

Death-like Trances

A TRANCE may be so like death as to deceive a doctor, and there is real danger that persons may be buried in this condition. One may know what is said and done around and yet seem to be unconscious; and it is not easy to believe the exquisite torture given to the soul that lies able only to know, but not to make a sign.

Dr. C. W. Larison, of New Jersey, is a man of wide experience and culture. He has been a minister, a professor, and a doctor; and in another way his experience has been extended, for he has lived long and endured trying sicknesses. In a book that he is about to give to the world—not his first, by any means—in answer to the question, *What is the Soul?* this gentleman has been giving remarkable testimony as to death-like trances among other things.

To begin with, take his own illness in 1875. It began with pneumonia, and erysipelas followed. He carefully instructed his nurse what to do in the whole course of the disorder, even to death, should that ensue. Then sight failed, then feeling was numbed, taste departed, and smell was not. He could not move a muscle or “cognise anything which did not come to the sensorium through the ear.” He heard, as if far away, what a physician said. Then came a period of silence, and he “deliberately, calmly, painstakingly questioned whether he was alive.” He had no pain. The only thing of which he was conscious was that he was thinking. But at the sound of the physician’s voice, “at once,” he writes, “I knew I was among the living.” Doctors came and said he was unconscious, and would soon be dead, which was declared to be a certainty. He heard and keenly resented all this; and records with great detail the progress of his psychological conditions throughout. He has outlived the five physicians who pronounced him extinct.

Next, look at the case of Mr. Hofforb, in 1894, with neuralgia in the heart. Pulse at the wrist, heart-action, respiration, ceased to be perceptible. The muscles were limp, and

the body chilly. A doctor, hastily called, had pronounced him dead. When Dr. Larison arrived, they were about to wash and lay out the body. “Not too fast here! Leave these clothes on!” he said, rather sharply; “I don’t have my patients dressed in grave-clothes, nor buried, until they are dead!” “Why, doctor, he is dead,” said the medico who was first there, a man of forty-four years’ practice; “the man is dead. See his eyes; and there has been neither pulsation nor respiration during the last hour; and then the temperature of the body has already fallen some degrees—he is dead.” Dr. Larison’s reply was in doffing coat and vest, and doing all he could “to help the life-force to again move the lungs, heart, and other parts of the machinery of a human being.” The other doctor withdrew in indignation, and others left. “Doctor, he moved his eyes!” cried by-and-by the patient’s business-partner and friend. “Doctor, he does move his eyes!” said another watcher. “Then one saw this sign of life, another that; one would help the doctor this way and another that; some wanted to speak joyfully to the patient, some to carry good news to those who thought him dead. There was sensation in the room, but the doctor kept all quiet. On regaining his powers, Mr. Hofforb was definite in asserting that he heard what was said in his presence all the time, and knew that the doctor and others had said that he was dead—knowing better than the patient himself, like the Irishman of the story. He recognised his own doctor’s voice, claiming him as his charge, not to be buried till dead; had heard his wife and partner exclaiming as signs appeared of returning life, though he did not know that eyes, or hands, or feet, had moved, and felt that he could not move them.

Other instances are given. But these are enough to indicate that there is a remoter citadel of life in the body than is often calculated upon, a reserve of life-force which may be at very low ebb and yet not dry. There may be a flow after lowest ebb-tide. The fear is that in some cases this hope may not be sufficiently counted upon. H. R. R.