

Cases, Coffins and Caskets! Many months ago the writer drew forth from an interesting gentleman a number of stories concerning the trials and tribulations of men engaged in the business of manufacturing the items listed at the outset of this wandering item on the three "C's" — Cases, coffins and caskets and the last word is the one most popular among manufacturers today. There was a time, not too far in the past, when the number of men in the manufacture of "bury boxes" were comparatively few in number, but as the population increased, so did business as more people passed on to the Great Beyond. As time flitted by and people had better jobs and bigger business, the demand for better and better Caskets became pronounced.

Today there are more in the business of manufacturing and competition in respect to sales is keen. However the manufacturers who turn out a first class article, have proven to be the most successful.

Getting back to the human side of the business, one manufacturer related an incident where a man who was gifted in handling tools, made a home-made casket for himself and for his wife. He did the work in his spare time and rather enjoyed the experience. The oak was from trees on his farm. The first casket was for himself, the other for his better half (and she was well aware what was being made.) The workmanship was good and the farmer - carpenter even made the long handles, which he padded in order that they would be noiseless. The oak containers took a real polish. When the caskets were finished they were stored in the Casket factory, where they were carefully lined and trimmed with the best materials. A couple of years passed and then the man passed away and not too long afterwards the wife also passed away. The two caskets were used.

Today many materials used in trimming and fitting are imported.

The Second War had quite an effect on the business. For one thing the War Department demanded all the surplus metal in the country and coffin name plates passed out of use, except in a few isolated cases where Funeral Directors include the name plates and charged plenty of money for them. Some of the Casket Manufacturers had their own engraving machines, articles which have almost disappeared.

At times manufacturers are called on to turn out extra large caskets and these jobs are always attended to with alacrity.

It is interesting to note that the number of caskets for children are considerably less in number in recent years and for this decrease it can be said that the medical men are responsible for the number of deaths among children that has been lessened to a very large extent because of scientific achievements and skilled medical men.

The story is told of a farmer who lived at Little Britain. He had a large number of beautiful cherry trees on his farm. The trees were cut to the ground and hauled to the casket manufacturer who carefully turned out two very fine cherrywood caskets which were later on used for the gentleman and his wife. It was not a case of not having the collateral but one of sentiment.

While on this morbid subject there are many people who believe that the dead should be buried with their feet facing the east and others that they should face the north. There is also an idea that when a man and wife are laid aside in their last resting place that they should be interred in the same manner they were married, side by side but the man on the right and the woman on the left.

A funeral director has a lot of secrets locked up in his head concerning incidents of interest. Like the time when there were two bachelor brothers. One died and he had considerable money while his brother had very little of this world's goods. When the deceased brother was resting in the coffin the remaining brother approached the Funeral Director and asked if he had

noticed a lot of money anywhere — the dead man never used a bank. The Director said that the money was under the pillow, put there at the dead man's request. Then the mourning brother pulled out a cheque book, wrote out a cheque for the amount and remarked "Put this under the pillow, my brother will not need the money where he is going and I do need the money."

Morbid perhaps but to a certain degree also interesting.