No. 858,684. PATENTED JULY 2, 1907.

W. S. UPSHUR.

COFFIN FOR PRESERVING CORPSES ABOARD SHIPS.

APPLICATION FILED NOV. 20, 1906.

2 SHEETS—SHEET 1.

Fig. 1.

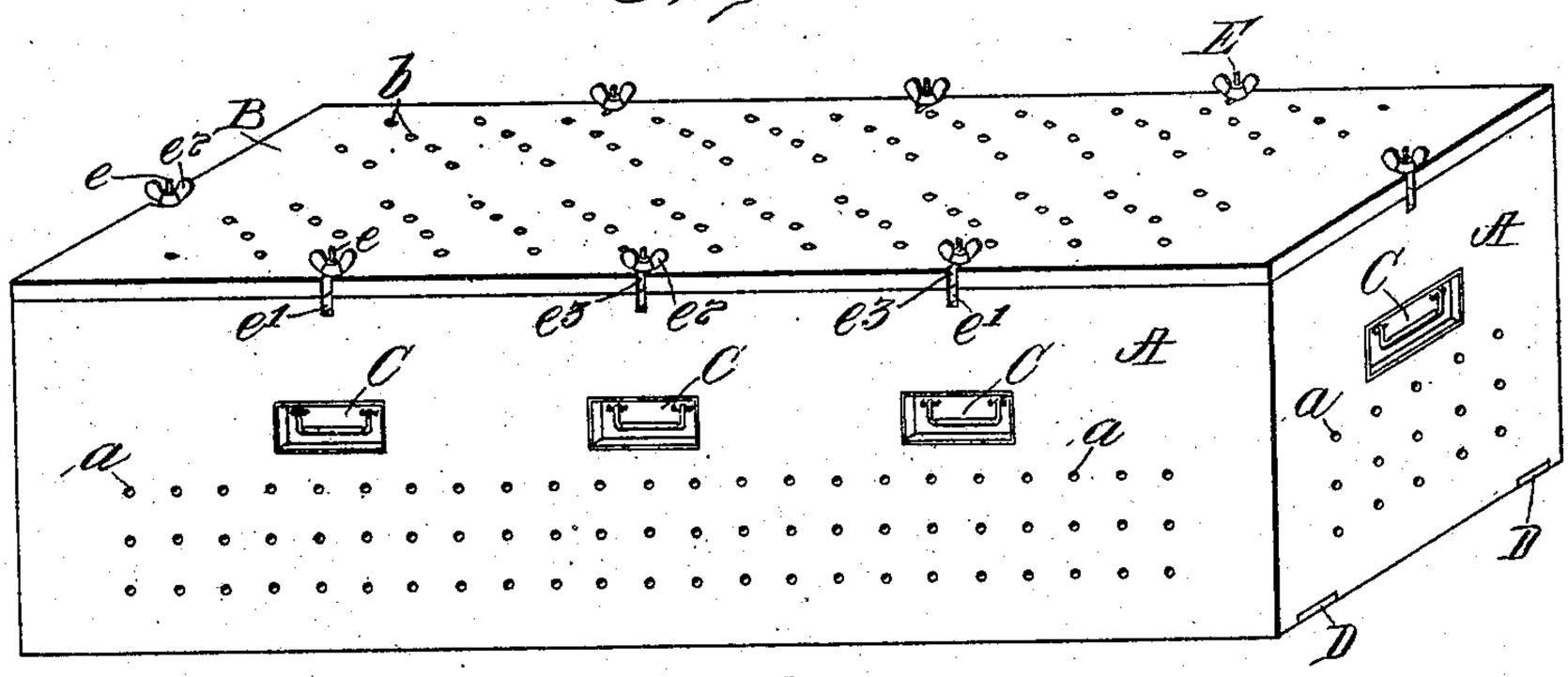


Fig. 3.

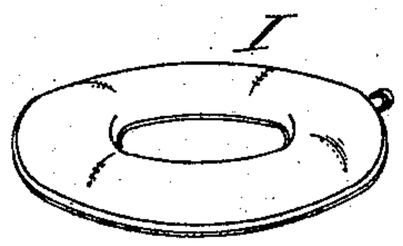


Fig. 2.

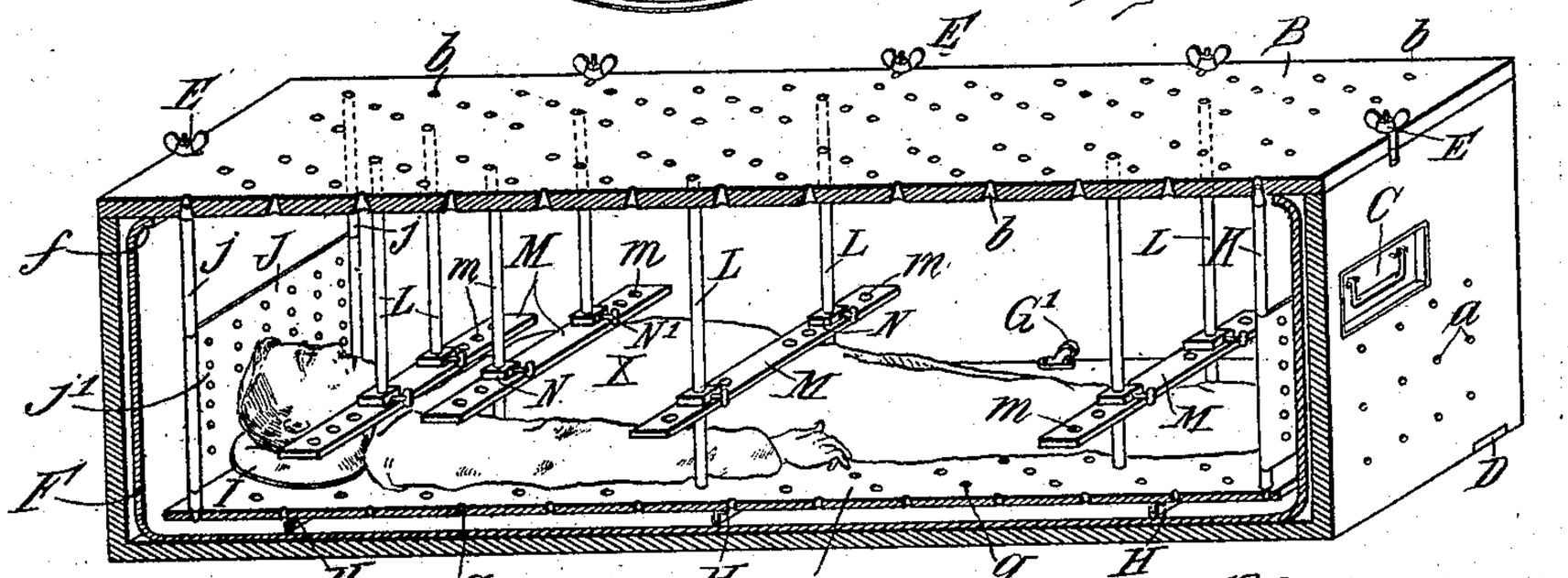
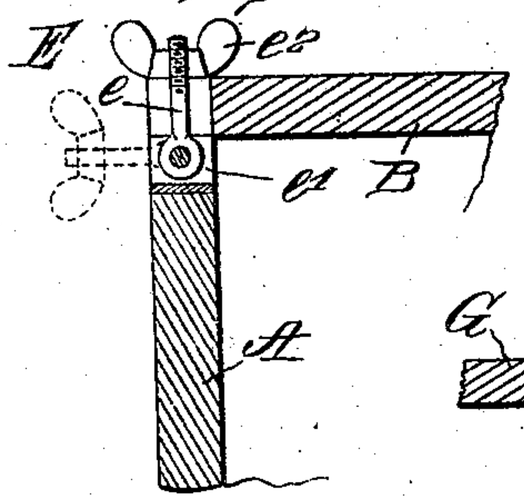


Fig. 4.



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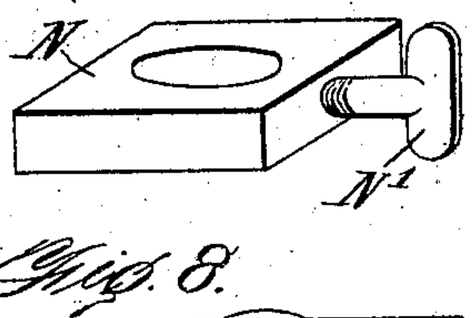

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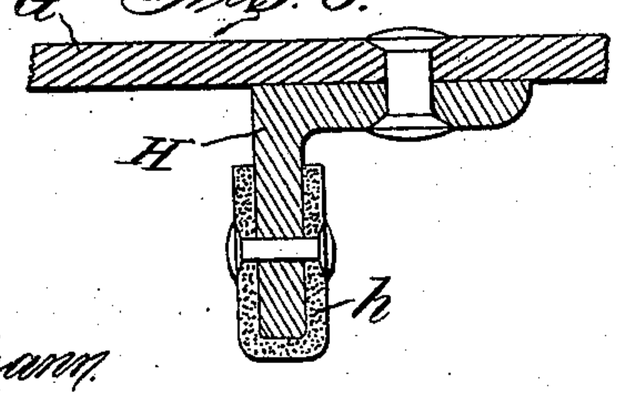
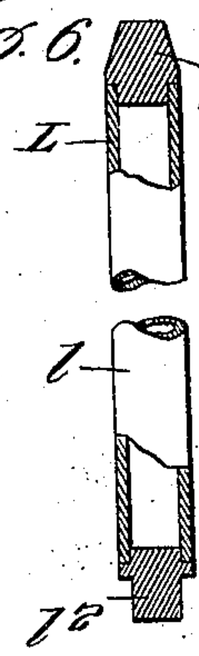


Fig. 6.



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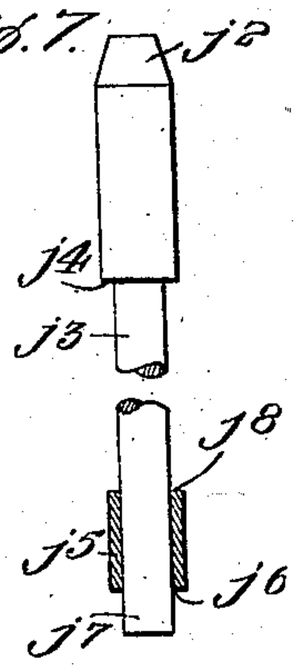

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2 SHEETS—SHEET 2.

Fig. 9.

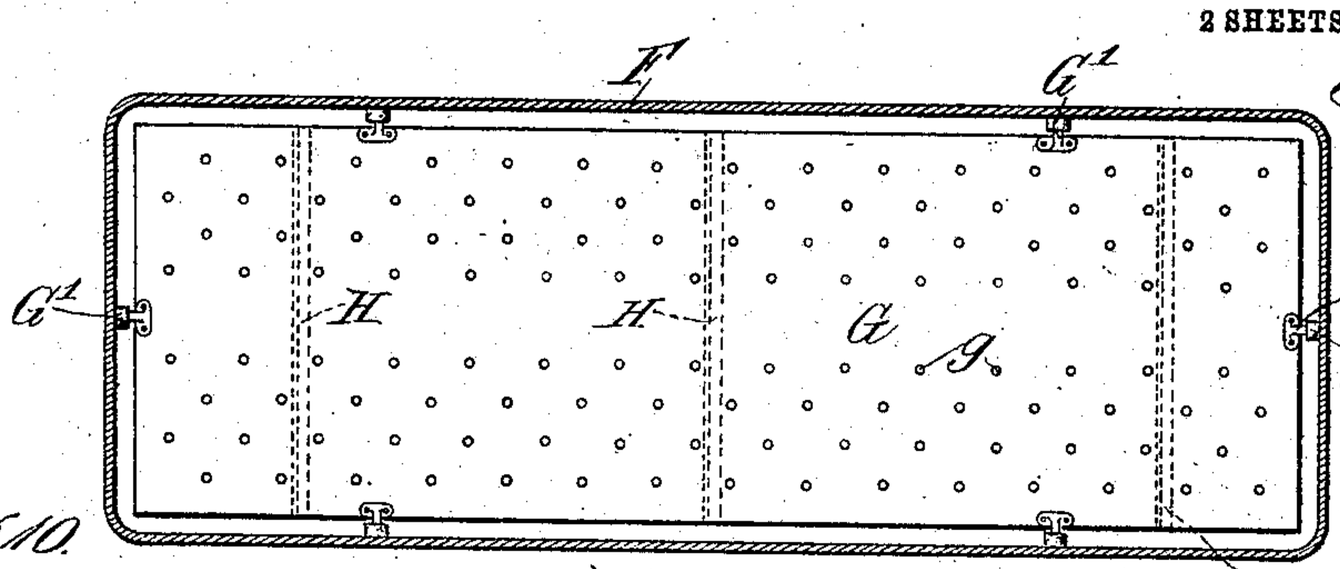


Fig. 10.

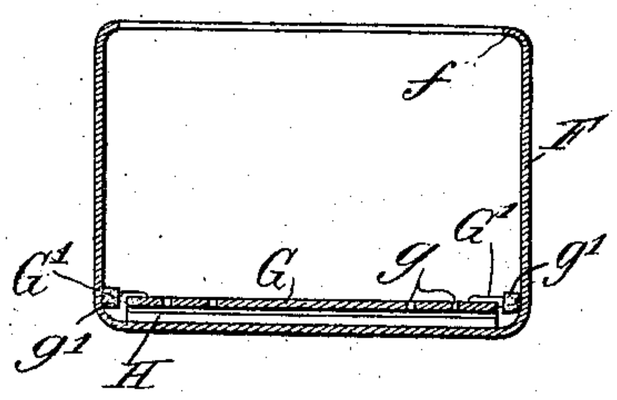
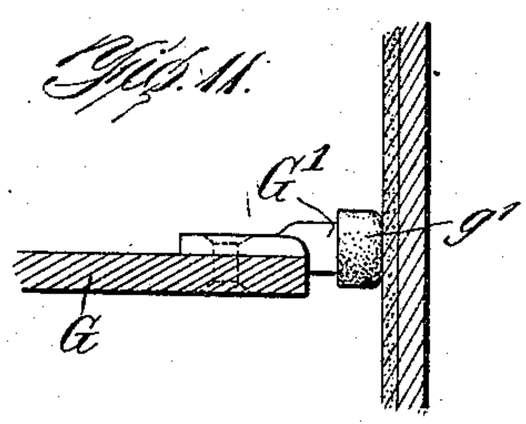


Fig. 11.



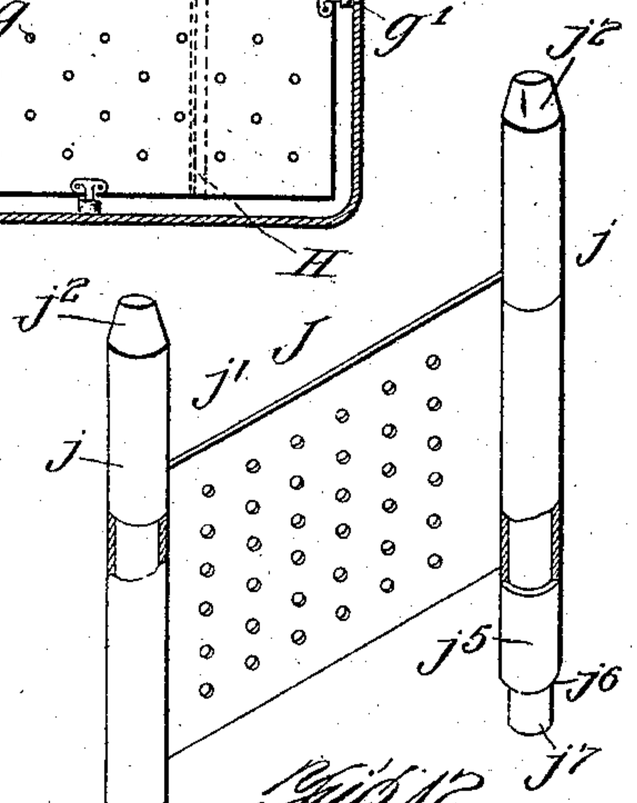


Fig. 12.

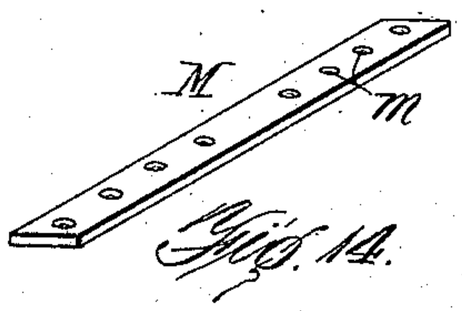


Fig. 14.

Fig. 13.

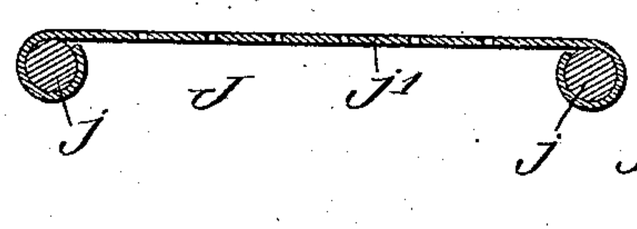
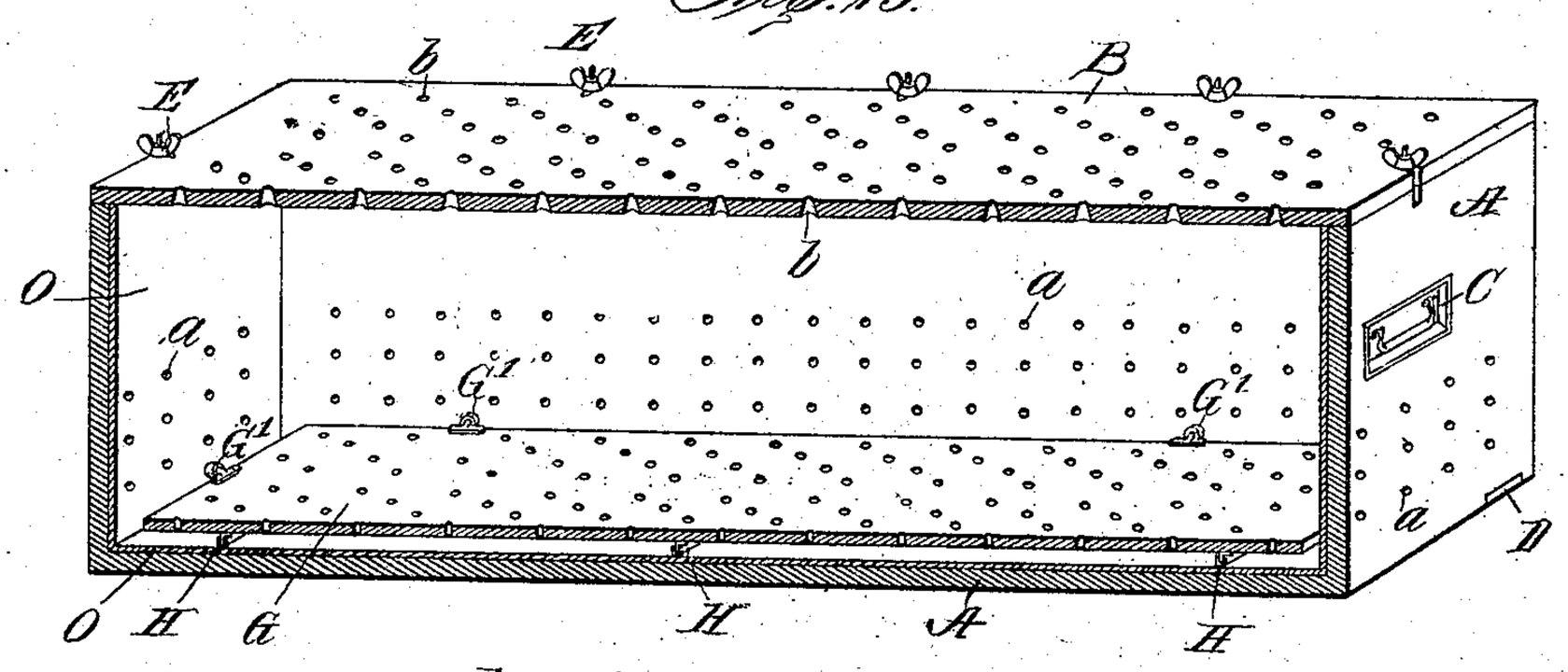


Fig. 15.



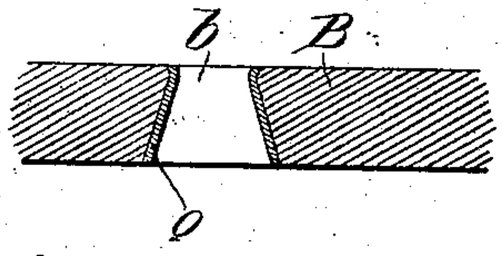


Fig. 16.

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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

WALTER S. UPSHUR, OF NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA.

COFFIN FOR PRESERVING CORPSES ABOARD SHIP.

No. 858,684. Specification of Letters Patent. Patented July 2, 1907.

Application filed November 20, 1906. Serial No. 344,332.

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, WALTER S. UPSHUR, a citizen of the United States, residing at Newport News, in the county of Warwick and State of Virginia, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Coffins for Preserving Corpses Aboard Ship, of which the following is a specification.

It has long been the universal practice when a person dies at sea to throw the body overboard, no means having heretofore been devised for preserving the body aboard ship. This practice has deterred many from taking an ocean voyage as the thought of the body being made food for sharks is extremely repulsive and not only causes some to refrain from commencing to make such a voyage, but it also impairs the pleasure of a voyage during passage to others who take it.

It is the object of my invention to provide suitable means for preserving bodies of those dying at sea aboard ship.

The invention herein claimed relates to the coffin or casket in which the body is placed. In my companion application for patent filed November 20, 1906, No. 344,331, I have shown a vault of novel construction for receiving and storing such coffins. The vault, as therein shown, is made air-tight and provided with refrigerating means which maintains the vault at such a low temperature as to avoid any danger of decomposition, and the coffins are of such construction as to permit a free circulation of cold air around the corpses. The vault holds the coffins securely against any movement by the motion of the ship and the coffins are arranged to hold the corpses within them in such manner as to be unaffected by the ship's movements.

In the accompanying drawings I have illustrated the ways now best known to me of carrying out my invention, but the details of construction shown may be varied and some parts may be changed without departing from the novel features of my invention.

Figure 1 is a perspective view of one of my improved coffins. Fig. 2 is a view in perspective and in vertical longitudinal section of the coffin showing how a corpse is secured therein. Fig. 3 is a perspective view of a pillow or cushion which may be employed for the head of the corpse. Fig. 4 is a detail view illustrating one of the fastening devices employed for securing the cover to the coffin. Fig. 5 is a perspective view of one of the devices for holding down the cross pieces which hold the body in place. Fig. 6 is a view partly in elevation, partly in section and with a part broken away of one of the posts or pegs employed for holding the body in place Fig. 7 is a similar view of one of the posts or pegs employed for the same purpose and also for the purpose of supporting the head and foot pieces. Fig. 8 is a detail view of one of the cleats employed for holding the false bottom elevated. Fig. 9 shows a horizontal section of the coffin. Fig. 10 shows a transverse section thereof. Fig. 11 is a detail view illustrating one of the arms employed for centering the false bottom. Fig. 12 is a perspective view of one of the head and foot pieces. Fig. 13 shows a horizontal cross section thereof. Fig. 14 is a perspective view of one of the cross pieces employed for holding the body in position. Fig. 15 is a perspective view in vertical section of a modified form of coffin. Fig. 16 is a detail view illustrating how the perforations in the coffin may be metal lined.

The box or coffin proper, A, may be made of any suitable material, preferably suitable wood. It has a bottom, two side, and two end pieces and a removable cover, B. The bottom is imperforate, but the sides and ends are provided with perforations, *a*, and the cover, B, is formed with staggered lines of perforations, *b*. Suitable handles, C, in the side and end pieces are employed, and these handles are arranged in recesses, as shown, so as not to project from the box.

The bottom of the box is provided with metal strips, D, which constitute rails against which the rollers, employed in my receiving vault, bear when the coffin is being inserted into and being withdrawn from, the vault. The cover is secured to the box by fastening devices, E, arranged at suitable intervals. Preferably each fastening device consists of a swinging eye bolt, *e*, hinged in a recess, *e'*, in the upper edge of the box and carrying a thumb-nut, e^2. The cover is provided with recesses, e^3, to receive the bolts. When the bolts are moved to the position shown by dotted lines in Fig. 4, the cover is not secured and can be easily removed. The bolts can be swung to the vertical position shown by full lines in Fig. 4 into the notches, e^3, and then the nuts can be screwed down to securely attach the cover to the box.

In the preferred form of my invention, as shown in Fig. 2, I provide an inner vessel or receptacle, F, for receiving the body, and which may be removed from the box if desired. This receptacle is preferably made of iron thoroughly enameled on the inside and covered with enamel paint on the outside. It is only slightly smaller in dimensions than the box so as to have but little movement therein but can be easily inserted or withdrawn. Preferably the upper edge of the receptacle is bent inwardly at *f*, as shown, and this inwardly projecting rim may be used as a handle. When the box cover is secured in place it rests on the top rim *f* and serves to hold the receptacle, F, firmly in position.

Within the receptacle, F, I arrange a false bottom, G. This may be made of suitable material such as metal thoroughly enameled. It is perforated at *g*, as illustrated, these perforations corresponding in position approximately with the outer lines of perforations *b* in the box cover. Arms, G′, having cushions, *g′*, are attached at the opposite side and end edges of the false bottom and serve to center the false bottom or hold it away from the sides of the vessel, F, as shown particularly in Fig. 9. In order to hold the false bottom away from the bottom of the vessel, F, cleats, H, are employed, which are preferably formed of angle-iron, as shown, and extend from one side of the false bottom to the other, as shown in Fig. 9. These cleats are faced with rubber, *h*, to prevent injury to the enamel. In this way the perforated false bottom is held in such manner as to permit a free circulation of air.

The body, X, is placed on the false bottom and is held in place thereon by the means next to be described. The head of the body may be supported by a cushion, I, preferably made in the form of a rubber ring inflated by air. Head and foot pieces, J, K, are employed for preventing endwise movement of the body in the coffin. The head piece, J, is arranged close to the top of the head and the foot piece, K, is arranged close to the soles of the feet. The head and foot pieces are adjustable for bodies of different lengths. The head piece preferably comprises vertical posts or pegs *j* and a cross piece, *j′*, consisting of a sheet of metal, preferably covered with white enamel, and attached to the vertical posts. Each of these posts is preferably formed in the manner shown in Fig. 7. It has a conical top or upper end, j^2, a reduced central portion, j^3, providing a shoulder, j^4, and a collar, j^5, arranged a short distance above the lower end of the post providing shoulders j^6, j^8 and a portion j^7, adapted to enter the perforations, *g*, in the false bottom. The perforations, *b*, in the cover are all cone-shaped, the bases of the cones being on the inside of the cover. The cones, j^2, fit the conical perforations, *b*, and the ends, j^7, fit the perforations, *g*, in the false bottom. These posts serve therefore to hold the false bottom down against the bottom of the vessel, F, as well as to support the cross pieces, *j′*. These cross pieces are attached to the posts in the manner illustrated in Figs. 12 and 13, that is to say, the opposite ends of the sheet are curled around the central portions, j^3, of the posts between the shoulders, j^4 and j^8. The foot piece is constructed in precisely the same way as the head piece. I also employ additional posts for holding the false bottom in position and for holding the corpse on the false bottom. These posts are preferably made in the manner indicated in Fig. 6. The body portion of the post being made of a tube, *l*, to the upper end of which is fitted a conical plug, *l′*, and to the lower end of which is fitted a shouldered plug, l^2. Any desired number of these posts may be employed for holding down the false bottom. I preferably employ eight such posts as shown in Fig. 2,—two of them being arranged on the opposite sides of the neck of the body, two in the region of the arm-pits, two on the outsides of the wrists, and two on the opposite sides of the knees. A greater or less number may be employed, the object being to prevent sidewise movement of the body. The conical plugs, *l′*, fit the conical holes in the cover and the shouldered ends, l^2, fit the holes in the false bottom. When the cover is removed the posts separate from the cover and they may be also easily separated from the false bottom. In order to hold the body down upon the false bottom, I preferably employ cross pieces, M, which may be also made of enameled metal or of other suitable material. These cross pieces are provided with perforations *m*, to receive the posts, L. The posts pass up through the perforations in the cross pieces, the cross pieces rest upon the body at different points and are held down by means of blocks, N, carrying set-screws, N′. It will thus be seen that the body may be held in place in the coffin in such manner as to be secure against any movement which would otherwise be caused by the motion of the ship when tossed by the waves. Provision is made for a free circulation of cold air, so that there is no danger of decomposition. The securing means may be easily manipulated for adjustment or removal.

The box, as before stated, is preferably made of wood. The larger metallic parts are preferably made of enameled iron, while other parts may be made of such metal as brass, which is not apt to rust. I prefer to use enameled ware wherever practicable.

It is not absolutely essential that the inner vessel F be employed. In Fig. 15 I have shown the wooden box lined at O with suitable material. This may be block tin, zinc or like material. If desired the perforations may be lined with metal *o*, as illustrated in Fig. 16. Such linings need hardly be used in the sides or ends of the box, but it may be desirable to line the perforations in the box cover.

I do not wish to limit myself to the details of construction shown.

As far as I am aware, I am the first to provide a coffin suitably constructed to hold a body securely in place so as not to be affected by the tossing of a ship at sea and to provide for a suitable circulation of air about the body.

I claim as my invention:—

1. A coffin for preserving corpses aboard ship, comprising a perforated box having a perforated cover and containing a perforated false bottom.

2. A coffin comprising a box provided with a detachable cover, means for securing the cover to the box a false bottom within the box and posts interposed between the cover and the false bottom and engaging them for holding the false bottom in place.

3. A coffin comprising a perforated box, a perforated false bottom, cleats on the under side of the false bottom for holding it elevated above the bottom of the box, laterally projecting arms on the false bottom for centering it within the box, and means for holding the false bottom in place in the lower portion of the box.

4. A coffin comprising a box, a false bottom, and adjustable head and foot pieces interposed between the false bottom and the cover of the box.

5. A coffin comprising a box, a perforated false bottom, posts interposed between the false bottom and the cover of the box, and a perforated sheet connecting the posts.

6. A coffin comprising a box having a detachable cover, a false bottom, posts interposed between the false bottom and the cover of the box and vertically adjustable cross-pieces carried by the posts for holding the body in place.

7. A coffin comprising a perforated box having a perforated detachable cover, a perforated false bottom within

the box provided with means for holding it away from the bottom and sides of the box, adjustable foot and head pieces, posts interposed between the false bottom and the cover of the box for holding the body in place and for holding the false bottom in position, and adjustable cross pieces for holding the body down upon the false bottom.

8. A coffin comprising a perforated box, an inner receptacle removable from the box, a false bottom within said receptacle, means for holding the false bottom in place, and means for attaching the body to the false bottom.

9. A coffin comprising a perforated box having a perforated detachable cover, an inner receptacle removable from the box and having an inturned rim at its upper end, a perforated false bottom within the inner receptacle, adjustable foot and head pieces, means for securing the body to the false bottom, and means for centering the false bottom and for holding it securely in place.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name.

WALTER S. UPSHUR.

Witnesses:
LLOYD B. WRIGHT,
E. B. FRANZONI.