatment of the tissues of the body, the importance of proper precautions when communicable diseases have caused death, the correct preparation for transportation of the dead, the use of plastic surgery and of cosmetics, the management of funerals, and the ethical business procedure. The course is the result of the combined experiences of practical Funeral Directors and Embalmers, coupled with scientific principles.

The elements of business also enter into the funeral directing profession because, in addition to rendering service, the Funeral Director sells merchandise. Since public opinion is slow to change, especially in anything pertaining to death, the Funeral Director has followed the lines of least resistance. He has become skilled in the art of proper preparation of the body for burial and has educated the public as to what they should expect from that angle, but he has neglected to lay the proper foundation in the mind of the public for his system of charging. The Funeral Director himself is responsible for this because, until very recently only a few members of the profession were conversant with the cost of service, and the details of cost in their own estab-



ishments. The public, apparently, was not concerned about how the funeral director should be reimbursed for overhead expenses. The Funeral Director was content to let the old order of pricing the casket continue. In this way his costs would be covered and he could make a reasonable profit



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*In France, there are nine types of horse-drawn hearses available, at varying prices. All are supplied by a private concern, La Societe des Pompes Funebres, which has a monopoly on funeral direction. This hearse, used in the funeral of Theophile Delcasse, eminent statesman, is one of the most expensive. Note the carved embellishments and silver-broidered draperies. General Joffre is the third figure from the left.*

for himself. He was slow to change for fear that the public would not understand that they must pay for service as well as for merchandise;

and he feared that some unscrupulous competitor would criticize and take undue advantage of his adherence to modern business methods.

Today many Funeral Directors are attempting to correct the situation by quoting the client their total charge. This quotation includes complete directorial and personal services, mortuary ambulance and hearse service, scientific preparation and care of the body, all mortuary facilities including the casket, and outside box or vault selected for that particular service. By this method, the client is not so likely to be misled.

During our present economic age, some members of social reform and other groups, and of the legal profession have sought to attack the Funeral Director because of the spread between the cost and the selling price of the casket. Due to lack of understanding, in many cases, the Funeral Director has been unable to properly justify his charges. As a result of this he has been the subject of considerable disfavor on the part of some of the public. As a matter of fact, funeral services and merchandise have cost the public relatively less than the merchandise or services rendered in many other well reputed lines of endeavor. Well conducted mortuaries today are giving greater service and better merchandise to the public for less money than ever before in the history of funeral customs.



Because the casket previously was allowed to represent the reimbursement for the major part of the service, an opportunity was left for the unscrupulous and insincere to go into the work of funeral directing with the impression that considerable profit could be made.

The funeral directing profession, as a National group, have neither expended large sums of money nor engaged high salaried executives in order to educate the public concerning the costs, numerous details and duties involved in their work.

It is a well known fact that practically all other professions are thoroughly organized not only in order to educate the public but also to prevent misrepresentations which inevitably produce false impression.

Ignorance is the cause of our troubles, but knowledge brings peace and happiness to all mankind.

The public is gradually replacing the old idea that "he who will may enter," with the new and proper idea that "he who is prepared may enter." This is due to the higher standards of modern education. The modern, properly trained Funeral Director is now selling his services complete, including the casket instead of selling the casket and including his services.



In summing up the qualifications and duties of the modern Funeral Director we learn that:

He must prepare his mind in a professional way by study and by apprenticeship in order to care for the bodies entrusted to him.

He must keep his services available twenty-four hours a day, and three hundred sixty-five days a year, regardless of weather conditions or transportation handicaps.

He must leave the sick in his own circle to attend the needs of others, and his social activities must be thrust aside when his services are requested.

He must select and equip a place of business consistent with the requirements of his locality; and he must bear in mind that it must be a civic improvement as well.

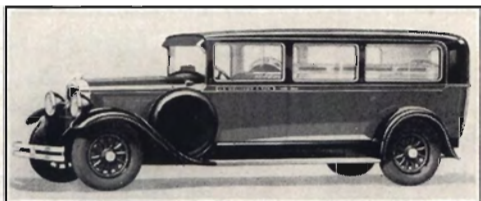
He must carry on hand materials covering a wide range of quality and prices in order to satisfy his clientele.

He must have well selected equipment and keep it in a high state of efficiency in order to avoid annoyance to his clients.

He must remember that it is the living to whom he renders his service and that he must create a satisfactory memory of all circumstances connected with the occasion in which he was con-

sulted. Having technical knowledge, his recommendations are necessary in the choice of materials.

He must be alert to the advisability of conservative expenditures for the financially distressed, and honorable enough to overcome the temptation to oversell the bereaved because of the mental condition prevailing at such times.



Courtesy The Studebaker Corporation of America

*A Modern Automobile Hearse*

He must be capable of guiding those accustomed to unusual quality and of holding himself above reproach in counsel and authority in matters peculiar to his own profession.

The value of knowing Why, When, and How to do the things required in connection with a funeral service is far in excess of the fees formerly charged by the average Funeral Director. Surely these services are as important as the materials and the merchandise employed.

Funeral directing is an art. Embalming is changing from art to a science. The professional embalmer links up the scientific with the practical, calling upon both science and a vast knowledge gained from experience. Modern science is being applied to the present-day methods employed by funeral workers. A concrete example illustrates this: Years ago ice was used to preserve bodies, halting momentarily but not checking the action of bacteria. Decomposition followed. Today the Funeral Director, knowing that bacteria causes the decomposition or chemical changes of bodies, marshals the resources of science to combat this natural tendency

The work of the modern Funeral Director and Embalmer is a great blessing in our present day. The profession is above commercialism, and next to religion, it is a man's haven in time of the death of a loved one.



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