

J. SHANNON.
Coffins.

No. 212,273.

Patented Feb. 11, 1879.

Fig. 1.

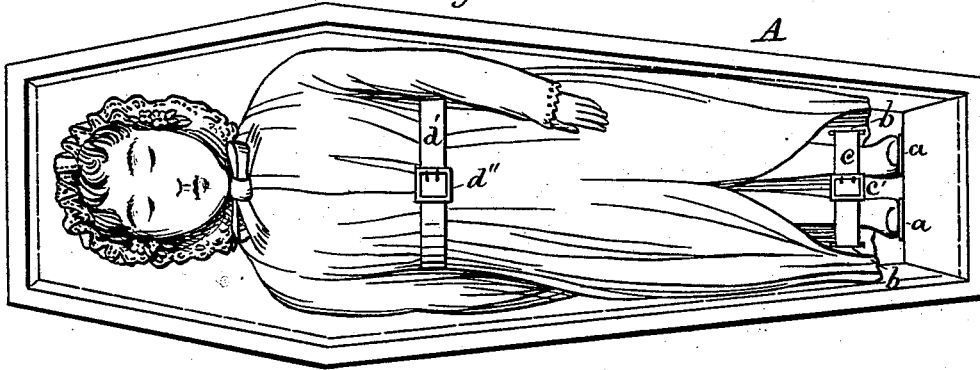


Fig. 2.

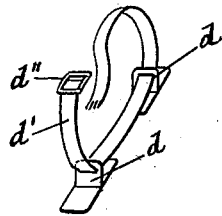
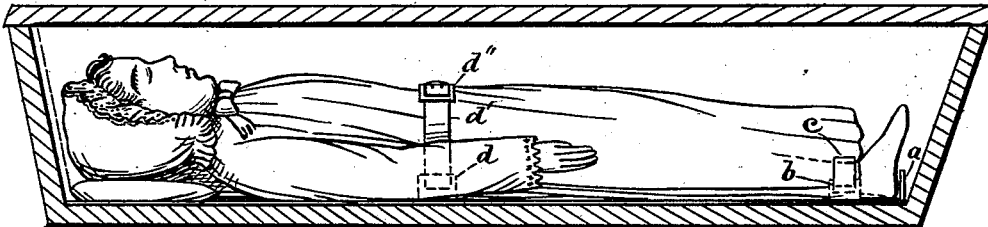


Fig. 3.

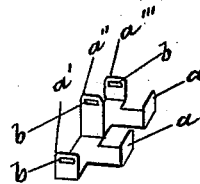


Fig. 4.

Witnesses :

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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

JAMES SHANNON, OF BALTIMORE, MARYLAND.

IMPROVEMENT IN COFFINS.

Specification forming part of Letters Patent No. **212,273**, dated February 11, 1879; application filed December 11, 1878.

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, JAMES SHANNON, of the city of Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, have invented certain Improvements in Coffins and Burial-Caskets, of which the following is a specification, reference being had to the accompanying drawings, and to the letters of reference marked thereon.

The object of the invention is twofold: First, it is designed to prevent the displacement of the corpse in the coffin after the closing of the lid and during the transfer of the remains down a flight of steps or stairway to the ground-floor of the house, when the corpse is apt to slip to the lower end of the coffin, and also to steady the remains in the casket while in the hearse and on the route to the cemetery or place of interment. It is well known to undertakers and others having charge of the final disposition of deceased persons that, where the coffin is opened at the grave or vault, the remains rarely present the same appearance, or are in the same position as when first placed in the casket.

Secondly, this invention aims to frustrate the efforts of persons who, from motives of cupidity, attempt to remove the remains from the grave.

That the nature and utility of my invention may be the better understood, the mode of operation practiced by "body-snatchers" or "resurrectionists" may be briefly explained as follows: The operators, having reached the grave and ascertained the point exactly above the head of the corpse, employ a post-hole digger, or similar implement, first sinking it into, and then drawing it up with, the earth until the coffin is reached. A large hole is thus cut in the earth immediately over the head of the corpse. The coffin-lid is then battered open, and the subject drawn to the surface by means of a hook placed under the chin.

In the description of the invention which follows, due reference must be had to the accompanying drawings, in which—

Figure 1 is a plan view of a coffin, showing the invention applied. Fig. 2 is a longitudinal section of the coffin, also showing the application of the invention. Figs. 3 and 4 are perspective views of the appliances constituting the invention, as hereinafter set forth.

A is the body of the coffin, at the foot of which are secured stops *a*, projecting vertically from the bottom of the coffin, and against which the feet of the corpse are placed. Forming parts of said stops are uprights *a'* *a''* *a'''*, the flat faces of which are at right angles to the faces of the stops *a*, and set back some distance therefrom. In the said uprights are eyes *b*, through which a retaining device, preferably a strap, *c*, having a buckle, *c'*, is passed, the strap binding the ankles of the corpse.

The central upright, *a''*, serves as a dividing-piece between the ankles of the deceased, each of which rests in a space between said central upright and one of the outer uprights, *a'* or *a'''*. The central upright is preferably made higher than the outer ones; but this construction need not be adhered to.

At the waist are two inverted T-shaped appliances, the central members of which constitute uprights *d*, the said appliances being secured to the bottom of the coffin at such distances apart as will allow the deceased person to rest between them, and having eyes through which a retaining device or strap, *d'*, provided with the buckle *d''*, is carried, and fastened around the waist, as shown. The uprights *d*, resting against and immediately forward of the hips, would receive and effectually resist such strain as would be necessary to draw the corpse from the coffin.

The effect of these simple devices is to prevent the displacement of the remains in the coffin, either when carried down a declivity or in a hearse, while it is evident that the body cannot be taken from the grave by body-snatchers except by first removing all the earth from the coffin—an undertaking which would be too lengthy and laborious to be attempted.

I claim as my invention and wish to secure by Letters Patent of the United States—

1. The foot and ankle rest herein described, consisting of the stops *a* and uprights *a'* *a''* *a'''*, provided with eyes, substantially as specified, the said rest being adapted for use in connection with a suitable retaining device, and to be secured to the foot end of a coffin or burial-casket, for the purposes set forth.

2. The waist attachment herein described, consisting of a pair of inverted T-shaped appliances, the central members of which form

uprights *d*, the latter being provided with eyes, as shown, the said attachment being adapted for use in connection with a suitable retaining device, and to be secured to the bottom of a coffin or burial-casket at or near the center of its length, or just above the hips of the occupant, for the purposes set forth.

In testimony whereof I have hereto subscribed my name.

JAMES SHANNON.

Witnesses:

WILLIAM G. RAY,
E. PRATT SPEAR.