

EIGHT PERSONS SUFFOCATED IN A RAILWAY WAGGON.

By Surgeon E. O. TANDY, *Civil Surgeon, Loodiana.*

ON the 21st of December, about 8-30 a.m., a telegram was received at Loodiana, stating that eight men had been found dead in a waggon belonging to the S. P. and D. Railway Company at the Sutlej station.

The waggon was brought to Loodiana, where it arrived about 1 p.m.; it was an ordinary iron waggon, which, with the doors closed, appeared almost air-tight; the floor at one end, for a distance of about 4 feet, was covered with 3 inches of earth, evidently to allow the men to cook without endangering the wooden floor: on this were four *choolas* built against the side of the waggon, and several cooking pots carefully arranged; on the boards were lying the bodies of seven men in various comfortable positions, more or less on their backs, as if they had just settled down to sleep. One man, about the centre of the waggon, was supported on his hands and knees, with his face resting on his crossed arms. All but one had evidently vomited some undigested food; the vomited matter was confined to their faces and their clothes, and the floor close to their mouths. At the mouth and nose of one there was a considerable quantity of froth, and the one on his hands and knees showed marks of having bled from the nose. The countenance of each was placid; all were dead and perfectly stiff.

The history given was that the men were all servants of the Railway Company, and had retired to the waggon to cook their food and spend the night. As they did not appear on duty in the morning at daybreak, the overseer sent to have them aroused, when they were found as described. It was stated that the door was found partially open; but this appears doubtful, as one of the bodies was reclining against the door in such a position that, had it not been for the rigidity produced by the rigor mortis, the weight of the shoulders must have pressed open the door and the body would have fallen out.

It is unnecessary to detail the *post-mortem* appearances of each, and circumstances such as pleural adhesions, enlarged spleen, &c.

The ages of the men varied between 15 and 45; all seemed to have been strong, healthy men. The bodies were quite rigid; there was no ecchymosis or mark of violence. The mouths of seven were besmeared with undigested matter; the mouth and nose of one with froth, and of another with blood. The conjunctivæ of all but two were suffused; pupils natural. From the penis of one, on turning over the body, about 30 drops of fluid resembling semen escaped, but under the microscope spermatozoa could not be detected. In all cases the scalp was congested, and on removing the calvarium blood in large drops was seen scattered over the dura mater. The sinuses were full of fluid blood; large vessels swollen with bright colored blood traversed the pia mater in all directions. The brain substance was natural in consistency, but on being cut shewed numerous bloody points. The ventricles contained an unnaturally large amount of fluid. In each case the pericardium contained a large quantity of serum, varying from about two to almost 4 oz. The vessels of the heart were swollen and prominent; the heart was greatly distended; in the right auricle and ventricle was an enormous quantity of fluid blood, and in all but two were large soft fibrinous clots—left side empty. Pleuræ healthy; lungs congested, especially posteriorly, except in the case of the man found on his hands and knees, in which the congestion was pretty equal all over the lungs. In all the stomach was greatly distended, and contained a large quantity of undigested matter, similar to that found about the mouth; the stomach was healthy; external surfaces of small intestines redder than usual. Liver, spleen, and kidneys, were more or less congested.

The opinion, arrived at was, that the men had been suffocated by the fumes from the fires in the *choolas* after having partaken of a heavy meal and gone to sleep.

From the position of the men it was evident that they had died quietly, as they lay asleep, after having eaten their supper; and from the fact of the vomited matter lying only about the faces and in positions in which it would have fallen without any effort at expulsion having been made, it is probable that sickness occurred after they had become insensible.

It is more probable that the man found on his hands and knees fell asleep in that position, than, as suggested by the bystanders, had made an effort to rise, and fallen dead, hurting his nose in his fall, as his position with regard to the others appeared to have been selected, and had he tried to rise he would most probably have fallen on his side and not remained with his buttocks elevated in the air as he was found: moreover, his forehead resting on his arms prevented his nose touching the floor—the amount of blood was not larger in amount than is seen in cases of hanging exude from the nose.

Only one man frothed at the mouth.

Only one had not vomited, three also had passed fæces.

Fibrinous clots were found in the hearts of all save two.

In only one was there an apparently seminal discharge.

There was no protrusion of eye-balls, or tongues, nor clenching of hands. Not one appeared to have made the slightest struggle.

LOODIANA, 25th January, 1873.

THE HEART, IN A CASE OF POISONING BY ARSENIC.

By Surgeon E. O. TANDY, *Civil Surgeon, Loodiana.*

ON the 16th of October last, the body of a man, said to have died from cholera, was brought to the Loodiana Dispensary for report.

Deceased was about 40 years of age; death occurred 26 hours before examination; the body was in perfect preservation and well nourished; no external marks.

The heart was full of coagulated blood, natural in size and appearance, with the exception of the left ventricle, the interior of which presented an appearance I had never seen before; there was no sign of inflammation, but in the muscular structure of the ventricle and in the columnæ carneæ there were extravasations of bluish blood, resembling recent bruises, over which the endocardium was seen perfectly healthy.

My suspicion being aroused, I examined the stomach and intestines, in which I found very considerable congestion, principally in patches.

The other thoracic and abdominal viscera were healthy in appearance.

Some of the contents of the stomach—a reddish brown, frothy fluid, and portions of the liver were sent to the Chemical Examiner, Lahore, who found distinct traces of arsenic.

Sub-Assistant Surgeon H. C. Banerjee was present at the *post-mortem* examination, and was equally struck with the peculiar appearance of the heart. The crime of murder was proved in this case, and a man and woman suffered the extreme penalty of the law.

LOODIANA, 6th January, 1873.

[On this subject see *Indian Medical Gazette*, Vol. I., pp. 252, 302, and Vol. II., p. 75.—Eds. I. M. G.]

Honor to whom Honor is due.—We are glad to observe that Surgeon Henry Walter Bellew, of the Indian Medical Service, has been made a Companion of the Star of India for services in Seistan. This is the second time this decoration has been bestowed upon an officer of the Indian Medical Service, Dr. Fayer being the first recipient. Our service now contains 3 C. B.'s and 2 C.S.I.'s. While acknowledging with gratitude these evidences of appreciation of the services rendered to the State by medical officers in India, we cannot help thinking that there are others in our service who have well deserved a similar recognition of valuable services rendered in the cause of humanity and science.