

THE MOMENT OF DEATH.

Despite the wise teachings and noble example of Socrates, and despite the positive assertions of the best medical authorities, most people look with fear and trembling toward the moment which separates time and eternity for mankind—the moment of death. Physicians have long since established the fact that death itself is a relief, a beautiful and by no means painful transition, but they have also laid stress upon the fact that this dissolution must not be confounded with the symptoms of disease which precede death.

The question as to what transpires in mankind during the approach of death has been the subject of many studies and researches, and quite recently a number of French scientists, among them V. Egger, Dr. Sollier, and De Varigny, have collected material that could be reached upon this point, and published it in a pamphlet just issued in Paris. Naturally, the material is but scant, but it nevertheless furnishes an interesting contribution to the great issue—the moment of death.

The French publication gives a number of statements by intelligent and observing persons who were rescued from death at the last moment. These statements are confined to accidents and do not refer to exhaustion resulting from old age, but even in the case of the latter the experts claim to be justified in the assertion that where the power of life gradually fades away death is no more painful than in the case of people who in the fullness of vitality confront the great destroyer.

A number of the instances cited in the publication are connected with the experiences of lion hunters in Algiers, who have been actually within the grasp of the claws and the terrible teeth of the king of animals.

Similar experiences are related by persons who were in imminent danger of drowning. One of them, a physician himself, tells how his boat capsized in a rushing stream and how he, after heroic but fruitless efforts to save himself, redoubled by the knowledge that he was rapidly carried toward a roaring cataract, drifted unresistingly in a sort of peaceful, semi-consciousness until rescue came. In all these instances, where accident brought people of well balanced mind face to face with death, there is the one consensus of thought that before the mind's eye of such people all the important events of their life, almost their entire life, so to say, passes in a moment. This is in accordance with life in a dream, where a single instant suffices to comprise an almost endless chain of events.

LIFE CROWDED INTO A MOMENT.

Professor Heine of the Zurich University, an indefatigable mountaineer, had the experience of a fall into a steep abyss. He was rescued by what seemed to be a miracle, and he immediately set to work to gather the experiences of others who had been in the same position. They all agreed.

"What I felt in the few seconds of my fall," says Professor Heine, "would take hours to relate. All thoughts and mind pictures were of a marvellous distinctness and clearness. A long train of means to break the tremor first, and next there passed before my first, and next there passed before my mind all the events of my life, realistic as in a kinetoscope."

Whymper, an English Alpine tourist of renown, fell from a height of over 200 feet. "I was perfectly conscious of what happened to me," he states, "and I counted every jolt I got from protruding cliffs, but, like a chloroformed patient, I felt no pain. Each repeated jolt, of course, was greater than the preceding one, and I remember quite well how I calculated that if the next jolt should be still more severe the end would come. But the most wonderful experience was that in this tremendous rush through space the air pressure, which must have been terrible, was not at all disagreeable."

Admiral Beaufort of the British navy relates what he felt when he once fell overboard. "From the moment my efforts to save myself ceased," he said, "the awful thought of death passed away like magic and gave place to perfect rest. This was apathy, pure and simple, and not resignation, for it never occurred to me that drowning was a misfortune. I did not think of rescue and yet I did not suffer. On the contrary, my sensations were rather pleasant."

Darwin, who as a competent observer has few peers if any, relates that he once fell from a garden wall only 7 or 8 feet high, and he says that a production of the thoughts which passed through his mind in the brief moment of the fall would fill a volume.

NO VISIONS FOR CHILDREN.

If these phenomena of panoramic views of past life are closely examined, the French scientists say, the conclusion is irresistible that the visions are limited to a few scenes which are later on enlarged by the imagination. Children, whose life comprises less numerous and clearer elements, never have these reminiscences. Almost invariably their only thought is that they will not see their parents again. This is illustrated by numerous examples, though there are exceptions cited in the publication, notably that of a French educator, who in his boyhood was unusually bright,



UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIAL.

Dear Sir,
Quite recently I was induced by a friend to try a packet of your "Gimme Cold" Cigarettes, since when I have smoked no others.
Yours etc., Tommy Jones.

almost precocious, in fact. He fell into a well when he was a boy of eight years, and this is the way in which he relates his experience, in after life, of course:—

"When the weight of the water jar carried me down I was conscious of a long space of time until I gathered my thoughts sufficiently to think of rescue. I thought I might gain a foothold on one of the protruding stones of the walls of the well and then to climb upward on hands and feet. Immediately the idea came to me that this effort would be futile and that I would die. I remained motionless while the water rushed into my mouth and ears with a tremendous roar. It was in this moment that numerous episodes of my life passed by (defile) my mind with inexplicable rapidity and in kaleidoscopic form. I use the expression 'passed by' advisedly, because it appeared to me that these pictures were not simultaneous. Moreover, I think I can say that I did not see a complete cycle of events, but that there were breaks and that the pictures had a certain rotation, chronologically reversed. Besides, the visions were unusually distinct, clear, and plastic. I saw myself objective, as if I were somebody else. I saw, as far as I can remember, scenes from a trained dog show I had witnessed a few days prior to the accident, little scenes from my school life, quarrels, and a competition for an award, but all this I saw as the experience of somebody else."

Dr Sollier reports the case of a confirmed opium eater, a girl of unusual brightness in her sober moments. He treated her after the method which cuts off the use of the drug at once, and which involves repeated stages of unconsciousness of the outer world. After each return to her senses the patient, who was firmly convinced that she must die, stated that her sensations were not only free from pain but positively beautiful.

Usually the death struggle is painless. The dying complains rarely. Even if consciousness appears to be clear, the dying are in the past rather than in the present, and the perfect rest which is often taken as a product of a strong will power is in reality a sign of absolute insensibility. "If I only had the power to wield a pen," murmured the dying William Hunter, "I would use it to express how easy and restful it is to die!"

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HOW NOT TO BE A CRIMINAL.

If I were asked, says Mr Nisbet in "The Human Machine" what quality would best safeguard one from committing murder, I would unhesitatingly answer—sensitivity of character—i.e., a quick perception of, and a ready sympathy with, the sufferings or wrongs of others. To be able to strangle or drown a little child for the sake of a paltry pecuniary gain implies a callous cruelty of disposition happily rare. In a burglar also, callousness, extreme callousness, is a far more necessary article of equipment than a jemmy or a loaded revolver. If you are going to think how unfair it is to the victim to have his brains battered out for attempting to defend his property, you had better renounce that line of business. The murderer's nerve is shown no less in the dock and on the gallows than in the commission of his misdeed, and it is not unlikely that to the last he feels less than the normal observer gives him credit for. Given a certain moral blindness, an inability to perceive or weigh distant probabilities, a lack of sympathy and a desire for some object lying within reach, and you have the born criminal's character. Je l'ai assez vu, il pent crever is the sentiment with which he regards every human being who does not minister to his convenience. Otherwise it would be incredible with what lightness of motive the most atrocious of crimes may be committed.

SAVING SYLLABUS.

A good story concerning Sir Henry Hawkins is told in one of our Japanese exchanges just to hand. He was once practising before Lord Campbell, who was somewhat pedantic. In addressing the jury Mr Hawkins, when referring to a brougham, pronounced the word with two syllables—bro-am. "Excuse me," said His Lordship, blandly, "but I think that if instead of saying 'bro-am' you were to say 'broom,' you would be more intelligible to the jury, and, moreover, you would save a syllable." "I am much obliged to Your Lordship," quietly replied Mr Hawkins, and proceeded to bring his address to a close. Presently the Judge, in summing up, made use of the word "omnibus." Instantly up rose Mr Hawkins, and exclaimed, "Pardon me m'lud, but I would take the liberty of suggesting that, instead of saying 'omnibus' Your Lordship would say 'bus,' and you would then be more intelligible to the jury, and, besides, you would save two syllables."



"Hi! Biffle: You're stopping the traffic. The Doctor's broom's coming up the street!"

"The Onchunga Borough Council has confirmed a resolution providing a penalty of £5 for persons who shall 'impede the traffic in any street, road or road, within the Borough of Onchunga.' The idea that anything could possibly impede traffic in Onchunga is decidedly grotesque."