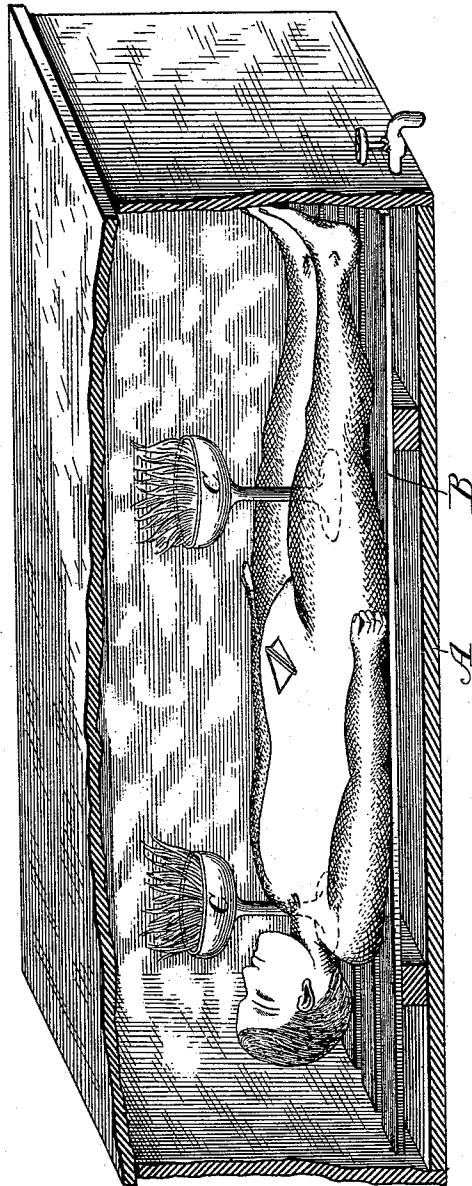


(No Model.)

G. H. HAMRICK.
METHOD OF PRESERVING CORPSES.

No. 466,524.

Patented Jan. 5, 1892.



Witnesses:

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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

GRAHAM H. HAMRICK, OF PHILIPPI, WEST VIRGINIA.

METHOD OF PRESERVING CORPSES.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 466,524, dated January 5, 1892.

Application filed September 19, 1888. Serial No. 285,808. (No model.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, GRAHAM H. HAMRICK, a citizen of the United States, residing at Philippi, in the county of Barbour and State of West Virginia, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Methods of Preserving Corpses; and I do declare the following to be a full, clear, and exact description of the invention, such as will enable others skilled in the art to which it appertains to make and use the same, reference being had to the accompanying drawing, forming part of this specification.

My present invention relates to that class of processes or methods of embalming in which sulphurous-acid gas is employed.

It is the object of my invention to provide a more simple and economical method, which can be readily practiced by any one without especial skill, as it involves no delicate operations requiring anatomical knowledge, and which in its results in preserving the body for a great length of time in a natural condition is remarkably effective.

In order to make my invention clearly understood, I will now proceed to describe in detail that manner of carrying the same into effect, which I prefer as being the best now known to me.

My method is adapted to the preservation of other animal bodies than human; but I will describe my method as applied to the embalming, for permanent preservation, of an adult human body. A box is provided capable of being tightly closed of sufficient length to hold the body, wide enough to permit the latter to be turned (from face upward to back upward, and vice versa) within it, and about twenty-eight inches deep. A solution is made consisting of water, saltpeter, and the absorbable fumes arising from the combustion of sublimed sulphur in the following manner: One gallon of water is placed in a suitable vessel having walls rising to a considerable height, say, one foot or more above the surface of the water so placed. I then place about one table-spoonful of sublimed sulphur on a suitable metal shelf or other support, such as a small float, within the vessel, and having ignited the sulphur close the vessel tightly. The sulphur will be quickly consumed; but the

vessel should remain covered until the desired absorption of the heavy fumes shall have taken place—say for one hour. I then take four ounces of saltpeter and, having dissolved the same in one quart of boiling water, pour the solution, when cold, into the solution already described which is within the closed vessel. The body to be embalmed is then incised in the abdomen, say, just below the navel. It is necessary to make but a small incision, about two inches long, in doing which care should be taken merely to penetrate the cavity of the lower portion of the trunk and not to sever or cut into the intestines. The body is then turned over to permit the escape of any fluids which at the time may be found within the cavity, and when the same has been so drained the body is placed face upward within the box above described, resting upon a lattice at about two inches above the bottom of the box, thus permitting the access of the preserving-gases upon all sides. The incision in the abdomen is then pressed and held open by a small stick or prop and the cavity filled by as much as it will hold of the solution already described. Upon a suitable shelf or support within the box are now placed two table-spoonfuls of sublimed sulphur. I prefer to use two such supports, one at the side of the head of the body and one beside the abdomen or between the thighs, placing one table-spoonful of the said sulphur on each support. The sulphur is then ignited and the box tightly closed. The supports should be of such height as to hold the burning sulphur above the general level of the top of the body.

In the accompanying drawing, forming part of this specification and illustrating a practical means for carrying my invention into effect, is shown a sectional view of the apparatus. In said drawing, A indicates the box, B the lattice or equivalent support for the body, and C the supports, shelves, or vessels for the sulphur. Every six hours the box is opened and the supply of sublimed sulphur is renewed, ignited, and left to burn in the closed box, as before. Every twenty-four hours the body is turned face downward and left to drain for six hours, the solution thus escaping from the cavity of the abdomen into

the bottom of the box. It may be drawn away from the latter by a suitable stop-cock or plug. During this six hours sublimed sulphur is burned, as before, within the closed box, subjecting the back of the body to the free and thorough action of the preserving-gases. The body is then turned, the cavity of the abdomen again filled with the solution, and the sulphur burned over it in the closed box as before. Where the preservation of the body for a short time only is desired—say for two or three weeks—the above-described treatment for twenty-four hours will ordinarily be sufficient. If preservation in very warm weather be necessary, a forty-eight-hour treatment, using two applications of the solution, may be adopted. If permanent preservation be desired, the above-described procedure is followed for, say, five days, using five applications of the solution to the cavity of the body. For this the quantity above mentioned will not be sufficient, and either a larger quantity of the solution will be made in the first instance, or it will be renewed, as may be found necessary. After the last portion of the solution shall have been emptied from the cavity, the burning of the sulphur will be continued as before, only it may be at longer intervals—say every twelve hours. The body should be turned to drain away any fluids which may gather and to expose the back, every three or four days. This treatment, without the further employment of the solution, I have continued for thirty-five days with satisfactory results; but I am of the opinion that a shorter time will suffice for permanent preservation of the subject, especially if it be below the average size. During the operation, while the body is filled with the solution, I keep the incision open in order that the solution may continue to absorb the preservative fumes and transfer them to the interior of the cavity; also, after the application of the solution has ceased I continue to keep the incision open to admit of the direct contact of the preservative gases with the inner walls of the cavity.

When it is desired to effect the embalmment by a short procedure, the cavity of the thorax may be treated as already described in the case of the cavity of the abdomen; but I have not found this to be necessary.

In case a swelling of the intestines supervenes, which may take place if the embalm-

ment is not begun soon enough after death, they should be removed. Ordinarily, however, this need not be done.

Subjects preserved by my procedure above set forth involving treatment for the longer period of about forty days, have been kept for many months through the hottest weather, in the open air, in a perfectly natural condition, and without any decomposition. I am unable to assign any limit to the continued preservation of such embalmed bodies.

I am aware that sulphurous-acid gas has been heretofore used for preserving or embalming bodies, and I do not claim, broadly, the use of such agent.

Having thus described my invention, what I claim is—

1. The herein-described method of embalming, consisting in partially opening a cavity of the body, subjecting the interior of the body to contact with a solution containing a mineral salt and submitted to the fumes arising from burning sulphur, as set forth, and subjecting the body in a closed chamber and while the interior is so filled or in contact with said solution to contact with the fumes arising from the combustion of sulphur, substantially as set forth.

2. The herein-described method of embalming, consisting in partially opening the cavity of the body, subjecting the exterior of the body to contact with the fumes arising from the combustion of sulphur, subjecting the interior of said cavity to contact with a solution of saltpeter impregnated with the said fumes, and finally subjecting both the exterior of the body and the interior of said cavity to direct contact with said fumes, substantially as set forth.

3. The herein-described method of embalming, consisting in partially opening the cavity of the abdomen, subjecting the exterior of the body to contact with the fumes arising from the combustion of sulphur, and subjecting the interior of said cavity and the exterior of the bowels to the alternate action of a solution containing saltpeter and of said fumes directly, substantially as set forth.

In testimony whereof I affix my signature in presence of two witnesses.

GRAHAM H. HAMRICK.

Witnesses:

H. N. Low,

E. K. STURTEVANT.