

Religion der Urne oder Religion Jesu Christi.

Warum sind gläubige Christen
Gegner der Leichenverbrennung?

Rattum

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In den letzten Tagen ist der Feuerbestattungsverein Hof und Umgebung mit einer Werbenummer an die Öffentlichkeit getreten. Daß man sich in Selb, wo der kostspielige Bau einer Feuerhalle unternommen wurde, mit Werbetätigkeit für die Leichenverbrennung befaßt, ist leichtbegreiflich. Die schiefen und falschen Behauptungen des Werbeblattes aber zwingen uns zu einer Erwiderung.

Wohl ist es Tatsache, „daß man sich in vorgeschichtlicher Zeit des Feuers bediente, um Leichname zu beseitigen“. Allein ebenso ist es Tatsache, daß die ursprüngliche Art der Bestattung überall die Erdbestattung war. Daß bei den alten Griechen in der Hellenzeit die Grabbestattung weitaus überwiegend war, haben die Ausgrabungen des berühmten Forschers Schliemann glänzend bewiesen. Wie man bei den Römern die Leichen behandelte, schreibt Plinius (†79 n. Chr.): „Den Leichnam zu verbrennen, war bei den Römern nicht die ursprüngliche Einrichtung; in der Erde wurden sie geborgen.“ Bei den Germanen wurden die Leichname in der allerältesten Zeit nicht verbrannt, sondern begraben. Aus der Steinzeit fand man nur begrabene Leichen, erst in der Bronzezeit findet man Urnenkrüge.

Die alttestamentlichen Juden waren bekanntlich nur Anhänger der Erdbestattung. Das Werbeblatt meint: „In Palästina konnte sich die Leichenverbrennung wegen der Holzarmut des Landes nicht einleben.“ Nein! Eichen, Platanen, Pappeln, Weiden, Maulbeer- und Maulbeerfeigenbäume, Tamaristen, Zedern, Kiefern, Zypressen, Wachholder, dazu das mächtige Steppengras mancherorts (vgl. Mt. 6,30), abgesehen von den etwa zehn Arten Fruchtbäumen, hätten genug Brennstoff für die Scheiterhaufen liefern können. Allein die Gründe für die Übung des Begräbnisses waren nicht wissenschaftlicher, sondern religiös-sittlicher Natur. Und die Leichenverbrennung wurde nur als Verschärfung der Todesstrafe aufgefaßt. An der Schwelle des Paradieses hatte der erzürnte Gott dem Stammvater des Menschengeschlechtes den Strafbefehl gegeben (1. Mos. 3,19): „Im Schweisse deines Antlitzes wirst du dein Brot essen, bis du wiederkehrst zur Erde, von der du genommen bist; denn du bist Erde und wirst zur Erde zurückkehren.“

Diesen Worten ist, um wenig zu sagen, weit eher der göttliche Wille her: Erdbestattung als der Feuerbestattung herauszu-
hören: Auf diesen Ton, der an der Schwelle der Menschheits-
geschichte aus überirdischer Höhe angeschlagen wurde, ist das ganze
plektische Begräbniswesen von den Urvätern bis zu Christus ge-
kennzeichnet; in Aegypten sowohl, wo Jakob und Josef die Bestattung
ihres Leibes in Kanaans Boden wünschten, als auch in der Wüste,
wo eine ganze Generation versterben mußte, in der Profetenzeit
mit ihren Irrungen ebenso wie in den Kriegen der Makkabäer.

Das Christentum stellte sich wie das Alte Testament von
Anfang an in scharfen Gegensatz zur Leichenverbrennung. Nicht
durch den „Zufall“, daß sich wegen der Holzarmut des Landes in
Palästina die Leichenverbrennung nicht einleben konnte, wurde sie
auch vom eindringenden Christentum verpönt; es waren religiös-
sittliche Erwägungen maßgebend. Vor allem war den Christen das
Beispiel Jesu Christi Richtschnur in ihren Auffassungen von Tod
und Begräbnis. So eindrucksvoll ist bei Matthäus, Markus und
Johannes die Kreuzabnahme und Bestattung des hochhl. Leibes
Christi in dem Grabe beschrieben, das Josef v. Arimathäa in seinem
caritativen Sinn dem hohen Toten zur Verfügung gestellt hatte.
Da sollten alle, die auf den Namen Christi getauft und Glieder
des geheimnisvollen Leibes des zweiten Adam geworden sind, es
sich zur höchsten Ehre anrechnen, ihr Leben und Sterben und Be-
grabenwerden so einzurichten, wie das göttliche Vorbild im Men-
schengewand es gezeigelt. Das ist ein allgemein gültiges Wort des
göttlichen Meisters und Gesetzgebers (Joh. 13, 15): „Ich habe euch
ein Beispiel gegeben, damit auch ihr so tuet, wie ich euch getan
habe.“ Wie das Haupt, so die Glieder! Gibt es eine Christusleiche
und nicht Christusasche, so gibt es auch nur Christenleichen und
nicht Christenaschel. Nach Paulus (I. Cor. 15, 20) ist Christus „der
Erstling der Entschlafenen“; Verbranntwerden aber ist kein Ent-
schlafensein. Und wenn der Erstling, dann nicht der einzigel!

Eine böswillige Unterschlebung ist es also, das Einäscherungs-
verbot Karls des Großen auf der Paderborner Kirchenversam-
lung von 785 darauf zurückzuführen, „weil sich das Friedhofsge-
schäft der staatsfreundlichen Kirche einträglich gestaltete“. Es ist
keine wissenschaftliche Art, der katholischen Kirche gewinnstüchtige
Absichten unterzulegen für die glanzvolle Tätigkeitsperiode, in
welcher sie mit dem Schweiß und Blut ihrer Ordensleute und
Missionäre die Kultur in die deutschen Lande brachte.

„Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung der Feuerbestattung.“ Durch
das Festhalten am bisherigen Brauch der Beerdigung würde man
gezwungen, immer größere Gelände anzulaufen, beim Steigen
des Wertes für Grund und Boden bedeute das für Großstädte „eine
fast unerschwingliche Last“, für kleinere Orte „das „entweder
zu wirtschaftlichem Zusammenbruch oder zu ganz unangenehmen
Friedhofsanlagen“. Auch das glaubt der Verfasser belegen zu
müssen, daß „große Mengen wertvoller Feldfrüchte aus diesem der
Nahrungsmittelherzeugung entzogenen Grunde erzeugt werden
könnten“. Statt am Begräbnisplatz zu sparen, wäre es für diese
Kulturfreunde eine viel dankbarere Kulturmission, bei Behörden
und Privaten darauf hinzuwirken, daß vorerst alle Debungen kul-
tiviert und die Ertragsfähigkeit des Bodens gesteigert werde. Im
übrigen sind die Begräbnisplätze ebenso eine Notwendigkeit
den Leib des Menschen, wie Sport- und Spielplätze, wie Parks
und Gartenanlagen; das Christentum verlangt Sorge für den

lebenden und Sorge für den toten Menschenleib. Und wenn den Urnenhallen das Kaufladenmäßige genommen und in der Aufbewahrung der Aschenbüchsen mehr den Gesetzen der Kunstschönheit entsprochen werden soll, wie viele Anhänger der Feuersache wollen, braucht man für ein Aschengrab auch mehr als 0,25 Mm.

Wenn man Sparsamkeitsgründe für die Leichenverbrennung ins Feld führt, so zeugt das nicht von kaufmännischem Rechnen. Die Verbrennungsanlage in Gotha kostete 80 000 M., die in Selb gar 100 000 M. (vgl. Selber Tagblatt 1924, Nr. 64 und 160). Mag sein, daß allerneuestens bei den Verbrennungen weniger Brennstoff nötig ist, im Brennofen auf dem Münchener Ostfriedhof sind im allgemeinen für eine Leiche 6 Ztr. Koks erforderlich, für jede weitere Leiche am selben Tag je 2 Ztr. In Paris betrug die Einäscherungsgebühr für eine Armenleiche vor dem Kriege nur 2 Franken? Als ich im Jahre 1906 in Paris weilte, besuchte ich auch die Feuerhalle auf dem berühmten Friedhof Père Lachaise. Des Interesses wegen schrieb ich mir die Gebührenordnung auf, die an der Außenseite angeschrieben war. Die 1. bis zur 5. Klasse bewegte sich zwischen 250 und 100 Franken. 6., 7., 8. Klasse und service ordinaire (gewöhnliche Klasse) zahlten je 50 Franken. Es bleibt wohl noch lange wie bisher, daß das Verbrennen der Leichen teurer ist als das Bestatten.

Die Gefährdung der Volksgesundheit durch die Friedhöfe, sagen die Freunde der Leichenverbrennung, sei ein weiterer Grund für die Förderung ihrer Sache. All den ängstlichen Sorgen für das Volkswohl, all den Ratschlägen zur „Vorsicht, das Sichere dem Unsichern vorzuziehen und jede, wenn auch die geringste Fäulnisquelle zu verstopfen“, antworten wir mit dem Gutachten des großen Münchener Volksgesundheitslehrers Dr. Max v. Pettenkofer, das er auf der internationalen Versammlung für öffentliche Gesundheitspflege in Wien abgegeben:

„Das Wasser aus Brunnen, welche auf Friedhöfen gegraben sind, findet man in der Regel viel reiner als das aus Brunnen in der von Lebenden bewohnten, sonst gleich beschaffenen Umgebung. Miquel hat in verschiedenen Friedhöfen von Paris Höhren in den Boden geschlagen, die Gräberluft angesaugt und sie stets frei von Mikro-Organismen (Klein-Lebewesen), nicht nur von pathogenen (krankheitserregenden), sondern auch von sonstigen Spaltpilzen gefunden. Professor Hoffmann und Medizinalrat Siegel aus Leipzig haben bei der Versammlung des deutschen Vereins für öffentliche Gesundheitspflege, welche vor einigen Jahren hier in Wien tagte, zum Erstaunen vieler, vielleicht auch zum Aerger einzelner, als Resultat mitgeteilt, daß man von keinem einzigen Friedhof in Sachsen, welcher einem wie gewöhnlich geregelten Betrieb unterlaß, eine Gesundheitschädlichkeit nach irgend einer Richtung nachweisen konnte“.

Das Werbeblatt will uns gruseln machen: „Jedenfalls ist es eine Vorstellung, die allein schon beunruhigt, daß irgendwo, wenn auch unter der Erde, ungeheure organische Massen (!), die sich in voller Fäulnis und Verwesung befinden, aufbewahrt werden“. Nur ruhig Blut! Als man in Augsburg den alten, seit mehr als 100 Jahren benutzten Gottesacker bezüglich seines Bodens und Wassers untersuchte, fand man das Brunnenwasser chemisch rein und zum Trinken geeignet; tatsächlich hatte die Friedhofwärtterfamilie seit mehreren Jahrzehnten immer davon getrunken. Chemische Untersuchungen der Brunnen in Berlin, Darmstadt,

Leipzig, Dresden, München, Nordhausen, ebenso in anderen europäischen Ländern, haben ergeben, daß das Wasser vom Kirchhofbrunnen nicht nur nicht schlechter als das übrige, sondern nicht selten sogar das beste war. Der große Pariser Friedhof Père Lachaise, der weit über anderthalb Millionen Leichen birgt, ist in seiner Umgebung bekanntlich dicht bewohnt; aber er ist noch nie der Herd für ansteckende Krankheiten geworden, obgleich die Umtriebszeit für Armenaräber nur kurze fünf Jahre betrug. Gott, der unendlich weise Werkmeister des tausendfältigen Sineinanders und Naeheinanders im Lebensprozeß, Gott der Allmächtige, der das Sterben und Begrabenwerden als Naturgesetz aufgestellt hat, hat auch im großen Welthaushalt dafür gesorgt, daß das große Naturgesetz ohne Reibung und Störung fürs Ganze sich vollziehe. Wie die reine Sonne für die Gesundheit der Lebenden sorgt, so auch die von irdischen Unwissenden heute gräßlich verlästerte „unreine Erde“.

Das tut den Anhängern der Totenverbrennung so wehe, daß bei der Erdbestattung das Schönheitsgefühl in allem beleidigt werde. Ja, so ist's! Der Tod ist der Sünde Sold. Wie man den Leib auch aus der Mitte der Lebendigen schaffen will, immer liegt der Ernst der Strafgerechtigkeit Gottes auf dem Sterben. Der Abschied von einer Leiche ist nie Triumph, sondern immer Trauer. Auch Harmoniumspiel und Blumenkränze täuschen über das Weh und Ach der Stunde nicht hinweg, der Tod ist der Sünde Sold. Und mag man den Feuertod noch so puzig auffrisieren („Der Sarg fährt . . . durch ein blumengeschmücktes Tor in eine hellbeleuchtete Halle, als ginge es geradeaus in den Himmel“) — der Tod ist der Sünde Sold. Man täusche doch sich und andere nicht! Das Verbrennen der Leiche ist nicht ein Verglühen in reiner, heißer Luft „wie in einem russischen Bade“ „in ein Häufchen reine, milchweiße . . . Knochenasche“. Vor dem Verbrennungssofen in Paris sah ich seinerzeit ein altes Holztischchen mit den Resten einer Verbrennung stehen: Knochen halb und wie abgenagt in grauschwarzer Farbe. Alexius Besi schreibt aus eigener Anschauung: „Schaut der Verbrennung einer Leiche zu, und wenn ihr Herz und Sinn habt, dann predigt, so ihr es wagt, die neue totenschänderische Barberei. Wer ein Kremation gesehen, will keine zweite schauen, weil sein Ekel davor zu groß“ (Die Beerdigung und Verbrennung der Leichen, Regensburg 1889, 117).

Die Strafe des Todes und das Unerquickliche der Verwesung wird für den Christusgläubigen verkärt durch den Glauben an die Auferstehung. Mit freudigem Dank nehmen wir es an, daß der Naturprozeß von Vergehen und Verwesen die Verklärung nach Art des auferstandenen Gottmenschen als Endstation hat. „Gesät wird (der Leib) in Verweslichkeit, auferstehen wird er in Unverweslichkeit. Gesät wird er in Unehre, auferstehen wird er in Herrlichkeit. Gesät wird er in Schwäche, auferstehen wird er in Behendigkeit. Gesät wird ein fleischer Leib, auferstehen wird ein geistiger Leib“ (1. Cor. 15, 42 ff.). Darum trägt auch die Kirche am Grabe außer dem Lobgesang des Zacharias auf die Erlösung das Heilandswort vor: „Ich bin die Auferstehung und das Leben. Wer an mich glaubt, wird, auch wenn er gestorben ist, leben. Und jeder, der lebt und an mich glaubt, wird nicht sterben in Ewigkeit“ (Joh. 11, 25 ff.). Darum pflanzt auch die Kirche am Grabe das Kreuz auf, das Siegeszeichen der Auferstehung und des Weltgerichtes.

Die Besprechung der religiös-sittlichen Seite der Totenverbrennung ist die Achillesferse der ganzen Verbennummer.

Fast jeder Satz muß da richtiggestellt werden, so mannigfach und so grob sind die Verstöße gegen Kirchengeschichte, Kirchenrecht und Moralphilosophie, nicht zu reden von den haßerfüllten Ausfällen gegen Kirche und Papsttum. Es war doch immer so, seitdem es auch in den Geisteswissenschaften eine Arbeitsteilung gibt: fachwissenschaftliche Fragen werden am sichersten von Fachleuten behandelt. Demnach sind in den Fragen der katholischen Religionswissenschaft die katholischen Theologen als Fachleute zu hören.

Es wird zwar ein paarmal versucht, die Leichenverbrennung dem Gerichtsbezirk der katholischen Sittenlehre bzw. des katholischen Kirchenrechts zu entziehen, da die Feuerbestattung keine Religionsfrage und ihre Verquickung mit Fragen der Religion und Sittlichkeit von orthodoxen (rechtgläubigen) Fanatikern mutwillig herbeigeführt worden sei. Nein, meine Herren von der Flamme, gerade weil Sie uns ausschalten möchten, heißt es für uns, Ihre Bestrebungen mit doppelter Aufmerksamkeit beobachten. Aus all Ihren Kampfesreden gegen die Stellung unserer hl. Kirche in der Totenverbrennungsfrage klingt der verhaltene Unmut, daß Ihre Gegnerin keineswegs eine minderwertige Gegnerin ist, und der stille Wunsch, daß dieser ernstzunehmende Feind endlich einmal Ihren Umarmungen erliegen möge. Ihr großer Wortführer W. Pauly (Die Feuerbestattung, Berlin 1905) schreibt ganz ärgerlich: „In der Kirche, richtiger dem Kirchenregiment, besitzt die Feuerbestattung den einzigen, ernst zu nehmenden, dafür aber um so gefährlicheren Gegner, denn lediglich dem Widerstand der Kirche — wenn man darunter die die Macht in Händen habenden Vertreter der orthodoxen Richtung aller Konfessionen versteht — ist es zuzuschreiben, daß die Feuerbestattung nicht schon Allgemeingut geworden ist, sondern jeden Schritt vorwärts mühsam ertämpfen muß.“ Sie, meine Herren, hatten die Liebeshörigkeit, zu meinen, das Eintreten der Freimaurerei für Ihre Sache habe auf die päpstliche Kurie gewirkt wie das rote Tuch auf den Stier — Sie werden auch die Ehrlichkeit haben, zuzugeben, daß Sie mindestens mit derselben urwüchsigem Angriffslust den päpstlichen Erlassen gegenüberstehen.

Wir wollen Ihnen sagen, warum für uns die Frage der Totenverbrennung eine religiös-sittliche Frage ist.

1. Jesus Christus, der Stifter unserer religiösen Weltanschauung, hat sich beerdigen lassen. Und das Wort „Christus unser Herr“, Christus „unser Weg“ soll für uns Christen keine bloße Redensart sein. Wir haben das oben weiter ausgeführt.

2. Das Begrabenwerden ist für den menschlichen Leichnam das Natürliche. Aus Erde ist er gebildet und zur Erde soll er wieder werden. Nach des Schöpfers Willen besteht nach dem Sündenfall ein innerer, nicht bloß zufälliger Zusammenhang zwischen Leib und Erdbestattung: „Im Schweiß deines Angesichts wirst du das Brot essen, bis du wiederkehrst zur Erde, von der du genommen worden bist; denn du bist Erde und wirst zur Erde zurückkehren.“ (1. Mos. 3, 19.) Lattanz, ein christlicher Schriftsteller des 4. Jahrh., faßt das Begräbnis als Gerechtigkeitspflicht gegen den Schöpfer auf: „Wir wollen der Erde zurückgeben, was von ihr gekommen ist.“

3. Jeder gewalttätige Eingriff ohne Grund und Recht ist ein Eingriff in die Majestätsrechte Gottes, des Herrn über die Geseze der Natur. Das Feuer verzehrt und zerstört mit Gewalt und gerade die Leichenverbrennung will so schnell und gründlich, als

nur immer möglich, jede Spur vom Verstorbenen vertilgen. Schon Tertullian, der geistreiche Verteidiger des Christentums unter den römischen Rechtsanwältten (gest. etwa 240) bemerkt, das Totenverbrennen sei ein hartes und grausames Verfahren, das sich nicht vereinbaren lassen mit der Milde und Menschenfreundlichkeit des Christentums. Feuertod war im Alten Testament und im Mittelalter Verschärfung der Todesstrafe. Feuer ist nach dem Urteil des ewigen Richters das Strafelement für die Verworfenen in der Ewigkeit. Des Feuers Werk ist Vernichtung, Asche und Kohlen; der Erde Gabe ist keimendes Leben, Sein und Blühen. Darum gebraucht auch der Heiland von der Menschenleiche das prachtvolle Gleichnis vom Samentorn: „Wenn das Weizenorn nicht in die Erde fallend stirbt, bringt es keine Frucht“ (Joh. 12, 24). Sein Apostel Paulus führt den Gedanken ausführlich durch im 1. Korintherbrief, 15. Kapitel; innerhalb der Verse 36—44 spricht er 8 mal das Wort vom Säen und Samen. Auch das Wort Gottesader klingt an diese Vorstellung an. Verbrennen und Säen sind aber schnurstracks entgegengesetzt.

4. Die heidnischen Griechen haben schon gesagt, daß der Schlaf der Bruder des Todes sei. Nach der Auffassung Christi ist jeder Verstorbene in Schlaf. „Lazarus, unser Freund schläft; aber ich gehe hin ihn vom Schlafe aufzuwecken“ (Joh. 11, 11). „Weint nicht! Das Mädchen ist nicht tot, sondern schläft“ (Luk. 8, 52). Paulus nennt die Gestorbenen „Schlafende“ (1 Thess. 4, 12) und Christus den „Erstling der Entschlafenen“ (1 Kor. 15, 20). Die griechische und die römische Sprache haben deshalb für Friedhof auch Schlafstätte gewählt. Wenn aber jemand schlafen soll, dann verbrennt man ihn doch nicht! Dem Schlafenden gewährt man eine Lagerstatt; man bettet ihn auf einem angemessenen Platz und gönnt ihm voll Liebe den Trost der Ruhe. Ins Feuer wirft man den Tierkadaver, den Straßengehricht, kurz das Wertlose, aber nicht den Christenleib, der einer christusgeligen Auferstehung entgegenzuschlummert.

5. Dem Leib des Menschen gebührt Pietät. Das Christentum hat die Liebe zu Fleisch und Blut nicht verboten, nein, gehoben und veredelt. Wir wollen, daß der liebe Tote noch möglichst lange unserm Geiste so vorsehwebt, wie wir ihn im Leben vor uns gehabt. Wir wünschen seine irdische Hülle noch recht lange in der uns bekannten Gestalt erhalten zu wissen. Die Ägypter, das älteste Kulturvolk der Erde, haben dieses zu tiefst im Herzen begründete Gefühl der Pietät wohl gefannt und deshalb ihre Toten durch das Einbalsamieren möglichst lange vor dem Zerfall zu bewahren gesucht. Ähnlich dachten und denken die meisten Kultur- und Naturvölker der Erde. Es muß doch viel Menschengefühl erötet werden, bis man sich vor eine 3 Liter große Urne mit Knochen-, Holz- und Kleiderresten stellen kann mit den Worten: Hier ruht meine selige Mutter. Der Christenleib ist noch dazu weit ehrwürdiger als jeder andere Leib. Er ist bewohnt von einer durch die Taufe vergöttlichten Seele. Er ist die Wohnung des dreifaltigen Gottes und der Lieblingsaufenthalt des hl. Geistes (1. Kor. 6, 19). Er ist ein Glied Jesu Christi (1. Kor. 6, 15), geweiht vor allem durch die Berührung mit dem allerh. Sakrament und anderen Sakramenten und Gnadenmitteln. Es war den Christen in Lyon etwas ganz Urges („ganz heftig marterte uns der Schmerz“), daß sie weder im Schutze des Nachtdunkels noch durch schweres Geld noch durch Bitten die Leichen ihrer im Jahre 177 getöteten Glaubensbrüder zur Bestattung erlangen konnten. Es ist aber Redens-

art nur zutiefst in der rein natürlichen und erst recht in der christlichen Lebensauffassung begründet: Pietät auch dem toten Menschenleib!

6. Hat man keine gefühlvolle Scheu vor dem toten Leibe, wird man bald auch die Achtung vor dem lebendigen verlieren. Gott der Herr wollte den alten Israeliten eine hl. Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben des Menschen einflößen; darum gab er ihnen eigene Gesetze über Art und Beschränkung der Tierjagden. Ebenso ist auch die Scheu vor dem toten Menschenleib eine Gewähr für die Schonung des lebenden Körpers. „Die Geschichte des alten Wolfs“ von Lessing ist bekannt. Der alte Wolf faßt den Entschluß, mit dem Schäfer auf gutem Fuß zu leben. Er beteuert, er sei ein ganz absonderlicher Wolf, er könne kein lebendes Schaf würgen, sondern nähre sich bloß von toten Schafen; der Schäfer möge ihm deshalb die Erlaubnis geben, von Zeit zu Zeit nachzufragen, ob nicht ein totes Schaf da sei, das er aus der Herde holen könne. „Spare deine Worte, unterbricht der Schäfer, ein Tier, das nur tote Schafe frisst, lernt leicht aus Hunger trante Schafe für tote und gesunde für krank ansehen. Mache also auf meine Freundschaft keine Rechnung und geh!“ Täuschen wir uns nicht: die pietätlose Behandlung der Leichen bei der Verbrennung macht allmählich einen Rückschlag auf die Volksmoral, die Einschätzung von Leib und Leben und die öffentliche Sicherheit. Die gesetzgebenden Körperschaften handeln nur im Interesse des Staatsganzen, wenn sie die Feuerbestattung auch von der moralischen, nicht bloß von der volkswirtschaftlichen und gesundheitstechnischen Seite betrachten lernen.

7. Die Jünger der Verbrennungssache spotten uns deshalb, weil wir an der Sitte der Väter festhalten. Ja, wenn das Neue nur immer das Bessere wäre! „Prüfet alles, das Gute aber behaltet“, lautet das goldene Kulturgebot des Apostels (1. Thess. 5, 21), der an der Seele aller Völker gehorcht. Wir sind Kinder der hl. katholischen Kirche, also einer Religionsgesellschaft, die sich in alle Lebens- und Kulturverhältnisse, in alle Zeiten und Zonen eingelebt, einer Religion, welche Jahrtausende umspannt und Erde und Himmel zugleich umschließt — wir vertrauen sicher und selig, daß unsere hl. Mutter, von deren Stirne der Stern göttlicher Lehrweisheit und der Lorbeer zweitausendjähriger Wissenschaft leuchtet, uns gut beraten und führen wird. Jeder Junge lacht über die altmodischen Ansichten seiner Eltern, wie er sie nennt. Die Geschichte, hat der große griechische Redner Sokrates gesagt, ist eine noch rückwärts gefehrte Prophetin. Vor der alten Kirche sind schon oft recht rührige, aber auch recht junge Feuertöpfe gestanden — und der ruhige, zielklare Konservatismus der Kirche hat auf Jahrhunderte hinaus recht behalten. Jawohl wir Katholiken, insbesondere wir von der „Priesterkaste“ hüten mit überlegener Ruhe den alten Brauch der Erdbestattung und hüten damit „das ganze Gebiet des Ueberinnlichen“, das Erbgut der Religion Christi und ein gut Stück deutschen Volkstums.

8. Gerade die Bemühungen der Feuerfreunde, unter den offiziell kirchlichen Vertretern Anhänger ihrer Sache zu finden, sind ein deutlicher Beweis, daß auch nach ihrer Ansicht die Feuerbestattung eine religiös-sittliche Frage ist. „Tatsächlich, schreibt das Werbeblatt, wurden nach der 1876 erfolgten Eröffnung der Mailänder Feuerhalle selbst Kardinäle eingeweiht.“ Dürfen wir die Namen dieser Kardinäle erfahren? Von den zwei italienischen

Geistlichen Sartorio und Savi wissen wir allerdings, daß sie testamentarisch die Verbrennung ihrer Leiche angeordnet haben. Allein es war im September und Dezember 1884, also 2 Jahre vor dem römischen Verbot von 1886. Der Graf Eugen Sylva Tarouca in Wien wurde eingesegnet von einem Geistlichen, dem von der nachfolgenden Verbrennung nichts gesagt worden war. 1656 soll „von päpstlicher Seite“ eine Schrift ausgegangen sein, „die für den Scheiterhaufen als Mittel zur Verbrennung Toter eintrat“. Der Leibarzt des Papstes Alexander VII., Msgr. Mattia Naldi hat indes nur einen wissenschaftlichen Vergleich zwischen Erdbestattung und Feuerbestattung gezogen, ist aber weitentfernt von der Empfehlung der Leichenverbrennung im Sinne der Neuzeit. Und wenn wirklich früher oder später ein katholischer Geistlicher in dieser oder jener Frage sich hätte eine Entgleisung zu schulden kommen lassen, so weiß jedermann in- und außerhalb unserer Religionsgemeinschaft, daß ein Priester und auch hundert Priester oder Bischöfe nicht das von Christus eingesetzte Lehramt der Kirche darstellen.

10. Wer sind die Väter des Gedankens der Leichenverbrennung, wie sie jetzt aufgefaßt und verbreitet wird? Damit kommen wir auf den Kern der ganzen Frage. Der päpstliche Erlaß vom 19. (nicht 17.) Mai 1886 sagt es glatt heraus: teils „Leute zweifelhaften Glaubens (nicht Charakters), teils Freimaurer“. Das Ursprungsland der neuzeitlichen Totenverbrennung ist Frankreich. In den wilden Zeiten der französischen Revolution ist das Kind geboren, die Patenschaft übten Religions- und Kirchenfeinde. Interessant ist für uns erstens die Begründung, mit welcher die Räte des Seine-Departements 1799 den Antrag Cambrys annahmen: „In Erwägung, daß im Altertum die meisten Völker ihre Toten zu verbrennen pflegten und daß dieser Gebrauch durch den Einfluß religiöser Meinungen abgeschafft wurde beschließt usw.“ Also ist die Leichenverbrennung doch eine religiöse bezw. gegenreligiöse Frage und rühmt sich mit dem heidnischen Altertum eins zu sein. Zweitens ist für uns von großem Interesse die Stellungnahme des Selber Werbeblattes zur französischen Revolution: „Leider ging die Revolution damals schon (gemeint ist 1801 nach 2jähriger Dauer der Feuerbestattung) ihrem Ende zu“. Dieses „leider“, womit der Verfasser diese scheußlichste Zeit der Weltgeschichte, diesen Morast von Blut und Schmutz quittieren zu müssen glaubt, sagt mehr als ein religiöses und politisches Programm.

Wer trat später für die Leichenverbrennung ein? Der Revolutionär und Gotteslästerer Garibaldi, ferner ein abgefallener Mönch namens Savazzi, der derb-materialistische Jakob Molechott, der Gottesleugner Paul Bert, der frivole Jude Gambetta. Zuletzt nahm die Freimaurerei die Totenverbrennung unter ihre Fittiche. Die französische Revolution wurde bekanntlich von den Freimaurern vorbereitet und wird von ihnen selbst als ihr eigenes Werk bezeichnet, was eine Unmenge von Belegstellen beweisen. Programmäßig ist für die Loge die Werbetätigkeit für die Totenverbrennung in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts geworden. Wir kennen die sicheren Ziele der Hochgradmaurerei. L. Castellazzo, Sekretär der Freimaurerei in Rom hat sie im Maiheft der italienischen Freimaurerzeitung 1885 dargelegt: „Die Zivilehe nimmt ihnen (Papst und Kirche) die Familie. Der konfessionslose Laienunterricht nimmt ihnen die heranwachsende Generation.“

* Anordnung

bürgerlichen Begräbnisse und die Leichenverbrennung werden ihnen auch noch die letzten Ansprüche beim Tod entreißen; so wird der Fortschritt sie bald vernichtet haben.“ Ein zum Erschrecken gründliches Zerstörungsprogramm! Gegen Familie, Schule, Ewigkeitsglauben, also die Ecksteine der christlichen Kultur, richten sich konzentrisch die Belagerungsringe der freimaurerischen Kirchenstürmer. Schade, daß so manche Gutmeinende da und dort mit zum Kampfe ziehen, ohne im Geringsten zu ahnen, in wessen Sold sie stehen! Aber das ist das Geheimnis der Stoßkraft der Hochgradmaureri, ihre Maske! „Die Katholiken, schreibt der Freimaurer Ghisleri selbst, haben ganz recht, sich der Verbrennung der Toten zu widersetzen; denn die Totenverbrennung würde die Herrschaft der Katholiken in ihren Grundfesten erschüttern.“

Und daß die Freimaurerei sich nicht bloß zufällig der Leichenverbrennung angenommen hat, zeigt folgende Tatsache der Geschichte. Für den 8. Dezember 1869 hatte Papst Pius IX. die große Kirchenversammlung im Vatikan einberufen, welche den großen und mannigfachen Irrtümern der Zeit die Wahrheit der Lehre Christi entgegenstellen sollte. Ausgerechnet am selben Tag fanden sich in Neapel an 700 Abgesandte der verschiedenen Freimaurerlogen, selbst aus Amerika und Asien zusammen. Ein neuer Beweis für die beliebte „Zahlenmystik“ der Loge. Die ganze Versammlung trug das Zeichen des Trükes gegen die Kirchenversammlung an der Stirne. Es wurde die Losung ausgegeben, „durch alle ihnen zu Gebote stehenden Mittel, revolutionäre Gewalt nicht ausgeschlossen, an der schleunigen und radikalen Beseitigung des Katholizismus zu arbeiten“. Als vorzüglichstes Mittel wurde die Abschaffung der Beerdigung und die Einführung der Leichenverbrennung verabredet. Es folgte ein Maurerkongreß auf den andern: 1871 Rom, 1876 Dresden, 1877 und 80 Mailand, 1885 Florenz, 1887 Mailand. Der Mittelpunkt der Werbetätigkeit für die ganze Welt wurde die Loge „Die Vernunft“ in Mailand wo der Bruder Dr. Gaetano Pini mit größtem Eifer für die Sache eintrat. Am 9. Juni 1877 erhob die Generalversammlung des Großorientes von Italien den Vorschlag der Mailänder Loge mit freudiger Zustimmung zum Beschluß: „Die Freimaurerei möge die Leichenverbrennungsfrage unter ihre Obhut nehmen.“ 1876 wurde unter der Patenschaft der Loge der erste Leichenverbrennungsverein gegründet. 1882 schlossen sich alle italienischen Zweckvereine zu einem Landesverband zusammen, 1887 alle Landesvereine zu einer internationalen Liga.

Zu wilden Ausbrüchen des Kirchenhasses kam es, als am 19. Mai 1886 der Papst die Verbrennung der Leichname und den Zutritt zu den Leichenverbrennungsvereinen verbot. „Die Totenverbrennung soll, erklärte Dr. Pini, die Grundlage einer neuen Religion der Gräber werden, frei von Vorurteilen und Aberglauben“ (gemeint sind die Grundsätze und hl. Gebräuche des Christentums). Also eine neue Religion ohne Offenbarungsglauben, ohne Jenseitsglauben! Oder wie ein Aufruf zum internationalen Freimaurerkongreß in Mailand im Oktober 1885 bereits das Wort geprägt hat: „Religion der Urne“. Religion der Urne, welche „durch die Flammen der Leichenöfen von den Vorurteilen des Aberglaubens befreit wird.“ So ist also die Religion der Urne nicht bloß eine duldbare Ansicht im Rahmen der christlichen Weltanschauung, sondern nach den Programmen der Freimaurerei der schneidende Gegensatz gegen die Lehren und Zeremonien der Kirche, die Kampflösung und Vernichtung des christlichen Gedankens in der Welt.

Mag sein, daß die Lage heute in der Totenverbrennungsfrage zurückhaltender geworden ist; allein das ändert nichts an der Tatsache, daß die neuzeitliche Leichenverbrennung ihr ureigenstes Werk ist. Zu trauen ist ihr nie, da sie sich ja selbst und zwar schon seit 1723, also fast seit ihrer Gründung, als die Gegenkirche bezeichnet (L. Neacia Mai 1908, Nr. 65). Ihr erstes Ziel hat sie einstweilen erreicht, die ganze Welt mit dem Gedanken der Totenverbrennung vertraut gemacht; die Kärnerdienste können vorläufig andere tun, bis sie wieder den Augenblick für gekommen erachtet eine zweite Offensive ins Werk zu setzen.

Das also ist der Grund, warum die katholische Kirche die Totenverbrennung so entschieden ablehnt, die Herkunft und die Zielrichtung der ganzen Bewegung. Keineswegs findet sie durch die Einäscherung einer Leiche den Glaubenssatz von der Auferstehung gefährdet; denn sie weiß zu gut, daß der große Gott mächtig genug ist, den in tausend Teilschen zerstückten Leib am jüngsten Tag wieder aufzubauen. Nein! Sie kann sich deswegen mit der ganzen Bewegung nicht eins erklären, weil diese aus Kirchenhaß geboren und auf die Erstötung des Jenseitsglaubens gerichtet ist. Die römische Kurie kennt eben die Hochgradmaurererei durch und durch; gebe Gott, daß jeder Christ und jeder Vaterlandsfreund ihre weltumfassenden Ziele so durchschaut wie sie!

Die katholische Kirche erfüllt demnach nur ein Gebot der Selbstachtung und Selbsterhaltung, wenn sie mit schärfsten Weisungen in der Frage der Totenverbrennung sich an ihre Gläubiger wendet „in Anbetracht, daß Menschen teils von zweifelhaftem Glauben, teils solche, die der freimaurerischen Sekte angehören, mit großer Anstrengung den heidnischen Gebrauch der Verbrennung menschlicher Leichname zu erneuern streben und daß zu diesem Zwecke sogar eigene Vereine von jenen Leuten gegründet werden“. Sie tut dies „aus Furcht, es möchten durch deren Künste und hinterlistigen Ränke die Gläubigen beirrt und in ihnen allmählich die Achtung und Ehrfurcht gegen die beständige christliche, von der Kirche durch feierliche Gebräuche geweihte Sitte, die Leichname der Gläubigen zu beerdigen, geschwächt werden“ (Erlaß v. 19. 5. 1886.)

Auf Grund der römischen Erlasse vom 19. 5. und 15. 12. 1886 und 27. 7. 1892, ferner gemäß Beschluß der Bischofskonferenz in Fulda vom 22. 8. 1911, sowie auf Grund des kirchlichen Gesetzbuches (vom 19. 5. 1918) gelten folgende Bestimmungen:

1. Der Leich der verstorbenen Gläubigen muß beerdigt werden; verworfen ist die Leichenverbrennung. Daher darf niemand anordnen oder billigen oder sonst förmlich dazu mitwirken, daß die eigene Leiche oder die eines anderen verbrannt wird.

2. Wenn jemand auf irgend eine Weise die Verbrennung seiner Leiche anordnet, ist es unerlaubt, diese Verfügung auszuführen. Wenn diese einem Vertrag, einem Testament oder irgend einem anderen Akt beigelegt ist, soll sie als nicht beigelegt gelten.

3. Wer die Verbrennung seines Leibes anordnet, hat dem wird das kirchliche Begräbniß verweigert, außer er gibt vor seinem Tode noch ein Zeichen der Sinnesumkehr.

4. Wer die Verbrennung seiner Leiche aus irgend einem Grunde anordnet hat und trotz erfolgter Verwarnung darauf besteht, dem sind die Sterbesakramente zu verweigern.

5. Wem das kirchliche Begräbniß verweigert ist, (d. h. die Aussegnung und die Begleitung durch einen Geistlichen), dem sind auch der Leichengottesdienst, die Jahresmesse und andere öffentliche Leichenfeiern zu verweigern.

6. Die Leichen derer, welche ohne ihren Willen, auf Anordnung anderer, verbrannt werden sollen, können im Hause oder in der Kirche, (Leichenhalle, Begräbniskapelle) nach kirchlichem Ritus eingesegnet werden. Auch ist es erlaubt, für solche das hl. Mesopfer öffentlich darzubringen, die Aussegnung abzuhalten und Jahresgedächtnisse anzunehmen. Die kirchliche Begleitung der Leiche zum Verbrennungsort ist jedoch nicht gestattet. Damit etwaigem Aergeris vorgebeugt werde, ist bekannt zu geben, daß die Verbrennung gegen oder ohne den Willen des Verstorbenen stattfindet.

7. Den Katholiken ist es nicht erlaubt, den Feuerbestattungsvereinen anzugehören.

Das die Bestimmungen unserer hl. Kirche in der Totenverbrennungsfrage. Daß wir Katholiken nicht allein stehen, beweist der Standpunkt des gläubigen Judentums in dieser Sache. Nach Oberrabbiner Dr. M. Verner ist die Leichenverbrennung nach jüdischem Gesetz aus vier Gründen verboten: 1. Als Verstoß gegen das göttl. Gebot, welches die Erdbestattung fordert. 2. Als Leichenschändung. 3. Als Zerstörung der Sühne, welche an die Einbettung des Körpers in die Erde und den Beginn seiner Umwandlung geknüpft ist. 4. Als Demonstration (Kundgebung) gegen den Glauben an Gott und göttliches Weltgericht. „Leichenverbrennung“, sagt er abschließend, „welche den Glauben an Auferstehung und Unsterblichkeit unterwühlt, ist also kein Fortschritt, auf welchen das moderne Kulturbewußtsein stolz sein kann, sondern ein Rückschritt zur barbarischen Pietätslosigkeit, eine Rückkehr zur heidnischen Verwilderung“. Der Vorstand der Rabbinerkommission der „Freien Vereinigung für die Interessen des orthodoxen Judentums“ stellte gemäß den Beschlüssen der Generalversammlung vom 5. 1. 1904 folgende Sätze auf: 1. Es gibt nach unserem hl. Religionsgesetz keine andere Bestattungsart als Beerdigung. 2. Jede Verletzung der Leiche ist streng verboten; also ist auch aus diesem Grunde das Verbrennen der Leiche untersagt. 3. Es besteht keine religiöse Verbindlichkeit, auf eine lektwillige Verfügung hin die Leichenverbrennung vornehmen zu lassen. 4. Die Beerdigungsbrüderschaften dürfen ihre Dienste bei keiner Leiche ausüben, sobald es feststeht, daß sie verbrannt wird. 5) Der Rabbiner darf eine Leiche, die verbrannt werden soll, nicht begleiten und auch keine Trauerrede in einem solchen Falle halten. 6. Die Asche einer verbrannten Leiche darf auf dem jüdischen Friedhof nicht beigelegt werden“.

Somit hat das Verbrennungshaus von Selbst einen Konstruktionsfehler. Darum, mag auch durch den Abfall mancher vom Christusglauben und durch das Geld der Pöge die Sache der Totenverbrennung eine Zeitlang Zuwachs erfahren, es bleibt doch das Bibelwort in der Geschichte immer wahr: Wo der Herr das Haus nicht baut, arbeiten die Bauleute umsonst“ (Psalm 126,1). Unsere Losung ist das Apostelwort: „Brüder, steht fest und haltet an den Ueberlieferungen, die ihr erlernt habt.“ (2. Thess. 2,14.)

Katholiken von Selbst Im Vorstehenden habt ihr die Lehre unserer Kirche in Sachen der Totenverbrennung gehört. Die Bestimmungen über die Mitglieder der Leichenverbrennungsvereine sind ernst und unverrückbar. Wohl ist uns bekannt, daß manche von euch durch die Wirtschafts- und Finanzlage der Zeit vor einigen Jahren dem Feuerbestattungsverein beigetreten sind in der Furcht, es könnten im Todesfall von den Hinterbliebenen die Mittel für eine ehrbare Beerdigung nicht aufgebracht werden. Gleichwohl

kann auch dieser an und für sich erklärliche Grund euerer Mitgliedschaft nie rechtfertigen und erlauben; Leichenverbrennung ist einfachhin verboten.

Ihr habt aber in Selb eine Hilfe, die im Fall eueres Ablebens den Hinterbliebenen mit aller nur wünschenswerten Bereitschaft entgegenkommt, die *Ältere städtische Leichenkasse*, Verein auf Gegenseitigkeit. Höre: Der Verein übernimmt:

1. die Lieferung des Sarges,

2. die Gebühren der Totenschau,

der Leichenfrau,

des Friedhofswartes,

des Leichenwagens,

für den Friedhof,

3. den Transport zur Leichenhalle,

4. die Kosten für das kirchliche Begräbniß.

Und wohlgemerkt: außerdem wird noch ein *Barbetrag* von 70 (siebzig) Mark ausbezahlt. Und das alles für eine Leistung von 5 (fünf) Pfennig bei jedem Sterbefall eines Mitgliedes. Wahrhaftig eine ungemein segensreiche Einrichtung, die weit und breit ihresgleichen sucht! Die Höchstgrenze, die früher 40 Jahre betrug, ist durch den letzten Vorstandsbeschluß auf sechzig Jahre hinaufgerückt. Nur müssen die Neueintretenden im Alter von 40—60 Jahren eine jeweils vom Vereinsauschuß festzusetzende Nachzahlungssumme entrichten; doch könnte diese bei augenblicklicher Zahlungsunfähigkeit auch in beliebigen Theilen erst nach mehreren Jahren abbezahlt werden.

Katholiken von Selb und Umgebung! Tretet der städtischen Leichenkasse bei! Durch nichts können die Leichenkosten billiger und besser gedeckt werden als durch sie. Freilich haben manche von euch bisher zur Feuerbestattungsvereinskasse ihren Beitrag bezahlt. Aber jedermann muß zugeben, daß die Vorteile der Leichenkasse weit größer sind; wägt nur die Leistungen der Mitglieder und die Gegenleistung des Vereins in jedem Fall gegeneinander ab! Und was die Hauptsache ist, als Mitglied der Leichenkasse ist Dir der Empfang der Sterbesakramente möglich und das Gebet und das Messopfer der hl. Kirche zugänglich. Laß in Gottes Namen die Summe fahren, die Du bis jetzt in die Kasse des Feuerbestattungsvereins einbezahlt! Bedenke, die Hilfe des Priesters, der an Gottes Stelle in der schweren Stunde des Sterbens und nachher Deiner armen Seele alles tun und geben kann, ist doch mehr wert als ein paar Mark! „Was nützt es dem Menschen, sagt das Herrenwort, wenn er die ganze Welt gewinnt, an seiner Seele aber Schaden leidet?“ (Mt. 16, 26).

Wähle jetzt: Religion Jesu Christi oder Religion der Urne?



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Ordnung für die Feuerbestattungsanlage in Leipzig.

Auf Grund des Gesetzes, die Feuerbestattung betreffend, und der Ausführungsverordnung dazu vom 29. Mai 1906 wird mit Zustimmung der Stadtverordneten folgendes bestimmt:

§ 1.

Zu Leicheneinäscherungen dient die von der Stadtgemeinde Leipzig auf deren Flurstück Nr. 193 a des Flurbuchs für Probstheida errichtete Feuerbestattungsanlage.

§ 2.

Die Feuerbestattungsanlage ist eine öffentliche Einrichtung der Stadt Leipzig und wird von ihr betrieben. Sie untersteht dem Räte der Stadt Leipzig. Für die Leitung des Betriebes, für die mit der Anlage verbundenen Beisetzungsstätten, sowie für die Führung des Einäscherungsregisters und des Beisetzungsregisters ist die Verwaltung des städtischen Südfriedhofes verantwortlich.

§ 3.

Die Gebühren für die Einäscherung der Leichen, für die Beisetzung der Asche und für alle sonst damit im Zusammenhang stehenden Handlungen werden vom Räte der Stadt Leipzig mit Zustimmung der Stadtverordneten festgesetzt und öffentlich bekannt gemacht. Sie sind an der städtischen Friedhofskasse zu entrichten, außer wenn die Leiche einer nicht im Stadtbezirke verstorbenen Person in der Anlage eingäscheret und die Asche nicht auf einem der städtischen Friedhöfe Leipzigs

beigefügt werden soll. Im letzteren Falle sind die Gebühren an der Kasse des Südfriedhofes zu entrichten.

§ 4.

Zu Trauerfeierlichkeiten dürfen die Kapellen des Südfriedhofes kostenfrei benutzt werden.

§ 5.

Die mit einzuäschern den Särge müssen aus dünnem, weichem Holze oder aus Zink von höchstens 0,75 mm Stärke bestehen und dürfen Eisen- oder Bronzeteile weder zur Verbindung noch zur Verzierung enthalten. Sie dürfen höchstens 2,25 m lang, 75 cm breit und 70 cm hoch und nicht ausgepicht sein. Die Sargfugen sind mit Leim, Schellack und ähnlichen Stoffen oder mit Kitt zu schließen. Die Leichen dürfen nur auf Hobelspäne oder Holzwohle gebettet und müssen leicht bekleidet sein. Die Verwendung von Kissen, Polstern und seidenen Decken ist unzulässig.

§ 6.

Der Zutritt zu dem Vorraume des Ofens während der Feuerbestattung und die Beobachtung der Einäscherung ist dem Publikum und auch den Angehörigen des zu Bestattenden versagt. Den Angehörigen kann aber die Zulassung einer von ihnen bezeichneten Person dann gestattet werden, wenn sie der Verwaltung des Südfriedhofes nachweisen, daß der zu Bestattende die Anordnung, es möge jemand dem Einäscherungsvorgange beiwohnen, schriftlich getroffen hat. Im übrigen ist es der Verwaltung des Südfriedhofes gestattet, mit Zustimmung der nächsten Angehörigen einzelnen Personen, die die Einäscherung aus wissenschaftlichen oder sachmännischen Interessen beobachten wollen, den Zutritt zu gestatten.

§ 7.

Die Einäscherungen sind bei der Verwaltung des Südfriedhofes anzumelden. Diese setzt die Zeit jeder Einäscherung

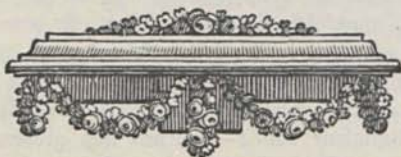
fest, trifft alle sonst erforderlichen Vorkehrungen und veranlaßt insbesondere bei den von auswärts mit der Eisenbahn ankommenden Leichen deren Überführung vom Bahnhofe nach der Feuerbestattungsanlage. Die nicht mit der Eisenbahn zugeführten Leichen sind von den Angehörigen bis in die Leichenhalle oder in den für die Trauerfeier bestimmten Raum zu befördern.

§ 8.

Die Aschenreste werden auf dem Grundstücke der Feuerbestattungsanlage entweder in der Urnenhalle oder in der Erde beigesetzt. Von dieser Beisetzungspflicht im Grundstücke der Anlage sind nur solche Aschenreste befreit, für deren anderweite Beisetzung gemäß § 4 Abs. 2 des Gesetzes vom 29. Mai 1906 nachweislich gesorgt ist. Zur Beisetzung der Urnen dient a) das Urnenfeld, auf dem Stellen von je 60:80 cm Größe zur unterirdischen Aufnahme von 1—8 Urnen und größere Plätze zur Aufstellung von Denkmälern oder zur Anlage von gemauerten Grüften überlassen werden. In der Erde beigesetzte Urnen sind derartig zu bedecken, daß der obere Rand der Urne mindestens 50 cm tief unter die Erdoberfläche zu liegen kommt; b) der Arkadenbau, in dessen Wänden Nischen zur Aufstellung von Urnen überlassen werden.

Die Stellen in den Reihen des Urnenfeldes und ferner die Nischen und Plätze in dem Arkadenbau werden auf 15 oder 30 Jahre, die Stellen und Plätze an den Hauptwegen des Urnenfeldes — Rabattenstellen — auf 30 oder 60 Jahre überlassen. Neulösung nach Ablauf der Vorbehaltszeit ist zulässig. Rabattenstellen dürfen erst anderweit vergeben werden, wenn die Berechtigten die Stelle innerhalb dreier Monate nach Ablauf der Vorbehaltszeit nicht neu gelöst haben. Urnen, für deren Beisetzung die Vorbehaltszeit abgelaufen ist und deren Herausgabe unter dem gleichzeitigen Nachweise, daß die Aschenreste auf einer Begräbnisstätte oder in einer Urnenhalle ander-

weit Aufnahme finden, von den Angehörigen nicht verlangt ist, werden mit den Aschenresten an derselben Stelle tiefer eingegraben oder, wenn sie aus den Arkaden stammen, in der Erde entsprechend beigesetzt. Oberirdische Anlagen gehen in das Eigentum der Stadt Leipzig über, falls sie von den Hinterbliebenen nicht binnen 3 Monaten nach Ablauf der Vorbehaltszeit abgeholt werden. Der Plan des Urnensfeldes liegt bei der Verwaltung des Südfriedhofes aus.



Gebührentarif und Ausführungs- bestimmungen zur „Ordnung für die Feuerbestattungsanlage in Leipzig“.

§ 1.

Für die Benutzung der Feuerbestattungsanlage und des Urnenfeldes werden folgende Gebühren erhoben:

1. Für Einäscherung der Leiche und Nebenleistungen

- a) bei Leichen Hiesiger, d. h. von in Leipzig verstorbenen Personen oder von Personen, die in Leipzig bis zu ihrem Tode ihren Wohnsitz hatten, aber auswärts verstorben sind 30 Mk.
- b) bei Leichen Auswärtiger, d. h. anderen Personen als unter a. 60 Mk.

(Anmerkung: Die Nebenleistungen umfassen: Aufnahme der Leiche in die Kapelle oder Leichenhalle, Beförderung der Leiche aus der Leichenhalle in die Kapelle, Überlassung einer der drei Kapellen nach Wahl, Darlehnung eines Bartuchs und einfache Schmückung der Kapelle mit Blattpflanzen, Beförderung der Leiche in den Verbrennungssofen und Sammlung der Asche unter Lieferung eines einfachen Aschenbehälters.)

Die Gebühr wird auch dann voll erhoben, wenn nicht alle Nebenleistungen in Anspruch genommen werden.

- 2. Für Überlassung einer Stelle von 80 cm Länge und 60 cm Breite in den Reihen des Urnenfeldes (für höchstens**

8 Aschenbehälter) einschließlich unterirdischer Beisetzung der ersten Urne und Vorbereitung der Stelle zu beetartiger Bepflanzung: auf 15 Jahre

bei Hiesigen (Ziffer 1a) 10 Mk.

bei Auswärtigen (Ziffer 1b) 20 Mk.

3. Überlassung einer Stelle von 1 m Breite und 1 m Länge an den Hauptwegen des Urnenfeldes (Rabattenstelle für höchstens 20 Aschenbehälter) einschließlich unterirdischer Beisetzung der ersten Urne und Vorbereitung der Stelle zu beetartiger Bepflanzung: auf 30 Jahre

bei Hiesigen (Ziffer 1a) 60 Mk.

bei Auswärtigen (Ziffer 1b) 120 Mk.

4. Für unterirdische Beisetzung jedes weiteren Aschenbehälters in den Stellen unter 2 und 3 3 Mk.

5. Wird durch Beisetzung weiterer Aschenbehälter oder oberirdischer Aufstellung von Urnen die Vorbehaltszeit überschritten, so ist für jedes weitere Jahr

im Falle 2 1 Mk.

im Falle 3 2 Mk.

bei der Beisetzung oder Aufstellung zu entrichten, in keinem Falle jedoch mehr als für eine neue Stelle derselben Gattung.

6. Für Harmoniumspiel

bei Hiesigen (Ziffer 1a) 6 Mk.

bei Auswärtigen (Ziffer 1b) 10 Mk.

7. Für Orgelspiel

bei Hiesigen (Ziffer 1a) 10 Mk.

bei Auswärtigen (Ziffer 1b) 15 Mk.

8. Für Beleuchtung mit Kerzen

bei Hiesigen (Ziffer 1a) 6 Mk.

bei Auswärtigen (Ziffer 1b) 10 Mk.

9. Für jede nach besonderem Wunsche ausgeführte oder wegen der sonstigen Umstände umfangreichere Schmückung der Kapellen mit Pflanzen

- bei Hiesigen (Ziffer 1 a) 25—100 Mk.
bei Auswärtigen (Ziffer 1 b) 40—160 Mk.
10. Für Glockengeläute
bei Hiesigen (Ziffer 1 a) 10 Mk.
bei Auswärtigen (Ziffer 1 b) 15 Mk.
11. Für Abholung der Leiche von der Bahn
a) in einfachem Leichenwagen mit viersitzigem Coupé unter
Stellung von 4 Begleitern bis auf weiteres . 18 Mk.
b) in besser ausgestatteter Leichenkutsche mit einsitzigem
Coupé unter Stellung von 4 Begleitern bis auf
weiteres. 27 Mk.
c) im Prunkwagen (Säulengalawagen) ohne Coupé (ver-
kappede Pferde) unter Stellung von 4 Begleitern bis auf
weiteres. 46 Mk.
- (Anmerkung: Im Falle c können als Begleitwagen
beste Landauer gestellt werden und werden zum Selbst-
kostenpreise berechnet.)

§ 2.

Aschenbehälter dürfen oberirdische im Urnenselbe nur so
aufgestellt werden, daß sie von Urnen umschlossen sind.

§ 3.

Für Aschenbehälter, über deren Beisetzung keine andere
Bestimmung getroffen ist und die deshalb nach § 8 der Ordnung
für die Feuerbestattungsanlage vom 24. September 1909 auf
dem Grundstücke der Feuerbestattungsanlage entweder in der
Urnenhalle oder in dem Urnenselbe beizusetzen sind, bestimmt
die Verwaltung des Südfriedhofs den Ort der Beisetzung nach
Maßgabe der jeweilig verfügbaren Plätze.

§ 4.

Mehr als 4 Rabattenstellen werden an den Erwerber
nicht vergeben.

§ 5.

Wegen der Pflege und Unterhaltung der im Urnenfelde belegten oder gelösten Flächen gelten jeweilig dieselben Bestimmungen, die für die Grabpflege auf dem Südfriedhofe bestehen.

§ 6.

Gemauerte Grüste sind nur bei Rabattenstellen zulässig und bedürfen besonderer Genehmigung, die unter Einreichung entsprechender Zeichnungen einzuholen ist.

§ 7.

Die Nischen in dem Arkadenbau sind, dafern sie nicht mit Urnen besetzt werden, die die Nischenbehälter umschließen, binnen 3 Monaten nach der Erwerbung durch Euren in Metall oder Stein abzuschließen und unter Verschuß zu halten.

§ 8.

Übersärge werden nicht zurückgegeben, sondern zur Verfügung der Verwaltung des Südfriedhofs zurückbehalten.

§ 9.

Für außergewöhnliche Leistungen, für die eine Gebühr in § 1 nicht ausgeworfen ist, werden die Gebühren im einzelnen Falle vom Räte der Stadt Leipzig festgesetzt.

§ 10.

Soweit nicht etwas anderes bestimmt ist, sind die Bestimmungen der Friedhofsordnung vom 15. September 1885 nebst ihren jeweiligen Nachträgen sinngemäß anzuwenden.



Sächsisches Feuerbestattungs-Gesetz

vom 29. Mai 1906.

§ 1.

Neben der Beerdigung ist die Feuerbestattung unter Beobachtung der nachstehenden Vorschriften zulässig.

§ 2.

Zur Errichtung und Ingebrauchnahme einer Leichenverbrennungsanlage ist die Genehmigung des Ministeriums des Innern erforderlich. Die Genehmigung darf nur erteilt werden, wenn das Unternehmen die Gewähr bietet, daß es dauernd und in würdiger Weise geführt wird.

Vor der Ingebrauchnahme ist eine Ordnung aufzustellen, die gleichfalls der Genehmigung des Ministeriums des Innern unterliegt.

Auf dem Grundstücke sind Einrichtungen zu treffen, daß die Aschenreste entweder in einer Urnenhalle oder in der Erde beigesetzt werden können.

Das Grundstück darf zu keinem anderen Zweck als für die Leichenverbrennung und für die Beisetzung von Aschenresten verwendet werden.

Eine Veräußerung des Grundstücks ist ohne Genehmigung des Ministeriums des Innern nicht zulässig.

Der Unternehmer hat sich dahin zu verpflichten, daß im Falle der Einstellung des Betriebes das Grundstück entschädigungslos der Ortsgemeinde anfällt.

§ 3.

Auf dem für die Leichenverbrennungsanlage bestimmten Grundstück ist eine Leichenhalle zu errichten, in der die Leichen vor der Verbrennung untergebracht werden können.

Die Leichenhalle muß einen Raum für die Leichenöffnung enthalten und mindestens den Anforderungen entsprechen, die in § 5 des Gesetzes, die Leichenbestattungen und die Einrichtung des Leichendienstes betreffend, vom 20. Juli 1850 (G. u. V.-Bl. S. 183) und in den §§ 7 und 8 der Ausführungsverordnung dazu vom gleichen Tage (G. u. V.-Bl. S. 184) gestellt sind.

§ 4.

Die Aschenreste von verbrannten Leichen müssen beigelegt werden.

Sie dürfen an die Angehörigen nur ausgeliefert werden, wenn diese den Nachweis erbringen, daß die Aschenreste auf einer Begräbnisstätte oder in einer Urnenhalle Aufnahme finden.

§ 5.

Zur Vornahme der Feuerbestattung im Königreiche Sachsen ist in jedem Falle die Genehmigung der Ortspolizeibehörde des Bestattungsortes einzuholen. Bei Sterbefällen innerhalb Sachsens ist auch die Ortspolizeibehörde des letzten Wohnortes oder des Sterbeortes für die Genehmigung zuständig. Antragsberechtigt ist jeder Beerdigungspflichtige. Die Genehmigung ist schriftlich zu erteilen.

§ 6.

Vor Erteilung der Genehmigung hat die Ortspolizeibehörde folgende Nachweise einzufordern:

1. einen den Todesfall betreffenden Auszug aus dem Sterberegister, bei außerhalb des Deutschen Reiches Verstorbenen eine amtlich beglaubigte Sterbeurkunde;
2. den Nachweis darüber, daß der Verstorbene nach vollendetem 16. Lebensjahre die Feuerbestattung angeordnet

hat, oder, dafern er zur Zeit des Todes das 16. Lebensjahr nicht vollendet hatte, oder geschäftsunfähig war (§ 104 des Bürgerlichen Gesetzbuchs), daß die Feuerbestattung von dem Inhaber der elterlichen Gewalt begehrt wird;

3. den Nachweis über die Todesursache, welche durch übereinstimmende Zeugnisse des behandelnden Arztes und eines an der Behandlung nicht beteiligt gewesenem beamteten Arztes (Bezirksarztes, Kreisarztes) festgestellt sein muß. Durch die Zeugnisse und außerdem durch eine Bescheinigung der Ortspolizeibehörde des Sterbeortes muß, dafern die Genehmigung nicht von dieser selbst erteilt wird, dargetan sein, daß jeder Verdacht, es sei der Tod durch eine strafbare Handlung herbeigeführt worden, ausgeschlossen ist.

§ 7.

Die ärztlichen Zeugnisse dürfen nur nach vorgängiger Leichenschau und sofern es auch nur einer der Ärzte für erforderlich erklärt, nur nach vorgängiger Leichenöffnung erteilt werden.

Ist der Verstorbene in der letzten Zeit vor seinem Tode nicht von einem Arzt behandelt worden, so ist ein zweiter beamteter Arzt zur Mitwirkung zu berufen.

§ 8.

Dem Erfordernisse, daß die ärztlichen Zeugnisse übereinstimmen, ist genügt, wenn beide Ärzte bezeugen, daß der Tod durch eine bestimmt zu bezeichnende Ursache herbeigeführt worden ist, die den Verdacht einer strafbaren Handlung ausschließt. Bestehen unter den beiden Ärzten verschiedene Ansichten über die Todesursache, so ist in dem Zeugnisse diese Verschiedenheit zum Ausdruck zu bringen, außerdem aber anzugeben, daß die Ärzte gleichwohl darin übereinstimmen, daß

sowohl die von dem einen als auch die von dem andern Arzt argenommene Todesursache den Verdacht einer strafbaren Handlung ausschließt. Wird dagegen durch die Leichenschau oder Leichenöffnung auch nur bei einem der Ärzte der Verdacht eines Verbrechens begründet, so ist nicht nur die Ausstellung der ärztlichen Zeugnisse und die Genehmigung der Feuerbestattung zu verweigern, sondern auch der Ortspolizeibehörde und durch diese der Staatsanwaltschaft oder dem Amtsgerichte von dem Verdacht und den ihn begründenden Thatfachen sofort Anzeige zu erstatten.

§ 9.

Wer eine Leiche zum Zwecke der Feuerbestattung außerhalb des Königreichs Sachsens verbringen will, hat hierzu die Genehmigung der Ortspolizeibehörde des Sterbeortes einzuholen. Die Vorschriften der §§ 6 bis 8 finden Anwendung. Die Genehmigung ist schriftlich zu erteilen.

§ 10.

Die nachträgliche Feuerbestattung schon beerdigter Leichen ist nicht zulässig.

§ 11.

Gegen eine ablehnende Verfügung der Ortspolizeibehörde steht die Beschwerde an die Kreishauptmannschaft zu.

Die Kreishauptmannschaft soll binnen 24 Stunden über die Beschwerde entscheiden. Die Entscheidung ist endgültig.

§ 12.

Unberührt bleiben die Vorschriften, die von den staatlich anerkannten Kirchen und Religionsgesellschaften innerhalb ihrer Zuständigkeit hinsichtlich der Feuerbestattung erlassen werden.

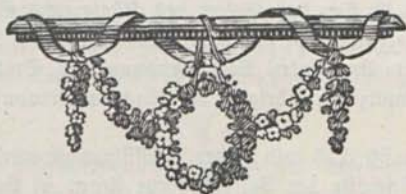
§ 13.

Die Vorschriften, die über den Leichendienst und die Leichenbestattung, insbesondere auch über die rechtzeitige Ent-

fernung aus den Sterbehäusern und über Leichentransporte bestehen, finden bei der Feuerbestattung entsprechende Anwendung.

§ 14.

Zuwiderhandlungen gegen die Vorschriften dieses Gesetzes werden mit Geldstrafe bis zu Mk. 150.— oder mit Haft bestraft.



16

Ausführungsverordnung zum Sächsischen Feuerbestattungs-Gesetz.

§ 1.

Als Ortspolizeibehörde im Sinne des Gesetzes und dieser Verordnung ist für das Gebiet des Königreichs Sachsen die Sicherheitspolizeibehörde (Polizeidirektion Dresden, in anderen Städten mit Revidierter Städteordnung der Stadtrat oder das Polizeiamt; im übrigen die Amtshauptmannschaft) anzusehen.

Die in §§ 5, 6 und 9 der Ausführungsverordnung bezeichneten Geschäfte der Polizeibehörde liegen in Städten mit Revidierter Städteordnung dem Stadtrat, im übrigen der Amtshauptmannschaft ob.

§ 2.

Den Bezirksärzten steht die medizinal-polizeiliche Aufsicht über den Leichen dienst auch im Falle der Leichenverbrennung zu. Sie sind daher namentlich bei der Errichtung von Leichenverbrennungsanlagen und den dazu gehörigen Urnen- und Leichenhallen sowie bei Einrichtung von Plätzen zur Beisetzung der Aschenreste in der Erde, desgleichen über die nach § 2, Absatz 2 des Gesetzes aufzustellende Ordnung gutachtlich zu hören.

§ 3.

Die Verordnung, die Dienstanweisung für die Leichenfrauen betreffend, vom 15. Dezeber 1904 (G. u. V.-Bl. S. 455) und die darin angezogenen Vorschriften finden auf die Feuerbestattung entsprechende Anwendung.

§ 4.

Gesuche um Genehmigung zur Errichtung von Leichenverbrennungsanlagen sind mit den erforderlichen Unterlagen bei der Baupolizeibehörde einzureichen und von dieser mit der baupolizeilichen Entschliehung der Kreishauptmannschaft vorzulegen. Die Kreishauptmannschaft legt sie mit Gutachten dem Ministerium des Innern vor.

Das Ministerium des Innern wird in geeigneten Fällen nach seinem Ermessen anordnen, daß das Vorhaben unter Stellung einer Frist zur Erhebung etwaiger Einwendungen öffentlich bekannt zu machen sei, sich auch vor endgültiger Entschliehung wegen Genehmigung der Anlage mit dem Ministerium des Kultus und öffentlichen Unterrichts vernehmen.

§ 5.

Die Leichenverbrennungsanlage und deren Betrieb, sowie die Ordnung der mit der Anlage verbundenen Beisetzungsstätten (Urnenhalle, Begräbnisplatz) unterliegt der Aufsicht der Polizeibehörde des Ortes, in dem die Anlage sich befindet.

Vor der Vornahme jeder Leichenverbrennung ist unter genauer Angabe der Zeit Anzeige an die Polizeibehörde zu erstatten. Die Vornahme der Verbrennung ist erst zulässig, wenn die Genehmigungsurkunde (§ 5 des Gesetzes) dem für die Leitung des Betriebes verantwortlichen Angestellten ausgehändigt und, sofern die Urkunde nicht von der aufsichtsführenden Polizeibehörde selbst ausgestellt war, dieser vorher vorgelegt worden ist. Die Genehmigungsurkunden sind bei dem Einäscherungsregister zu sammeln und der aufsichtsführenden Polizeibehörde auf Erfordern jederzeit vorzulegen.

Die Dienstanweisung der mit der unmittelbaren Ausführung der Überwachung beauftragten Beamten, sowie allgemeine Ordnungen über die Aufsichtsführung sind dem Ministerium des Innern zur Genehmigung vorzulegen.

§ 6.

Der für die Leitung des Betriebes der Verbrennungsanlage und der damit verbundenen Beisetzungsstätten verantwortliche Angestellte ist von der aufsichtsführenden Polizeibehörde in Pflicht zu nehmen.

Er hat über die sämtlichen in der Anlage vorgenommenen Verbrennungen ein der öffentlichen Einsicht zugängliches Register nach dem beigelegten Muster zu führen und darin alle Einäscherungen der Zeitfolge nach einzutragen (Einäscherungsregister).

Das Register ist mit Ende jedes Kalenderjahres abzuschließen und mit den Genehmigungsurkunden an die Polizeibehörde zur Aufbewahrung auszuliefern.

§ 7.

In den Fällen des § 157 Absatz 1 der Strafprozeßordnung darf die Ortspolizeibehörde die Genehmigung zur Verbrennung der Leiche nicht erteilen, bevor die in Absatz 2 der angezogenen Gesetzesstelle bezeichnete schriftliche Erklärung der Staatsanwaltschaft oder des Amtsrichters beigebracht worden ist.

§ 8.

Die Leichen sind zur Vermeidung von Ansteckungsgefahr stets in demselben Sarge einzuäschern, in dem sie zur Verbrennungsstätte oder in die Leichenhalle gelangen.

Zur Leichenverbrennung dürfen nur Särge aus Holz oder Zinkblech verwendet werden (vergl. auch § 4, Absatz 2 der Verordnung, Leichentransporte betreffend, vom 28. Mai 1903, G.-u. V.-Bl. S. 494). Die Särge vor oder in den Räumen der Leichenverbrennungsanlage zu öffnen, ist verboten.

§ 9.

Die Aschenreste einer jeden verbrannten Leiche sind, dafern ihre Beisetzung innerhalb Sachsens erfolgt, in einem besonderen, mit dem Namen und Stand, letzten Wohnort und

Todestage des Verstorbenen versehenen Behältnisse (Urne) zu verschließen und in diesem Behältnisse in der Urnenhalle oder der sonstigen Beisetzungsstätte aufzubewahren.

Jede Änderung des Ortes der Beisetzung der Aschenreste ist der Polizeibehörde anzuzeigen und in dem Beisetzungsverzeichnisse zu vermerken.

§ 10.

Über Beisetzungen, welche in der mit der Anlage verbundenen Urnenhalle oder Begräbnisstätte vorgenommen werden, ist von dem verantwortlichen Angestellten ein besonderes Verzeichnis zu führen, aus dem jederzeit der Ort der Aufbewahrung der einzelnen Aschenreste deutlich erkennbar ist.

Das Verzeichnis ist der öffentlichen Einsicht zugänglich zu halten.

§ 11.

Vor der Ausstellung von Leichenpässen für Leichentransporte, die außerhalb des Königreichs Sachsen gehen, hat die ausstellende Behörde zu ermitteln, ob die Leiche nach auswärts zur Beerdigung oder zur Feuerbestattung gebracht werden soll.

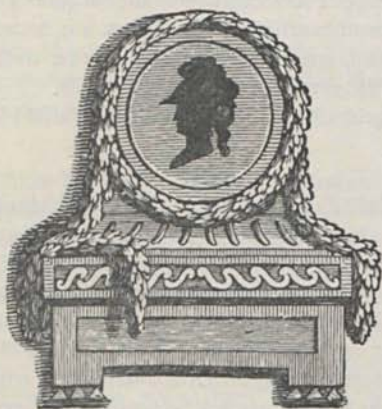
Für den Transport zum Zweck der Feuerbestattung darf der Leichenpaß nur nach Vorbringung der in § 9 des Gesetzes vorgeschriebenen Genehmigung der Ortspolizeibehörde erteilt werden.

In dem zur Ausstellung des Leichenpasses zu verwendenden Formulare (vergl. die Anlage zu der Verordnung, Leichentransporte betreffend, vom 28. Mai 1903, G. u. V. Bl. S. 499) sind fallsolchenfalls die Worte „zur Bestattung“ durch die Worte „zur Feuerbestattung“ zu ersetzen.

Rehnen die Antragsteller eine Angabe über die beabsichtigte Art der Bestattung ab, oder stellt sich heraus, daß die Beteiligten im Widerspruch mit ihren Angaben die Feuerbestattung beabsichtigten, so ist die Ausstellung des Passes zu verweigern, solange nicht die ortspolizeiliche Genehmigung nach § 9 des Gesetzes beigebracht wird.

§ 12.

Zuwiderhandlungen gegen die Vorschriften dieser Verordnung werden, soweit nicht andere Strafvorschriften Anwendung finden, mit Geldstrafen bis zu 150 Mk. oder mit Haft bestraft.



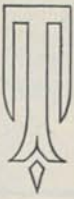
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Bildhauerei
Grabsteinlager**

Arthur Lehmann

Steinmetzmeister

Telefon 13455 **Leipzig=R.** Oststr. 30/32

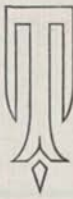
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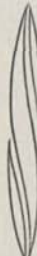
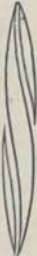
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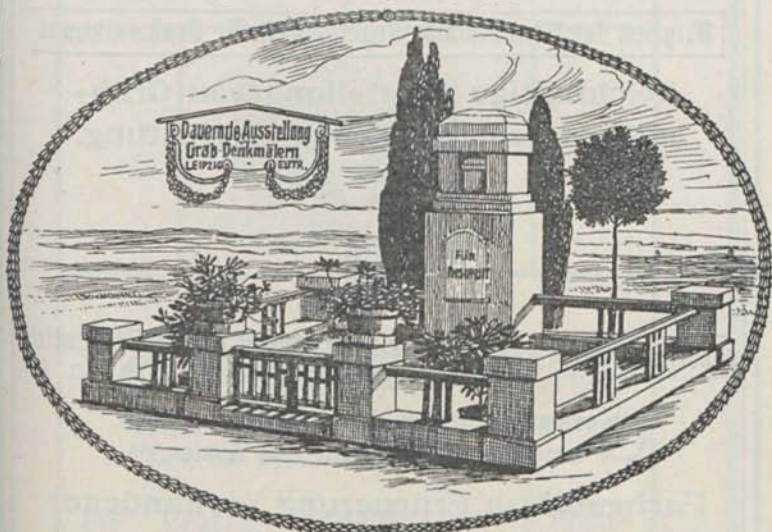
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ALLGEMEINE
BAUARTKREIS-
AUSSTELLUNG
VON 1909
EHRNÜHRIGKEIT
ZUR LEISTUNGEN

1911-12
VON LEIPZIG
BAU-UND
HANDWERK

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Baumaterialien-Markt Nr. 28. 1909.

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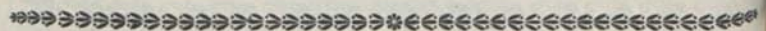


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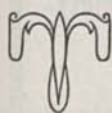


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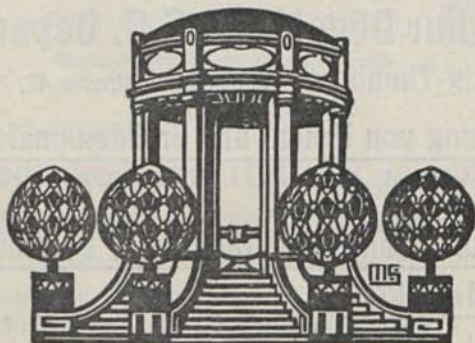
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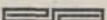
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ANNOUNCEMENT



FOR the accommodation of those who look upon cremation with favor, we have recently completed the construction of a thoroughly modern Crematorium and Columbarium in connection with our undertaking establishment. ¶ This booklet will acquaint the public with the exceptional nature of our equipment in that regard. ¶ It also briefly outlines the nature of our method of cremation and suggests some of the more important advantages of the practice which have brought it into much favor with many thoughtful persons in more modern times.



THE disposition of the bodies of their beloved dead has always engaged the attention of mankind.

¶ Among civilized races, earth interment and cremation have, in their turn, been in popular favor.

¶ Different religious beliefs have naturally, for the most part, been the determining factors of the momentary preferences. ¶ Cremation, which was quite generally practiced by all nations other than Egypt, China, Chaldea and Judea, prior to the time of Christ, fell into disfavor among the early Christians, who considered it as interfering with the promised resurrection of the body. ¶ The things which have contributed most to popularizing cremation in modern times, among an increasing number of persons, are its sanitary features and the elimination of many disagreeable details incident to interment.

¶ After all is said, however, the general adoption of cremation—if that should ever come—will depend upon its weight in the scales of public sentiment apart from its economy and sanitary excellences. ¶ Personally, we have no preferences as to either method to foist upon our patrons. ¶ Mechanical and scientific ingenuity, as to the methods; architectural and artistic treatment of the surroundings; and, withal, accommodations, generally, which ever contemplate the harrowed feelings of the bereaved, have all contributed to make cremation as practiced in modern times, increasingly popular. ¶ These pages indicate how well this establishment has kept step with the most modern and approved innovations in this as in all other respects. ¶ Those persons who have honored us with a visit of inspection have been unstinted in their praises.

"I have no doubt that cremation will work its way into general favor, and I am glad to think so."

—Rev. Edward Everett Hale, D. D.

"I believe that there are no true objections to the practice of cremation, and a good many excellent reasons why it should become common."

—Right Rev. Phillips Brooks.



¶ This pleasing vista of the main corridor illustrates the care taken throughout our establishment to make it artistically attractive and entirely devoid of anything repellantly suggestive. It leads to the Reception Room, Private Slumber Rooms, Family Room, Funeral Parlors, and Crematorium and Columbarium Departments, in all of which the same care is given to every detail of treatment.



EVEN the most aesthetic will find nothing in this Crematorium to offend their sensibilities. ¶ The bare mention of cremation, being a departure, as it is, from established custom, awakens a nameless dread in the minds of many persons. ¶ To such, our equipment and accommodations are a pleasing revelation. ¶ In the department shown above the influence of the Egyptian style of architecture is quite apparent, and every detail of treatment has been worked out in a remarkably pleasing manner. ¶ Between the two pillars at the right of the picture may be seen the entrances to two of the three retorts. It will be noted that the operator and regulating devices are entirely out of sight. To the left of the picture is shown a



waterfall and pool, cleverly worked out of the natural rock formation, and which adds an unique and restful touch to the room.

¶ When services incident to the final disposition of the body are desired, this service room makes ideal quarters. ¶ Compared with open air burial service — often in extremely inclement weather—to the danger of the health of the family and assembled friends, and under the observation of the merely curious-minded —services conducted in such surroundings as these weigh strongly in favor of the new method. ¶ The family may wait to see the body placed in the etherealizing compartment, or otherwise, as they prefer. Those not desiring to remain frequently delegate some friend to represent them after their departure.



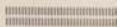
S the illustrations in this booklet indicate, the arrangement of our Crematorium and Columbarium departments rob the new method of all offensive suggestiveness. ¶ After funeral services in our parlors—which are the last word in convenience and attractiveness, as well as of privacy for the bereaved—the body, just as it reposes in the casket, is removed to the Crematorium herein illustrated, where services may be had, if it is so desired. ¶ The removal of the casket containing the body to the etherealizing compartment is accomplished without noise or confusion. ¶ Contrary to popular conception, the body is not consigned to a fiery furnace. There is nothing in the least shocking to even the most susceptible. ¶ After the family has retired, the operator, who is out of sight, by means of scientific regulating apparatus, introduces into the retort the required heat and air to thoroughly etherealize the body. ¶ Commercial gas is used exclusively for heating. There is absolutely no smoke. ¶ The ashes from the casket and clothing are automatically separated from those of the body. ¶ The incinerated ashes are painstakingly collected and either placed in a plain metal receptacle or an artistic urn, as desired. ¶ No charge is made for keeping these receptacles for a period of thirty days, and a merely nominal charge thereafter. ¶ We carry an extensive line of urns showing appropriate and artistic designs. These may either be placed in niches rented in our Columbarium or in the family vault or mausoleum, as the family prefer. ¶ Surely, nothing could be more free from unnecessarily harrowing details or unpleasant suggestiveness.

"Cremation is not only the healthiest and cleanest but the most poetical way of disposing of the dead."
—Kate Field.

"I believe that this method is more reverent, more in harmony with refined feelings, beside being obviously superior on grounds of public health, to the usual practice of earth burial."
—Prof. Felix Adler.



¶ In this Columbarium Department, single, double or family niches for urns may be had at moderate rental charges. Note the inviting surroundings.



¶ An artistic and popular urn design is here shown. We carry a large selection of varied styles and sizes in copper, statuary bronze, brass, onyx, etc.



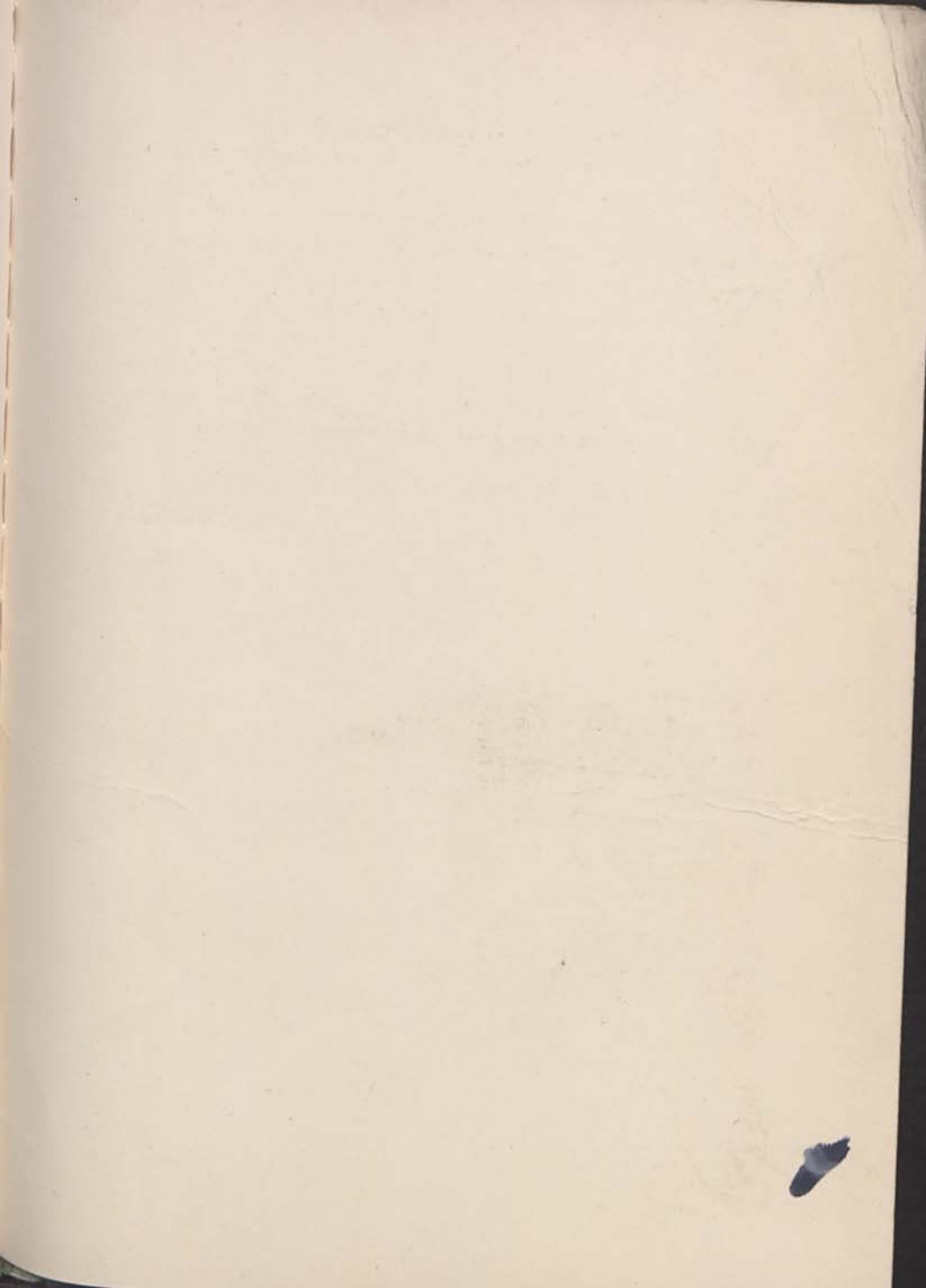
IN submitting this booklet to the public, we are merely actuated by a desire to show our splendid facilities, and have no intention of trying to influence any one's preference as to either the new or as to the more customary method. ¶ We can only say to those to whom the admitted sanitary superiority and other advantages of cremation are not outweighed by religious beliefs or such time-honored sentiments as they may entertain, that we are fully prepared to render such service in this respect as is equaled by few similar institutions in the United States. ¶ We shall be pleased to show you these new departments at any time.

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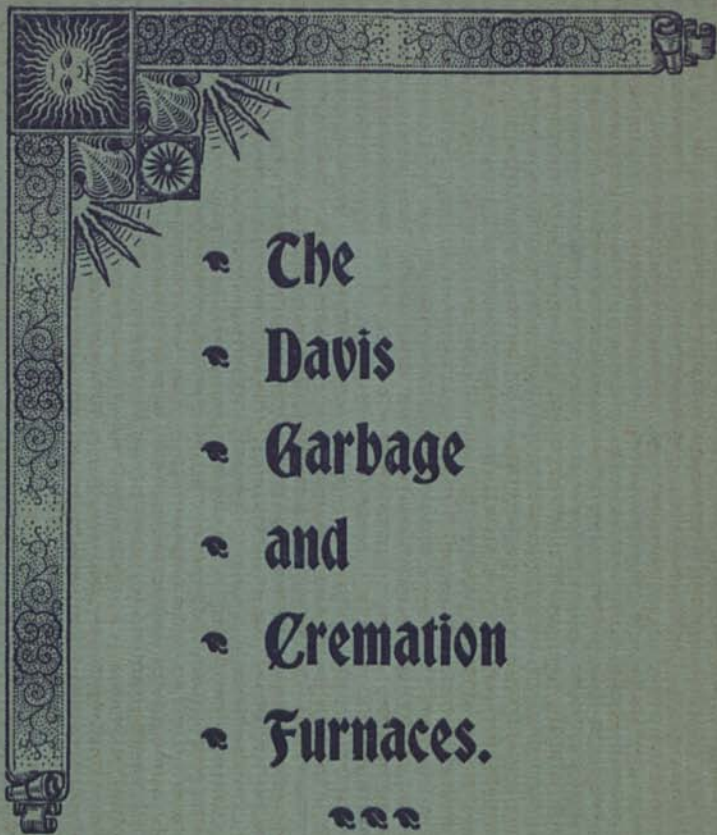


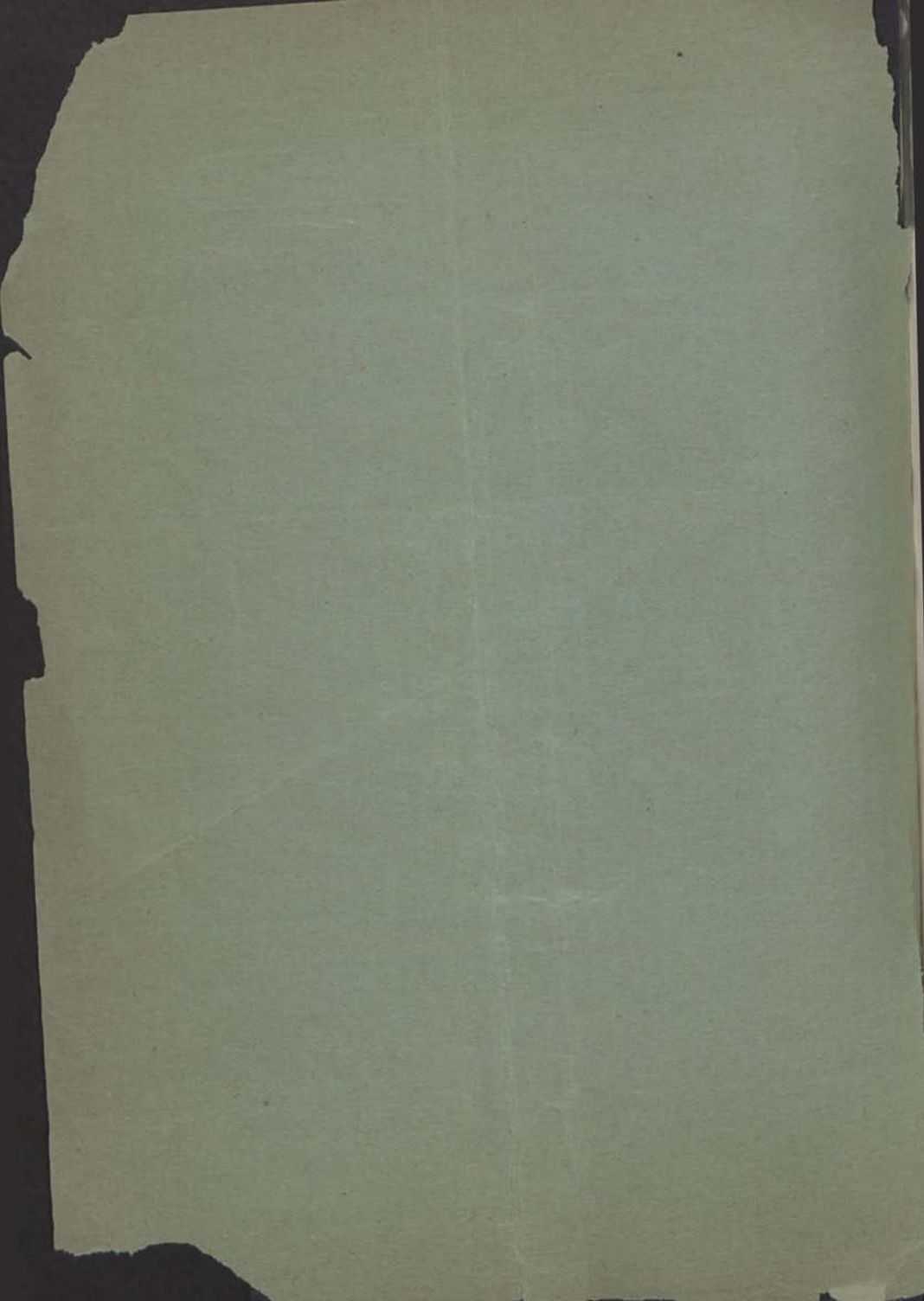


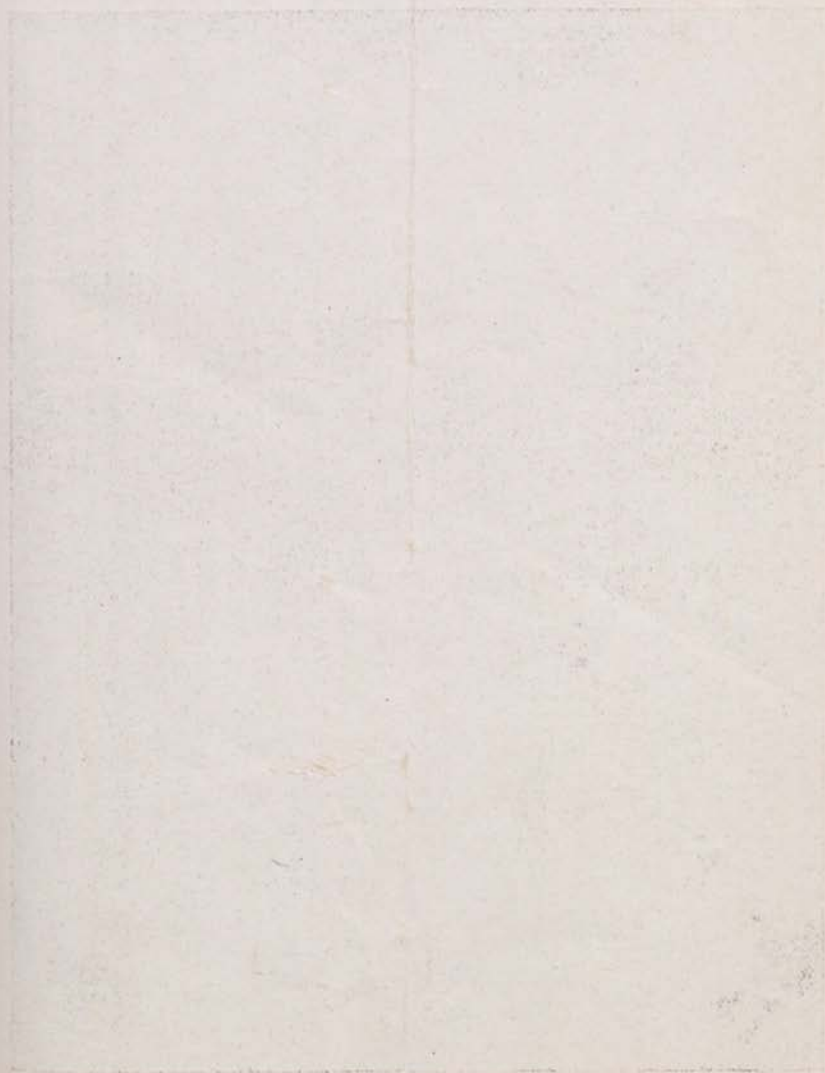
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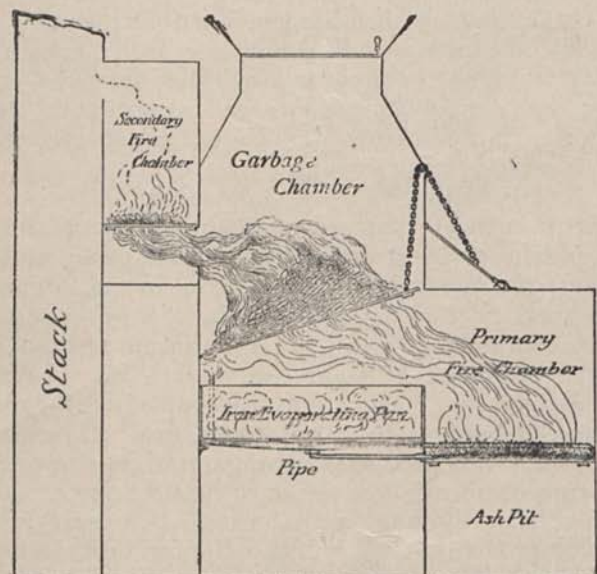
GARBAGE disposal has become a serious question in cities both for sanitary and economic reasons, which need no recapitulation for those who will be interested in reading this circular. Assuming this, we call attention to the device (Pat. Oct. 27, 1891.) illustrated on pages 2 and 3, as the best solution yet offered of the problem.

The idea is readily grasped on examining the engraving. The flame from the Primary Fire Chamber passes through the garbage which has been dumped upon the grate, and dries it thoroughly; the gases driven off passing in the form of smoke to the Secondary Fire Chamber, where they are consumed, and where combustion is so complete that no residual odor can be detected at the outlet from the stack. Liquid waste drips into the evaporating pan, where it is vaporized by means of a pipe running from bottom of pan to the fire in Primary Chamber—the steam thus produced passing out of jet shown in figure, and assisting combustion at the most needful point. When the charge has been thoroughly desiccated, the grate is lowered, and the dry product is dumped into the fire in Primary Chamber, where all its organic constituents are finally consumed, being utilized as fuel. This furnace may be built to any scale, to meet the wants of dwellings, hotels, villages or cities; being simple and economical in construction, easy of operation, and giving perfectly satisfactory results. One can scarcely overestimate the value of such an apparatus in epidemics; and to Hospitals for contagious and infectious cases it is an imperative necessity at all times. With its rooms drained of poisoned air, the wastes disinfected and conveyed to this furnace and destroyed, what more can be done, with present knowledge, to assure perfectly antiseptic conditions? (See illustration on next page.)

THE DAVIS GARBAGE FURNACE

Is built of ordinary brick on the outside, fire brick or fire clay tile in parts exposed to heat, with iron doors, grate bars and evaporating pan. It consists of a series of three chambers:

The *Primary Fire Chamber*, with suitable fire doors, grate bars and ash pit. Adjoining this and on a higher level (to facilitate draft,) is the *Garbage Chamber*, into which the waste material is received. It is provided with a movable grate, which may be raised and lowered; the arch above it is perforated by a trap through which the charge is dumped upon the raised grate. Underneath the grate is the iron *Evaporating Pan*, into which drips the liquid portion of the garbage; from



GARBAGE FURNACE.

the floor of this tank a pipe runs into and around the inside of the Primary Fire Chamber, returning behind the pan and discharging the contents in the form of steam at the rear of Garbage Chamber to assist in further combustion—this disposal of the liquid leaving the solids in better condition for desiccation. The burning gases from the fuel in Primary Fire Chamber (which may be hard or soft coal or any other suitable fuel,) enter *under* the garbage grate, and pass up *through* the garbage, which utilizes their heat to the fullest extent, drying out the charge most expeditiously and driving off organic elements. The

gases thus liberated, in the form of thick smoke, are carried by the draft under the grate of the *Secondary Fire Chamber*, on a still higher level, and in that fire all organic matter is entirely consumed, as is evidenced by the absence of smoke or odor at the mouth of the stack. The grate is now lowered and the solid remnant of the garbage, desiccated and still unconsumed, is dumped from the Garbage Chamber into the Primary Fire Chamber, where the combustible part becomes fuel and assists in its own destruction, and the small percentage of inorganic substance falls down as ashes. The Garbage Chamber is re-filled and the circuit continued.

We claim the following points of superiority for **The Davis Garbage Furnace**, over any other in use:

1. All fuel elements in the garbage are utilized.
2. The flame from Primary Fire Chamber passes *through* the garbage instead of over it as in other methods, thus reaching all of the charge most quickly and efficiently.
3. The liquids are drained off and converted into steam without checking combustion, and afterwards promote it at the most essential point.
4. The movable grate enables the desiccated material to be dumped into fire chamber with least possible labor instead of removing to separate chamber, as in other methods.
5. The *Secondary Fire Chamber* is an absolutely trustworthy protection against smoke or smell, escape of disease germs or atmospheric contamination.
6. Finally, but by no means least, the simplicity of its construction enables *The Davis Garbage Furnace* to be built and operated *more cheaply than any other*.

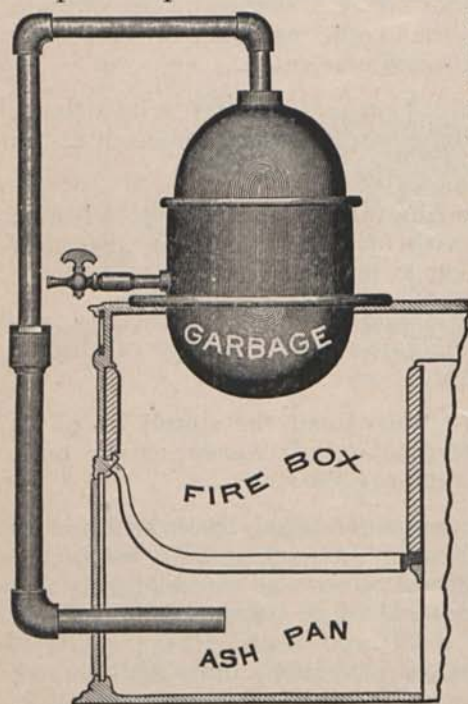
No city or large town can now afford to be without its plant for this purpose. Even in the most sparsely populated districts, the question of disposal of waste is material to health and comfort; but when human beings are crowded in large masses, it becomes a matter of life and death. It is possible of course, to destroy the dangerous material by individual action; but the trouble and expense is of course greatly decreased by co-operation and the supervision of proper authority. On the next page will be found the solution adapted to single households, where combined action is impracticable.

EVERY intelligent and cleanly housewife has often struggled with the annoying problem—how to get rid of the garbage and refuse of the kitchen. In the cities much money has been spent upon different public methods, all of them being slow and most of them more or less inefficient. The unpleasant odor and the danger to health are persistent and continuous—a satisfactory remedy has been the pressing need. No other agency ever has, nor is it probable any ever will, be able to claim results equal to those attained by *fire*. For in this way only are we absolutely certain of the destruction of the dangerous elements in the disease-breeding material. For this reason many housekeepers have fallen back upon the kitchen stove or range for consumption of garbage, making a virtue of necessity and putting up with temporary nuisance of malodorous gases while the process lasted. While this is infinitely better than allowing the garbage to decay above ground, or even under ground, it is still a very rude process. To secure a perfect result, yet escape all unpleasant odors and other annoyances was manifestly

a great desideratum, and many attempts have been made to procure it, but without practical result except upon a very large scale too expensive for family use. The problem has, however, at length been solved in the invention shown here.

This simple device claims to effectually destroy all organic matter without offensive smoke or smell. It can be adapted to any make of stove or range, and operated with an ordinary fire.

As shown, the pot is placed in the griddle-hole of the stove, resting on the wide lower flange, and the garbage placed in it; the cap is fitted on top, and the pipe, which is furnished



below with a plate, to take the place of the opened door, is adjusted to the ash pan. The gases driven off thus pass down under the fire grate and are consumed. When the garbage is dried

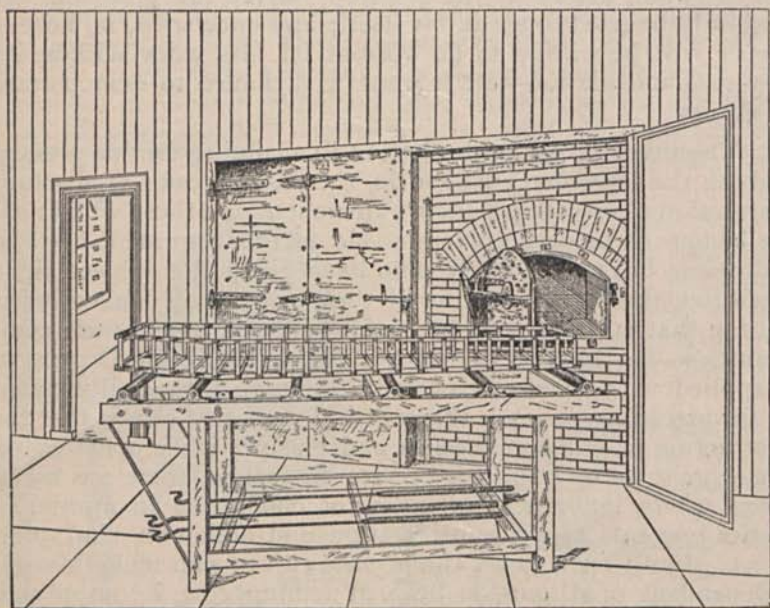
and converted into charcoal the stop-cock is opened, and the air thus admitted ignites the remaining contents which are also consumed. With proper adjustment, which is obviously easy for any one, no escape of odor is possible, and the garbage is harmlessly disposed of—nothing remains but a little inorganic ashes.

This invention has been exhaustively tested, and we are quite safe in saying that it will do its intended work every time, with ordinary care. No expert knowledge is required; once adjusted to your stove or range, it is but a minute's work to put the apparatus in place and set it going—the balance it does for itself, the only attention required being to admit air when the garbage is dried, which is readily tested by the stop-cock. We claim therefore, that the DOMESTIC GARBAGE CONSUMER has met the want, answered the question, solved the problem. It need only be tried to speak for itself; and once tried, no house-keeper will be willing to do without it. Its work will be its best recommendation—all it wants is a chance to demonstrate its merits.

The inventor has no hesitation in claiming for his process on both the large and small scale, the desired result of absolute destruction of disease-producing elements. To those who know the history of modern epidemics, no further argument need be addressed; but to the many who have given the subject little attention, the careful reading of these pages may convey information that will not only be useful to them, but to their communities—for the principle so well illustrated in the DOMESTIC is applied with equal efficiency in the large furnace illustrated in the preceding pages. While it is a matter of course that the destruction of garbage is easier and cheaper when operated on the large scale by public or private enterprise, there are many plans where ignorance, prejudice or corruption in municipal bodies prevents proper consideration and action on vital questions. In all such cases, the private citizen can make himself independent of all outside help, at trifling cost, by supplying his kitchen with the DOMESTIC, and disposing of his own waste until the public mind is properly enlightened.

CREMATION.

CREMATION having established itself in the scientific mind as a sanitary measure, it is merely a question of time when the prejudices of the ill-informed shall give way, and a more rational disposal of the body take the place of the present method. The Furnace here shown in the engraving having already been before the public for a number of years, and being now in successful operation in many American cities—including New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Detroit, Pittsburg, Davenport, Ia., Waterville, N. Y., and Lancaster, Pa.—we need here only add a few explanatory sentences:



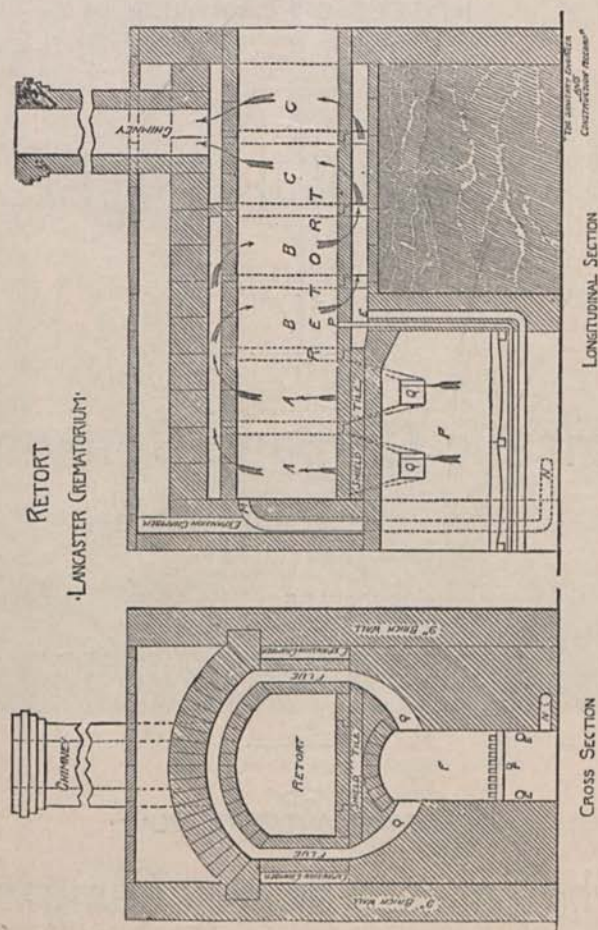
CREMATION FURNACE.

The flame from the fire chamber passes through the curved flues and up on both sides of the Retort, down again through a second pair of flues, and up once more through a third—thus enveloping the retort, and raising it to any temperature desired for its purpose. The body is rapidly reduced to ashes, and the gases evolved and not consumed in the retort are conveyed through a pipe and delivered under the grate of the fire chamber, where final combustion is so complete that analysis by Dr. T. R.

Baker, late of Millersville Normal School, of what escaped from the chimney, showed the following:

	H ₂ O	CO ₂	Illumin'g Gas.	O	CO	N
Before Cremation	.0011	.00080	.000	.0080	.0000	.016
During Cremat'n	.0044	.00091	.012	.0065	.0017	.015

The chemist adds that "none of his tests indicated the presence of anything that could pollute the air."



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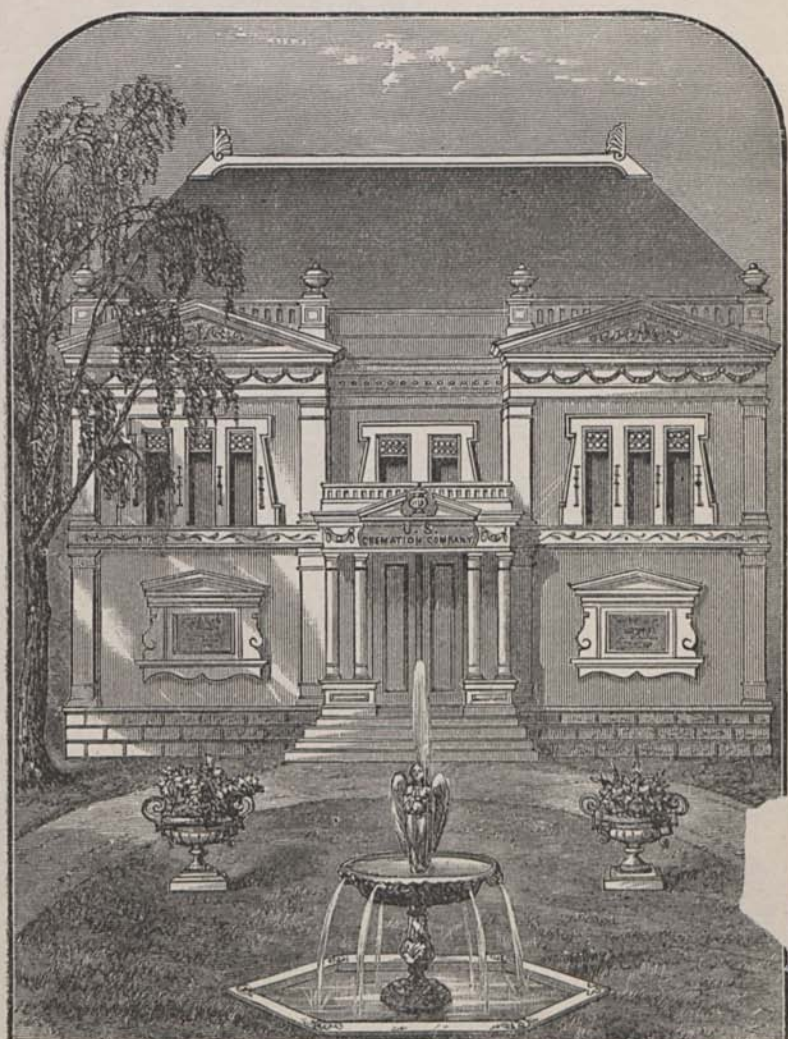
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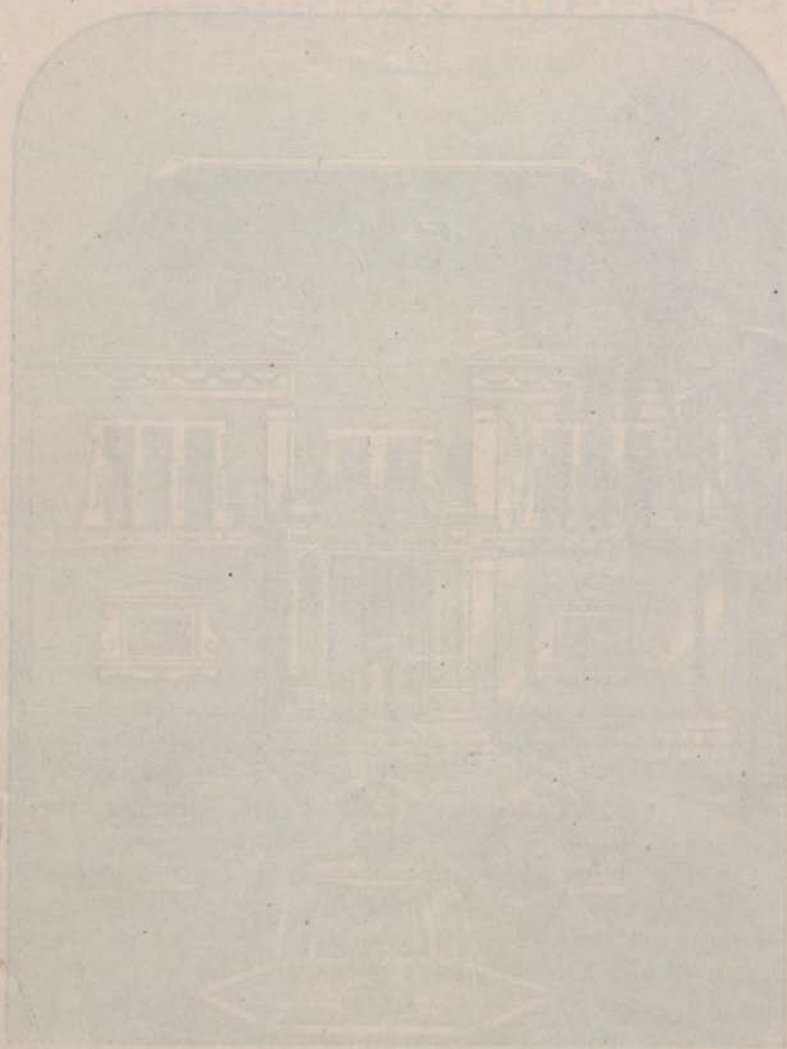
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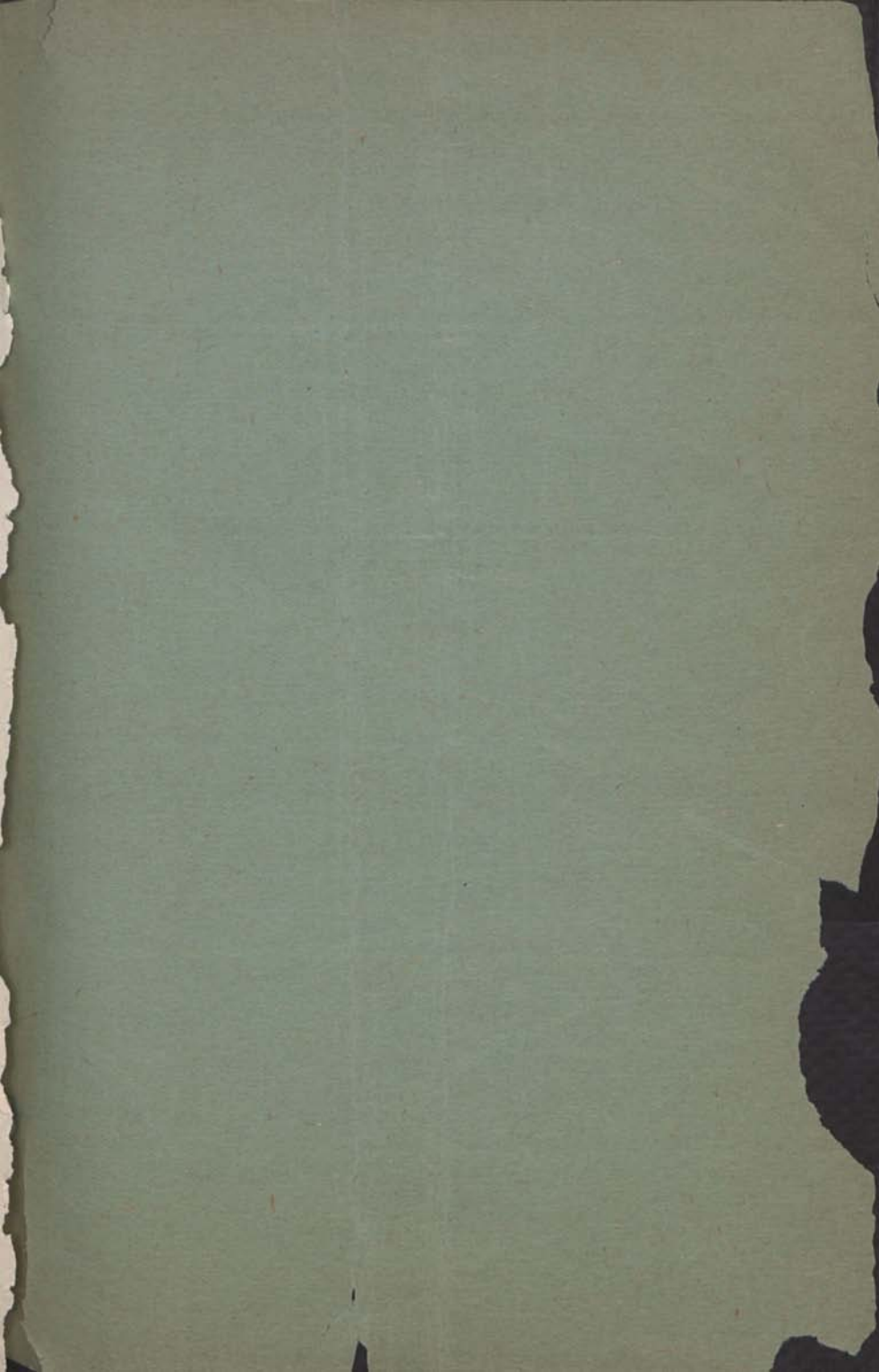
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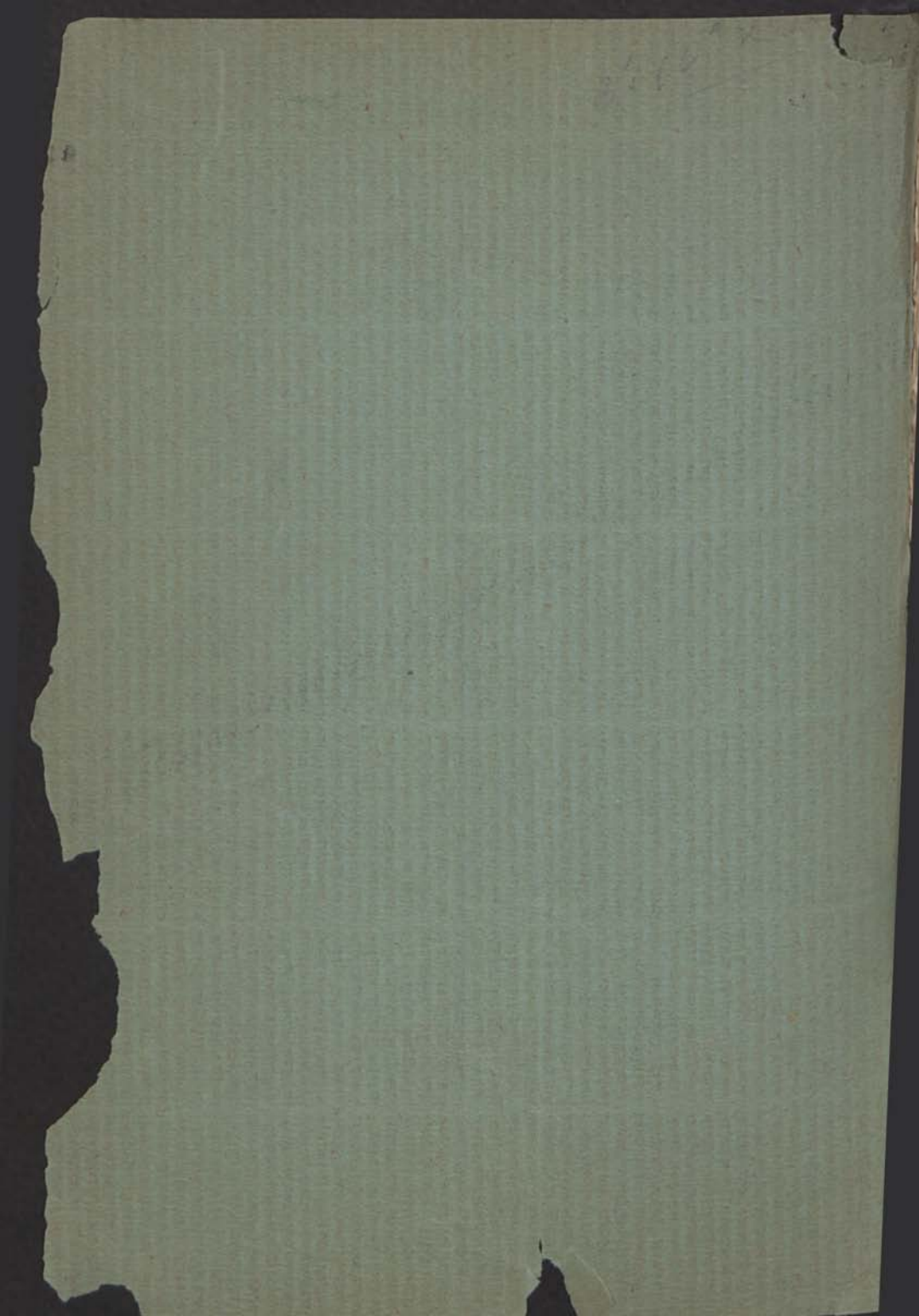
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Incinerons nos Morts

L'Incinération supprime le lent et hideux travail de la décomposition putride au sein de la terre, la transformation du corps « en ce je ne sais quoi qui n'a de nom dans aucune langue » ; le feu purificateur résout le cadavre, en moins d'une heure, en cendres et en fumée.

L'Incinération supprime la pollution du sol, des eaux, de l'air, l'empoisonnement des vivants par les morts ; l'appareil crématoire est d'une innocuité absolue.

L'Incinération supprime les difficultés, les grossières manipulations, les profanations, les inconvénients de l'inhumation et de l'exhumation ; à l'intérieur du monument crématoire, l'assistance peut, comme en un temple, se recueillir, entendre les suprêmes adieux sans être témoin de la disparition du corps ; sous les portiques du Colombarium, à l'abri des intempéries, elle évoquera la mémoire du disparu.

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L'Incinération rendra à la vie les immenses espaces occupés par la mort ; l'urne n'exige qu'une place minime.

Prière de répandre le présent appel.

L'Incinération peut être entourée, à volonté, du faste le plus grand ou d'une extrême simplicité.

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Incinérons nos Morts !

A Paris, depuis l'ouverture du monument crématoire du Père-Lachaise, en août 1889, des milliers d'incinérations ont été effectuées.

Parmi les personnalités incinérées citons :

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- 1^o De propager la coutume de l'incinération en France ;
- 2^o De faire toutes études sur la pratique de l'incinération ;
- 3^o De participer, selon ses ressources, lorsqu'elle le jugera convenable, aux frais d'incinération de ceux de ses membres pour lesquels une demande régulière lui sera faite.

ART. 4. — La Société est ouverte à tous ceux qui, partisans de l'incinération, s'engagent à faire une propagande active en faveur du but qu'elle poursuit.

ART. 5. — Pour être nommé membre **titulaire** ou **adhérent**, il faut, soit être présenté par un membre de la Société et *agréé par le Comité*, soit adresser une demande au Comité qui statue.

Les **membres titulaires** ont tous à payer une cotisation annuelle fixée à un *minimum de 5 francs*.

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LIVING AND THE DEAD: 27

A LETTER

TO THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND,

ON THE

STATE OF THEIR CHURCHYARDS,

WITH PRACTICABLE

SUGGESTIONS FOR THEIR IMPROVEMENT.

BY

A PHILANTHROPIST.

London:

WHITTAKER AND CO.; SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO.

DEARDEN, NOTTINGHAM.

1841.

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MY FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

With your permission, I will engage your attention for a short time, whilst I address a few remarks to you on a subject deeply affecting your interests in many ways, and to an extent of which, I think, but few of you are aware.

You will perhaps think Churchyards very curious things to write upon, and wonder in what manner their condition can possibly affect you ; and I wish you may so think and wonder, for the most effectual means of gaining attention is by exciting curiosity. But I will not keep you in the dark as to the object I have in view, and the end I hope to attain, by writing this letter. They are short and simple. The former is to shew you that our present modes of interment are neither safe for the living, nor respectful to the dead : the latter is to induce you to take such steps as are available for effecting a beneficial alteration in them.

Attention has, for some time past, been very considerably attracted to the manner in which the mortal remains of our species are disposed of when the vital principle has ceased to exert its sway, and left its perishable tabernacle to return to the inanimate state whence it sprung, ere the omnipotent Creator instilled into it a purer essence.

Important branches of the daily and weekly press have used their best exertions to awaken the public from the torpor in which they have so long and so unaccountably slumbered, respecting this important subject; and have striven to impress upon them, especially upon the inhabitants of large and thickly populated districts, the danger they are incurring, by allowing the receptacles of the dead to remain in their present revolting and demoralizing state. Individual philanthropists, eminent for their talents and exertions, have likewise lent their influential aid in the same praiseworthy and laudable undertaking. Nor can it be said that these exertions have been altogether unproductive of good. Though they have not succeeded in arousing the public, generally, to a full sense of the danger of allowing the dead to remain in close contact with the living, nor have they as yet had sufficient moral power to compel the executive body, rigidly to enforce the fulfilment of such sanatory regulations for the public weal, as they are now by the existing law enabled; still less have their exertions, and the startling truths they have elicited and proclaimed, had sufficient weight to drive (and driven they must be if anything is to be done) the legislative assemblies to propound any fresh and more stringent enactments than those now in force for the preservation of the public health; yet have they, in many instances, worked considerable good, by inducing people to reflect upon what before

had either entirely escaped their notice, or, if noticed, had been attributed to other causes, entirely innocent of producing the direful results, unjustly and unreasonably attributed to them: and thus, as it were, laying the foundations for a general reformation.

Every thing, whether of great or small importance, must have a commencement; and we know that many great undertakings have sprung from very small beginnings. Let us not despair of accomplishing anything we take in hand, so long as we have right on our side; and let us never be dismayed because we do not, at first, succeed to the full extent we expect, or have a right to anticipate.

When an evil is proved to exist, and a remedy is known to be available, it is almost a solecism to say that it is the imperative duty of those who are intrusted with power, or have a right to apply that remedy, to enforce it in such a manner as to effect the greatest possible good that may lie in their power; yet, at the same time, to do it with as little interference with pre-existing opinions, laws, and institutions, as the exigencies of the case may admit. I am not an advocate for hasty and sweeping alterations—I am most decidedly opposed to the wild and ill-considered measures of too many of our modern lawgivers, who, for the mere sake of change, or to obtain temporary popularity with the vicious and ill-informed, would force into the statute book, measures fraught with palpable and inevitable ruin to those they profess to

benefit : still less would I, unless the most pressing necessity were proved to exist, encourage or countenance any infringement of the time-hallowed institutions or long established customs of my country ; institutions and customs to which many of the best feelings of our nature are inseparably linked, and to sever which, unnecessarily, I should consider as a crime amounting to very little less than sacrilege. But when from causes over which man has no control, or has no right to have control, such, for instance, as the increase of population, it becomes absolutely necessary for the safety and comfort of the community that such alterations should be made, then, I say make them, deliberately and feelingly indeed ; but make them fearlessly and effectually.

That the Graveyards in this country, those hotbeds and nurseries of sickness, misery, and death, as I shall hereafter prove them to be, have so long been allowed to remain in their present unhealthy and unseemly state, may be easily explained ; whilst that their condition has received so little attention from those, whose duty as guardians of the public welfare it undoubtedly is, to take care that nothing is allowed to exist that may have a prejudicial effect upon it, may be attributed to various causes. It would not, I think, be a very difficult task to prove that the administration of existing laws, and the construction of fresh enactments, are placed in the hands of men to whom public utility and public welfare are of

secondary consideration ; and I might easily shew that our law administrators and law propounders esteem private aggrandizement and personal interest worthy of far more attention and trouble than the benefit of their fellow-creatures, and that in their eyes an empty victory over a political opponent finds more favor than any measure having solely for its object the happiness and prosperity of those from whom these law administrators and law propounders derive their influence and fancied importance. I could shew that whilst days, weeks, and months are unprofitably wasted by that branch of the Legislature, calling itself, and boasting of being, the representative of "the people," in endeavouring to carry some measure, at the best of chimerical utility, and which, carried in its most favourable form would, as far as "the masses" are concerned, be of as little real benefit as would a critical knowledge of the evolutions of the glorious orbs that deck our nights with brilliancy, or a full persuasion that the Egyptian Pyramids were really erected under the superintendence of the men whose names they bear ; yet, if any unfortunate philanthropist should endeavour to draw attention to any crying evil, any abuse calling loudly for legislative interference, to which a party triumph could not by any possibility be tacked, such an individual would have the mortification of addressing himself to comparatively empty benches, if indeed he were fortunate enough, either through his own

personal influence, or the brilliancy of his oratorical powers, to retain a sufficient number of Members in the house to enable him to proceed. That such scenes are continually witnessed, as Members really actuated by a desire to promote the good of their country, or to ameliorate the condition of their fellow creatures, (and there are a few of these even in the present House of Commons,) being overpowered by clamour, whilst bringing forward some real grievance, or proposing some practical remedy for some weighty oppression, I defy the most strenuous supporters of "things as they are" to deny; and whilst such proceedings are not only tolerated, but encouraged by those who possess the power of preventing it, I fear but little is to be expected.

If my object were to endeavour to induce the Government, or their servants, the houses of Parliament, to do some act, or institute some enquiries for the benefit of mankind, or the good of their countrymen, from which they could not either directly or indirectly derive any advantage, either in their public or private capacity, I own I should wellnigh despair, and shrink from the undertaking, purely from the hopelessness of succeeding. But, most fortunately, I am not reduced to such a strait in my present undertaking. I hope to have some hold upon the attention of our rulers, because I shall shew them that they individually have an interest in it. Yes, luckily, I shall be enabled to bring self-interest (that

all important ally in working upon public men) to bear upon the point. I shall prove that their safety, as well as the safety of the public, is compromised; and when I have done that, I shall hope to effect some good. I know it is requiring too much to expect the acknowledged and accredited preservators of the public welfare to make beneficial alterations, to rectify known and acknowledged abuses, or even to take the trouble of instituting enquiries as to whether alterations are necessary, or abuses exist, merely for the benefit the public would derive from their exertions; but, as our legislators are mortal, and liable to pretty nearly the same ills that attack their less fortunate brethren, they, for their own sakes, if not for the sake of their fellow creatures, must be desirous of rendering the air they breathe in common with mankind, wholesome and pure, instead of allowing it to bear upon its wings ripe germinations of the direst diseases, by which the human frame is liable to be affected.

My brother Englishmen, my object in these pages, as I before observed, will be to impart to you a little information on a subject of which I think many of you have lived in ignorance, and to warn you of a danger with which few of you are acquainted. You all know there are such places as churches and churchyards, and many of you enter into the former at least once in every week; but I think it highly probable that few of you are aware of their state and condition;

I mean as affecting your health and comfort. Now, if you will allow me, I will scintillate you thereon, and offer a few "*grave*" hints for your consideration.

I tell you our graveyards are a nuisance, and are not only the receivers of the dead, but the destroyers of the living. In proof of which, I will lay before you the particulars of a few cases, in which it clearly appears that the inhumation of the dead in the immediate vicinity of the living has been attended with fatal consequences; from which you will see there is every reason to believe that many of those awful visitations, so common and so frequent, by which thousands and tens of thousands of human beings are hurriedly swept into the grave, derive their origin from noxious gases arising from the insecure state of the receptacles of the dead, and from permitting the living to reside within the baneful influence of their poisonous exhalations. You know the old saying, that one fact is worth a dozen arguments, and one proved occurrence more efficacious than a hundred flowery declamations. I acknowledge that principle, and shall act upon it.

The first case to which I shall allude, is the death of two men in a churchyard in a metropolitan parish. It appeared from the evidence taken on the Coroner's inquest, that the death of these men was occasioned by their inhaling some poisonous vapours that exuded from certain decomposing animal matters, and that the remains had been exposed before the decomposing

powers had had sufficient time to eradicate their noxious principles. It was proved that the grave-digger, in his vocation of preparing an already well stocked grave for the reception of another inmate, after he had reached a considerable depth, was suddenly and violently arrested in his progress by the hand of death. Upon being discovered, apparently in a state of insensibility, a ladder was quickly produced, and another individual descended into the grave for the purpose of rendering assistance to the unfortunate grave-digger. An eyewitness of this person's descent states, that he had no sooner reached the place where the man lay, and was stooping to raise him, than he (the assistant) fell; to use the witness's own expression, as though struck by a cannon ball, and appeared instantly to expire. Several attempts were afterwards made to descend into the grave, but they were deterred from penetrating any depth from the extreme foulness of the air. At length, all attempts to descend being found useless, the grave-digger and the man who first descended to assist him, were drawn up out of the grave by means of hooks attached to ropes. When the bodies were raised, all animation had ceased; and the surgeon who examined them declared, that death, in either case, was to be attributed to carbonic acid gas germinated from decaying animal matter. Now mark what follows. It was proved by the evidence of the grave-digger's daughter, that the

grave in which these lives were lost, when the fatal occurrence happened, had been opened and exposed to the effects of the atmosphere for four weeks. Here then we have an instance of destructive exhalations proceeding from a grave that had been laid open for a month, and exposed to all the variations of the atmosphere, yet possessing sufficient vigor to cause an instantaneous suspension of the vital functions of two individuals, who, previously, for anything that appeared to the contrary, were in the full enjoyment of all their corporeal powers. Now, as it has been shewn from evidence the most substantial, and proof the most positive, that the air in this grave, though not confined, but fully exposed to free circulation, had sufficient virulence to cause instantaneous death, we may be very sure that during the four weeks in which it had been laid open, an immense quantity of gas must have exuded from it, and been imbibed by the casual passers by, as well as by the individuals whose fate it was to dwell in its vicinity. And though, in consequence of its admixture with the element in a purer state, this gas became so much diluted as to have its deadly qualities considerably weakened; still we cannot suppose that those who inhaled the pestilential vapour in its less destructive form escaped without some injury; though it was not directly apparent, and, from its known and proved effects, could not be traced home. Though no other persons,

besides the two cases before noticed, were so affected as instantaneously to drop down in a state of unconsciousness and almost immediately expire ; it would be presuming, I think, too much ; it would be pressing far too greatly on our credulity to tell us and expect us to believe, that the grave-digger and his assistant were the only persons who suffered from the exhalations in question. Is it not very possible, indeed, is it not highly probable, that many who traversed that churchyard, or its immediate confines, in the exercise of their daily vocations ; or who permanently resided in its immediate neighbourhood, and were therefore more directly within its influence, received into their frames, through the instrumentality of these noxious evaporations, the germs of diseases from which they were before free, and which, but for that, might never have affected them ? How highly probable is it, in consequence of that grave being allowed to remain open, and the gas from its dead bodies permitted to escape, that many an industrious mechanic or useful citizen, who before, by his own unassisted exertions, was enabled to maintain himself, his wife, and family, if not in affluence, at least in comfort and respectability ; might have his arm paralysed, his bodily powers weakened, or his mind reduced to imbecility, from the same cause that effected the more immediate death of the grave-digger and his assistant ; and instead of maintaining himself and those who looked

to him for aid and protection by "the sweat of his brow," be compelled, along with his afflicted family, to drag out a miserable existence in a parish work-house; or, if his mental powers were assailed, an existence still more wretched and deplorable in a lunatic asylum; taking it for granted all the while, be it remembered, that his frame was sufficiently robust to withstand the first attack of his disorder.

I may here passingly observe, that it is generally supposed that most, if not all, the cases of typhus fever, that awful ravager of our race, derive their origin from the air being contaminated by gases that spring from animal substances in a state of putrescency; and that those with whom the disease originated have it in its severest form.

The next case I shall offer, will pointedly shew the extreme danger of approaching a body whilst the putrifying agencies are at work upon it; and, with what rapidity the gases that exude from the operations of those agencies, effect their baneful influence on the human system. The particulars are as follows:—

A gentleman, who, it appears, was studying to qualify himself for entering the medical profession, descended into a vault for the purpose of procuring some gas from a decomposing body, in order to try some experiments. Having procured a subject that the sexton, who accompanied him, thought particularly suitable to his purpose, probably from

knowing the circumstances attending the death of the individual, and which, let me observe, as proved by the inscription on the plate of the coffin, had been buried upwards of eight years. As soon as the instrument employed to open the coffin had been introduced into it, a most horribly offensive gas issued from it in great quantities, and the gentleman who went to obtain the gas unfortunately received it in a manner he did not intend: he imbibed some portion of the exuding vapour, and was quickly obliged to support himself against a pillar of the vault to prevent his falling. He was instantly seized with a suffocating difficulty of breathing, as though he had respired an atmosphere impregnated with sulphur, to which was added giddiness, extreme trembling, and prostration of strength; and in attempting to leave the vault, he actually fell from debility. It further appears, that on being removed from the place in which he had imbibed these noxious vapours, he did not immediately recover from their effects: for we find that the above symptoms were succeeded by sickness and nausea, and he was confined to his bed for seven days in consequence. His pulse was scarcely to be recognised at the wrist, although the heart beat so tumultuously that its palpitations might be observed beneath the covering of the bed clothes, varying between 110 and 125 per minute during the first three days after he was attacked; and

for many days after this exposure, his gait was very vacillating.

The above is the substance of part of a paragraph in Mr. Walker's admirable work on graveyards; a work that has done more, perhaps, than any other of a similar nature, in exposing to public view their revoltingly insecure and dangerous state, and arousing attention by the startling details it contains.

The paragraph before mentioned, in continuation, goes on to state, that the person who accompanied the gentleman whose sufferings I have just described, was also attacked with sudden illness, and with symptoms *precisely similar* to those above related; in consequence of which he was rendered unable to follow his customary avocations for some days. His symptoms, fortunately for him, were less in degree; but prostration of strength, pains in the head, giddiness, general involuntary action of the muscles, particularly of the upper limbs, continued for several days afterwards. We are also informed that this person, who, it seems, had been long accustomed to approach the remains of the dead, had on many previous occasions experienced similar symptoms in various degrees.

Here then, as in the preceding case, we have two persons simultaneously seized with distressing symptoms exactly corresponding, though experienced by them in different degrees of intensity; and in this case likewise, as well as in the other, there

cannot be the smallest doubt that the existing cause of the illness was noxious vapour arising from animal deposits in a state of putrescency.

It is a very common practice to teach Sunday and charity school children either in the body of the parish church, or in parts of the building separated from it, converted into an apartment and kept exclusively for that purpose. It is no uncommon thing for these buildings to be placed directly over a vault containing immense quantities of bodies, and also for the vault to have its ventilators conducted either into, or connected with, the place in which the children are educated. No one can wonder that the children and their teachers, when so situated, should have their health impaired, and their lives endangered. That such has often been the case, numbers can testify. One occurrence of this nature specially attracted my attention. I will give you the particulars of it. It appeared that, in a thickly populated and widely extended parish, there was only one Church, and but one burial ground, in the midst of which the Church was situated. Under a considerable part of one angle of the Church was a vault, in which the more wealthy part of the inhabitants were buried, on payment of a considerable fee to the Incumbent; and, as it happened that the parish contained a great portion of persons "well to do in the world," and as it is confessedly true, that such persons have a great dislike to lay their bones beside bones that

have belonged to persons in a more humble sphere of life, the vault contained immense numbers of bodies : indeed so frequent were the interments in this place, that a great portion of the Incumbent's revenue was derived from the fees paid on their admission. In consequence of some improvements in the parish, it became necessary that the building in which some charity children had been educated for a long period, should be pulled down. The school was then removed to a building attached to the Church, and over the vault, which was ventilated by means of apertures covered with iron gratings ; and unfortunately, one of these apertures came into the new school-room. The effect was soon apparent. The children, while the old room was used, were full as healthy as children in thickly populated places usually are ; but scarcely had the change of situation been made, when a change also was very evident in the appearance of the scholars and their teachers. The rosy freshness of health soon disappeared, and its place was supplied by ashy, pale, and cadaverous complexions. Sickness soon thinned their ranks—the attendance was diminished, and the school-room quickly presented “ a beggarly account of empty benches ;” whilst those who were able to attend were languid and weak ; unfit either for corporeal exercise or mental exertions. Things went on in this state for some time without attracting particular attention. The sickness was attributed to ordinary causes, and,

consequently, no investigation into it was instituted. But when, after a considerable lapse of time, there was no amendment, but on the contrary, the number of children who were prevented from attending by illness, was increased; and when it was known that the neighbourhood was free from any epidemic calculated to produce such a result, attention was drawn to the subject, and curiosity excited.

The effecting cause was soon elicited, and the means by which so much misery had been wrought and so many deaths occasioned, were satisfactorily accounted for. In the vault beneath the room was the mischief brewed. It was clearly proved by several scientific men, that vapours, injurious to the vital functions, occasioned by the decomposition of animal substances, were continually rising in it, and ejected into the room through means of the ventilators. These vapours, of course, became mixed with the purer atmosphere, and, as a natural consequence, were imbibed by the unfortunate inmates. On these discoveries being made, another site for the school-room was immediately sought and obtained; and the children being removed from the influence of the destructive vapour, were speedily restored to their wonted state of health and vigour.

These facts speak for themselves; they need no comment; they require no explanation. I am not in possession of the number of deaths occasioned by the instrumentality of the gases germinated and

distributed in the manner I have related ; indeed, it would be utterly impossible to ascertain the number, because many might receive the poison, which, from the peculiar nature of their constitutions, might, for a while, slumber harmlessly in their veins, and yet eventually spring into life and activity. That the number destroyed was considerable I am fully assured ; and at one time, out of a school of upwards of 300 children, nearly four fifths were labouring under indisposition.

The case you have just read is another and very convincing instance, though differing in its circumstances, of the danger arising from allowing the living to approach the dead. But that is not all that the case proves. You observe that the school-room was placed in an apartment, made out of a portion of a parish church, and that the vault was partly under the church and partly under the school-room. Now, I hardly know which of these two great evils is the worst, or to which I attach the greatest blame—poisoning the children in the school-room, or desecrating the church by converting it into one gigantic tomb, and making a charnel house of it.

I may as well tell you, for I am not ashamed of it, as regards religion, I am a member of the Church of England ; as regards politics, I am a Conservative ; and I have, therefore, as all good Churchmen and Conservatives have, a great veneration for the noble piles that constitute our places of worship,

and a very great dislike to their being defiled and polluted: but, as I intend to make a few remarks on this subject in another part of my letter, I shall say no more about it here, and for a time smother my indignation.

My readers, I will not weary you with distressing statements of deaths and sickness deriving their origin from the dead; neither is it my intention to harrow your feelings with a narration of details as disgusting as they are true. I will, therefore, close these statements of proved and acknowledged occurrences of deaths and sickness with one other circumstance, given in the admirable book I have before alluded to—Mr. Walker's *Gatherings from Grave-yards*. It is as follows:—"A lady died Sept. 7, 1832, and was buried in the rector's vault in — Church on the 14th. The undertaker had occasion to go down into the vault near the Communion Table; he had done the work of the Church nearly thirty years, and was well acquainted with the localities; the grave-digger had neglected to take up the slab which covered the vault; the undertaker being pressed for time, with the assistance of the son of the deceased removed the stone. The two descended, taking with them a light, which was almost immediately extinguished (a certain sign that the air was foul;) upon reaching the lower step of the vault, both were simultaneously seized with sickness, giddiness, trembling, and confusion of

intellect. The undertaker raised his friend, who had fallen on the floor, and with difficulty dragged him out of the vault; he himself, though previously in excellent health, was seized with vomiting the next day, and for twelve months rejected his food; at the end of this period, after having been under the care of many medical men, he consulted Dr. James Johnson, from whom he derived great benefit. The Dr. pronounced his case to be one of poisoning from mephitic gases. The patient is convinced that his health has been completely ruined from this cause; he is now obliged, after a lapse of seven years, to live entirely by rule. The young gentleman who was with him, was subsequently under the care of several medical men, upwards of two years; his principal symptoms, those of a slow poison, developed themselves gradually, but surely. He was attacked with obstinate ulcerations of the throat, which were not removed until two years had elapsed, although he had frequent change of air, and the best medical assistance that could be obtained."

I have now stated the particulars of four cases, in all of which there is the clearest proof that can possibly be given, that death or inveterate sickness had been produced from persons going within the influence of vapour impregnated with poisonous gas, issuing from human bodies whilst the decomposing agencies were operating upon them. And in each case it is clearly apparent these disastrous results

could not have been effected if common attention had not been wanting, or common decency had not been violated. In the first quoted, that of the death of the grave-digger and his assistant, want of care and attention is evident. Whether the accident happened through cupidity, in appropriating too scanty a space of ground for interment, or from an overpowering increase of population, or from inattention in the persons intrusted with the preparation of graves (and one of these there is no doubt it was) the result was the same, viz.: the ascertained destruction of two human lives, and the more than *probable* sacrifice of many others unascertained.

In the second instance, when the medical student and his companion were seized with sudden and dangerous illness from inhaling gas from a coffin *tapped*, as it is termed, for the purpose of obtaining it for some scientific experiments, there seems to have been lack of both common care and common decency: common care, in allowing the gas to escape in such a manner as to be subjected to its influence; and common decency, in wantonly and unnecessarily infringing on the sacredness of the tomb's repose. For the sake of the living, I am well aware, there must be experiments tried with the dead, and therefore it is necessary that there should be subjects for anatomical investigations; but they should be procured in a regular and legitimate manner: by methods duly authorised by law,

and not by secret and surreptitious spoliation of the tomb.

The next circumstance I brought forward was, that of some children poisoned by gaseous evaporations arising from a vault. And in this case it seems that a most ravaging scourge was let loose on its unconscious victims, purely through negligence and want of common attention; at least, there is no other excuse for such conduct but insanity; for who, in the due exercise of his senses, would think of allowing the foul air of a vault to escape through a room crowded with human beings: a man who conducted a common sewer, or the drainage of a slaughter-house, through his drawing-room, I should not consider one whit more insane; indeed, I would sooner far have the latter than the former. And thus, through want of a little foresight and precaution, numbers of human beings were abruptly cut off in the spring time of their life, or left to drag out an enfeebled existence, a prey to poverty and disease, and all their concomitant miseries.

And, lastly, the case I have just related was also one of careless inattention, as well as of disgusting outrage to every finer feeling. For who can tolerate the idea of the holy fane which our forefathers reared, where our venerated ancestors offered up their devout aspirations to the God who made them, and, in defence of which, the richest blood of our countrymen hath been poured like water; I say,

who can endure the thought of that time-hallowed fabric being made little better than a charnel house, and allowed to retain within its walls ripened seeds of destruction, that only want an opportunity, such as the opening of a door, the decaying of a brick, or the loosening of a fragment of mortar, to pour a flood of pestilential vapours, the forerunners of disease and death, upon all within their reach.

I shall not enter further into details of particular and ascertained cases of death or sickness, occurring through the neglected state of our Churches and Churchyards; but I shall proceed to offer a few observations on their general condition. And a very few will, I hope, be sufficient to prove that there is indispensable necessity for immediate alterations, and for the enforcement of more stringent sanatory rules and regulations, than, unhappily, are now in force.

In the present day of alteration and fancied improvement, when, in reality, almost every ancient institution is unsettled, and every fundamental principle shaken to its very centre, we hear a vast deal of "reformation," "rectifying of abuses," "purifying from the rust of ages," and terms of a similar nature; from which, any one unacquainted with the real state of matters, and ignorant of what such words, from the lips of those who use them, truly mean; would suppose that every thing either was, or very speedily would be, in a state of perfection; and that the good

people of this favored land would soon have little else to do but make themselves happy and contented, and live in peace and comfort beneath their own vines, and their own figtrees : no cares to disturb their repose ; no wants to be relieved by the sweat of their brow ; no dangers to be avoided ; no hopes unsatisfied. But, alas ! how often does it happen that where there is apparently the greatest activity, the least is accomplished : how frequently where the most strenuous exertions seem to be made, the smallest possible real advantage is derived. Such, unhappily, is the present state of things in this country. Whilst every nerve is strained to accomplish some favorite scheme, or some airy crotchet ; and whilst thousands upon thousands of the public money are expended in vapoury illusions or fanciful alterations, scarcely any thing is attempted either to relieve the real defects of existing institutions, or even to take the trouble of enquiring whether defects do or do not exist. From what I have witnessed in our houses of Parliament, especially in that professing to represent "the people," I believe if any member was to bring forward a motion or present a petition stating that the Graveyards were in a state they ought not to be, and pressing for an investigation into them : no matter how startling the facts on which such a motion or petition was founded, or how clear the impress of truth, he would be met by a sneer or a laugh, or at

the best received with cold inattention. Yet our Churchyards are a real, a great, and an oppressive evil to the people. In them are ripened and ripening seeds of destruction: in them are opened and opening the flood-gates of disease and death. Surely "the people" cannot be aware of the real state of things, or they would not suffer their health, their comfort, nay, their very life, to be thus endangered, when they have the power of preventing it. Surely if they could be persuaded that what I have related, really happened, and that similar cases are continually likely to occur, they would bestir themselves—they would demand at the hands of their representatives, a correction of these abuses. The dangerous condition of the Churchyards in large towns, has long been known to the few, (and of that few, the greater portion have an interest one way or another in keeping them as they are,) but I cannot think that the many have ever had the matter fairly brought within their reach in an attainable shape, or they could not have allowed it to remain as it is.

I say the state of our Churchyards is dangerous and disgusting; and I speak advisedly when I say so.

I had my attention first drawn to the subject under discussion on going to a Churchyard in a metropolitan parish to search for the grave of a relative who had been buried in it a few years previous. From a description of the Churchyard

I knew, very nearly, where he lay, at least where he ought to have lain. When I reached the place, I looked for the stone that once covered the mortal remains of my ancestor, but I looked in vain. It had been removed. I asked a sexton who was digging a grave at some little distance, if he knew anything of the removal of the tablet; but I received no answer save a curse, accompanied with a request to be informed what business it was of mine, whether the stone had been removed or not. Very near if not directly upon the spot, where, some twelve or fourteen years before, my revered relative had been interred, was a newly opened grave. Curiosity led me to look into it. It was deep, deeper I should say, than usual; but from the very top to the bottom, its ragged sides presented an appearance as of white pieces of dirty chalk, sharply protruding, which, on a closer inspection, I found to be human bones; many of them as perfect as if the flesh had been recently and rapidly removed. On looking at the earth thrown out of the grave, there was the same appearance; bones, some whole, some broken, mixed with fragments of wood (the remains of coffins) were thickly mingled with the earth, which was black and moist. Most probably, for it was more than possible, amongst the bones thus wantonly torn from their resting place, broken, and trodden under foot of the casual passers by, were some of the bones of the very relative whose grave I went to seek. I turned away,

sickened at the loathsome sight. How forcibly did the truth contained in the beautiful lines of the unfortunate bard of my native county then present themselves on the tablet of my memory :—

“ Who would lay

His body in the city burial place,
To be thrown up again by some rude sexton,
And yield his narrow house another tenant,
Ere the moist flesh had mingled with the dust,
Ere the tenacious hair had left the scalp,
Exposed to insult lewd, and wantonness ? ”

And who, says the same feeling poet, instead of being thus committed to the dust, would not prefer to

“ Lie

Beneath a little hillock, grass o’ergrown,
Swathed down with osiers, just as sleep the cottiers ? ”

Reader ! if this subject possesses sufficient interest, and if you suppose what I have told you too shocking to be true, or that I have stated it merely to work upon your feelings, let me request you to walk into the first Churchyard in the Metropolis ; or, should you reside at a distance from that repository of all that is good and all that is bad, then step into a Churchyard in the first thickly populated town you may happen to come near, and look into the first grave you see open, and, I doubt not, you will then find how probable to happen is all that I have told you, how truth is depicted upon every line of the extract I have just given from Kirke White’s “ Lines

written in Wilford Churchyard ;" how exactly borne out by experience is the picture that so vividly "starts from beneath his pen." And you will find that he whose lot it may be to be interred "in the city burial place," must not expect to rest quietly in his grave—must not entertain the cherished hope of calmly slumbering undisturbed until the last trumpet on the resurrection morning shall thrill him with its warning, but must be assured that he will soon have to yield "his narrow house another tenant," and that too, perhaps, before his coffin has decayed—before his flesh has returned to the dust from whence it was formed—or even "before the tenacious hair has left the scalp." But, should you happen to have a father or a mother, a brother or a sister, a wife or a child, a playmate of your youth, or a companion of your maturer years, deposited in such a place, I advise you under all circumstances to keep away from that Churchyard, and forego the cherished but melancholy pleasure of shedding a tear upon their tomb, or strewing "a rosebud o'er their ashes," lest your feelings should be tortured by finding their loved remains wantonly mangled by the careless sexton, their bones made the playthings of children, or their dust scattered to the wild winds of heaven. That this is no overdrawn picture, no circumstance unlikely to happen in the present state of our Churchyards, I can testify from experience.

Facts they say are stubborn things ; and he would be

an able philosopher indeed who could make a person disbelieve the evidence of his own eyesight. I have seen the graves opened ; I have watched the fragments of bodies thrown up by the sexton ; and I have witnessed him cast out a "grinning skull" with as little concern or attention as the lump of clay in which it was imbedded ; and, what is even more disgusting still, I have seen children playing at "shindy" in a Churchyard, a skull used as a substitute for a ball, and large fragments of leg or arm-bones in the place of sticks. Before children could be induced to substitute a skull for a ball, and an arm-bone for a stick, how long and how constantly must they have been accustomed to see those remnants of mortality ! How continued the exposure ! Were we to shew a child brought up in a village, the turf of whose Churchyard has remained unbroken perhaps for centuries, and where the dead are indeed allowed to rest in peace, a skull, it would shrink from it with horror, and would consider its youthful hands contaminated by the touch. Not so children educated in a town. From long habit and constantly seeing the dead exposed, and the tomb violated, they become indifferent to the sight ; it either passes unnoticed altogether, or if noticed at all, is made the subject of an obscene jest or a witty observation. But to return.

After I had witnessed the scene just related, where the tomb of my ancestor had, in all probability, been rifled, and his remains demolished and scattered

about, curiosity led me to examine other Churchyards in the Metropolis; and, in the few which in the weekday I was permitted or had opportunity to enter, the same revolting spectacle was discovered. Wherever a grave was opened, there were visible the mouldering vestiges of prior deposits. There was to be seen the bone, the skull, the portion of coffin, and the moist black earth; I did not find one single instance where fragments of human bodies were not visible. In some, full one half part of the earth thrown out seemed to be composed of these fragments; in others they were not so prevalent, but in all of them they were to be seen. To prove this much, that all the Churchyards in the Metropolis, and, of course, in all large towns also, are so full of dead bodies, that it is impossible to allow a sufficient space of time to elapse (even were the intention or wish existing) for the prior deposits to decay before fresh ones are conjoined with them, nothing can be easier: for, only take a walk through London, enter into the Churchyards indiscriminately as you pass them, keep your eyes open, look into the graves prepared or preparing, and I venture to affirm you will have the proof as full and as complete as actual demonstration can prove anything, which is surely enough to shew that an alteration is loudly called for; reason, decency, every right and good feeling, alike demand it. Then why is not the alteration made? At all events, why is there not

an attempt at an alteration? Why is year after year allowed to elapse, generation after generation to be born, and to pass away, without so much as one real attempt to remove this palpable, this crying abuse? An answer, at least an answer that ought to satisfy a reasonable or rational man, I apprehend cannot well be given.

The cause of all the mischief is evident and plain. The plots of land almost invariably allotted to the London Churchyards for the interment of the dead, are so extremely small and confined, that the ground inevitably must be disturbed, and its deposits removed long before natural causes can have effected their operations; and even by applying powerful artificial destructive agencies, the desired result could not in many instances be attained. (Remember, reader, I am now only speaking of the actual danger to the health of the living, and not in any way alluding to the preservation of the tomb's sacredness; and, consequently, not referring to the propriety or impropriety of applying such means as it is known will assist nature in rapidly effecting the destruction of animal remains.) So long as the present places for interment are used, I am persuaded but little good can be achieved; the disease is too deeply rooted to be removed by mild remedies. It must be a radical cure, or it will be no cure at all: gentle remedies might relieve the patient, but they could not effectuate a complete restoration. The value of

land in the heart of the Metropolis is so exceedingly great, and the population so dense, that it is quite impossible to obtain sufficient space to allow interments to be done decently, even if it was desired by the authorities, which I do not think it is ; and when we consider the immense numbers of persons who annually die there, we may easily conceive how crowded must the Churchyards be, and how necessary the utmost attention to preserve them even tolerably secure.

One certain evidence of the fact of the ground in Churchyards being overloaded with animal putrescency, is, the soil almost invariably presenting a black and moist appearance. I never saw soil taken from a grave in a Churchyard in London, that was not unnaturally dark and moist, and both these appearances always accompany animal decompositions. The walls, too, of Churchyards, and the houses in their immediate neighbourhood, have often been noticed as exceedingly damp, which can only be attributed to gaseous vapour exuding from the graves ; this moisture also as invariably emits an offensive smell.

All accounts agree in representing the people in the neighbourhood of Churchyards in the Metropolis, as being in a peculiarly unhealthy condition ; and statistics shew that typhus fever is most prevalent, and most virulent, where the Graveyards most abound. Nor is this unlikely, since typhus fever,

I believe, (for I am not a medical man, and have no practical acquaintance with the different complaints to which the human frame is liable, or the causes that produce them,) is allowed, as before stated, to be generally germinated from gases produced from animal substances during the time they are decomposing. And as we know that the people in the purlieus of Churchyards in the densest parts of London, and other large towns, are generally of the poorest class, who, from want of a free circulation of air, spare or unwholesome diet, neglect of cleanliness, and indulging in immoral and dissolute habits, are rendered more liable to infections and contagious disorders, than people whose mode of living is less objectionable, and whose facilities in procuring remedies when attacked are greater; it cannot be wondered that they are the greatest victims, and suffer in a more severe degree. And being aware that such is the case, I ask, is it right, honest, or fair, that these unfortunate individuals should continue to have their natural dangers further increased, and their scanty comforts diminished, by imbibing, unnecessarily, air poisoned by gases and vapours often propagated, no doubt, by the very bodies of their relations and friends? Is it right or fair, that, whilst the rich and the great have their noble monuments, and their spacious vaults, where their ashes may repose in peace, that the poor and the wretched should have their miseries

heightened by continually witnessing from the windows of their comfortless habitations, the graves of their deceased relatives thrown open, their bodies mangled, and their bones broken; and, at the same time, be liable to receive a pestilential disorder germinated from those very remains? Yet, how often must it happen, that the inhabitants of such places look into the Churchyards where their relatives are interred, and how continually must the harrowing spectacles I have just described, be presented to their view; when it is a well ascertained fact, that the graves of all, or nearly all, are invaded long before the children who placed them there have joined them in their long last sleep.

Mr. Walker has given an account of the condition of a great number of the Metropolitan Churches and Churchyards; and has entered into numerous interesting details, all of which, without exception, tend to shew, that they are exceedingly unhealthy, and crowded with dead bodies to an excessive degree. It would not come within the scope or the limits of this letter, to go into similar details. Indeed, by so doing, I should only be following in the steps of one better qualified for doing justice to the subject, from having had greater practical experience than I have had opportunities of possessing; though I have no doubt the subject is far from being exhausted, and that great quantities of particulars, similar in their nature and inevitable

results, might with much ease be obtained ; yet I do not see that any beneficial end would be attained by so doing. Therefore, instead of re-doing what has been so well performed, I shall content myself by giving one or two extracts from this work, and will so select them, as to shew that the Churchyards in a dangerous state are not confined to one spot, or one particular part of the Metropolis ; for, from the hovel of the beggar to the palace of the sovereign, the danger extends.

“ Buckingham Chapel is situated in Buckingham-street, and about three minutes walk from Buckingham palace. There are two vaults and a burying ground belonging to this Chapel. One of the vaults is underneath very large school rooms for boys and girls, and the other is underneath the chapel ; the entrance to these vaults is through a trap door ; in the passage dividing the school rooms from the Chapel, steps lead to the bottom of the building ; on the right is the vault underneath the schools. When I visited this place, a body had recently been interred, and the effluvium from it was particularly offensive. The vault is supported on wooden pillars, and there is only one grating, which fronts the street, to admit light and air ; the floors of the school rooms are white washed on the upper surface ; it is no difficult matter to see the children in the lower school room from this vault, as there are apertures in the boards sufficiently large to admit

the light from above. The place is spacious, but very low; the vault on the left, under the chapel, is about the same size as that under the schools, though much lower. I was assured that the ground was so full of bodies that there was difficulty in allotting a grave; the roof of this vault is formed by the under surface of the Chapel; it is white washed, the light passes through it, and the smell emitted very offensive. In the vault underneath the chapel there are piles of bodies placed in lead, the upper ones are within a few inches of the wooden floor. On a level with the Chapel, and behind it and the school rooms, is the burial ground, which is much crowded,—most of the graves being full nine feet deep, and nearly filled to the surface with the dead; the ground is raised more than six feet from the original level, formed only by the *debris* of mortality. No funerals are allowed on a Sunday. Interments are allowed in either vault, in lead or not; if not in lead, two wooden cases are required, a shell and a wooden coffin."

I have given this extract verbatim, and what startling facts does it not proclaim! Let us pause for a moment and consider it somewhat in detail. We find a receptacle for the dead within the very reach of the inmates of the royal palace. And how do we find it? Its soil unbroken? Its dead bodies respected and undisturbed? No! we find it "a nuisance, pouring out deadly emanations of

human putrescence." Here are vapours laden with poison continually arising, even mingling with the atmosphere, and borne into the very chambers of the Sovereign ruler of England's destinies. Here we witness a most remarkable occurrence: here, for once, we find the monarch and the beggar brought to something like an equality, even without calling in the assistance of that unceremonious leveller—death; for the monarch and the beggar are exposed to the same danger, both liable from the very air they breathe to receive a mortal wound to their constitutions. Again: the mischief does not stop with this; the rising generation also suffer in a peculiar degree; over one of these pestilence breeders the children of the neighbouring poor are educated, for we find that "one of the vaults is underneath very large school rooms for boys and girls." Reader, think on that. If you are a poor man, and have children educated in this school room, or in any school room in a similar situation, think on it well; and not only think on it, but, as you value the lives of your children, as you wish them to be healthy and happy, remove them immediately from such a contaminated region. I tell you, it is far better that they should be entirely uneducated, than that with their education they should be liable to receive the seeds of disease and death.

These evils, bad as they are, are not all the

pernicious effects brought within our view by the condition of Buckingham Chapel and its Cemetery : for we read that “the roof of the vault is formed by the under surface of the floor of the Chapel ; the light passes through it, and the smell emitted from this place is very offensive.” So you see that they who, in obedience to the institutes of both God and man, frequent this place, consecrated and dedicated to the service of their Maker, by so doing, have their lives placed in jeopardy, their health risked, and their comfort destroyed. And by what ? Why, by destructive vapours arising from the mouldering remains of their relations and friends : relations and friends who, before them, frequented that place for a similar purpose, and with a like intention.

The particulars of the case I have just given are, as I said before, from a Churchyard in the vicinity of Buckingham palace, now the constant town-residence of our most gracious Sovereign. We will now take one from a district inhabited chiefly, I believe almost entirely, by the poorer classes of society ; and the details of it will be found even more revolting than its predecessor ; and, I apprehend, may be considered a fair specimen of the general condition of the Metropolitan Churchyards and Churches, and also of similar places in large manufacturing towns, where population is extensive and dense.

“ St Giles’s Churchyard is full of coffins, up to

the surface, coffins are broken up before they are decayed, and bodies are removed to the 'bone-house' before they are sufficiently decomposed to make their removal decent. The effect upon the atmosphere in that very densely populated spot, must be very injurious. I had occasion to attend the Church with several gentlemen, on Tuesday: being required to wait, we went into this Golgotha; near the east-side, we saw a finished grave, into which had projected a nearly sound coffin, half of the coffin had been chopped away to complete the shape of the new grave. A man was standing by with a barrow full of sound wood, and several bright coffin plates. I asked him, 'Why is all this?' and his answer was, 'O, it's all Irish.' We then crossed to the opposite corner, and there is the 'bone-house,' which is a large raised pit; into this had been shot, from a wheelbarrow, the but partly decayed inmates of the smashed coffins. Here, in this place of 'Christian burial' you may see human heads, covered with hair; and here, in this 'consecrated ground,' are human bones with flesh still adhering to them. On the north side, a man was digging a grave; he was quite drunk, as indeed were all the grave-diggers we saw. We looked into this grave, but the stench was abominable. We remained, however, long enough to see that a child's coffin, which had stopped the man's progress, had been cut, longitudinally, right in half;

and there lay the child, which had been buried in it, wrapped in its shroud, resting upon the part of the coffin which remained : the shroud was but little decayed. I make no comments ; every person must see the ill effects if such practices are allowed to continue."

This extract is taken from the Weekly Dispatch Newspaper, of the 30th Sept. 1838, and is also given at large by Mr. Walker in the book to which I have so often referred ; who in allusion to it says, that the vaults of St. Giles's Church are crowded with dead bodies, and hints that it is highly probable that the "great plague," (as the destructive disorder which broke out in the parish of St. Giles in the year 1665, and carried off immense multitudes of people was usually designated,) instead of arising from a foreign contagion, as is generally supposed, might derive its origin from the unhealthy state of the parish Churchyard, which then, as well as now, as proved by a celebrated historian, was in a disgusting condition.

It is scarcely necessary to make any comments on the horrifying picture I have just drawn. The natural coloring of it is so vivid and bright that any attempt to heighten it would be a fruitless labour ; whilst the particulars of it, speak so plainly for themselves, that they need neither explanation nor remark. And now let me ask, where is the man, who can calmly peruse this disgusting narration—

this cold-blooded, heartless violation of the tomb, without feeling that to permit it to remain as it is, without even so much as an attempt to rectify it, is a gross outrage to humanity; an indelible stain on the character of this Christian—this civilized land.

In whatever light we view the state of this Church and Churchyard, it is full of horror;—a living, a breathing reproach to the constituted protectors and guardians alike of our national prosperity, our general and individual comfort, our moral and religious condition. Oh, how unlike our rude, unlettered ancestors are we—how inferior in this respect, even to the barbarians of both ancient and modern times; and well might we, who make a boast of our enlightenment, our civilization, our refinement, our incomparable institutions, our religious observances, our moral rectitude, read a profitable lesson from the pages of their simple history. I verily believe, but perhaps it may be considered a bold declaration, that in no nation that has ever existed since the foundations of the world were laid,—whether barbarous or civilized,—whether enslaved or free,—whether enlightened by the bright beams of Christianity, or darkened by the heavy mists of pagan superstitions,—has such gross, such revolting, such wanton spoliation of the dead been permitted, as are now passed over in silence, or regarded with indifference, in Christian England,

in the nineteenth century. Even those nations who are so steeped in depravity as to luxuriate in feasting on human flesh, and who consider a draught of human blood, warm and reeking from the veins of their slaughtered enemies, the greatest treat they can have ; they, even they, brutal as they are, and unworthy the name of man, as we cannot but consider them, still venerate and revere the dead bodies of their kindred, and would willingly sacrifice their own lives, rather than that their remains should be subjected to outrage or insult. Yet, from the customs and laws of these barbarous cannibals,—these fiends in mortal form,—these human blood-drinking, human flesh-eating savages,—the highly civilized natives of Britain's favoured shore, may read a profitable lesson ; and by copying some of their practices and institutions, may at once be made better men and better Christians.

Whilst the foregoing pages were in course of preparation for the press, the public attention was attracted to a remarkable occurrence in St. Bride's Churchyard in which a human life was sacrificed. The particulars are very shocking ; and as they present some extraordinary features, and exemplify some occurrences that I have before stated as not unlikely to happen, I cannot do better, or more forcibly exemplify the position I have assumed, than by giving them in this letter.

It appears that on Tuesday afternoon, the 2nd

March, the inhabitants of Fleet-street and its neighbourhood were thrown into a state of alarm and excitement by a report being raised, that a grave while being dug in St. Bride's Churchyard, had fallen in and buried the grave-diggers, who were employed at the time in making the necessary excavations. The facts of the case are shortly as follows :—A person of the name of Cox, the grave-digger of the parish, a young man of the name of Henry Thompson, and another man, were engaged in digging a grave 20 feet deep, at the north east corner of St. Bride's Churchyard, and within three or four feet of the wall passing along St. Bride's passage. When the men had descended to the depth of about 17 feet; Cox the grave-digger, and the man whose name is not given, observed some of the earth giving way, above a tier of coffins, piled on each other, nearest the Churchyard wall, and lost no time in ascending out of the grave, and, fortunately, effected their escape unhurt. Thompson, it seems, also perceived the earth giving way, and his own imminent danger, and immediately attempted to follow the steps of his companions, and get out of the grave; but, before he could do so, not merely the earth, but the entire tier of coffins gave way and fell upon him. On the accident happening, an alarm was immediately raised, and the churchwardens and other people forthwith repaired to the place, whilst pulleys and

other implements were obtained as speedily as possible, for the purpose of removing the coffins and the earth that had fallen in, which was very considerable. Notwithstanding the great exertions made by the officials, police, and other persons, more than two hours elapsed before the body of the unfortunate man was brought in view. His head was first discovered. It was pressed against the head of the grave, having the entire weight of two coffins upon his chest. When found, life, as might be expected, was quite extinct. An attempt was immediately made to drag the diseased out of the grave, but it could not be accomplished, in consequence of the lower extremities of the body being jammed in between the coffins, and imbedded in the earth, and it was not until after nine o'clock on the Thursday evening following that the body could be recovered; for, owing to the loose state of the ground, little progress could be made in the excavations, for as fast as the labourers dug, the earth around them fell in on all sides. The reason assigned for the extreme difficulty in extricating the corpse, and the length of time it took, was, that his legs had become entangled in a bent position between the fallen coffins. One of the most active persons in endeavouring to remove the body, was a respectable man of the name of Beall, a rate-payer in the parish. On removing the coffins from the chest of the diseased, the first

that was taken out was that of *his own child*, a young girl of fourteen years of age, whom he had buried about three months before the occurrence of the fatal accident. The poor fellow was struck with horror at the sight, as well he might, and so affected as to be unable to render any further assistance.

In the circumstances attending the death of this unfortunate grave-digger, we have a wholesale violation of the sacredness of the tomb, such as could never be required, and ought never to be tolerated in any place or under any emergency; and whilst we cannot but lament the melancholy catastrophe that accompanied the destroying of the well-filled grave, and the demolition of the "tier of coffins;" and feel shocked at the outrage done to the feelings of the unhappy parent, by witnessing the exposure of the remains of his child, we cannot but rejoice at the publicity of the occurrence, because we feel assured, that these abuses only require to be known by "the people," (by that expression I mean the mass of the population, the poorer classes, the principal sufferers in such cases as this,) to ensure their being rectified and the nuisances removed.

In the late catastrophe in St. Bride's Church-yard, there must have been a more than ordinary degree of inattention and carelessness, on the part of the authorities, whose duty it was to attend to the regulations for the interment of the dead. For

I cannot think that in any Churchyard, however small, or however much crowded with dead, it could be necessary, in the excavations for a new grave, to expose the coffins in one that had only been closed for the space of three months. But, if the contrary is indeed the case, and the Churchyards are so small, and the deposits so numerous, that the prior deposits must be intruded upon in less than a quarter of a year, the situation of our Graveyards is appalling indeed, and their condition worse than has been represented, or is generally supposed; and the necessity for a complete reformation more urgent and pressing.

Having laid before you all the details of particular instances of deaths or sickness that have arisen in consequence of the repositories for the dead being insecure and dangerous, that I think necessary to establish the assertion with which I started, "that our Churchyards are dangerous and revolting;" so as not to extend this letter beyond the usual limits of such a species of publication; and having given such information on their general state as I deem sufficient to place beyond doubt the truth of what I have said, all that remains for me to do, is, briefly to offer a few remarks in conclusion on what appears the most ready and practicable method of correcting the abuses that I have proved to exist. But, before I do so, perhaps it will be as well to recapitulate what has before

been advanced, and, to use a legal phrase, "shortly to sum up the evidence;" which, by being condensed, will be impressed more powerfully on the memory.

You will remember I commenced by stating, that in consequence of the startling and melancholy accidents that have from time to time, within the last few years, happened in the Metropolis, the attention of a part of the public press, and the thinking portion of the community, has been attracted to the subject; but that from a want of attention, or something worse, in those who had the power to apply the reforming besom, the abuses, though glaring and oppressive, were still unrectified, and the mischief, a growing and enlarging one, still allowed to continue. I then proceeded to exemplify my assertion, that the state of our Graveyards is a scandal to our country, a disgrace to our rulers, and a personal nuisance to ourselves, by giving the particulars of cases where unhappy results had been proved to spring from allowing the dead to be interred in the neighbourhood of the living, with insufficient attention, and without a due regard to either safety or decency. I shewed, as plainly as undenied and undeniable occurrences could shew anything, that deaths have occurred from individuals incautiously approaching within the baneful influence of vapours and gases produced from dead and decaying human bodies,

and I proved, by the examples given in pages 10 and 14, that such vapours and gases are of so subtle and insidious a nature, as to insinuate themselves into the human frame, without the persons affected having any actual contact with the substances from which they are produced; and yet, so exceedingly virulent and powerful, as at once to suspend and destroy all the active vital principles. In addition to these cases of death, I proceeded to shew, that sickness, most deadly and inveterate, had attacked both individuals and assemblies from a similar cause, and that where the persons attacked were fortunate enough, either from the natural strength of their constitutions, or from receiving the poison when its efficacy had been reduced from exposure to the atmosphere, to escape with their lives; yet that they suffered to such a severe degree, that the best medical advice the country could produce, and the most rigid attention to medically prescribed rules, entirely failed in restoring them to their former state of health and comfort, even after a lapse of years of privation.

From these cases, clearly proving the imminent danger arising from allowing human remains to be disturbed whilst decomposing agencies are actively at work upon them, and that it is a mistaken notion to suppose that these agencies will have completed their work in a short period; I went on to prove that this melancholy loss of life, and the scarcely less deplorable extension of sickness and suffering, have

not been confined to those persons, who, in the exercise of their duties in preparing graves, are certainly in greater peril ; or to those persons who, from curiosity or other causes, are accidentally brought within the reach of these gases and vapours ; but, that immense masses of persons are continually exposed to the like dangers, and liable to the same fate, without being in any way aware of their danger ; or, if aware, without any means of extricating themselves from it. They are often cut down and withered, without so much as knowing from what quarter springs the deadly shaft.

It is melancholy to think how many hundreds of human lives, in every passing year, whilst yet fresh and fair from the hands of their Maker, are unnecessarily and wantonly sacrificed by these means. I fear it would present an awful page in the statistics of this country, could it be shown, how many human beings are thus cut off, and carried to a "timeless grave," before the fresh spring of their existence has displayed its buds ; and who, if they had not been thus sacrificed, might have lived to have been an ornament to their country, or have lent a helping though a humble hand in raising her to a higher pitch of renown and prosperity. And yet it is apparent, that the inhuman practice of allowing children to be educated in such places as apartments over vaults, crowded to their very roof with dead, and, in many instances, without using the customary, yet not always efficacious pre-

caution of placing those dead in leaden coffins ; and which vaults necessarily are continually pouring through their ventilators and gaping chinks, odours the most noxious and offensive, cannot possibly fail of producing the results justly ascribed to it. I would advise the supporters of the principles propounded by Dr. Malthus in his celebrated work on population, to look into this subject. Perhaps they are not aware how powerful a supporter they have in our Graveyards, and, I dare say, few of them are conscious what efficacious assistance the vaults of our Churches often lend them in practically carrying out their favourite principle. Whether or not they will thank me for informing them of it remains to be seen, but fully assured am I that their's is the only class in society who would not rejoice in seeing this blot wiped away,—this blackening stain on our character, as Christian men, removed, and for ever.

The next point on which I touched, and which has been incidentally illustrated, is the injury that may, nay, that must inevitably be done to religion, in deterring people from attending places of worship, by converting them into pest houses, and propagators of infectious and contagious disorders, instead of preserving them pure, and fit for the holy purposes for which they are intended ; and the only powerful argument that can be used in extenuation of it is, that it is a custom deeply rooted and long established. But, the interment of the dead in Churches and

other consecrated places, is not so very ancient a custom as some suppose, but one of those encroachments which pride, cupidity, and degeneracy, first tolerated, and then encouraged.

Interments in Churches, when first permitted, were confined to those persons who were justly celebrated for their exemplary piety, or who had distinguished themselves by rendering some important services to the state, or by benefactions to the Church in which their remains were to be deposited; in no cases were persons allowed, by the payment of money, to procure the much desired privilege. But time alters most things, and few, I fear, are benefited by the change. Amongst other alterations which have been introduced into our customs and institutions, the permission to bury in Churches, on payment to the clergy of a sum of money, is one. Unhappily, for the sake of religion and morality, the Clergy soon ceased to follow in the steps of their illustrious predecessors—soon “fell from their high estate;” the first symptoms of their degeneracy were avarice and cupidity; their love of gold was soon more powerful than their love of either God or man; and to gratify that love, they scrupled not to convert holy things to unholy purposes. And thus, what, if confined to its first intentions, would have been unproductive of harm, if not productive of good, was used as a precedent for indiscriminately allowing burials in places of worship.

So that, eventually, he who was possessed of sufficient wealth to satisfy the demands of the priests, was permitted to be buried within the walls of the sacred edifice, without any regard to the circumstances of his previous life or conduct ; and thus the practice has been continued to the present day, without the slightest attempt to check the unseemly proceeding ; and no doubt any such attempt would be met with a glowing declaration on the immutability and sacredness of what is called immemorial custom. But it would not be difficult to shew that the present practice of desecrating sacred edifices by converting them into charnel houses, is neither immemorial, nor has it been sanctioned by the better part of our clergy ; I could prove that many divines, of ancient times at least, were actuated by better motives than swayed the great bulk of their brethren, and loudly raised their voices, and sturdily wielded their pens, against these sacrilegious innovations on the temples of their God.

Lastly, I contended that the horrifying spectacles daily and hourly displayed in our graveyards, must of necessity work prejudicially on the morals of the people. Train up a child in the way you would wish him afterwards to walk, is an old adage and a true one ; and it is borne out by experience, that first impressions are not only the strongest, but so strong that they never can be entirely eradicated. Now turn to page 31. What think you must be the

state of the morals of children who can deliberately convert human skulls and bones into playthings ; and what the effect on their after conduct, from thus early being familiarised with those remains of mortality. I think it would not be going too far to say, that the child who could convert into a plaything a human skull, or make it the subject of a jest, would not, when a man, feel much repugnance to destroying a human life.

Where is the child, who had been religiously and morally brought up and educated ; nay, where is the man, with a well cultivated mind, who, if he did not turn away with superstitious awe, at least would not think of making such things as human bones and skulls the instruments of either amusement or profit ; but would wish them again to be quietly and decently committed to the graves whence they had been taken.

As I am not writing a sermon, or penning a moral essay, I shall not enter further on the consideration of this topic ; but I shall leave it to men better qualified, who I hope will profit by the hint. And I beg specially to recommend it to the attention of those who are advocates and strenuous supporters of that great distinguishing feature of the present age, the march of education.

The state and condition of our Churches and Churchyards, as exemplified by the circumstances before related, as you cannot but have observed, may

be viewed in a twofold light. First, as affecting the health of the community ; and, secondly, as affecting the morals of the people. In rightly considering them, both these great divisions should be kept in view ; and so I have endeavoured to do. But it is to the former, (the danger arising to the health of the community,) that I have particularly devoted my attention in these pages. Whilst I have entered, comparatively, at large on the danger, bodily, we are in from permitting the dead to be disturbed in their graves before their dust has mingled with its kindred dust, I have only alluded, incidentally, to the danger, morally, arising from and propagated by the same creating agencies. I therefore stop for a moment, though it is perhaps somewhat out of place, to state my reasons for not entering more at large on this last and highly important view of the subject, lest it should be supposed I consider it of trifling moment. It is shortly this: want of space, within the narrow compass I have allowed myself, to do full justice to both ; and not because argument most conclusive could not be used to substantiate it.

To consider the Graveyard question in its principal bearings and specific subdivisions, would not come within the scope of this letter ; neither, I candidly confess, would the knowledge or information of the Writer enable him satisfactorily to perform the task ; and even that branch of the subject to which I have devoted the greater portion of the preceding pages,

I have only treated in a very slight and superficial manner: my wish and endeavour being rather to awaken curiosity and encourage further enquiry, than to enter into minutiae and lengthy detail. Indeed to do so would be impossible. For to give even a decimal portion of the facts that might easily be collected in corroboration and proof of what I started with asserting, viz. that the state of our Churches and Churchyards is dangerous, insecure, and unseemly, would fill a large octavo volume at the least; and to lay before you, in a classical and scientific manner, all the primary and resulting evils springing from the present mode of disposing of our species, when the vital principle has withdrawn its correcting and preserving influence, would require, amongst other things, an extensive knowledge of chemistry, practical as well as theoretical; and to neither do I pretend. All the information I possess on the subject on which I am treating may be acquired by any one, who will take the trouble to seek it, without any previous acquaintance with the principles of any abstruse science. The facts stated in corroboration, are matters of public notoriety, and of course, if untrue, may very easily be contradicted. And, in the present day, let me observe, it would be no easy matter to palm an imposture on the public; especially when the subject from which the attempt is made professes to rest its foundation on substantial realities, openly displayed and publicly pro-

claimed. When the subject under discussion happens to be some abstract principle, or some effect, the operating causes of which are little known, or imperfectly understood, very possibly, by the aid of sophistry and plausible deductions, error may for a time, take the appearance of truth ; and the shadow seem substance. And indeed even when sophistry and plausibility are not set forth, but on the contrary, when the Writer really and firmly believes what he states to be " the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth ;" still, even then, owing to the shortsightedness and imperfection of human reason and understanding, often is an end obtained, an opinion substantiated, or a proceeding encouraged, entirely contrary to the intention of the operator.

But to return to the subject and to conclude. It now only remains for me to state my plan for correcting the abuses I have exposed, and for the future guarding against the occurrence of lamentable accidents, similar to, if not worse than those I have related.

I confess I approach this part of my task, with diffidence and reluctance. We all know that it is a very much easier matter to discover what is wrong, and expose a defect, than to propose an efficacious and practicable remedy. But the natural difficulty in such cases is immeasurably increased, where such defect has become interwoven with one's feelings, if I may be allowed the expression ; when it comes

home to the bosoms of all; and when it is sanctioned and encouraged by long established custom. Those who have never attempted to uproot a custom of universal application, sanctioned by ages and hallowed by time, can have no idea what they have to contend with who do. I have little doubt that all who have perused the foregoing pages and attentively thought on the fearful scenes depicted, will at once be ready to exclaim, "how very shocking"—"who would have thought of such things happening in England"—"why are not these abuses rectified?" But to numbers who so think and say, if I were to tell them that the only way to prevent a repetition of such occurrences, and the sole apparent means by which such abuses can be rectified, is, to put an end to the custom of interment in Churchyards and vaults in connexion with Churches; and that when they die, they must not expect to be buried near their relatives and friends, but in a place remote from them, and from human habitations; I feel persuaded their tone would quickly change, and their violent denunciations against the "Churchyard nuisance" be moderated and subdued; if indeed they did not look upon me as a heartless savage or an infidel. But so it is.—If we are to hear no more of men poisoned in graves;—no more of children blasted by vapours springing from the tomb;—no more of typhus fever slaying by hundreds the people living in the neighbourhood of crowded Churchyards, whilst those apart from them

are free from the ravaging scourge ;—no more of the religion of our country being desecrated ;—no more of the morals of the rising generation being corrupted ;—no more of the unseemly sight of witnessing fragments of mouldering mortality being converted into instruments for amusement or profit ; (aye of profit, gentle reader, for it is well known that the sextons in some Churchyards make a considerable sum annually by the sale of the bones they remove on opening graves, which are taken to mills and converted into dust and then sold to farmers as manure, to be used in the cultivation of their fields;)—no more, I say, of persons going to pour the melancholy tribute of a tear on the ashes of their kindred, finding that the place that once knew them, “ knows them no more ;” instead of the gentle flower pouring its sweet smelling odour on the mossy sward that covered their remains, finding the loved body dismembered, and its broken limbs wantonly trodden under foot, or what is worse, used as playthings by a ragged crowd of half clothed savages. If we are to hear no more of these things in civilized England, the dead must no longer be interred in the places and in the manner they are now. Some other means must be devised for their disposal ; and such I now intend to consider.

There are various methods by which beneficial results might be obtained, and the evil partially remedied ; but, I am not an advocate for half-measures, or for temporizing with what is con-

fessedly wrong or impolitic. If an abuse exist, let it be corrected in a straight-forward and effectual manner ;—if a blot is found upon any of our institutions, let it be wiped away. Remember the few are made for the many, and not the many for the few. This, I know, is a hard principle for some people to understand ; but nevertheless, it is a principle as firm and solid as the foundations of the everlasting hills.

In these concluding observations, there are two classes of people to whom I shall address myself. Firstly, those who for the time being, are intrusted with the management and direction of public affairs ; and consequently, by virtue of their office, are bound to see that all public matters are conducted in a proper and beneficial manner. Secondly, those for whose benefit these managers and directors of public affairs, execute the important trusts committed to their care ; and from whom, directly or indirectly, they receive their authority, and to whom necessarily, they are, either directly or indirectly, answerable for their conduct, and amenable for any dereliction of public duty.

The first of these two classes—the directors and managers of public affairs, ought to be subdivided, or perhaps they should be considered as two separate and distinct classes : but I have thought it better so as more clearly to define my meaning, to consider them as two classes only, and divide the first into two divisions ; namely, the general rulers of the

whole country, the ministers of the crown ; and those who by virtue of Charters or special Acts of Parliament, rule paramount in particular districts, and are not under the control of the general law of England.

To the first of these two subdivisions of the first class I will now, humbly yet firmly, offer a few observations ; but, whilst the following remarks and hints are specially directed to the individuals constituting the first class, the governors of the country, I particularly request the attention of those who constitute the second class, the governed ; because, by so doing, they will obviate the necessity of repeating the same remarks, or at least the most of them, when I come to address myself to them ; and also, because as I shall hereafter shew, they have it in their power to compel their governors to attend to whatever affects their interests and welfare ; or at least, if they cannot compel them to attend to the interests of the country, and enforce or enact such regulations as are palpably necessary for the public safety and comfort ; they can compel them to relinquish the offices, which, by so doing, they will have proved themselves both unfit and unworthy to fill ; and they have the power, indirectly, to place in lieu of them men who will and who can discharge their duties efficaciously.

Having thus premised, I will proceed, and will be very brief. And now, Mr. First Lord of the Treasury, whoever you be when these pages go forth to the world, and are subjected to its criticisms, to you, as

the accredited head, and mainspring of the body of men who sway the destinies of this mighty empire, I address myself. To you, great, mighty, and all-powerful as you are, to work immeasurable good, or incalculable harm ; who have it in your power to decree even the rise of nations, and the fall of empires—to continue the blessings of peace to your own and other lands, or to plunge them into the miseries of a long and bloody warfare ; to you, even to you, I address myself, and request your attention for a few moments, whilst I endeavour to explain to you what amendments the Government ought to make, with the assistance of Parliament, in the condition of our Graveyards and places of interment.

The duties devolving on the governors of such a nation as England, must be vast, varied, and extensive ; and many, I am aware, must, from the urgent exigency of other matters of more pressing moment, go for a time, ill performed, if not altogether neglected. There are duties of primary, and duties of secondary degree ; and it must of course be admitted that those of the primary order must be settled and performed before the secondary are entitled to due attention ; provided they cannot both be disposed of at one and the same time : the greatest concerns must be adjusted first, the smaller ones must “ bide their time.” Now, does the subject I have been considering come under the first or the second head ? Is it of primary or secondary importance ? I hesi-

tate not to declare that it belongs to the first class—it is of the greatest importance.

It cannot be denied that one of the most pressing duties devolving upon those in whose hands are deposited in the reins of government, is to endeavour to raise the people over whom they are placed to as high a pitch of enjoyment and happiness as they can possibly attain for them. A person placed in authority, who neglects to avail himself of any attainable means by which their individual welfare may be promoted, or national prosperity enlarged, has ever and deservedly, been considered guilty of a great dereliction of public duty. And who will say, that the enjoyment of health unimpaired is not one of the main ingredients in the cup of human happiness individually, and that to preserve in a healthy tone the great mass of the population, one of the most effectual means of promoting an enlargement of national prosperity. For, without health, of what value to their possessors are all terrestrial blessings? Of what advantage is wealth? Can they derive gratification from its disposition? And what satisfaction can the unhappy wretch, tortured with agonising pains on the feverish couch, derive from the possession of grandeur and power, of honours and fame, of a nation's plaudits, or a world's admiration? Where is the man, who, when dissolution appears startlingly near, and when the cold and clammy hand of death has laid its heavy weight

upon his brow ; whatever his earthly possessions, or however extensive his capacity for procuring temporal gratifications, would not gladly relinquish the one, and forfeit all his means for obtaining the other, for one short reprieve, or one trifling alleviation of his sufferings? How gladly would the noble, highbred victim of disease, exchange places with the being, he before looked down upon with contempt, as something of an inferior order! How willingly would he fill the situation of the lowest menial in his luxurious establishment! How joyfully become the "rustic hind," the humble cottager, or the laborious mechanic! And what can a sickly and enfeebled people do? How can they preserve their country? How keep it a "first class nation?" If we are to be prosperous, we must be healthy. No matter whether we allude to an individual or a community, neither the one nor the other can duly perform what is required of them, unless their bodily functions are in full operation, and their mental capacity in unclouded efficacy. So that in whatever light we view the subject, whether individually or collectively, it is clearly apparent that health unimpaired is one of the greatest blessings that can be bestowed.

If, my Lord, you have read the former part of this letter, and cast over in your mind the matters on which it treats, I flatter myself you will have discovered that there are yet certain things in this

“land above all lands afar encircled by the waters” that ought not to be ; and that the celebrated “Reform Bill,” whatever good or harm it may have done, certainly is not a panacea for all kinds of evils, as its most strenuous advocates predicted it would be. But although nine summers and as many winters have passed away since it became the law of the land, there still remains here and there a speck on our ancient institutions and customs, which would look quite as well without them ; and amongst such specks, our modes of interment of the dead, is not one of the least. But, my Lord, if you have not been so fortunate as to have perused the foregoing pages ; yet, if you had performed your duty to the public in the manner you ought, you could not be ignorant that what I have stated is the plain unvarnished truth. But it is not unlikely your Lordship may say, I have heard of such things as you have described, I have seen them recorded in the public press, and I know that when they happen, they cause a good deal of local excitement ; but it is not general ; there have not been any public meetings called to discuss the subject ; I have not heard of any petitions to Parliament praying an alteration ; and, moreover, I have not received any “official intimation” of them. I know it is a very common practice for persons in your Lordship’s situation, to decline any investigation into certain things

until they are officially brought into their notice. Such a mode of getting out of difficulties is a thing of every day occurrence; and, I dare say, very pleasant and very convenient. I have often noticed a person whilst holding the appointment of Chief Adviser of the Crown, and First Protector of the People, quietly rise from his seat in Parliament, and declare that he knew nothing of the matter, that is, nothing "officially," that for a month previous had been in every public print, and at every man, woman, and child's tongue end, from one extremity of the kingdom to the other. But I have always thought such a way of transacting public business very extraordinary, though no doubt exceedingly Parliamentary; and, being a plain, straightforward, unsophisticated individual, it certainly did appear anything but statesman-like. If I am wrong, I humbly beg pardon, and should not have alluded to it, but, reasoning on the supposition that what appears to have happened so often may possibly happen again, and that too, as just before noticed, in the present instance; for, I dare say, your Lordship has not yet had any "official intimation" of the condition of the Graveyards.

Now for what I think ought to be done by government. First, I recommend that an officer should be appointed by the crown, and be under its control like any other member of the govern-

ment, to be styled, "the minister of public health," whom I would invest with extensive powers necessary to enable him to carry into effect such regulations as he may deem expedient; or such as may be delegated to him by Parliament or other competent authorities. The exclusive duty of this person should be to see that the health and comfort of the public is not allowed to be endangered or infringed upon under any circumstances whatever, provided it is possible by any reasonable means to prevent or avoid it. As in the exercise of these duties it will often be necessary for him, notwithstanding the utmost vigilance and circumspection, to infringe upon individual rights and public customs; he must be invested with competent powers to enforce his alterations effectually; to do which, he must be placed out of the reach of popular control, so that there may not be any "pressure from without" to impede his course of operations, or check the usefulness of his proceedings. To this individual, in right of his office, should be committed the care of the Graveyards, I mean so far as to take care that the dead are interred both safely and decently. This minister should have power, under proper restrictions, to appoint assistants to aid him in carrying his plans into execution, which, at first, would be extensive and laborious.

The state of all the Churches and Churchyards

should be strictly investigated, and whatever sanatory regulations the minister should make, should be binding upon the local authorities in places affected by them, and adequate powers given to enforce the fulfilment of them, notwithstanding any by-laws or customs, to which they should be superior. In all places where the population is great and exceeds a certain amount, I would require the total abolition of interments within their bounds, and in those cases, the minister must provide such places out of the town, and away from habitations, as, considering the population and its probable increase, may be deemed sufficiently extensive, so as to prevent the possibility, with the exercise of ordinary caution, of the ground being disturbed before the bodies with their coffins should be effectually destroyed. These places should of course be consecrated in the same manner that burial grounds now are; and interments in them performed with the same ceremonies and by the same persons as at present. In selecting the burial-places, such plots of ground should be chosen as are open, apart from trees, walls, or habitations, that the "breath of heaven" may blow upon them without interruption. As regards the distance of the burial-places from the town, that is a point I would leave to the discretion of the minister, who would be guided by local circumstances, rather than lay down any general

rule binding alike in all cases. Indeed it would be scarcely possible to lay down any general rule on this point, for particular circumstances might prevent its being acted upon, without a very extensive infringement on private rights and immunities. The only general rule I would make, is, that the places set apart for interment should be such, and so arranged, that the living should not be endangered by them, and that the bodies should not be disturbed until they had substantially returned to the dust out of which they were formed. The carrying out of the principle I would leave open. Whether burials in the Churchyards of small towns and villages, where the space allotted to them is usually ample, should be discontinued, I would leave for after consideration; but the burial of the dead in Churches and vaults in connexion with them, I would abolish in toto. That blot at least should be wiped away, and for ever; whatever may be done with regard to interments in village Churchyards. No matter what a man's rank may be, or however great his wealth; neither the one nor the other should entitle him to have his remains bestowed in a place dedicated to the worship of his Creator, and originally intended for a far holier purpose, than as a receptacle for the mouldering remains of mortality, whether they be of the noble or the peasant, the prince or the beggar.

This alteration in the mode of interment, if fully carried out, would occasion considerable extra expense and trouble to the relations of the dead, in conveying them to the new burial-places, and present a formidable difficulty with respect to the poorer classes of society, who, for the most part, can ill afford the expense of burying their relations in any way ; and therefore it would not be fair to throw upon them any greater expenditure. To obviate that difficulty, there must be public conveyances, kept for the purpose of conveying the dead of the poor to these places of interment. This establishment, if well managed, might be carried on without any very great expense ; whatever it might be, it would be far more than an equivalent for the danger arising from the Churchyards in their present state. As regards the more wealthy portion of the community, the major part now use hearses, and therefore the additional expense to them would be very trifling ; indeed, not worth considering.

These, Mr. First Lord of the Treasury, are all the suggestions that appear necessary for me to make to you on this really important subject. By attending to which, and seeing that the principle embodied in them is fully carried out, I venture to affirm, you and your colleagues will effect a real benefit for your country ; you will be the means of saving many a human life from being prematurely

destroyed, and you will do good service to the cause of religion and morality. And, let me tell you, it is a concern in which you, apart from your public duties, are interested ; for you must personally be continually exposed to the dangers I have related. In your daily walk or ride from St. Stephen's to Buckingham palace, you must breathe a considerable quantity of foul air, exuding from Churchyards, for your pathway runs by the side of some in as dangerous a state as any in the Metropolis. Therefore, if you do not look into this matter for the sake of the public, perhaps you may be induced to do so for your own sake ; and, I assure you, it matters but little either to me or any one, save yourself, what are the motives that actuate you, provided the end desired be but accomplished.

And now, having disposed of the Premier and his colleagues, I wish to have a few words with the municipal authorities. There are many corporations in England specially and peculiarly empowered by their individual charters granted by the Crown, or by virtue of Acts of Parliament, to frame such by-laws and regulations for the government of their towns, and preservation of the health of their inhabitants, as they may deem expedient ; and these corporations, I apprehend, have it in their power, if they will but exercise it, in a great measure, to remove the causes of complaint arising from the insecure state of the Graveyards ; at least, they can,

if they please, considerably abate the nuisance, if they cannot in all cases entirely remove it. Their duty is plain, simple, and obvious. If the state of their Churchyards is unhealthy, a nuisance exists; and where a nuisance exists, it becomes their duty, as special Public Guardians, to see that it is removed; or, if it is not possible entirely to abolish it, to take care that it is reduced within as small a compass as possible, and this, I imagine, they are in all cases entitled to do. Not being learned in the law upon these points, I am not aware what powers the municipal authorities can exercise over the management of Churches and Churchyards when they become a nuisance, or are detrimental to the health of the public; but I have a strong impression that they have full power to interfere, and, if they have power, I beg to tell them it is their duty to exercise it. I am not going to enter into the question of what the rights and powers of Corporations are—that would involve certain legal points, with which the public have but little to do, and would understand still less, if I was to tell them: all I wish is, to suggest, that whatever those rights, powers, and privileges may be, they should be put in force to the utmost, even though privileges of private individuals should be infringed upon; remember what I said before, the minority must give way to the majority; and I am fully persuaded that their powers and privileges will be found powerful

enough to enable them to work great good in their peculiar locality, and entitle those who enforce them to the hearty thanks of their neighbours and fellow townsmen. To these private authorities I offer the same suggestions as those I have before given to their superiors in rank and authority. I would have them close the present Graveyards, and for ever keep their municipal seal upon them ; and I would have them select eligible sites away from the town, where the dead may rest undisturbed ; also, out of the municipal fund, provide the necessary public conveyances, as before stated.

There is one point I must not omit to notice, and ought, properly, to have referred to it sooner. That is the opposition some of the Clergy may offer to the plan for abolishing interments in Churchyards and Churches, on account of the diminution it might make in their incomes. In many places they derive a very considerable revenue from that source ; which I think comes under the head of "surplice fees." In some of the London Cemeteries these fees amount to an immense sum ; indeed to so much as to render the livings (otherwise of little value) amongst the most valuable in the kingdom. Therefore, it is evident, an alteration such as I propose, would affect certain "vested interests" to an alarming extent, if some special provision was not made to obviate it. And there does not appear to me any great difficulty in so doing : though the modes of accomplishing it

are numerous, and must depend on the manner in which the alteration is made; therefore, I shall not enter into its consideration. But, whatever alteration is made, and whatever plan adopted, most certainly the rights and privileges of the Clergy should be carefully respected and preserved.

Having concluded my advice and admonition to the "powers that be," the Governors of the country, and stated the plan that appears to me most feasible in effecting the necessary reformation, I will address a few words to the "powers that be not," though in reality they "be,"—the governed.

My friends, I address myself to you by that appellation, for I am one of you; I do not belong to the great, the noble, or the mighty; I claim neither kindred nor connexion with one birth-ennobled individual; and what is more, I do not wish to do so. I am one of those who think that it matters little whether a man can trace his descent through a long line of illustrious ancestors, or, as Pope has it, whether his

"Ignoble blood

Has crept through scoundrels ever since the flood,"

provided his own conduct is unblemished; his own motives are pure; for, by a man's own deeds, must he stand or fall. Thus, being one of you, I can address you freely; without restraint, without fear. By *you* I shall not be treated with either contempt or indifference. You have perused this letter—you

have reflected upon it—you have made enquiries (Englishmen are an enquiring race) into it—and you have ascertained that what I have written is true—you are satisfied that “the Graveyard nuisance” is not a fiction, or “vapory effusion of the brain ;” but a dire and stern reality.—You have attentively considered my plan for removing it, and generally you approve of it. But you ask, what can we, “the people,” do? We have no power. If we complain, we are not attended to; if we resist, we are threatened with “the strong arm of the law.” Such a question has often been asked, and such despondency has often checked exertion; but I tell you, it is wrong. You are quite mistaken. You can do a great deal, and the power you are possessed of is irresistible when properly applied. Individually, I admit, you can do little or nothing; but united, what is there you cannot accomplish? Have you not heard of the ancient fable of the old man, who on his death-bed, called his sons and desired them to break a bundle of thin sticks which he had fastened together for the purpose; how they all tried, one after another, but failed; it resisted all their efforts; but, when the sticks were disunited, how easily they were destroyed: now you are like that bundle of sticks—singly, you have little power of resistance, and are easily put down and destroyed; but united, who can resist, who can destroy you? Ever keep in mind the important motto, “Union is Strength.” I tell you

there never yet has been any really proved *general* grievance, which the people of England have resolutely and determinately, but peaceably and orderly, endeavoured to remove, that has not yielded to the pressure, no matter by whom or by what means supported. And what is there in the present case to prevent their again succeeding. The undertaking has every requisite quality to ensure success; for the evil complained of is a general one, and it has no right to exist. It certainly has a powerful advocate in long established custom; but what of that? How many customs, old and firmly established, have we not witnessed, even in our own day, give way to popular and reasonable demands; and why should not this? Depend upon it, so long as Englishmen retain their national character, and their incomparable constitution, the like causes will always produce the like effects.

If public evils and defects have withstood attack, it is because the means employed to accomplish their removal have not been the proper ones; or else they have not been properly applied; and not because the evils or defects possessed paramount power. If numbers are invested with right, they must prevail, if they employ right means, in the proper manner and time: all classes have their rights and privileges, the humble and the poor, as well as the great and the noble; and one class has no legitimate power to press on the other. With the rights and privileges

of the rich, I have nothing to do here ; it is popular rights I have to shew.

When “the people,”—“the masses,” have cause to complain, their proper means to obtain redress are by public meetings, and by petitions. And these are the weapons I recommend them to use in the battle of the Graveyards. Let some of the inhabitants of large towns and populous districts, call a meeting, and let it be well attended. Enter into discussion of the question—bring forward the cases that prove the existence of the evil—forward petitions from the meeting numerously signed, to both Houses of Parliament, and entrust the presentation of them to individuals friendly to your cause, who you know have ability, ably to advocate it, and as the Doctors say, repeat the dose until the desired result is obtained : above all things be not disheartened by a temporary failure or repulse. Should petitions, public demonstrations, and popular opinion, backed by the palpably apparent necessity of the case, all fail in effecting a redress of a grievance, like the one I have manifested, which is not likely, then “the people” have no alternative, but patiently to wait for the next general election of Members of Parliament, and then they have the power in their own hands. They can return men of like views to their own:—they can require their representatives to give pledges to support such and such measures ; to advocate such and such opinions ;

and, when that is done, the evil, if a real and not an imaginary one, must fall beneath the blow ; it cannot stand, if opposed by common sense, and a majority of the people's representatives, Petition ! Petition ! Petition ! is the people's watchword—it is their irresistible battering ram. At first, the stronghold against which it is opposed may resist its force, and the defenders of it may, for a time, laugh at the attempt in fancied security behind their bulwarks ; but relax not in your efforts, repeat the blows, and a breach must eventually be made ; which, when once accomplished, however small the aperture may be at first, every successive blow will increase the opening, and eventually you will be enabled entirely to effect its destruction, or take it by storm.

To conclude. In the foregoing pages I have advocated the necessity of important alterations in our manner of entombing our dead, and I have earnestly endeavoured to attract public attention to the subject, and in so doing I have used strong expressions, and advocated sweeping alterations ; but far, very far is it from my wish to advise the abolition of any long established custom, unless imperatively called for by the pressing exigency of the case. I have stated what I consider absolutely necessary, but I have stated nothing more. I do not recommend, because I do not consider it absolutely necessary, that the same course should be

adopted in England, as in France, towards the latter end of the last century ; when the minister of public health, in order to check the further spreading of pestilential disorders then prevalent, disinterred upwards of six millions of human bodies, and had them conveyed away from human habitations. The adoption of a similar course of proceeding in England, would, I think, be neither useful nor expedient ; all that appears requisite, is to see that the graves are secure, and to take all due precaution to prevent the superincumbent earth being displaced until an amply sufficient space of time has been allowed to elapse for the silent but continuous operations of nature to have their sway.

No! remove not the dead that now slumber in the tomb. As they are, so let them remain, until that awful morning shall dawn, when, at the sound of the shrill trumpet of the Archangel of the Judge of quick and dead, the waters of the great deep shall give up their inmates, and the graves shall restore from their silent resting-places, the accumulated remains of mortality for unnumbered generations.

I am, my Fellow Countrymen,

Your very faithful friend,

A PHILANTHROPIST.

POSTSCRIPT.

Whilst the foregoing sheets were passing through the press, I have observed, with great satisfaction, that the subject on which they treat has been ably introduced into the House of Peers by the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London ; and that his forcible attack on the " Graveyard nuisance " has been followed up by a spirited and judicious article in the leading Evening Ministerial paper, the *Globe*. This is as it should be ; it is an auspicious commencement. The battle has now begun in earnest—the first blow has been bravely struck—*victory must follow*. Charge, Melbourne, charge ! On, Stanley, on !!

NOTES

While the foregoing facts were passing through the press, I have observed, with great satisfaction, that the attention which they have been thus imparted into the House of Lords by the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London; and that his noble speech on the "Conventual nuns" has been followed up by a spirited and judicious article in the *British Missionary*, which, in the *Globe*. This is as it should be; it is an auspicious commencement. The battle has now begun in earnest—let us then have good hearts, strong wrists, and noble courage. On Sunday, 11th, 1851.

L614.62
1.
The Editor of the Birmingham
THE
Advertiser

GRAVE YARDS OF LONDON;

BEING

28

AN EXPOSITION

OF THE

PHYSICAL AND MORAL CONSEQUENCES

INSEPARABLY CONNECTED WITH OUR UNCHRISTIAN AND PESTILEN-
TIAL CUSTOM OF

DEPOSITING THE DEAD IN THE MIDST
OF THE LIVING;

WITH THE

EXAMINATIONS OF THE AUTHOR,

UPON THIS HIGHLY IMPORTANT SUBJECT,

BEFORE A

Select Committee of the House of Commons.

By GEORGE ALFRED WALKER, SURGEON,

AUTHOR OF "GATHERINGS FROM GRAVE YARDS, ETC."

"SALUS POPULI SUPREMA LEX."

LONDON:

LONGMAN AND CO.; AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1841.

•• The following pages are principally abridged from an octavo work published in the year 1839, by the same author, under the title of "Gatherings from Grave Yards."

The object in presenting in a condensed and cheap form many facts and arguments then for the first time put forth, is to diffuse more generally, information, instruction, and the author ventures to believe, conviction, upon a subject most vitally important and but little understood. Those who may be disposed to pursue the investigation will find abundance of illustrative matter in the work above alluded to. To the conductors of the Medical, the Literary, the Political and General Press of the Empire, the Author, in the name and on behalf of the religion, the national character, the humanity, the morality and the PUBLIC HEALTH of the country, begs to offer his sincere thanks for their powerful co-operation; and he trusts they will second, with equal energy, this further effort for the annihilation of a most disgusting and destructive nuisance.

101, *Drury Lane*, August, 1841.

CHAPTER I.

HISTORICAL AND GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

Decently to dispose of the dead, and vigilantly to secure their remains from violation, are among the first duties of society. Our domestic endearments—our social attachments—our national prepossessions, respect and sanctify the resting places of our forefathers. The most barbarous of mankind, would burn with indignation, at beholding the last remains of a beloved relative exposed, mangled or mutilated: and yet, among us, in a moral and Christian country, the abode of the dead is openly violated—its deposits are sacrilegiously disturbed, and ejected—the tender solitudes of survivors, are cruelly sported with, and the identity of relationship is destroyed,—so eager, indeed, is the haste to dispossess previous occupants, that time is not even allowed, for the *gradual* dissipation of decaying human putrescence: this is eliminated in gaseous profusion, contaminating, as it circulates, the habitations of the living.

Whence this rude invasion of the tomb? How can we reconcile, the previous anxieties of survivors, to secure a respectable interment, with the subsequent unconcern, neglect, or abandonment of the localities of the dead? I shall not presume to solve these questions; I cannot, however, help thinking, that the depredations of the "grave yard" are comparatively disregarded, from a feeling and a desire common to every man,—a feeling of unwillingness to believe, that his own friends have been disturbed, and, a natural desire to avoid the renewal of melancholy reminiscences. "All men think all men mortal but themselves." This self delusion, is carried yet further; for, while every man readily sympathizes with others, at the disturbance of their dead; he believes his own depository secure, and his future repose inviolable.

Every member of society is interested in the statement—that in the Metropolis and in very many towns and villages of the empire, the abodes of the dead are insecure. By far the greater number of grave yards are crowded to excess; many, indeed, have been in this condition for an indefinite period; so that additional interments could not have taken place without a very questionable disturbance and displacement of previous deposits. The mere allusion to this particular will, I am aware, arouse the sensibilities of our nature; but the proofs are conclusive.

And are these the "consecrated grounds," the "sanctuaries," the "resting places" of our ancestors? Let the inquiry be instituted, by whom are these violations of the grave directed, or sanctioned, or committed, and on what authority? This is an inquiry which essentially interests all classes of the community; and, perhaps more than any other, "comes home to men's business and bosoms."

It would seem that interment of the dead within Churches or Vaults, or in Burying Grounds, surrounded with houses, or in the immediate vicinity of densely populated Cities or Towns, is so familiar from its frequent or daily occurrence—accidents *clearly* traceable to the influence of putrefying effluvia so seldom, comparatively, arise from the practice of inhumation—that the most perfect indifference appears to prevail upon the subject; no danger seems to be dreaded, no fear excited, no apprehension even entertained of the injurious and destructive agencies which are constantly in operation, and armed with invisible and irresistible powers; and yet it is not difficult to show that some of the most afflictive visitations of Providence have originated in the contamination of the atmosphere, from putrefying animal substances—and that to the neighbourhood of the “Grave Yard” may be attributed the violence, if not the origin, of some of the most destructive diseases which have depopulated the human race.

That London with its thousands of busy minds and observant eyes should bear upon its breast those plague spots, the BURIAL GROUNDS, must appear to every reflecting mind, an anomaly not easily explained. Yet thus it is—whilst men are daily developing the simple and beautiful laws of the universe, and basing upon them systems as comprehensive as the laws they illustrate—the most perfect indifference is manifested as to the wilful infringement of those laws, and the most contemptuous disregard of the direful consequences which result from such violations.

This state of things cannot wholly be ascribed to ignorance; for in this modern Babylon there are those who by their scientific attainments, their leisure, and their acknowledged ability, must be supposed attentive to the action of general agencies, and fully cognizant of the evils inseparably connected with the present mode of burying the dead:—there are—there must be, men, who, standing aloof from the passions, the employments, and the anxieties that actuate large communities, have leisure for reflection, and time for execution;—yet *they* have not attempted to rouse the public mind to the consideration of a most important, though latent cause of disease and death. So important, indeed, do I consider this subject, that I have spared neither time, labour, nor expense in the investigation; and, after mature reflection, I felt I had a stern and inexorable duty to perform; otherwise, I should have shrunk from the task.

With the exception of a few of the most barbarous tribes, all nations, through all ages, have venerated the burial places of the dead. *Inhumation* has been the prevailing custom, and for the most part the vicinity of towns and cities has been most scrupulously avoided. Even among the Egyptians, where the custom of embalming was more generally adopted than in any other country, inhumation was practised among the common people. It is true that the custom of burning the dead succeeded to embalming, and that with the Greeks and Romans it was by no means uncommon: this custom, however took its rise from a religious regard to the resting places of the dead. “It was observed that long wars, frequent transmigrations, the destruction and re-building of cities, might, with the revolution of time, overturn the whole surface of a country; and that *lones confided for several centuries, to the bosom of the earth, would then unavoidably be exposed upon the surface.*” THE FEAR OF

SUCH A PROFANATION determined the practise of burning the dead ; their repose, from that moment, was considered as secure."

The *Jews* were very careful to remove the dead from their dwellings. They dreaded all communication with them, so much so that travellers were even forbidden to walk upon places where the dead were buried. Caverns and fields were destined for places of burial. The priests, it is true, were buried on their own estates, and sometimes in the tombs of kings ; but every city always had its public cemetery outside the walls.

Inhumation was always more general in *Greece* than elsewhere, and the very salutary custom of conveying the dead to a distance from the cities, was inviolably preserved ; indeed the whole religious doctrine and mythology of the Greeks tended powerfully to strengthen and support the laws which directed the bodies of the dead to be removed far from the habitations of the living.

The *Romans* entertained a religious veneration for the dead : and the places destined for sepulchre, were held particularly sacred. The law of the Twelve Tables expressly forbids the burning or burial of any dead body in the city.

"Hominem mortuum in urbe ne sepelito neve urito."

Inhumation was established among the early *Christians*, and their dead were carried out of the city ; but after Constantine had embraced the Christian religion, and peace had been established, innovations were admitted in the mode or place of interment. Constantine was allowed the privilege of being buried in the vestibule of a temple he had himself built ; and the same honour was afterwards conferred on many of his successors. It was subsequently granted to benefactors, who had provided liberally for the decorations of altars, and for the expenses incurred in performing the august ceremonies of religion, till at length, from veneration, ambition, or superstition, the abuse was carried so far, that interment, in the vicinity of churches, was granted to Pagans and Christians,—to the impious and the holy.

Attempts were unquestionably made by Emperors and Ecclesiastics, to correct this abuse. Theodosius the Great, in 381, published his celebrated code in which he forbade the interment of the dead in the interior of cities, and even ordered *that the bodies, the urns, and the monuments which were in the city of Rome, should be carried without the walls.* The monks strictly observed the rules, and conducted themselves on this point, with the most austere severity ; those who inhabited grottoes and deserts, were buried in forests, and in the heart of mountains. Walford, Abbot of Palazzolo, in Tuscany, was the first who, in the eighth century, wished to be buried in his own cloister. Sepulchres were soon afterwards introduced into churches, and further encroachments were rapidly made, till at length the prevailing custom was opposed to the established law, and the prerogative which was originally reserved for Emperors, became the portion of the lowest class of citizens, and that which was at first a distinction, became a right, common to every one.

It must be admitted, however, that in Catholic countries, the authorities of councils and the decrees of Popes, &c. have been directly opposed to interment in churches, and in the vicinity of cities and towns ; but the desire of distinction penetrated into the interior of temples, and permission having become easy and general, distinc-

tion could only be acquired by the position of the tombs, and the magnificence of their decorations. A decree was issued by the Archbishop of Toulouse, in the reign of Louis XV. of France, against the admission of the dead within consecrated walls, and in places held sacred. He states, that in violation of the holy canons, interments in the metropolitan church had increased exceedingly, and that the air was sensibly contaminated by fetid exhalations from vaults. With a truly apostolic mildness, he reasons upon the dangers and the profanation of the practice, and as an excuse for his interference and to secure the compliance of his diocese, says, "it was necessary that your eyes should be opened to your danger by repeated accidents, sudden deaths, and repeated epidemics. It was necessary that your own wishes, impelled by sad experience, should compel our interference; and that the excess of the evil should call, in a manner, for an excess of precautionary measures."

The French Government has indeed shown itself pre-eminently attentive to the health, and consequently, to the happiness of its constituents. Commissions have been issued—enquiries instituted—laws enacted—royal decrees published, and well arranged plans formed and executed. The remains of those who had long lain mouldering in their tombs have been carefully removed from the interior of cities, and respectfully and securely deposited, and mortuaries have been fixed and consecrated for those who follow so far distant from "the busy hum of men" as not to molest or endanger the survivors; nor has America been idle, this important subject engaged the authorities of New York in the beginning of the present century. The Board of Health of that city, in 1806, appointed a Committee, to report on measures necessary to secure the health of the inhabitants, and a prohibition of interment within the city was afterwards formally determined upon. To Great Britain belongs the unenviable distinction of being wholly supine in so momentous a matter; and yet from the vast masses of human putrefaction annually deposited in the metropolis alone, restrictive regulations seem to be no where so imperatively required.

It appears from an official return, made to the House of Commons, in the year 1833, that "in the parishes and places within the London bills of mortality, and of Chelsea, Kensington, Saint Mary-le-Bone, Paddington, and St. Pancras, in the county of Middlesex," 32,412 interments took place in the burying places of the Establishment, *exclusive* of those belonging to the Dissenters, Jews, and Catholics. From this return the following numbers are taken, viz:—

All Saints, Poplar, 456; St. Andrews, Holborn, 820; St. Anne, Limehouse, 396; St. Anne, Westminster, 494; Christ Church, Spital Fields, 594; Christ Church, Surrey, 540; St. Clement Danes, 516; St. Dunstan, Stepney, 703; St. George, Hanover Square, 1510; Saint George, Middlesex, 708; St. George, Southwark, 943; St. Giles in the Fields, 1642; St. James, Clerkenwell, 842; St. James, Westminster, 803; St. Leonard, Shoreditch, 963; Saint Luke, Chelsea, 1033; St. Luke, Old Street, 593; St. Margaret, Westminster, 930; St. Martin in the Fields, 565; St. Mary, Islington, 796; St. Mary, Lambeth, 1427; St. Mary, Newington, 547; St. Mary, Rotherhithe, 454; St. Mary, Whitechapel, 557; St. Mary-le-Bone, 3040; St. Matthew, Bethnal Green, 1054; St. Pancras, 1769; St. Paul, Covent Garden, 406; St. Saviour, Southwark, 590.

I am perfectly convinced that from many private burial grounds, in low and crowded neighbourhoods, where the lowness of the fees has occasioned an immense influx of funerals, *no returns whatever have been made*, or returns purposely inaccurate, have been furnished. The returns from some places I could name would be instructive.

From *official* documents it also appears that the number of bodies buried in the metropolis

From 1741	to 1765, inclusive,	were 588,523
1766	.. 1792.....	605,832
1793	.. 1813.....	402,595
1814	.. 1837.....	508,162

2,105,112

I have not been able to procure any satisfactory accounts of the numbers interred in burying grounds unconnected with the Established Church. By some parties *information was refused*, by others the records of the place were stated to have been *lost or neglected*, and in some cases the *parties most interested in suppressing, had alone the power to communicate*. The number must, however, be enormously vast, seeing that there are, in various parts of the metropolis, about 450 places of worship, of which nearly 200 belong to the Establishment; there are 47 for Baptists, 6 for the Society of Friends, upwards of 100 for Independents, 32 for Wesleyan Methodists, 4 for Swedenborgians, 6 for Unitarians, 4 for Welsh Calvinists, and numerous others, for different classes of Protestant Dissenters. There are, also, 9 chapels in connection with the Church of Scotland, 14 Roman Catholic chapels, 7 synagogues, and 18 foreign Protestant churches and chapels.

CHAP. II.

DESCRIPTION OF SOME OF THE METROPOLITAN BURYING GROUNDS.

From the following descriptions, the reader will be able to form a faint estimate of the dangers by which he is surrounded:—

CLEMENT'S LANE.—This is a narrow thoroughfare on the eastern side of Clare Market; it extends from Clare Market to the Strand, and is surrounded by places, from which are continually given off emanations from animal putrescence. The back windows of the houses on the east side of the lane look into a burying ground called the "Green Ground," in Portugal Street, presently to be described; on the west side the windows permit the odour of another burying place—a private one, called Enon Chapel—to perflate the houses; at the bottom—the south end—of this Lane, is another burying place, belonging to the Alms Houses, within a few feet of the Strand, and in the centre of the Strand are the burying ground and vaults of St. Clement Danes; in addition to which, there are several slaughter houses in the immediate neighbourhood: so that in a distance of about two hundred yards, in a direct line there are four burying grounds; and the living here breathe on all sides an atmosphere impregnated with the odour of the dead. The inhabitants of this narrow thoroughfare are very unhealthy; nearly every room in every house is occupied by a separate family. Typhus fever in its aggra-

vated form has attacked by far the majority of the residents, and death has made among them the most destructive ravages.

BURYING GROUND, PORTUGAL STREET.—This ground belongs to the parish of St. Clement Danes, and has been in use as a burying place beyond the memory of man.

The effluvia from this ground, at certain periods, are so offensive, that persons living in the back of Clement's Lane are compelled to keep their windows closed; the walls even of the ground which adjoins the yards of those houses, are frequently seen reeking with fluid, which diffuses a most offensive smell. Who can wonder, then, that fever is here so prevalent and so triumphant?

In the beginning of the year 1839, I was called upon to attend a poor man, who lived at 33, Clement's Lane; his health was broken, his spirits depressed, and he was fast merging into that low form of fever of which this locality has furnished so many examples. I found him in the back room of an extremely dirty house, his wife and family with him. On looking through the window of his room, I noticed a grave open within a few feet of the house; the sick man replied to my observations, "Ah, that grave is just made for a poor fellow who died in this house, in the room above me; he died of typhus fever, from which his wife has just recovered,—*they have kept him twelve days*, and now they are going to put him under my nose, by way of warning to me."

About twenty years since, it was the custom in this ground to bury the poor in a vault underneath the pauper's promenade, which is now flagged over. Trap doors covered the entrance to the vault, and a large chimney or shaft, rising from about the centre of the vault, carried off the products of decomposition from this place. The smell, I am informed by a respectable man, was disgustingly offensive, and was frequently intolerable during hot weather. The bodies were buried in slight deal three-quarter stuff coffins; these were soon destroyed: they were packed, as is the custom, one upon the other; the superincumbent weight, aided by the putrefactive process, had deranged several of the bodies; in replacing one of the coffins, three guineas fell from it; it was supposed that the money had been clutched in the hand previous to death; a more rational supposition is, that the nurse had hidden the money in the coffin, but that the opportunity had not offered of removing it.

ENON CHAPEL.—This building is situated about midway on the western side of Clement's Lane. It is surrounded on all sides by houses, crowded by inhabitants, principally of the poorer class. The upper part of this building was opened for the purposes of public worship about 1823. It is separated from the lower part by a boarded floor: this is used as a burying place, and is crowded at one end, even to the top of the ceiling, with dead. It is entered from the inside of the chapel by a trap door; the rafters supporting the floor are not even covered with the usual defence—lath and plaster. Vast numbers of bodies have been placed here in pits, dug for the purpose, the uppermost of which were covered only by a few inches of earth; a sewer runs angularly across this "burying place." From the most authentic information, I have reason to believe, that since the establishment of this place, from ten to twelve thousand bodies have been deposited here, not one of which has been placed in lead. A few years ago, the Commissioners of Sewers, for some cause, interfered,—and

another arch was thrown over the old one; in this operation many bodies were disturbed and mutilated. Soon after interments were made, a peculiarly long narrow black fly was observed to crawl out of many of the coffins; this insect, a product of the putrefaction of the bodies, was observed on the following season to be succeeded by another, which had the appearance of a common bug with wings. The children attending the SUNDAY SCHOOL, held in *this chapel*, in which these insects were to be seen crawling and flying, in vast numbers, during the summer months, called them "body bugs,"—the stench was frequently intolerable; one of my informants states, that he had a peculiar taste in his mouth during the time of worship, and that his handkerchief was so offensive, that immediately upon his return home, his wife used to place it in water. The parish authorities interfered upon the subject of poor rates, proposing to impose a mere nominal rate, if the place were closed; this was done for about twelve months. In defiance of opinion, however, it was again employed for the purposes of interment, and has been so used up to the present time. I am acquainted with many who have been seriously affected by exhalations from this corpse hole, and who have left the place in consequence.

Some months since, hand bills were circulated in the neighbourhood, "*requesting parents and others to send the children of the district to the Sunday School, held immediately over the masses of putrefaction in the vault beneath.*"

Residents about this spot, in warm and damp weather, have been much annoyed with a peculiarly disgusting smell; and occasionally, when the fire was lighted in a house abutting upon this building, an intolerable stench arose, which it was believed did not proceed from a drain. Vast numbers of rats infest the houses; and meat exposed to this atmosphere, after a few hours, becomes putrid.

This place is familiarly known among undertakers by the appellation of the "Dust Hole," and is a specimen of one of the evils which sprang up during the operation of certain laws that were hostile to the cultivation of anatomical science, which have happily now been repealed. The professed security of the dead was made the pretext; individual advantage was the real object for depositories of this description. The health and comforts of the living were entirely disregarded, and the annoyance and dangers, resulting from the proximity and effluvia of decaying animal substances were submitted to, and hazarded by survivors, rather than subject themselves to the tormenting anxieties which arise from the apprehensions of a brutal exhumation.

I have several times visited this Golgotha. I was struck with the total disregard of decency exhibited, numbers of coffins were piled in confusion; large quantities of bones were mixed with the earth, and lying upon the floor of this cellar (for vault it ought not to be called); lids of *coffins* might be trodden upon at almost every step.

My reflections upon leaving the masses of corruption here exposed, were painful in the extreme; I want language to express the intense feelings of pity, contempt, and abhorrence I experienced. Can it be, thought I, that in the nineteenth century, in the very centre of the most magnificent city of the universe, such sad, very sad mementos of ignorance, cupidity, and degraded morality, still exist? Possibly I am now treading over the mouldering remains of many, once the cherished

idols of the heart's best and purest affections,—here, thought I, may repose one who has had his cares, his anxieties—who, perchance, may have well fulfilled life's duties, and who has tasted its pleasures and its sorrows,—here he sleeps as I must sleep; yet I could not but desire that I might have a better resting place—a *Christian* burial.

ST. CLEMENT'S CHURCH, Strand.—There is a vault under this church called the "*Rector's Vault*," the descent into which is in the aisle of the church near the communion table, and when opened the products of the decomposition of animal matter are so powerful, that lighted candles, passed through the opening into the vault, are instantly extinguished. The men at different times employed, have not dared to descend into the vault until two or three days had elapsed after it had been opened, during which period the windows of the church also were opened to admit the perfilation of air from the street to occupy the place of the gas emitted;—thus a diluted poison is given in exchange from the dead to the living in one of the most frequented thoroughfares of the metropolis. The other vaults underneath the church are also much crowded with dead. From some cause, at present doubtful, these vaults were discovered to be on fire upwards of fifty years ago; they continued burning for some days, and many bodies were destroyed.

At the eastern side of this church a pump was formerly fixed, it has since been removed. The well was sunk in the year 1807, but the water had become so offensive, both to smell and taste, that it could not be used by the inhabitants, owing, most probably, to the infiltration of the dissolved products of human putrefaction. Graves certainly have been dug very near to this well, and the land springs have risen to within a few feet of the surface.

ST. MARTIN IN THE FIELDS.—The old burying ground adjoining the church has been broken up for the purpose of making improvements in the city of Westminster; the dead were disinterred, and their remains removed to vaults, called catacombs.

DRURY LANE BURYING GROUND belongs to the parish of St. Martin's in the Fields. Many thousands of bodies have been here deposited. The substratum was, some years since, so saturated with dead, that the place "was shut up" for a period. The ground was subsequently raised to its present height—*level with the first floor windows surrounding the place*, and in this superstratum vast numbers of bodies have, up to this period, been deposited. A short time since a pit was dug (a very common practice here) in one corner of the ground, and in it many bodies were deposited at different periods, the top of the pit being covered only with boards. This ground is a most intolerable and highly dangerous nuisance to the entire neighbourhood. Rather more than two years ago, in making three areas to the centre houses on the western side of this burying ground, many bodies were disturbed and mutilated. The inhabitants of the houses are frequently annoyed by the most disgusting and repulsive sights.

RUSSELL COURT, DRURY LANE.—This BURYING GROUND belongs to the parish of *St. Mary-le-Strand*. In its original state it was below the level of the adjoining ground; *now*, the surface is on a line with the first floor windows, of the houses entirely surrounding this place. It has long been in a very disgusting condition, but within the last few months the surface has been "cleaned up," and the whole may now be called "the whited sepulchre."

About twenty years ago a very respectable tradesman in the neighbourhood, was employed to make a "cold air drain" at the west end of this ground. For this purpose it was necessary to cut through the wall of an adjoining house, and on taking up the ground floor large quantities of human bones were found scattered about. It was supposed they had been dragged thither by rats, vast numbers of which annoy the inhabitants in the proximity of this ground.

ST. PAUL'S, COVENT GARDEN.—The burying ground adjoining the church, with difficulty admits an increase. On a recent occasion, the grave digger had to make several trials before he could find room for a new tenant, and he assured me that on several occasions, he had been driven from the attempt of digging a grave, and compelled to throw back the earth, owing to the dangerous effluvia he experienced from the soil. The vault underneath the church is also crowded.

ST. GILES'S BURYING GROUND.—St. Giles's parish has the melancholy notoriety of originating the plague in 1665. It was the fashion in those days to ascribe that visitation to *imported contagion*? I will not pause to enquire whether in the disgusting condition of many portions of this and other districts sufficient causes may not be operating to produce an indigenous effect, which might again be ascribed to a foreign origin.

Pennant, in his account of London, expresses himself strongly on the condition of this church yard:—"I have," says he, "in the church yard of St. Giles's seen with horror, a great square pit, with many rows of coffins piled one upon the other, all exposed to sight and smell; some of the piles were incomplete, expecting the mortality of the night. I turned away disgusted at the view, and scandalized at the want of police, which so little regards the health of the living, as to permit so many putrid corpses, tacked between some slight boards, *dispersing their dangerous effluvia over the capital*, to remain unburied. Notwithstanding a compliment paid to me in one of the public papers, of my having occasioned the abolition of the horrible practice, it still remains uncorrected in this great parish. The reform ought to have begun in the place just stigmatised."

That the present condition of this burying place is not much improved, will be seen by the following extract, taken from a London Journal of September, 1838:—

"What a horrid place is Saint Giles's church yard! It is full of coffins, up to the surface. Coffins are broken up before they are decayed, and bodies are removed to the "bone-house" before they are sufficiently decayed to make their removal decent. The effect upon the atmosphere, in that very densely populated spot, must be very injurious. I had occasion to attend the church with several gentlemen, on Tuesday, being required to wait, we went into 'this Golgotha; Near the east side we saw a finished grave, into which had projected a nearly sound coffin; half of the coffin had been chopped away to complete the shape of the new grave. A man was standing by with a barrowful of sound wood, and several bright coffin plates. I asked him "Why is all this?" and his answer was, "O, it is all Irish." We then crossed to the opposite corner, and there is the "bone house," which is a large round pit; into this had been shot, from a wheelbarrow, the but partly-decayed inmates of the smashed coffins. Here, in this place of "Christian burial," you may see human heads, covered with hair; and here, in this "consecrated ground," are hu-

man bones with flesh still adhering to them. On the north side, a man was digging a grave; he was quite drunk, so indeed were all the grave diggers we saw. We looked into this grave, but the stench was abominable. We remained, however, long enough to see that a child's coffin, which had stopped the man's progress, had been cut, longitudinally, right in half; and there lay the child, which had been buried in it, wrapped in its shroud, resting upon the part of the coffin which remained. The shroud was but little decayed. I make no comments; every person must see the ill effects if such practices are allowed to continue."

The vaults of this church are crowded with dead; they are better ventilated than many others; so much the worse for the public.

I have been the more particular in the foregoing statements, as the places described are situated in my immediate neighbourhood, and first attracted my especial attention to the fatal consequences that must ultimately arise, if the practice of interment in the midst of the living be not speedily abolished altogether, or at least confined within the narrowest limits. The following brief outline of the state of several other churches and grounds of the metropolis will prove, that the evils apprehended are confined to no particular locality; but that, wherever the enquiry is instituted, similar facts are established, and dangers and results equally injurious and fatal, to the health of the inhabitants, may, with too much reason, be apprehended.

ALDGATE CHURCH YARD.—The state of this burying ground is truly alarming. The fatal occurrence which took place in September, 1838, during the opening of a grave (the particulars of which will be fresh in public recollection), not only excited considerable alarm at the moment, but must convince the most sceptical, of the dangers of inhumation in the church yards of the metropolis. This ground is crowded to excess.

WHITECHAPEL CHURCH.—The vaults *underneath this church*, have been suffered to fall into a very dilapidated state; the smell from them, owing to the exposed and decayed state of some of the coffins is very offensive.

The **BURIAL GROUND**, *adjoining the church*, abuts upon one of the greatest thoroughfares in London, and is placed in the centre of a densely populated neighbourhood. Its appearance altogether is extremely disgusting, and I have no doubt whatever, that the putrefactive process which is here very rapidly going on, must in a great measure, be the cause of producing, certainly of increasing, the numerous diseases by which the lower order of the inhabitants of this parish have so frequently been visited. The ground is so densely crowded as to present one entire mass of human bones and putrefaction. These remains are treated with ruthless indifference. They are exhumed by shovelfuls, and disgustingly exposed to the pensive observations of the passer-by—to the jeers or contempt of the profane or brutal. It appears almost impossible to dig a grave in this ground without coming into contact with some recent interment, and the grave digger's pick is often forced through the lid of a coffin when least expected, from which so dreadful an effluvium is emitted, as to occasion immediate annoyance. Most of the graves are very shallow; some entire coffins, indeed, are to be found within a foot and a half of the surface.

In digging a foundation for a new wall, on the eastern side of the church, the workmen penetrated through a mass of human bones

eight or ten feet in thickness. These bones were thrown out, and for some time lay exposed to public view, scattered over the ground in a loathsome humid state. Two or three pits were afterwards dug to the depth of eight or ten feet, as common repositories for these bones, and the pits were filled up to within a few inches of the top, with a slight covering of earth over them. Family graves also were disturbed, and many coffins exposed,—some of them literally cut in two. Coffin wood is plentifully strewed over the ground in a rotten and decomposed state.

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHAPEL, Moor Fields.—The burial ground adjoining this chapel is crowded to excess, and has been closed for several years past. The vaults under the chapel are principally for private persons; none but the more wealthy Catholics are interred in them.

There is a burial ground belonging to this chapel in Poplar, where a great many of the poor Irish are interred. This place too is very full. The ground is very damp, and cannot be dug beyond five or six feet “without coming to water.” Many of the bodies lie near the surface, slightly covered over with earth. The neighbourhood is thickly inhabited, much sickness latterly prevailed, both among children and adults.

Another burial ground belonging to this chapel, in Dog Row, Whitechapel Road, is also excessively full, and requires to be dug with the greatest care.

SPITAL FIELDS GROUND adjoins the church, and is literally overcharged with dead. The vault underneath the body of the church is also very much crowded.

BETHNAL GREEN.—There are two burial grounds in this parish, called the *old* and *new ground*. The *old ground*, like that of Whitechapel, is very full,—from eight to ten funerals have taken place daily, and three or four grave diggers are constantly employed. The depth of the graves is, on an average, little more than four feet,—at a greater depth the water flows in. The *new ground* is situated in the Bethnal Green Road, adjoining to the new church.

STEPNEY.—The burial ground adjoins the church, and is crowded to excess. Footpaths cross through it in every direction. The soil, largely imbued with the products of putrefaction, is also extremely moist; many of the tomb-stones have sunk deeply in the earth. Here the peculiar putrefactive odour may be frequently distinguished,—as indeed it may in many of the burial places I have described.

MULBERRY CHAPEL, Well Street, St. George's in the East.—There are three vaults belonging to this chapel, one underneath the chapel, one underneath the school connected with it, and one underneath the *alms-houses*. They are all very full of bodies, particularly the two latter. A great many of the coffins are in a very decayed state. The smell from them is very offensive. The neighbourhood is densely inhabited.

ELENORA, SWEDISH PROTESTANT CHURCH, in Princess Square.—The ground was given to Charles the XIIth of Sweden, and the church was built by his sister, Elenora, after whom it is named. The burial ground is full; interment in it is discontinued. The grave digger, an old Swede, narrowly escaped with his life, on two occasions, from the falling in of the ground. There is a vault underneath the church, which is never opened, unless for burial; the entrance is secured by a very heavy stone slab.

ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, *Cannon Street, East*.—This is the parish church. The burial ground, which adjoins the church, is excessively crowded; many of the tomb-stones have sunk into the ground. There are public and private vaults; the former underneath the steps and entrance, the latter under the body of the church. The public vaults are greatly crowded, and in a loathsome state.

EBENEZER CHAPEL, *Ratcliff Highway*.—The burying ground is very small, but overcharged with dead. It is considered dangerous to open a grave. The neighbourhood is very populous. This is a *private ground*.

SHEEN'S BURIAL GROUND, *Commercial Road*.—This also is a *private* burying place. The proprietor of this ground is an undertaker. He has planted it with trees and shrubs, which are sufficiently attractive, *but the ground is saturated with human putrescence*.

TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, *Cannon Street Road*.—The burying ground at the back of this chapel is large, and very much crowded. The fees are low. Many of the Irish are buried here, and bodies are brought from very distant parishes.

There is a *school room for children* at one end of the ground, built over a shed, in which are deposited pieces of broken-up coffin wood, tools, &c.

MARINER'S CHURCH, *Well Close Square*.—This was formerly used as a Danish place of worship, but has since been purchased by the "Rev." G. C. Smith, better known as "Boatswain Smith." There is a burial ground adjoining the church, and a vault underneath it; but this is now never used. The ground is very full; many foreigners have been inhumed here.

BUNHILL FIELDS, *City Road*.—This old established Dissenting burial ground contains about seven acres. It was originally let on lease to a Mr. Tickell; it was first opened in 1665. More than one hundred thousand interments are supposed to have taken place in it. The monument to the Rev. John Bunyan contains the following inscription:

JOHN BUNYAN,

AUTHOR OF THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS.

OCT. 31 AUG. 1688.

ÆT. 60.

Until a few years ago, the average annual number buried in this ground was about a thousand; the fees were increased, and the number now averages about seven hundred.

ST. LUKE'S, *Old Street*.—There are three burying grounds belonging to this parish; two adjoining the church, and the poor ground, in Bath Street. Those near the church are spacious; some of the graves are very deep. The grave digger assured me, that he had often experienced the effects of the effluvia arising from the coffins, to an alarming extent, a frequent occurrence when coming suddenly upon a fresh grave, where the body had been kept too long before interment; then the effluvia would penetrate through a foot and a half or two feet of earth, and frequently produced nausea and loathing of food. He stated that many accidents arose from neglect or carelessness; a grave partly dug and left exposed for a night would, for instance, become dangerous from the collection of "foul air."

The poor ground is at the back of the alms-houses, in Bath Street; an improved system of interment is adopted in this ground. The vaults underneath the church are less used than formerly, on account of the cemeteries round the metropolis, but the smell from

them is particularly offensive,—so much so, that I was informed by the Rev. Dr. Rice, the present Curate, that he never ventured to descend, but invariably performed the funeral rites whilst standing in the passage, at the top of the entrance to the vaults.

CLERKENWELL CHURCH.—There are four burying grounds belonging to this parish, besides a vault underneath the church; two of the grounds adjoin the church, a third is behind the prison, and the fourth or poor ground, is in Ray Street, the entrance to which is through a private dwelling house, occupied by a broker. It formerly was occupied by a butcher, named *Rope*, who had his slaughter-house and stable at the back, and immediately adjoining the burial ground. About fifteen years ago, during the residence of this man, it was discovered that several bodies had been exhumed and placed in the stable, close to the slaughter-house; the inhabitants of the vicinity were powerfully excited, and the man, who had for many years carried on an extensive business, was deservedly ruined, and driven in disgrace from the neighbourhood. All these grounds are crowded, and in disorder; in the poor ground little regard is paid to the depth of the graves, or the removal of the dead. In this filthy neighbourhood fever prevails, and poverty and wretchedness go hand-in-hand.

SPA FIELDS.—This ground was originally taken for a tea garden; the speculation failed, and a chapel was built upon it, in which some ministers of the Church of England preached. The Bishop refused to consecrate it, and it was ultimately bought by Lady Huntingdon; she inducted one of her Chaplains, and it is now much frequented. The burying ground is very large, but absolutely saturated with dead.

This place offers a difficult problem for solution;—no undertaker can explain it, excepting by a shrug of the shoulders. I can affirm, from frequent personal observation, *that enormous numbers of dead have been deposited here.*

ST. JAMES'S BURYING GROUND, Clerkenwell.—This is a very extensive ground, and many of the poor Irish are buried here; the place appears excessively crowded. The mortality among children in this neighbourhood, in the year 1839 was very great. This will not occasion surprise when the locality of the burying ground, and the filth and wretchedness of the major part of the inhabitants are duly considered.

ST. ANN'S, Soho—There is only one burying ground belonging to this parish; it is walled in on the side next to Princes Street; close to this wall is the bone house; rotten coffin wood and fragments of bones are scattered about. Some graves are only partly filled up, and left in that state, intended, probably, for paupers. The ground is very full, and is considerably raised above its original level; it is overlooked by houses thickly inhabited. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood have frequently complained of the past and present condition of this place. The numbers of dead here are immense.

ELIM CHAPEL, Fetter Lane.—This chapel has a vault underneath it, crowded with dead; it much resembles the state of Enon chapel. A report is currently circulated, that some time ago, water had forced a passage into this vault, and that the stench proceeding from it had produced injurious effects upon the health of the inhabitants in the immediate neighbourhood.

ST. SAVIOUR'S CHURCH, Southwark.—The burial ground adjoining the church is very full. The poor ground, called "*Cross Bones*," in

Red Cross Street, Union Street, Borough, also belongs to this parish. The greater portion of this ground has not been opened for some time past, in consequence of its very crowded state; on the 20th February last year, a vestry meeting was holden "for the purpose of considering the propriety of re-opening the Cross Bones burying ground." The ground had been closed about two years (*the time generally allowed for the destruction of the bodies!*) and it was moved that it be re-opened; the mover of the resolution stating, that in consequence of the aversion generally manifested to bury in what is named the "Irish corner," many bodies were taken out of the parish to be buried. *This corner, however, had been cleared, and room made for about a thousand bodies.* One gentleman argued that "if the graves had been made deeper, hundreds more corpses might have been buried there." Another admitted that it really was too bad to bury within eighteen inches of the surface, in such a crowded neighbourhood; and it was even hinted that "*the clearing,*" viz. the digging up and the removal of *the decayed fragments of flesh and bones, with the pieces of coffin, &c. would be the best course, were it not for the additional expense.*" The funds of the vestry and the health of the living were here placed in opposite scales,—the former had its preponderance. Two charity schools, one for boys and the other for girls, are built at the west end, in Union Street, the back parts of which run into this ground.

There are two vaults belonging to this church, one called the Great Vault, underneath the body of the church. The coffins are piled one upon another; some, which contain branches of the same family, are chained together. All the bodies placed in this vault are buried in lead,—a condition never deviated from. When the vault is opened a fire is always kept burning. On one occasion I accompanied the grave digger to this vault; he received a caution from the sextoness, and hesitated for some time before opening the door. He observed that "he should know, directly he opened the place, whether there was danger." In descending, he carried a lighted candle at arm's-length; he then called out, "there is no danger." The place is extremely damp, and gives out a most offensive smell.

Another called the Bishop's vault, runs underneath the church yard. The coffins are piled upon one another, but the burying in lead is left to the option of the party concerned in the funeral. The smell here is more offensive than in the larger vault.

EWER STREET CHAPEL AND BURYING GROUND, at the bottom of Union Street, Borough.—The burying ground appears to have been raised nearly six feet from the original surface, and is literally surcharged with dead; it is now closed, and presents a very repulsive aspect. It might be instructive to know the number of bodies here inhumed; perhaps,—but dead men tell no tales,—the exhumed might present a formidable array. The vicinity is disgustingly dirty.

DEADMAN'S PLACE.—This burying ground is near to Ewer Street, and is equally surcharged with dead,—the name befits the appearance. Tradition says it took its name from the number of the dead interred there in the great plague, soon after the Restoration,

NEW BUNHILL FIELDS.—This burying ground is situate in the New Kent Road; it is a private speculation, and belongs to Mr. Martin, an undertaker.

It has many attractions for survivors; the fees are low, the grounds

are walled round and well watched, and the superintendent of the place resides upon the spot. At the entrance of the ground a chapel has been erected; it belongs to the Wesleyan connexion; under this chapel, arched with strong brick-work, is a spacious vault, containing about eighteen hundred coffins. There are not more, I believe, than twelve bodies placed in lead out of the entire number.

A strong ammoniacal odour pervades this vault; it is not so offensive as that which I have experienced in most other depositories of this description; this I attribute, to the constant transmission of the noxious vapours, (through open iron gratings) to the circumambient atmosphere.

The burial ground and vault, it appears, have been employed, for the purposes of interment, about eighteen years, during which, not less than ten thousand bodies have been inhumed and deposited, within this "narrow spot of earth," and the vault connected with it. Yet, around this tainted atmosphere, many houses are erected and boards are placed offering ground to be let upon building leases!

LAMBETH CHURCH.—This is close to the Bishop's Palace. There is a vault under the church, and a burying ground adjoining to it, both of which are for private or family graves. The ground is very full; it is contiguous to the river, and *the soil is very damp*; many of the tomb-stones have sunk into the earth.

At a short distance from the church is another burying ground, belonging to the parish; it is divided into the upper, middle, and lower grounds. It is very much crowded, and the tomb-stones are deeply sunk in the earth; the state of the ground has rendered it necessary to discontinue the practice of interment,—bones are scattered about, and a part of the ground has been raised. The neighbourhood is thickly populated; the soil is very moist, and water flows in at the depth of four feet.

ST. JOHN'S BURYING GROUND, Westminster, is very spacious and over-crowded. The churchwardens have been obliged to give up a part of the ground, for the interment of the poor, which had formerly been set apart, for the more fortunate. *The soil here is very damp*, and, at a shallow depth, the water flows in abundantly; the depth of the graves varies from four to eight feet.

ROMNEY STREET CHAPEL, close to St. John's burial ground.—This is a Baptist place of worship, with vaults underneath, not unlike those under Buckingham chapel, but not so large. The smell from the vaults is exceedingly offensive, and produces a feeling of nausea.

BUCKINGHAM CHAPEL, situated in Palace Street, about three minutes' walk from Buckingham Palace. There are two vaults and a burying ground belonging to this chapel; one of the vaults is *underneath very large school rooms for boys and girls*, and the other is *underneath the chapel*. The entrance to these vaults, is through a trap-door, in the passage dividing the school rooms from the chapel; steps lead to the bottom of the building; on the right, is the vault underneath the schools. When I visited this place a body had recently been interred, and the effluvium from it was particularly annoying. The vault is supported on wooden pillars, and there is only one grating which fronts the street, to admit light and air. The floors of the school rooms, white-washed on the under surface, form the roof or ceiling of the vault. It is no difficult matter to see the children in the lower school room from this vault, *as there are aper-*

tures in the boards sufficiently large to admit the light from above. This place is spacious, but very low;—the vault on the left, under the chapel, is about the same size as that under the schools, though much lower. I was assured that the ground was so full of bodies, that there was difficulty in allotting a grave. The roof of this vault, is formed by the under surface of the floor of the chapel; the light passes through it; the smell emitted from this place is very offensive. In the vault underneath the chapel there are piles of bodies placed in lead; the upper ones are within a few inches of the wooden floor.

On a level with the chapel, and behind it and the school rooms, is the burial ground, which is much crowded,—most of the graves being full 7 feet deep, and nearly filled to the surface, with the dead. The ground is raised, more than six feet from the original level,—formed only by the debris of mortality.

Interments are allowed, in either vault, *in lead or not.*—*if not in lead, two wooden cases are required, a shell, and an outer coffin.*

I could not but feel surprised that in the very atmosphere of the Palace, such a nuisance as I have just described—a nuisance, pouring out the deadly emanations of human putrescence, should be allowed to exist—still more so that it should be permitted daily to increase. *It is now exposed,* when will it be *denounced?* Surely the guardians of Her Majesty's health, will not risk the consequences of neglect.

CHAP. III.

DISGUSTING PRACTICES IN BURYING GROUNDS.

From the preceding description of a few (and but a few) of the metropolitan burying grounds, it will be seen that by far the greater number are crowded even to excess. This certainly ought not to have been permitted. The moment it appeared that the space allotted for interment, was occupied—that moment the ground should have been closed, and other asylums set apart for the interment of the dead: an infringement upon the occupancy of the unresisting tenant violates the property of survivors, and desecrates the sanctity of the sepulchre. Men pay *funeral dues* under an implied assurance that the “dead” shall be “respected.”

It is well known, that formerly, considerable alarm was manifested that the grave would be robbed of its deposits by the intrusion of the “resurrectionist.” An Act of the Legislature had the effect of destroying the temptation to purloin the dead, but the grave is still insecure. Grounds, accustomed to be held sacred, are unceremoniously cleared under *official* superintendence; and that too with such ruthless indifference and wanton publicity, that even passers-by complain of the indecent profanation.

I shall now show by what arrangements the superfluity is reduced, and room made for subsequent interments; and in doing this, I shall restrict myself to a brief enumeration of some of the particulars.

The means employed to effect the purposes contemplated, consist in what, by the grave diggers, is called “management.”

In this “management” of the ground, former occupancy is disregarded. Coffins are remorselessly broken through, and their

contents heaped together, in wild confusion, or scattered carelessly over the surface, exposed to "insult lewd and wantonness."

Great expense is frequently incurred in funerals. The encasement is often strongly made, and highly ornamented; and yet (perhaps, *therefore*) second-hand "coffin furniture," (nails, more especially,) may be found by the hundred weight, at many of the "dealers in marine stores," nor can we wonder that *coffin wood has been extensively used as an ordinary fuel in low neighbourhoods*. The gases produced by the decomposition of the dead, are partially soluble in water; and a fatty pellicle is instantly formed in large quantity. The wood, saturated with these dissolved gases, and used as fuel, must diffuse, in addition to the exhalations constantly given off from bodies in vaults, and on the earth's surface, vast volumes of gaseous poison.

In a burying ground, in Southwark, an application was made for a grave; the grave digger said, "there was no room, except for a relative, and only through management could room be made!" He was interrogated concerning his "management"—He replied "he would be a fool to tell any one how he did it." It was observed to him, that the place appeared to be dreadfully crowded, and it was feared there was not sufficient depth. "Well," observed the man, "we can just give a covering to the body."

A poor widow, to evidence her affection for her departed husband, had seriously diminished her resources, to defray the funeral expenses. The coffin was covered with black cloth, and was some time after identified by the maker of it,—it was nearly covered with lime.

An undertaker, who had the charge of a funeral, went with a friend into the vault of a chapel. A coffin, recently deposited, was taken under his arm with the greatest ease; his friend, doubting, poised the coffin, and was affected to tears, from the conviction that the body had been removed. Several other coffins were in the same condition.

The workman, in digging a grave in the burying ground of a chapel, much frequented, broke in upon a common-sewer, and deposited the coffin, there. The brother of the deceased insisted upon its removal; he compelled the man to place the body in the vault until another grave was dug; then dared him to remove it, and cautioned him not again to dig a grave for a human being, *entering the common sewer*.

In the vaults of a church centrally situate, the burying ground of which is, on the surface, in a most disgusting condition, a nobleman, and several other persons of distinction, had found their last resting-place.

In the year —, a rumour arose in the parish, that the rights of sepulture had been grossly violated; enquiries were instituted,—men were employed to replace the bodies in the shells that were left, and from which the lead had been stolen; a hole was dug, into which the remainder of the bodies were thrown. The grave digger was privately examined before a magistrate; but as it was found that any proceedings against him would implicate others, the affair was hushed up, and the vault, which had undergone a

thorough clearance, was thus again made available for the purposes of interment,—again, perhaps, to be subjected to a similar purgation, when the cupidity of the grave digger may be in the ascendant, *or the want of room shall require it.*

Four coffins, out of upwards of fifty, alone escaped these brutal depredators of the dead,—that which contained the remains of the nobleman, which it was expected would rest ultimately in—, according to his last wish, and three others, secured by strong chains, passing through their handles at each end; these were pad-locked, and the keys were kept by the survivors.

In March 1841, another fatal proof was afforded of the shocking condition of the soil of the London grave yards. The grave digger of *St. Bride's, Fleet Street*, and two assistants were employed in opening a pit 20 feet deep for the interment of the dead. Two of the men more practised than the third, escaped, large quantities of earth and an entire pile of coffins fell upon and crushed the man who was unable to get out of the grave. Such was the rotten state of the ground—that as the men dug, it fell in in masses and upwards of seven hours were employed in the most severe and indefatigable exertions, before he could be recovered, although the labourers had every mechanical assistance that blocks, falls, pullies, hooks, &c. &c. could afford. His head pressed against the end of the pit was discovered after two hours digging. As if in revenge for the insults offered them, two dead bodies had rested themselves on his chest, whilst his legs, jammed between other coffins and embedded in the earth could not for many hours be extricated. Thus another “grave yard” has divulged to the many the secret of its condition—which has long, however, been known to the few.

So effectually—so diligently had this ground been worked, so well charged with rottenness and corruption—so well incorporated with the bones—flesh and tissues of decayed and decaying human bodies—that the natural cohesiveness of the soil had been destroyed—thus “*the loose state of the ground was such that as fast as the workmen dug the earth it continued to fall in on all sides.*” Need I say one word in addition, yet the moral will be the more deeply impressive if I add, that the poor fellow named Thompson, was, when his existence was terminated in the shocking manner above related, 22 years of age, and the sole support of an aged mother.

It is well known to those engaged in burying the dead, that when leaden coffins are employed, the expansive force of the gas, and the consequent bulging out of the coffin, compels the workmen frequently to “tap” it, that the gas may escape. In some instances, the coffin may be turned round upon its axis, by the slightest touch of the finger, within a few hours after the lid has been soldered down, and holes are frequently bored through all the cases, over which the plate of the outer coffin is fastened; so that the gas may gradually escape into the room or vault in which it is deposited. When the coffin is not well secured, the lead will burst, and the gas become generally diffused.

The following extract from a weekly paper of June 14th, 1840, discloses the existence of a very revolting practice.

“A constant subscriber informs us, that a few days since,

he was passing in the rear of the Tabernacle, in Tottenham-court-road, to which is attached a public burial-ground, when his attention was arrested by a strong sense of something burning, and which from its character he had no doubt was animal matter. Curiosity led him to the immediate spot, when, upon inquiry, he found that some of the bones of the dead were being consumed, and the dense exhalation from the chimney was the product of the consumption. We have only to observe that, if this disgraceful practice is to be continued, the line of houses in St. John-street, which is in the immediate vicinity of the chapel, will soon be untenanted. It is the duty of the landlords to look to the matter, and indict the parties; or the police may summon them before a magistrate, who is empowered to inflict a fine of £10."

Extract from the report of an inquest held at Chelsea, by T. Wakley, Esq., M.P., and Coroner for Middlesex,—The highly injurious and abominable custom of placing masses of bodies one upon the other is here and in too many other places practised.—“In the month of August, 1840, a poor man died at a wretched hovel in Paradise Row, Chelsea, and was buried in the *usual way by the parish*—a judicial enquiry was instituted, and it was necessary to exhume the body; the grave digger opened the hole, and after searching for some time, he declared his inability to find it. The coroner enquired of the summoning officer the precise number of bodies interred in the same pit—the officer replied, ‘to the best of his recollection there were 26 bodies.’ The coroner wished to be informed if they rammed them in with a rammer!—the officer said he ‘was not aware that they resorted to such a process, but the bodies of paupers were packed together as closely as possible, in order to make the most of the space!’ The coroner observed, that such a system of burial was revolting to humanity, and reflected the highest disgrace on a Christian country.”

Another circumstance intimately connected with the present mode of interment must be noticed. It is well known to grave diggers that in many cases it would be impossible to dig a grave in the midst of a mass of coffins, without taking great precautions. Some employ water, lime-water, &c. as absorbents; others throw down lighted paper, straw, shavings, &c. &c., and thus the heavier gases are rarified by heat and driven off from the numerous laboratories of human putrefaction distributed in patches over the entire surface of London. These gases once diffused in the atmosphere, are permanently mixed with it, are applied to the skin, and enter the lungs with every inspiration.

I have conversed with many grave diggers in various parts of London; *there is not one* who has not at some time or other been more or less seriously affected in the execution of his work. Some have informed me that they have been obliged to fill up graves which they had attempted to dig—they were so overpowered by the effects of the gas. Many when employed in digging graves in cold weather, have noticed that the earth “reeks with noxious vapour”—condensed gases are at times perceptible to the eye; they have a faintish smell—irritate the nose and eyes—produce debility—and injure the appetite. At a depth of some feet from the surface,

they are frequently insupportable; and every old and experienced grave digger keeps his head as erect as possible.

It will be noticed also, from the description I have given of the humid condition of the soil in many grave yards, that no attention whatever has been paid to the kind of earth most suited to the purposes of inhumation. Now this should have been a primary object—putrefaction going on much more rapidly in moist than in dry situations.

I have already adverted to the fact of bodies being placed within a few inches of the surface of the earth; and shown that many thousands of bodies, or rather shells, piled one upon the other, are to be found in the vaults of churches and of chapels. It would appear, indeed, that mourners, after they have seen

“The deep grave receive the important trust
And heard the impressive sentence—dust to dust.”

imagine that they have performed the last duty to their deceased friend: have they ever reflected that *they have deposited a centre of infection to the living?*

It may be said that in many instances graves are dug to a great depth. I know that this is sometimes true, although in very many instances deception is practised in respect to the depth of graves. To give an *appearance* of depth the earth is thrown up on each side to a considerable height, and planks are placed edge-ways to prevent the earth from falling in. I also know that an inducement is held out to the grave digger of an additional shilling or eighteen-pence for every foot of ground excavated beyond a given depth, but to accomplish this, it often happens that every opposing obstacle is cut through, and that the legs, the head, or even the half of a body are frequently dissevered.

Thus, among all classes of society, those who have been loved during life, and to whose remains the last affectionate duties have been paid, are, after they have passed for ever from our sight—though they may dwell in our remembrance—subjected to the most disgusting indignities. Even the enormous fees paid in some places cannot secure for our dead undisturbed repose. “The pride, pomp, and circumstance” of a funeral are a bitter jest—a biting sarcasm: the bodies of our wives, our daughters, our relatives, are to be exposed to the vulgar gaze, the coarse jests, and brutal treatment of ruffians, who being men, would not, dare not, execute the tasks imposed upon them. But these persons, for necessity may have compelled them to the employment, are comparatively innocent. The abuse—the criminality of the act rests with those who superintend or connive at the transgression.

The above remarks are applicable to a vast majority of places I have examined, and of which I have not considered it necessary to detail the particulars. They indisputably prove, that the present system of inhumation, (and it is not confined to the metropolis,) is grossly immoral, and demands—imperiously demands, the interference of the Legislature to abolish or reform it.

But what shall we propose upon the subject of *Private Burying Grounds?* Unquestionably, that they be immediately and for ever closed; and that the proprietors, presuming that they have not acted illegally, receive a just compensation for their interest in the

LAND ONLY; and that the dead there deposited remain undisturbed until a general cemetery or cemeteries be appointed to receive them, after a decent exhumation, and a solemn and appropriate transmission. It is true that a correct registry of burials may now be anticipated: why not a registry of the burial grounds (not one of which should be PRIVATE)—*the situation—the extent of ground—the numbers buried—and the period they have remained open?* A particular space can only receive a limited number; that number having been deposited, the ground should be closed, and no disturbance should on any account be permitted, but under the direction of an approved and responsible superintendent. I have been led to these remarks from considering the state of the private grounds which have fallen under my own observation, and as examples are always more influential than vague generalities, I would refer my readers to the particular description already given, of the management of the SPACE under the floor of Enon Chapel in Clement's Lane.

This space measures in length 59 feet 3 inches or thereabouts, and in width about 28 feet 8 inches, so that its superficial contents do not exceed 1,700 square feet. Now, allowing for an adult body only twelve feet, and for the young, upon an average, six feet, and supposing an equal number of each to be there deposited, the medium space occupied by each would be nine feet: if, then, every inch of ground were occupied, not more than 189 (say 200 in round numbers) would be placed upon the surface; and admitting (an extravagant admission most certainly) that it were possible to place six tiers of coffins upon each other, the whole space could not contain more than 1,200; and yet it is stated with confidence, and by credible authority, that from 10,000 to 12,000 bodies have been deposited in this very space within the last sixteen years!

Is this place a sample of other private burying places! It is, I fear, but an epitome of a numerous class. My enquiries have convinced me that private speculations should at all times be held in suspicion, and closely scrutinized.

CHAP. IV.

EFFECTS OF BURYING IN CROWDED LOCALITIES.

The consequences resulting from the practices deprecated in this work, have already been glanced at, but a few additional facts may tend still further to impress the public mind.

I have stated that in Clement's Lane, and at the upper end, which adjoins Clare Market, and is called Gilbert Street, the disease called typhus fever "had made the most destructive ravages." The mortality in this lane has been, at periods, excessively great; the instances of sudden death have been numerous, and cases of modified disease,—examples of action without power,—involving, perhaps, no particular organ or tissue, have very frequently come under my notice. The inhabitants occupying the houses looking over the open space of the burying ground in Portugal Street, have, perhaps, suffered most. The exhalations of the grave yards in this neighbourhood, it may reasonably be inferred, have increased the malignancy and putridity of disease;

the poor man's residence overlooks his grave. May it not, then, fairly be stated, that cause and effect have here been constantly in operation, and constantly increasing in the ratio of the mortality. Can we believe that the power of infection ceases when the animating principle has departed, when the solids are contaminated,—when the blood, poisoned at its source, and in its whole current affected, ceases to stimulate the central organ of the circulation—the heart! If, during the period in which life and death are struggling for the mastery,

“Whilst the slow staggering race which death is winning,
Steals vein by vein, and pulse by pulse away,”

the living can be infected by contact or proximity,—shall they not be diseased by the bodies from which the conservative principle has departed! When the poison that has destroyed life, is disengaged by the decomposition of the tissues with which it was in combination,—when, as in severe forms of typhus fever, the vitality possessed by both solids and fluids, is of the lowest degree, we may fairly conclude, that in proportion to the degree of putrescency evidenced during life, will be the degree of danger to the living, from the emanations of the dead.

A short time since, two bodies were deposited in a burying ground in my neighbourhood. They were placed in one grave, the uppermost body being only a few inches from the surface. Such was the intolerable stench arising from the bodies, that those engaged could not approach within several feet of the grave. I am convinced that many attendants at funerals, conducted under such circumstances, pay a fearful tax in the depreciation of their health—the almost inevitable result of their exposure to the exhalations of the dead. If these persons could be tracked to their homes, very frequently disease would be found, the result of exposure to a “malaria,” whose dangerous effects, in this country at least, seem neither to be understood nor appreciated.

In the month of June, in the year 1835, a woman died of typhus fever, in the upper part of the house, No. 17, White Horse Yard, Drury Lane; the body, which *was buried on the fourth day*, was brought down a narrow staircase. Lewis Swalthey, shoe-maker, then living with his family on the second floor of this house, and now residing at No. 5, Princes Street, Drury Lane, during the time the coffin was placed for a few minutes, in a transverse position, in the door-way of his room, in order that it might pass the more easily into the street, was sensible of a most disgusting odour, which escaped from the coffin. He complained almost immediately afterwards of a *peculiar coppery taste*, which he described as being situated at the base of the tongue and posterior part of the throat; in a few hours afterwards, he had at irregular intervals slight sensations of chilliness, which before the next sunset had merged into repeated shiverings of considerable intensity. That evening he was confined to his bed,—he passed through a most severe form of typhus fever; at the expiration of the third week, he was removed to the fever hospital and recovered. He had been in excellent health up to the instant when he was exposed to *this malaria*.

Mr. Mason, a patient of mine, some years since was exposed to a similar influence. A stout muscular man died in his house in the month of June, after a short illness; on bringing the body down stairs, a disgustingly fetid sanies escaped from the coffin in such considerable quantity, that it flowed down the stairs. Mr. M. was instantly affected with giddiness, prostration of strength, and extreme lassitude; he had a peculiar metallic taste in the mouth, which continued some days; he believes that his health has been deranged from this cause.

My pupil, Mr. J. H. Sutton, accompanied by an individual, for many years occasionally employed in the office of burying the dead, entered the vaults of St. — church, and a coffin, "*cruelly bloated*," as one of the grave diggers expressed it, was chosen for the purpose of obtaining a portion of its gaseous contents. The body, placed upon the top of an immense number of others, had, by the date of the inscription on the plate, been buried upwards of eight years. The instant the small instrument employed had entered the coffin, a most horribly offensive gas issued forth in large quantities. Mr. S. who unfortunately respired a portion of this vapour, would have fallen but for the support afforded by a pillar in the vault. He was instantly seized with a suffocating difficulty of breathing (as though he had respired an atmosphere impregnated with sulphur); he had giddiness, extreme trembling, and prostration of strength; in attempting to leave the vault, he fell from debility; upon reaching the external air, he had nausea, subsequently vomiting, accompanied with frequent flatulent eructations, highly fetid, and having the same character as the gas inspired. He reached home with difficulty, and was confined to his bed during seven days. The pulse, which was scarcely to be recognised at the wrist,—although the heart beat so tumultuously, that its palpitations might be observed beneath the covering of the bed clothes,—ranged between one hundred and ten and one hundred and twenty-five per minute, during the first three days; for many days after this exposure, his gait was very vacillating.

The man who accompanied Mr. Sutton was affected in a precisely similar way, and was incapacitated from work for some days. His symptoms were less in degree; prostration of strength, pains in the head, giddiness, and general involuntary action of the muscles, particularly of the upper limbs, continued for several days afterwards; these symptoms had been experienced, more or less, by this person, on many previous occasions, but never to so great a degree. I have myself suffered from the same cause, and been compelled to keep my room upwards of a week.

A grave digger was employed to obtain a portion of gas from a body interred in lead, in the vaults of St. —; the man operated incautiously; he was struck to the earth, and found lying upon his back; he was recovered with considerable difficulty.

In a burial ground in Chelsea, within the last two years, a grave digger was employed in preparing a grave close by a tier of coffins; he had dug about four feet deep, when the gas issuing from the

bodies exposed affected him with asphyxia ; he was found prostrate ; assistance was obtained, and with some difficulty he was recovered.

In the month of August, in the year 1835, a vault was opened in the aisle of the church of Little Birkhampstead, Herts ; the body of a child had been placed in this vault about fifteen months previously. Upon removing the stone, a peculiarly offensive smell was emitted ; the vault was found nearly full of water, in which the coffin was floating. My informant, the then sexton, Benjamin Smith, now living No. 8, Princes Street, Drury Lane, was instantly affected with nausea, followed with diarrhœa, excessive trembling, prostration of strength, and loss of appetite ; and these symptoms continued some weeks. He believes that his health has seriously suffered in consequence. The bricklayer and labourer employed in opening the vault and taking out the water, were also affected, and Mrs. Smith, whilst cleaning the inside of the church, several days afterwards, was sensible of a very offensive odour, which was perceptible during divine service on the Sunday following.

William Jackson, aged 29, a strong, robust man, was employed in digging a grave in the " Savoy ;" he struck his spade into a coffin, from which an extremely disgusting odour arose ; he reached his home, in Clement's Lane, with difficulty ; complained to his wife that he had " had a turn ; the steam which issued from the coffin had made him very ill ;" he had pain in the head, heaviness, extreme debility, lachrymation, violent palpitation of the heart, universal trembling, with vomiting. His wife stated that the cadaverous smell proceeding from his clothes affected her with trembling, and produced head ache ; she mentioned that she had been before affected in a similar way, although more slightly, from the same cause. Jackson recovered in a few days, although considerably debilitated. Compelled by the poverty of his circumstances, he attempted, seven days afterwards, to dig a grave in Russell Court, Drury Lane. In this ground, long saturated with dead, it was impossible, without disturbing previous occupants, to select a grave ; a recently buried coffin was struck into ; the poor fellow was instantly rendered powerless, and dragged out of the grave by John Gray, to whom he was an assistant. Jackson died thirty-six hours afterwards. This case occurred during the visitation of the spasmodic cholera, and his death was attributed to that cause.

Mr. Paul Graham, residing in my immediate neighbourhood, had buried a child in Russell Court, Drury Lane. An acquaintance of his was buried in the same ground a few weeks subsequently, and as the survivors had a suspicion that this body had been exhumed, an undertaker was employed to ascertain the fact. Mr. G., accompanied by another person, was present during the time the lid of the coffin was partially removed ; a most offensive effluvia was emitted ; he was affected with instant vomiting, head ache, confusion of intellect, prostration of strength, and trembling ; the other person became unwell from the same cause ; the undertaker had carefully averted his head during the partial removal of the lid of the coffin, and thus escaped its effects. Mr. G.

stated to me that no sensation of disgust could have occasioned these symptoms, as the body was not exposed. He has, to this day, a vivid recollection of the offensive odour.

A grave digger was employed, a short time ago, in the ground of St. Clement Danes, Strand. He had excavated a family grave to the depth of sixteen feet, and when the coffin was to have been lowered, he went down by the boards on the sides to the bottom of the grave, and had what is called "a turn;" he felt as if he had his mouth over brimstone (the taste was "sulphury"); he called out, but was not heard; he then motioned with his hands, and a rope was lowered down; he seized hold of the rope, and was pulled up to the surface; he was "queer" for a day or two.

The following important fact was communicated to me by one of the parties immediately concerned:—

A lady died September 7th, 1832, and was buried in the Rector's vault, in St. ———'s church, on the 14th. The undertaker had occasion to go down into the vault, near the communion table; he had done the work of the church nearly thirty years, and was well acquainted with the localities; the grave digger had neglected to take up the slab which covered the vault; the undertaker being pressed for time, with the assistance of the son of the deceased, removed the stone. The two descended, taking with them a light, which was almost instantly extinguished; upon reaching the lower step of the vault, both were simultaneously seized with sickness, giddiness, trembling, and confusion of intellect; the undertaker raised his friend, who had fallen on the floor, and with difficulty dragged him out of the vault; he himself, although a man previously in excellent health, was seized with vomiting the next day, and for twelve months rejected his food; at the end of this period, after having been under the care of many medical men, he consulted Dr. James Johnson, from whom he derived great benefit; the Doctor pronounced his case to be one of poisoning, from mephitic gases. The patient is convinced that his health has been completely ruined from this cause; he is now obliged, after a lapse of seven years, "to live entirely by rule." The young gentleman who was with him, was subsequently under the care of many medical men upwards of two years; his principal symptoms, those of a slow poison, developed themselves gradually,—but surely; he was attacked with obstinate ulcerations of the throat, which were not removed until more than two years had elapsed, although he had frequent change of air, and the best medical assistance that could be obtained.

Mr. Tumbleton, a highly respectable undertaker, of No. 4, Warwick Street, Golden Square, informed me that about eleven years ago, he attended the funeral of an "Odd Fellow," on a Sunday, at ENON CHAPEL (particularly mentioned in the preceding pages); he smelled a disgusting stench; he was seized, within forty hours, with a violent pain in the back of the left hand, continuing about an hour; had "cold chills" within half an hour afterwards; took a glass of rum and water, and went to bed; he arose in the morning very ill, and consulted Dr. Burnett, of Golden Square, who ordered him home, and told him that he

would "give him three weeks before he got up again." This prognostic was true to a certain extent, for the patient kept his bed nine weeks, with a malignant typhus, and all its concomitant evils.

On the 10th of July last, I was called to attend a widow, named Adams, house-keeper to a gentleman residing in Gray's Inn Square; some days before my arrival, she had been attacked with pain, which she referred to the region of the liver. The pulse, on my first visit, was weak and easily compressible, ranging between one hundred and twenty and one hundred and thirty; she complained of no pain; her heart beat tumultuously; the tongue was brown and dry, and protruded with difficulty—her general symptoms were those of action without power. I carefully watched the case; but, notwithstanding all my efforts, my patient sunk on the 22nd of the same month. She had been a regular attendant at *Enon Chapel*. She died of typhus, accompanied with symptoms of extreme putrescency. Can the cause be problematical?

Four bodies had been placed in a tomb in the Eastern Cemetery, into which it was found water had penetrated, the first body had been interred in February, 1836, the last in April, 1839. Two grave diggers employed in the removal of the water and the dead bodies, were from the commencement of their labour struck with the fetid odour given off, yet they continued their work. They had removed a large quantity of water and two coffins, when in attempting to seize the third, their feet slipped, and the water remaining in the tomb was violently agitated by their fall. One of the men fell instantly lifeless. His comrade made several efforts to raise him, at the third attempt he fell deprived of consciousness upon the body of his unfortunate companion; assistance being quickly rendered, the men were withdrawn from the tomb. The grave-digger who first fell was dead; the other, notwithstanding the extreme attentions of two medical men, remained unconscious during six hours—for the space of a month afterwards he suffered greatly from difficulty of breathing, and weakness of the legs, which in the course of the same month were affected with a general desquamation. (*Annales D'Hygiène, &c., January, 1840.*)

My remarks published upwards of twelve months since, have unfortunately had too solemn a verification;—at p. 183 of the "Gatherings from Grave Yards" will be found the following description of the abominable and dangerous condition of the burying grounds of St. MARGARET'S, Westminster. "There are two burying grounds belonging to this parish, one near the Abbey, adjoining the church, and the other in the Broadway, Westminster, the ground is excessively crowded; funerals are very frequent, the ground behind the church is too full to admit of increase, with propriety or safety." Confirmatory of the above description made from repeated personal observation, I quote the following remarks from high authority. "The Commissioners for the Improvements in Westminster, reported to Parliament in 1814, that St. Margaret's church yard could not, consistently with the health of the neighbourhood, be used much longer as a burying ground, 'for that it was with the greatest difficulty a vacant place could, at any time, be found for strang-

ers; the family graves, generally, would not admit of more than one interment, and many of them were *then (in the year one thousand, eight hundred, and fourteen!!)* too full for the reception of any member of the family to which they belonged." (*Quarterly Review*, September 1819, p. 380.)

Thus, has this place, abominable as it is, yet perhaps less (if comparison can be made) infamous in its practices than many other, so called burying places, within the intimate knowledge of the writer, produced results, at which *humanity* shudders, and which *religion* should indignantly repudiate.

"William Green, a grave digger, while employed, in his vocation in the church yard of St. Margaret's, Westminster, was suddenly seized with faintness, excessive chilliness, giddiness, and inability to move his limbs. He was seen to fall, removed home, and his usual medical attendant was sent for. The poor fellow's impression was that "he should never leave his bed alive; he was struck with death." He was, subsequently, removed to the hospital, where he died in a few days. No hope was entertained, from the first, of his recovery.

Mr. B., the medical attendant, was seized with precisely the same symptoms. He was attended by me; I apprehended from the first a fatal result; *he died four days after the decease of the grave digger.*

The fatal effects of this miasm did not end here. The servant was seized on the day after the death of her master *and she sank in a few days.*

There can be no doubt of the fact that the effluvia from the grave was the cause of the death of these three individuals.

The total inefficiency in the three cases, of all remedial means, showed the great power of the virus, or miasm, over the animal economy, from the commencement of the attack."

J. C. ATKINSON, Surgeon,

Romney Terrace, Westminster.

Extracted from "The Lancet," June 13th, 1840.

At a meeting of the London Medical Society, Mr. Hutchinson, Surgeon, related the following case. A girl, aged 14, the daughter of a pew opener in a city church, came under his care on the 15th of March last. On the Friday previous to his seeing her, she had assisted during three hours and on the Saturday during one hour in shaking and cleansing the matting of the church, situated in the centre of a small burying ground which had been used for the interment of the dead for centuries, and the ground of which was raised much above its ordinary level, and was strongly saturated with the remains of humanity. The vaults underneath the church contained bodies in leaden coffins. The dust and effluvia which arose during the "cleansing," had a very offensive and fetid odour, very unlike the dust which collected in private houses, and had always the effect of making her (the girl's mother) ill, for at least a day afterwards; and used to make the grandmother of Mr. Hutchinson's patient so unwell, that she was compelled to hire

a person to perform her duties. The girl suffered under the symptoms of typhus, or putrid fever in a formidable degree. A lady with whom Mr. H. was acquainted—who was in the habit of visiting the church in question, had always head-ache afterwards. A majority of the members engaged in the discussion were of opinion, that the patient's illness had been occasioned by exhalations from the bodies of the dead.

Mr. Pilcher observed that "the Church Yards of the Metropolis were in such a defective state, that it would be a great service to the community if burials within the metropolis were altogether done away with; Mr. P. thought that the effluvia from the mats had been sufficient to produce the fever."

Mr. Dendy said "there was abundant evidence to shew the 'Grave Yards' were highly injurious."

Mr. Leese "had lately attended a lady whom he was obliged to prohibit from going to a church in the west part of London, in consequence of the injury she had sustained repeatedly from the effluvia proceeding from the vaults beneath the building. These vaults were nearly full of coffins piled one above another, some of them having given way from the weight imposed on them."—*Extracted from the Lancet of May 1, 1841.*

It would be easy to multiply similar instances from my own personal observation, but the limits of the present work will not permit. Since these pages were in the press, Mr. Anderton, at a Court of Common Council, held in the City on Thursday, said that he rose to submit a motion of importance to both rich and poor. He was able to show that there were the most unanswerable arguments for applying to the Legislature to prevent the sepulture of the dead in future in the City of London, *the only great city in the world, he believed, in which the practice was permitted.*—(Hear, and cries of 'Refer it at once to a Committee.') Mr. Anderton immediately made a motion to that effect, which was carried by the Court unanimously.

CHAP. V.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

I have now, detailed some of the particulars of a long and laborious enquiry, and have placed before my readers a statement of the gross abuses and immoral tendencies arising from the practices now prevalent in the burial places of the metropolis, and with the full conviction that I have, fearlessly, and to the best of my ability, performed an important public duty, in submitting the result of my investigations to the judgment of my countrymen; I look forward with confident anticipation to the cordial co-operation of my fellow citizens, and also to the assistance of the Legislature in annihilating or effectually reforming the present system of burial,—a system fraught as much with insult to the dead, as with extreme danger and affliction to the living.

If I have entered upon a repulsive and disgusting detail, it has been from a profound conviction of its necessity. The profits of

private speculators have not as yet been compelled to defer to the vast—the enormous—the invaluable—yet utterly neglected interests of the PUBLIC HEALTH and PUBLIC MORALITY—yet are they too inseparably connected to be dis severed. “Immorality and disease are multiplied by practices which should only teach ‘the resurrection and the life.’”^{*} I am much gratified to be able to add, that the Legislators † who regulate the criminal, the fiscal code of the country, are at length convinced of the necessity that exists for their interference with the practices of selfish, unprincipled, or ignorant men—who have forgotten, or will not understand—that “death like life propagates itself.” † I venture to hope that the health of the metropolis will form a prominent feature in the measures of the Administration, and the attention of Parliament be early directed to enquire into and to adopt such measures as may avert threatening calamities and secure future sanatory improvements.

It must be remembered, that although my attention was originally directed to the condition of the burial places in my own immediate neighbourhood; and that although I have been prompted to extend my enquiries into the condition of those in other districts; yet, that taking into consideration the magnitude of the metropolis, the abuses here exposed (and many others that might be mentioned), however repulsive, disgusting and immoral, would not amount to a tithe of the detail, were the investigation pursued under authority and judicious arrangement.

It may I fear, with truth be said, from the burial places of one vicinity—know all the rest. If so, let those who at present supinely look on and disregard the dangers threatening their poorer neighbours from these vast sources of disease, remember that pestiferous exhalations arising from the numerous infecting centres of the metropolis, are no respecters of persons; by the ever shifting gales of the moment, they may be visited, even in their chosen localities, their power of resistance experimented upon, and a severe penalty incurred—the punishment of their omitting or neglecting to avoid evils self-inflicted, and therefore removable.

It is demonstrable that the centres of infection are found principally in crowded neighbourhoods, and a vitiated atmosphere; here they are propagated and nourished by the action and reaction, the cause and effect constantly in operation;—for, in many of these very districts, the so-called burying places, the receptacles for the dead, are situated; their insatiable appetite, yet unglutted, is constantly devouring fresh victims, and these again are ejected, after a slight sojourn, to make room for the succeeding occupants, who retain their situation only by the interest or caprice of a hireling grave-digger.

Upon a matter so intimately connected with the prosperity and happiness of a State, the attention of the Government cannot be too anxiously directed. Who will venture to affirm that the health of a community is not of the first importance to the stability and prosperity of society! Without health,—riches, honours, and distinctions are comparatively worthless to their possessors.—Who

* Morning Chronicle, April 28th, 1841. † Vide, Report of Select Committee on Health of Towns.—Hansard, June, 1840. ‡ Lancet.

can doubt but that a healthy people are the most valuable defenders of the soil; the most formidable in war, and the most useful in time of peace! Throughout all ages rulers have unfortunately manifested but little regard to the interests or the amelioration of the condition of the poor, and have resisted every attempt at amendment, until by some dreadful calamity they have been driven to measures of improvement.

The vast numbers of burying places within the bills of mortality are so many centres or foci of infection—generating constantly the dreadful effluvia of human putrefaction—acting according to the circumstances of locality, nature of soil, depth from the surface, temperature, currents of air—its moisture or dryness, and the power of resistance in those subjected to its influence—(and who is not?)—as a slow or an energetic poison.

The reflection will obtrude itself on every thinking person—how long is this state of things to continue! Who is not deeply interested in this question! Families, home, kindred, relations, friends, the thousand sympathies that have grown with our growth and strengthened with our strength,—are so intimately connected with our subject, that the more deeply we reflect, the more settled is our conviction of the necessity for the interference of the Legislature upon a point so intimately involving the best interests of society. I have freely and earnestly spoken of the tremendous risk incurred by the mutilations of the restless dead, portions of whose bodies, in various stages of decomposition, are thus made the instruments of punishment to the living. Yet no attention is paid to remonstrance, urged from conviction; no heed given to warnings, however disinterested, and however urgent.

I would not unnecessarily alarm the public mind, but the opinions I have advanced are not hypothetical; they are founded upon the experience and practices of past ages, confirmed by the experience and practice of the present day: and, yet this momentous subject has hitherto been passed over in total silence, as though insignificant or indifferent, by *English* writers of eminence, I have, therefore, not hesitated, feeling the paramount importance of the question, to throw my mite into the public treasury, hoping to see, at least, as the result of my labours, the enforcement of efficient "Sanatory Regulations" throughout every department of the kingdom, and the ENTIRE REMOVAL OF THE DEAD FROM THE IMMEDIATE PROXIMITY OF THE LIVING.

I may be allowed to state that I am entirely unconnected with any speculation, public or private, having reference to the establishment of Cemeteries. Commending, as I do, the efforts of private individuals, who have originated a reform, which should long since have commenced with the Executive, I am, nevertheless, so fully convinced of the necessity for legislative interference to destroy the present dangerous system of inhumation, that I hesitate not to express my opinion, that the Government of the country will ultimately be driven to the adoption of means for enforcing the prohibition of the interment of the DEAD in the midst of the LIVING.

APPENDIX.

EXTRACTS FROM

THE EVIDENCE

GIVEN BEFORE

A SELECT COMMITTEE

OF THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS

ON THE

HEALTH OF TOWNS.

HEALTH OF TOWNS

HOUSE OF COMMONS

A SELECT COMMITTEE

THE EVIDENCE

APPENDIX.

EVIDENCE GIVEN BEFORE PARLIAMENT.

The following is the evidence given by Mr. Walker before the "Select Committee on the Health of Towns," at two examinations, namely, on the 26th of May and the 4th of June last year. The Committee consisted of the following members:—

Mr. Slaney.—*Chairman.*

Lord James Stuart,
Mr. Mackinnon,
Mr. Vigors,
Mr. John Ponsonby,
Mr. Cowper,
Mr. Greene,
Mr. Richard Walker,

Mr. Wilson Patten,
Sir Harry Varney,
Mr. Baines,
Mr. Oswald,
Mr. Tuftnell,
Mr. Brotherton, and
Mr. Ingham.

George Alfred Walker, Esq. called in; and Examined.
(May 26, 1840.)

3116. *Chairman.*] You are a medical man residing in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane, are you not?—I am.

3117. That is a district surrounded by a populous neighbourhood, with a considerable number of courts opening into it in different directions, is it not?—Yes; but I consider it a good neighbourhood upon the whole.

3118. Are there not some courts in which there is no exit through them?—Yes; there is a cul-de-sac, named Wellington Court formerly, and which is now called Nag's Head Court, and others.

3119. Is that inhabited by a considerable number of persons of the poorer class?—It is inhabited principally by Irish. The sewerage is in a very bad state; in fact, there is no sewerage there; there is a contrivance which is a sort of cabinet d'aisance, in which the excrementitious matter has frequently been ankle deep on the floor. I visited the place only yesterday.

3120. *Mr. Cowper.*] Do you mean the floor of the house?—You pass through a passage, you enter the passage door, and in the corner is this place, and a most filthy and disgusting one it is.

3121. *Chairman.*] Is there any system of cleansing or scavengering there?—There used to be a contrivance that would be something like an ordinary place; there are two holes, and when they are filled with the excrementitious matter it may, perhaps, pass through into a reservoir, or else run over the seat, whichever may chance to happen.

3122. Is there any system of scavengering and cleansing by proper authority?—No; it is most grossly neglected.

3123. Does the health of the inhabitants suffer in consequence of the want of draining and cleansing, and the neglect of sanitary regulations, in that district?—Most unquestionably; and it is easily provable.

3124. Does fever prevail in that district to any extent?—Yes; I do not speak of the immediate district, but right and left about it. I have had two most terrible cases of disease in that court lately.

3125. Are there any other courts in the vicinity which, though not so much neglected as that, are somewhat in a similar state?—Yes; Clement's-lane is a sample of filth and abomination.

3126. Is that also a cul-de-sac?—No.

3127. Are the houses close to each other?—The street is narrow, only 15 feet wide.

3128. Is there any good system of sewerage there?—No; the sewerage is bad.

3129. Is there any system of scavenging or cleansing there?—It is sadly neglected.

3130. Is there any officer whose duty it is to inspect this district, and to give notice to the proper authorities, or to take care that the cleansing is properly done?—None that I am aware of. There ought to be a power of enforcing it somewhere; and I have long wondered that whilst in this country so much attention is paid to the protection of the person and property, so little care should be taken of the health of its inhabitants.

3131. Are you aware that the neglect of some sanitary regulations which would tend to promote the health of the poorer classes, is a cause of great expense to the richer classes?—There can be no question about it, and it is also a source of great dissatisfaction on the part of the poor with regard to those above them in authority.

3132. In consequence of the illness arising from the neglect of such regulations, do you conceive that a great burthen is frequently cast upon the poor rates?—There is no doubt of it; and also upon the hard-working surgeon. I am sure I give away from 100*l.* to 200*l.* in medicines and attendance every year to sick persons, and I cannot help it, as I am compelled to have those cases come under my notice.

3133. A great cost is also incurred in dispensaries and hospitals, and all other benevolent institutions, that have for their object the relief of the poorer classes when out of health, is there not?—Precisely so; and I was about to say, I take this view of the question, that although these places are good establishments, yet a great deal of disease is caused by the neglect of sanitary regulations, and this neglect is a source of expense that might otherwise be saved. There is one point I wish to advert to particularly, with respect to Drury-lane; from Queen-street (I know nothing of the ground plan there), but I think from Queen-street opposite Long Acre, we have no sewerage; the consequence is, that the excrementitious matters are pumped up, and they pass of course on the surface of the gutter; now while these gases are quiescent, little harm is done; but the instant they are mixed with the air, it is breathed by the inhabitants, and becomes noxious, and of course highly injurious to health.

3134. Now with regard to the evils arising from burial-places in the midst of the dense population of London or other large towns, have you made any particular observations upon that?—Yes, I have paid rather particular attention to that subject.

3135. Will you give the Committee the result of your observations?—I think it is very easily provable, that bodies have been placed, by some system of management, which at present I cannot understand, in spaces utterly inadequate to contain them.

3136. Do you apprehend that the health of the inhabitants in vicinities close to burying-grounds has frequently been injured?—I do.

3137. By the effluvia arising from the decomposition of bodies in these burying-places?—I think so, and no conservative power of constitution can resist it.

3138. Can you state any particular cemeteries or burying-places near the locality that you are best acquainted with, from which such evils arise?—I know very many, in every one of which that evil exists.

3139. Will you mention a few?—There is Enon chapel, in Clement's lane, Strand, that is a particular Baptist meeting-house.

8140. Is that in a populous district?—Yes, surrounded with numerous inhabitants.

3141. Will you mention another?—There is the burying-ground of Portugal-street, Lincoln's Inn Fields.

3142. Any other?—There is one in Russell-court, Drury-lane, which is excessively full; and there is another in St. Martin's-in-the-fields, in Drury-lane.

3143. Where is that situated?—That is to the left, on the western side, a little way beyond this court I have been describing.

3144. Are there any other?—Yes; in St. Giles's, and in many other parishes, they are in the same condition; I have examined and described more than forty of them in a work entitled "Gatherings from Grave-yards."

3145. Mr. *Comper*.] Have you any proof of the injurious effects of these church-yards?—Yes, abundance of proof.

3146. Of what character?—Of death arising instantaneously, and deterioration and depreciation of health.

3147. *Chairman*.] This is not your own individual opinion, but the concurrent opinion of most medical men, is it not?—No; it is not an universal opinion, there are some of a different opinion.

3148. But although there may be difference of opinion as to the evil to health arising from these exhalations, there can be no question as to their being disagreeable and unpleasant to the inhabitants of that vicinity?—Yes; and more than that,—they are decidedly injurious to health.

3149. Then although persons may differ about the one, they cannot differ about its being excessively unpleasant and noxious to the inhabitants to have smells of that kind arising?—No; but life may be destroyed without any smell being perceptible.

3150. Is there any other point upon which you can give evidence referable to sanitary regulations beneficial to the humbler classes in large towns?—I have spoken of the sewerage being very deficient in my neighbourhood; another point is the deterioration of the water. There is a police station-house in Pickett-place in the Strand. I was called upon some time ago to attend a family who were just arrived from the country; I had some reason to suspect that there was some generally acting cause, for of upwards of 40 individuals living in this station house, scarcely one of them could be pronounced to be in good health. I instituted some inquiries; made an examination, and found that the pipe conveying the excrementitious matters from the two upper floors ran parallel with and within a few inches of the pipe bringing up the water that supplied the whole of the building. This water was of course drunk, and employed for washing and cooking. I requested a little water to be drawn for me, the smell was exceedingly offensive; dissolved excrementitious matters were easily distinguishable.

3151. There was a deterioration of the water from this filthy stuff then?—Yes; it was dropping, in fact, into the cistern; I went and

examined it, and found the pipe was about four inches and a half in the bore, and in a most wretched state.

3152. Then do you attribute the illness to this cause?—I do; but I should say that has since been amended; I was there two or three days ago.

3153. Is there any other point you can direct the attention of the Committee to, connected with this inquiry?—I think the proximity of the cabinets d'aisance to the water-butt is a great cause of disease, because these gases pass off, and then they become absorbed to a certain extent. I would also beg to state in general terms that the mortality in Clement's-lane has been very great.

3154. Can you state what it is in reference to the population?—Yes, at a rough guess I think there are 70 houses, and giving 10 persons to each house, that would be 700 persons, and the mortality has been four per cent. from fever of various grades. There were 41 deaths within 18 months.

3155. That is one in 25, is it not?—Yes; the mortality in this particular lane equals that of the worst district in London, the White-chapel, and that is calculated from all the causes of death put together.

3156. Independently of the deaths caused by fever, were there not also in that district many cases of persons whose health was injured, and whose forces and powers for industrious purposes were very much lessened, in consequence of the fever?—Most unquestionably; and I have no doubt that a vast portion of the poverty and destitution that exists arises from the combined operation of many causes of disease, that under a good system of medical police would not be permitted to exist.

3157. Does the practice of drinking ardent spirits prevail much in those low districts?—It does; and that is one point I would wish to touch upon: many persons take stimuli from various causes, and one vastly exciting cause is the condition of the air they breathe.

3158. Do you not conceive that in the neglected localities you have spoken to, in which dirt and disease prevail so much, that these poorer classes frequently fly to spirits as a temporary resource and refuge as it were from the evils around them?—Yes, constantly. They are smitten by an invisible agent, the bad air they breathe; there is no question that that is one vast cause.

3159. Then these neglected points to which the Committee have adverted, is in one respect the cause of their spirit drinking, and then the spirit drinking becomes in its turn a cause of disease and neglect?—Unquestionably.

3160. *Mr. Corper.*] Do you mean that the infected atmosphere has a depressing effect upon the people subjected to its influence?—Yes; it involves the necessity of taking something as a stimulant.

3161. *Chairman.*] These neglected districts have among them a great number of children, have they not?—A very great number.

3162. Are there any schools there?—There are.

3163. For the younger children?—Yes.

3164. Are there any play-grounds appendant to those schools?—Not one of them has a play-ground; that is a sad piece of information I am sorry to give.

3165. Is it not almost absolutely necessary to the developement of their strength and the spirit and energies of youth, that they should

have some place of exercise?—There is no question about it. I have seen in my neighbourhood 18 children in a room, perhaps not more than 12 feet square, and that too over a receptacle for old bones.

3166. Was the air close and noxious?—Of course it was.

3167. And injurious to the health of the children? Unquestionably; Enon chapel has been employed as a school-room, and the children have met there over the bodies of the dead, which have been piled up to the ceiling of the cellar beneath; the ventilation is bad, and the rafters supporting the boards of the floor on which these children stand were not covered with the usual defence, lath and plaster.

(SECOND EXAMINATION.)

June 4, 1840.

3460. Mr. *Mackinnon*.] YOU are a medical man?—I am.

3461. You have written a book on the subject of the burial of the dead in large towns, have you not?—I have.

3462. You have turned your attention a good deal to that subject?—I have.

3463. In the book you have published, you have mentioned the evils arising from the want of ventilation in places such as cul-de-sacs?—I have.

3464. Have the goodness to state to the Committee generally your observations upon that subject?—I have little to add in addition to what I have previously stated. There is a cul-de-sac in the neighbourhood of Drury-lane, to which I have previously referred. In that court I was called upon to visit four children who had measles; I found them recovering from the eruption, but suffering with symptoms of typhus, complicated with sub-acute inflammation of the mucous coat of the intestines. The place in which they lived is one of the worst in the neighbourhood, being a cul-de-sac called Wellington-court, leading out of Drury-lane on the north-eastern side, approached by a long and narrow passage, most disgustingly dirty, without drainage, and inhabited by characters of the poorest description; the houses appear as though they were never cleaned or white-washed, and the abominations called filthy are here in abundance. One cause of the gradual though sure deterioration of health had been long in operation, and this, I think, upon inquiry, will be found amongst the poor to be present very generally, viz. the filthy condition of the privies. In this court there is no sub-surface drainage; the substitute resorted to here is one extremely likely to be the least efficient. Instead of the excrementitious matter being carried off, it is suffered to collect in the hole immediately under the seat until it reaches a certain height, when it is conveyed by a pipe into a reservoir, which when full, is in the same manner prevented from overflowing by another pipe communicating with a larger reservoir, in the middle of which is a tub pierced with gimlet holes, so as to allow the fluid to separate from the solid portion; into this inner tub the pipe, connected with a pump, enters, and the fluid has been pumped up by the nightman. One person who lived here used to mix up the excrementitious matters deposited during the day to a consistence with water,

and then pour it out on the surface-gutter in the court. No provision being made for the passage of the solid portion, as might be anticipated, all the reservoirs have long since been full; and the two *pot de chambres* being covered over by boards, the one immediately under the seat of the privy is constantly overflowing; indeed, frequently the soil has forced itself between and through the boards, and has repeatedly been foot deep on the floor and in the yard. Two children recovered; the other two were in succession attacked; one affected with gangrene of the mouth successively lost the whole of the upper lip; the lower jaw was laid bare inside and out, and the roof of the mouth destroyed; petechiæ now appeared, and the child, a most loathsome object, died. The mother now removed into another house in the same court, with the idea of benefiting the other child, a girl, who was in a similar state. This infant, about twelve months old, had, when the boy died, ulceration of the hard palate, denuding the bone and laying bare the alveolar processes all round. It was similarly intractable with the boy's, and successively destroyed the whole roof of the mouth, perforating the palate bones, and eventually opening a communication between the mouth and nose by the mortification of all the intervening parts. The nose was next attacked and removed; the upper lip, detached from its adhesion to the jaw, fell down, and was only prevented from separating itself from it by a small portion of yet sound skin at the angles of the mouth. The lower lip was next affected, and in an incredibly short space of time was nearly destroyed, when death relieved the poor little creature from its sufferings. It is impossible for language to express in too strong terms the horrible spectacle presented to the eye by the poor child, its face hardly recognizable, scarcely human, smelling most insufferably; its hands were almost constantly employed in picking piece by piece away of the remaining portions of the face; yet in this condition was it applied to the breast of the mother.

3465. To what do you attribute that dreadful disease in the child?—However the disease might be produced, unquestionably it would be much increased by the bad air and want of ventilation; it was almost impossible to enter the house.

3466. Do you attribute it in part to want of drainage?—Yes, to the combined influence of both; there has been a great mortality in that court.

3467. Have you any other particulars to state on this subject of ventilation?—I have nothing to add, I think, to what I have stated previously. An efficient Building Act is much required.

3468. Will you favour the Committee with your opinion respecting drainage?—I may state in general terms, that our neighbourhood is excessively ill-drained. Crown-court, in Little Russell-street, Covent-garden, is the property of the Duke of Bedford; and there, I am sorry to say, the excrementitious matter is pumped up, and flows down the centre of the court. There are many other places. I would mention a second-class house in Stanhope-street; a man named Fairbank, who has resided here two years, has, during that period, been affected with sickness; he is in general good health, but he cannot keep his food on his stomach: "as for myself, (says his wife) I am much affected in my head with giddiness and violent pain; my child is a year and a half old, and is troubled with sickness. I feel convinced it is from the drain, he is so much better when he is out of it."

3469. *Chairman.*] Do you feel convinced they were right in their opinion?—Yes; they are all affected in the house. Sarah Jackson, another lodger, states: “During the time we lived in Stanhope-street my family was much affected with sickness and loss of appetite, particularly my husband; my son Charles was so much affected that he could not take any animal food for a long time previous to our leaving the house; now his stomach rejects nothing received into it. I was very much troubled with the head-ache; it has, since I changed my residence, entirely left me; July 30, 1839.” Then again, in the same house, case 3, Miss Graham writes thus: “I have resided three years in this house; I was in perfect health when I entered it; within the last two years I have been much oppressed at the chest, attended with sickness, ejecting as it were copperas water; I endure a weakness that I cannot describe; I am relieved whilst out of doors; when I return my old feelings return with me. My sister is never free from the head-ache more or less; she has sickness at times.”

3470. Do you, as the medical man attending them, and knowing the situation in which they were, attribute the symptoms of which they complain to the want of drainage in the district?—I do; I am convinced that is the cause. I have taken this evidence at distinct times, without one communicating with the other; it is impossible not to attribute it to that. I will mention another instance. I have been to a house this morning in Angel-court; a family of the name of Swift lived there some time ago; not one of that family was healthy; the children had flaccidity of fibre; it will be invariably found when a child comes from the country, and enters a place where the drainage is defective, it will soon succumb; this will vary according to circumstances.

3471. Is this court you mention a cul-de-sac?—No. There is another case I will take from a respectable street, Little Russell-street, Covent-garden: “Ann Salt entered the service of a lady in Little Russell-street, Covent-garden; the drain in this house had long been in a most offensive state. This young woman, aged twenty years at the period of her entering this house, was in a firm state of health, had compact muscles, a red lip, a cheerful mind; during many months she was exposed to the action of a poison passing off from the water-closet. As she lived in the kitchen, and indeed slept there, she would of course be exposed during the greater portion of the time to its influence; her health gradually diminished, until at length her strength became so reduced that her sisters removed her in a coach to their lodging in Bear-yard, Lincoln’s Inn Fields (this place is in a most offensive condition); I was called to see her, and for some weeks the issue was doubtful; she had a most peculiar appearance of the entire skin of the body. It is my decided opinion that the drains are an immense source of disease.

3472. *Mr. Mackinnon.*] Are there any other particular cases you would mention?—Such additions to the atmosphere are decidedly injurious.

3473. Your opinion as a medical man is, that the state of the sewerage in parts of London is most defective, and that it generates the state of disease to which you have referred?—Yes, and many other diseases, by whatever name they may be called.

3474. And that having houses built in the shape of cul-de-sacs is most injurious, by preventing the circulation of air?—Unquestionably.

3475. Your opinion is, that there ought to be further legislative provisions?—Decidedly; I think it a very hard case that a poor man, without knowledge or judgment on his own part, should come into a locality, not knowing that there are causes constantly operating to depreciate his health; he may get out of it as he can; but frequently a saving of sixpence a week will induce a man to remain; his means may not enable him to remove; he is thus perhaps the creature of circumstances, over which he has no control.

3476. You have no doubt of the loss of life, and disease generated, by the want of drainage in this town?—I have no doubt of it; it is cause and effect; and it is not merely the loss of life, but it is a serious matter to the health of many in the vicinity who feel the effects.

3477. Is it your opinion that it ought to be prevented, on account not only of the physical but the moral effect it has upon the community?—Unquestionably. If you expose children or adults to degrading influences, you must inevitably deteriorate their moral character; there will be constantly a struggle between moral propriety and physical necessity.

3478. Does not the putrefaction, arising from want of sewerage, generate a desire to drink, or to have recourse to spirituous liquors, from the low feeling it creates?—That is certainly the case.

3479. Are there any circumstances you can call to mind confirming that opinion?—I think that the grave-diggers as a body would confirm that. They generally drink.

3480. *Mr. Greene.*] How is the excrementitious matter removed from privies, such as you have described in those courts?—That is generally taken away by nightmen, frequently in the night; sometimes the excrementitious matter is mixed with water and poured out on the surface-gutter of the court. Such things are calculated to demoralize any one, or any set of men. From the end of Queen-street, opposite Long-acre, to the first sewer in Drury-lane, the excrementitious matter which is frequently pumped up from two houses there runs on the surface; when I have passed that way, I have smelt a filthy smell from the water-closets of these two houses.

3481. How is the solid matter removed?—In carts, or in some instances it passes on the surface of the gutters into the drains.

3482. Is there not a certain degree of generation of foul air produced by the removal of those filthy deposits through the streets?—No doubt, and it must produce the most injurious effects.

3483. Even the carts passing through adjoining streets must have an injurious effect?—Unquestionably; we have to bear it in the night as well as the day; according to the law they are not to do this until it has struck twelve o'clock, but many persons are obliged to be about after that hour; and whether they be in-doors or out, it can matter little whether these agencies be put in operation before or after the hour of twelve.

3484. There is a liability to this being thrown over into the street, and a great deal of foul air generated?—Yes. I may here mention a case of a family in Crown-court: one woman had seven children at one time affected with typhus, and she attributed it to the abominable stench she was obliged to live in.

3485. *Mr. Mackinnon.*] You are the author of "Gatherings from Grave-yards"?—I am.

3486. You have therefore personally examined the principal burying-grounds of the metropolis?—I have.

3487. Have the goodness to describe to the Committee their state?—The majority of the burying-places in London, whether they be called vaults, cellars, or grave-yards, are in a very dangerous and disgusting condition.

3488. Will you state what, in your opinion, is their physical and moral effect?—I have collected irrefragable proofs of both positions; I have given abundant evidence of their dangerous and immoral influence; I have, since I published my work, become acquainted with many instances, demonstrating the injurious effect of masses of bodies in putrefaction; I calculate, according to the present returns of mortality, we should have at least 5,000,000 of bodies amongst us in a hundred years, taking it at 52,000 per annum. I have no question that the extent of mortality has never been fairly entered until the late excellent Act; it was matter of speculation. I have demonstrated that bodies have been placed in spaces that could not properly contain them; hence has resulted a shocking state of things; the mutilation of bodies, the destruction of their envelopes, with a host of immoral consequences and injurious results.

3489. *Chairman.*] Have you any doubt of the injurious effects of this practice?—None. Here is one instance: I speak now of the nursing of bodies in lead, in what are called vaults, in the midst of human dwellings; it is a most injurious practice, and one that ought to be annihilated. The lead cannot confine the gas, therefore the only way to get rid of the nuisance, is to take the bodies away at once, where a sufficient quantity of good air can be found circulating without interruption. During the demolition of the old church of St. Dunstan's, the dead in the vaults were removed. This was found to be a matter of some difficulty and much danger. Several of the labourers employed refused to continue the work. They were well supplied with brandy, and under the influence of a half-drunken excitement, they effected their removal. William Mutton, a labourer, employed, within a few hours after his exposure, complained of a nauseous taste in the mouth and throat, severe pain in the chest accompanied with a cough; his skin subsequently became of a deep yellow tinge, and extremely harsh and dry. This man was at times so affected with the effluvia, that he was compelled to support himself against the wall of the vault. In removing the body of a man who had committed suicide, the gaseous exhalation was so powerful that he was rendered unconscious for a considerable period. He invariably declared that this was the cause of his death.

3490. Do you think it was?—I should think it more than likely; I have produced a number of results in my work. I will give a recent case:—Thomas Beal, 2, Cromwell-place, Little Shire-lane, a strong compactly-made man, aged 26, has been employed as grave-digger about four years; he was engaged in the month of January, 1840, in assisting William West, the beadle of St. Mary-le Strand, to clean up the rector's vault previous to the reception of the body of a deceased parishioner, who died 27th January, 1840; the vault, a detached building, is entered by steps from the church-yard; two of the men employed were sensible of a disgusting odour, which left a coppery taste in the throat. On the evening of the same day Beale had vomiting, cough, and considerable expectoration, and extreme lassitude during five or six days. Six days after this exposure he consulted me, in consequence of a peculiar eruption, which first attacked the

breast, and subsequently (within two days) spread over the entire surface of the body. On the fourteenth day from the appearance of this eruption a very painful enlargement of the glands in the left axilla and the groin of the same side occurred, both of which suppurated extensively during six weeks; he has now, May 5th, 1840, the remains of the eruption over large portions of both arms. I produce this case to show an example of the same poison producing the same results, for William West, who died of typhoid fever, was affected in precisely the same manner, excepting that he had no glandular enlargement; he imprudently entered the vault soon after it was opened for the purposes of ventilation. After his return home he complained to his wife that he had a peculiar,—a coppery taste in his mouth; within a few hours afterwards he complained of pain in the head, nausea, loss of appetite, and debility; in a few days he was attacked by an eruption, which first appeared over the chest, and in a few days had covered the entire body; he remained a considerable time in a very debilitated state, and it was the opinion of his widow that it was in consequence of his imprudent exposure to the exhalations passing off from the bodies in this vault.

3491. Mr. *Mackinnon*.] Do you find, as a medical man, that this putrid effluvia, arising from dead bodies, affects all individuals in the same manner, or does it affect different individuals in a different manner?—Unquestionably the man who is accustomed to an office executes it best; grave-diggers in many localities would not be able to do their work but under the influence of strong stimulants. We may take the evidence of medical men. Every man almost engaged in dissection is affected with diarrhœa; let him leave off his dissection for a time, and he will get rid of it; if you place a man accustomed to the exhalations in the dissecting room he will be frequently affected with diarrhœa. I was myself for three months, in Paris.

3492. Is there anything further you have to state upon this subject?—I can state other instances, but it appears quite unnecessary.

3493. You state in your work that graves are sometimes left open in this city; will you state any instance?—I think it is a most abominable practice; it is done in many instances to save time and to get space. I have one in my own neighbourhood; I examined that grave the other day; that is a representation (*producing it.*) It was dug 22 feet deep; and within a few feet of the windows of the house; there were ten or a dozen coffins projecting into the grave; I have no doubt some of them had been cut through. My opinion is, that the lighter gases pass off; the heavy gases, the carbonic, oxide and carburetted hydrogen, will fall down to the bottom of the grave. It is generally supposed a candle will not burn in a place of that kind, but I think a candle may be extinguished and yet life retained; I tried a lighted candle; it was extinguished at a depth of 12 feet from the surface; I requested the grave-digger to cover over the top of the grave, and to throw the depth of a foot of earth upon it. I tried another experiment, and the candle was extinguished at a depth of eight feet. I think we ought not to have those places amongst us.

3494. What place was this?—St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, in Drury-lane; the yard is raised there even with the first floor windows surrounding the place. It is close to the large theatres.

3495. You state in your book a case in which the same poison,

arising from putrefaction, has had a different effect on two individuals; will you explain that?—One was a young gentleman 19 or 20 years of age; the other, an undertaker, a very respectable man, whose name I have given as being poisoned at Enon Chapel, in Clement's-lane. The man went to a church at the west end of the town to prepare for the burial of the mother of the young gentleman; not being acquainted with the grave-digger, he contrived to lift up the stone covering the entrance of the vault called the rector's vault; they were both prostrated on the floor by the gas; the undertaker being a powerful man lifted up and carried out the other. The two men were differently affected; the elder, who had been attended by Dr. James Johnson professionally, for two years, could not retain his food; he assured me that the gaseous exhalation had been nearly the death of his young companion, who had an ulcerated sore throat, had had the best advice and many journeys and changes of air, and it was two years before he recovered. I do not think that the living should be thus poisoned by the dead.

3496. You mention gases arising out of coffins; you consider them as generated in a leaden coffin? Yes; it is impossible to prevent it; as an atmospheric pressure of 30lbs. to the square inch, cannot keep it down, I do not know what can.

3497. Therefore it is impossible burying in a large town to prevent the generation of gases mixing with the air?—I think it impossible. I have seen coffins quite convex and the screws driven out.

3498. The only effectual remedy would be the removal of those burial-places to country districts, or districts where there was not a thick population?—Certainly; I do not think any consideration of money should be allowed to interfere.

3499. In proportion as the mass of dead is laid in the church-yard the gas must be increased?—Certainly.

3500. And in that proportion that must be unhealthy to the neighbourhood?—Yes; I could mention a grave-yard in my neighbourhood where a shower of rain would lay bare the tops of the coffins.

3501. Mr. *Greene*.] Are there any vaults where the gratings adjoining those vaults, and places for ventilating them, open into the public streets?—Yes; they must be ventilated, or they dare not descend; they have been obliged to leave even the doors of St. Clement's Church, in the Strand, open. On Saturday the 19th of August 1839, it was necessary to open the doors of the church of St. Clement's, from the intolerable stench, proceeding, in my opinion, from the dead bodies.

3502. Mr. *Mackinnon*.] Then of course that must be very injurious to the health of the congregation attending there?—I have no doubt of that; it produces frequent faintings.

3503. Mr. *Greene*.] Are you aware that in the vaults of the church of St. George's, Hanover-square, and Hanover Chapel in Regent-street, the gratings open to the street?—Yes; that is a very frequent circumstance; the ventilation is indifferently performed. At Enon Chapel in Clement's-lane, there is the greatest facility for the escape of the gas into the place.

3504. Mr. *Mackinnon*.] Your opinion is that if the practice of burying in this large town is continued, in the course of a hundred years we should have four millions of dead exhaling their gases to

the injury of the living?—I should think at least that number, if the mortality be 52,000 annually.

3505. How long will the gas, in your opinion, remain in the coffin before it is entirely evaporated?—That would be a very difficult question to answer; I should think it might be kept there for ever under peculiar circumstances. There was an instance occurred in the church-yard at Hampstead, of a grave-digger striking by accident, not purposely, into a coffin; the body had been buried in lead a hundred years before, and the man was struck down with it; it is impossible to form any conception of the most abominable stench proceeding from the dead.

3506. You have spoken of the injury arising from the gases and putrefaction of animal matter creating those unwholesome exhalations to which you have alluded: will the putrefaction arising from the small quantity of animal matter from one human being buried do material injury?—Unquestionably, a very serious injury. There is one point which is material, the keeping of bodies in low neighbourhoods before interment; I have seen frequent proofs of the injurious consequences resulting from dead bodies being kept too long previous to interment; this ought to be remedied; the periods of burying should be diffused over the entire week. At present the poor bury almost entirely on the Sunday, and frequently if a person dies on the Wednesday, if they have not time to make arrangements previous to the Sunday following, they keep that body perhaps till the Sunday next succeeding. I have frequently known a body kept on the table or the bed in a poor man's room; perhaps he is living in that room, sleeping there, and performing all the usual and necessary offices of the family with his wife and five or six children. I have often wished for an absolute power to compel the burying of bodies under circumstances of this nature; a child, for instance, dies of the confluent small-pox.

3507. *Chairman.*] Is there any power to order the burial of a body in such a state?—Not the slightest.

3508. Has the Coroner's Court any power?—I think not. There are other consequences which sometimes follow with respect to the dead.

3509. *Mr. Mackinnon.*] What is the longest time you have known those bodies kept?—Twelve and fourteen days. In this cul-de-sac, Wellington-court, there were two bodies in the house when the other children were attacked; there the stench was so horrible, the neighbours were obliged to complain; they could bear a great deal, but they went to the parochial authorities about it.

3510. *Chairman.*] There is no inspector who can be appealed to?—No; there are no sanitary regulations to meet the case.

3511. *Mr. Mackinnon.*] What would you suggest?—I may state in general terms, that my intimate knowledge of, and acquaintance with, the scandalous and abominable practices followed in very many places of interment, compels me, however unwillingly, to say it matters little whether the body rests in a poor man's room, or putrefies on the surface of a grave-yard which is incapable of receiving it.

3512. *Chairman.*] From your acquaintance with the bad state of the burial-grounds in London, and with the negligence as to burying at the proper time among the poorer classes, do you not think that it is absolutely necessary there should be a legislative provision for the

purpose of preventing burial-grounds continuing in populous cities, and for some mode of compelling burials to take place at the proper period?—I think that absolutely necessary; the mode of burying, and the tasks imposed upon the men, makes the matter highly injurious in many points of view. In the case of the poor, I am convinced that the indecent disposal of the dead, practised in many grounds, has begotten in their minds feelings of bitter animosity, and consequent estrangement towards the parochial authorities; that I consider as an important matter. I will give a proof. There are burial societies established in most neighbourhoods; I have a book from which I will read rule the eighth; "That as this society is established for the decent interment of its members; if the friends of any member behave so disrespectfully to the member as to bury him or her at the parish expense, he shall be entitled to no assistance." I have seen the most unseemly disputes about these things.

3513. There are great evils arising from the want of sufficient space, and the mode in which the burials take place?—Not merely physical evils, but moral ones.

3514. Mr. Mackinnon.] Is it your impression that the evils arising from those gases produced by putrefaction, are not merely physically injurious, but also demoralize the people by driving them to spirituous liquors?—I would not perhaps go so far as that; but if we take the instance of the grave-diggers, I would affirm that the system has educated a race of men, and compelled them to execute offices that they ought to shudder at; it is a very frequent circumstance for a grave-digger to cut a body in half.

3515. In consequence of the closeness with which they are packed?—Yes.

3516. He cannot get down to the grave without?—No, he cannot in many instances; and it is not only the making room, but the putrescent earth is thrown up, and the graves are open longer than ought to be permitted.

3517. Is there any benefit or profit arising to the grave-digger from making use of the wood of the coffins?—That I have stated in my book. I took the police to see a sack full of that wood in a court in Carey-street; it is extensively burnt all over London; that (*producing it*) is a portion of a coffin I have brought; the poor creature died in Charing-cross Hospital; she had frequently burnt large quantities of it herself; this wood was drying with a large quantity which the police seized, and the fire was made of this wood when we entered the room. There was a large quantity I brought away, and sent it to the head police-office in Scotland-yard, with my compliments, and that they had better look into the matter; they sent it to the parish officers, and they said, "Oh, it must be got rid of; the poor are quite welcome to it." This I produce was part of a pauper's coffin. I know a parish in which the grave-digger burns it as common fuel. I asked him whether he felt any stench from it; he said, "Oh, the people say it smells now and then;" but he was a drinking man. This state of things has in fact educated a race of men too frequently the most degraded and abandoned; with but few exceptions, they drink to excess, and indeed too frequently they are compelled to stimulate.

3518. The grave-diggers in those close neighbourhoods?—Yes, in the old burying-grounds: thus the sources of physical and moral evil

are in an intimate degree identical; the condition of by far the majority of grave-yards and burying places in London has been such for many years, that they have not been capable of receiving the annual mortality. There are men who have unblushingly made the disposal of the dead a source of income to an extent that few would believe; some private speculators have long known that a freehold grave-yard is infinitely preferable as a source of profit to any other. The want of space has produced, among other inevitable results, a necessity for the disposing of bodies deposited in places utterly inadequate to contain them; they have been removed by various means, the spade or pickaxe of the grave-digger, or the application of lime. The wood of the coffins has been given away or sold in large quantities.

3519. *Mr. Mackinnon.*] Must not the deposit of a sack full of that wood in a house produce very injurious effects?—No doubt it must; but the people cannot see those active poisons evolved in their houses.

3520. You say that the poor are not in general aware of those gases impregnating the air, and that no precautions are taken by them to prevent it?—I cannot see what precautions can do if they and their children live constantly in this atmosphere; thus I have invariably found that when a child or children have come from the country and gone to a badly drained house, in a few weeks they will succumb to the influence. There is a chapel in Clement's-lane, called Enon Chapel, to which I have before referred; there is a cellar underneath it, not covered with a lath and plaster defence, and there is nothing to prevent the exhalations passing up. In this there have been deposited about 12,000 bodies in about 15 years; on an average 30 bodies a week were buried there for a considerable time; it is used as a place of worship every Sunday, and is now occupied by a society who hold public meetings. I am quite amazed that such a place should have been permitted to exist. Sixty-four loads of bodies and earth, mixed together, were removed. Such was the intolerable stench that numbers left the place, and very commonly, during the services held here, four and five women have been carried out in a fainting condition.

3521. In your opinion did that arise from the stench of those bodies?—I think so, decidedly. Many have suffered seriously in their health. One man, whom I have recently examined, attributes a malignant typhus, which held him to his bed during seven months, to the exhalations from the bodies beneath, and I believe he was correct in that opinion.

3522. *Chairman.*] This evidence you have given of a particular spot, is strongly confirmatory of your general opinion of the necessity of burial-grounds being removed from large towns?—Certainly.

The following notice of Mr. Anderton's motion in the Court of Common Council has appeared in the *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, of Aug. 7th, 1841,—

"The Subject of intramural sepulture has at length been taken up by the Common Council of the City of London, and we trust sincerely that the question will not be abandoned until some measures be devised for allowing the dead 'to rest in peace.' The evil effects produced by the interment of large numbers of bodies in contracted spaces have been abundantly proved by Mr. Walker, in his popular work, entitled '*Gatherings from Grave Yards*;' but independently of the physical evils attendant on the practice, common decency, and the respect due to the departed, require that some place of interment should be provided, where the dead may remain undisturbed. Within the precincts of London no such place can exist."



Die Leichenverbrennung.

Mit besonderer Rücksicht

auf die

österreichische Gesetzgebung

dargestellt

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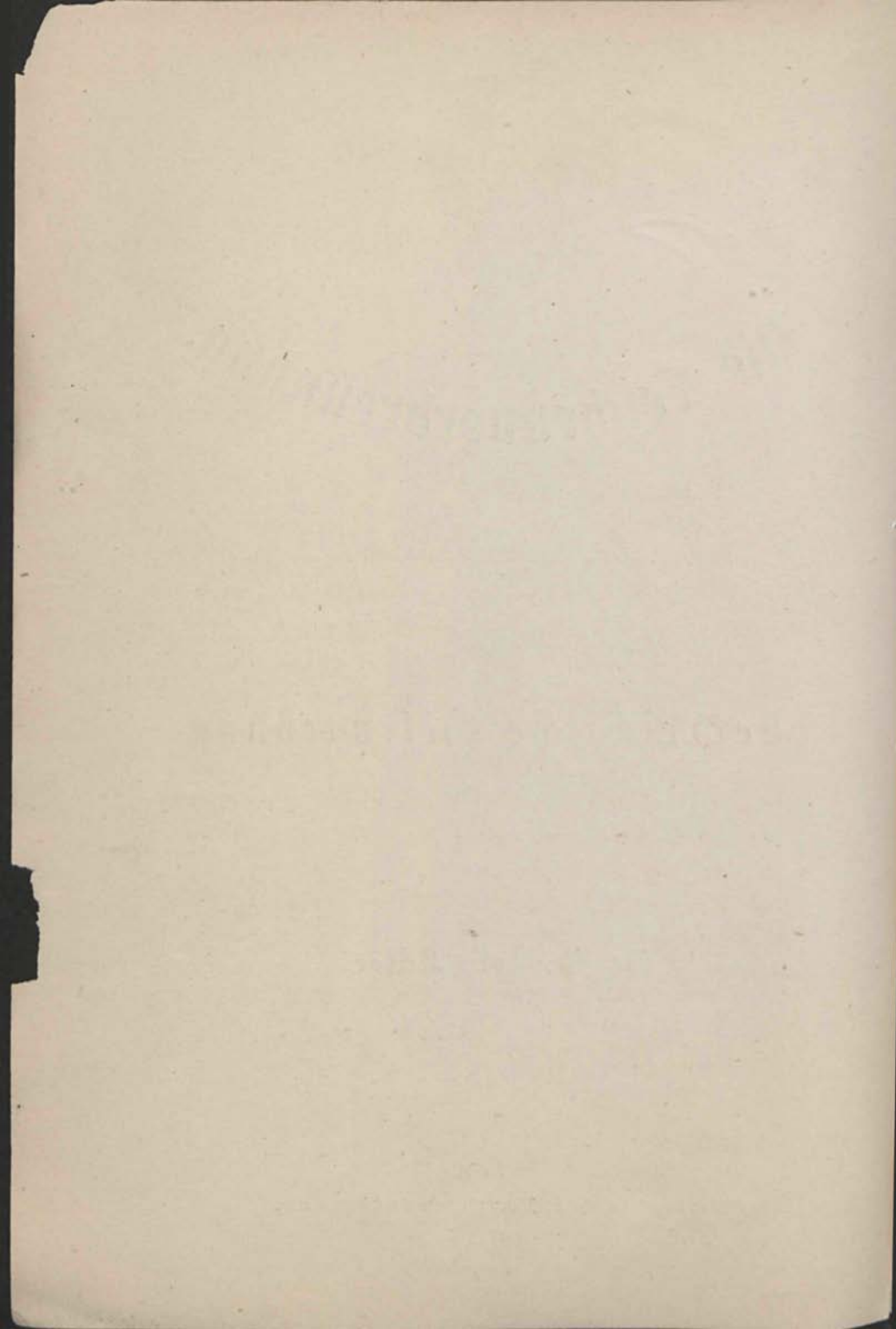
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Verhältnisse und Umstände localer Natur, welche man mit der Bezeichnung „Die Wiener Central-Friedhofsfrage“ zusammenfassen kann, haben eine Idee, die bisher nur als stiller Wunsch Einzelner dahinschlief, zu einem Schlagworte des Tages, zu einer stehenden Rubrik in den Zeitungen gemacht.

Die bei mehreren Culturvölkern des Alterthums und auch noch in unseren Tagen von einigen Volksstämmen in Hinterasien geübte, im ganzen Bereiche der christlichen, mohamedanischen und jüdischen Religion längst durch das Begräbniß verdrängte Bestattung der Todten durch deren Verbrennung soll — zunächst im Wege der freien Uebung als facultative Leichenverbrennung reactivirt werden.

Die berebten Fürsprecher der Leichenverbrennung ¹⁾ stellen die Leichenverbrennung als ein Postulat

¹⁾ Die in Zürich 1874 erschienene Broschüre von Wegmann-Ercolani: „Die Leichenverbrennung als rationellste Bestattungsart“, bringt eine übersichtliche Darstellung der Leichenverbrennungsfrage im Allgemeinen und speciell der verschiedenen Leichenzerstörungsmethoden der Professoren Polli und Pini in Mailand, Gorini in Vodi, Brunetti in Padua und Reclam in Leipzig.

1. der Hygienie,
2. der Oekonomie, und selbst
3. der Pietät und Aesthetik

hin und führen in diesen drei Richtungen an:

Ad 1. Die vermöge unseres (mitteleuropäischen) Klima's und der durchschnittlichen Beschaffenheit unseres Bodens die naturgemäße und schnelle Zerstörung der Leichen hindernde und doch auch die Conservirung der Leichen durch deren Mummificirung nie ermöglichende Beerdigung führe bei hoher Lage der Beerdigungsstätten zu gesundheitsgefährlichen Verunreinigungen der Luftströmung und des Grundwassers, bei niedriger Lage jener Stätten aber nicht selten zu einem völligen Stillstande des Verwesungsprocesses durch Eintritt der sogenannten Leichenverfettung (adipocire), welche die Leichen in dem ekelsten Zustande einer Verkläfung festhält und die Fortbenützung derselben Begräbnisstätte unmöglich macht.²⁾

Ad 2. Berufst man sich auf die Ersparung nicht unbedeutlicher, jetzt der Beerdigung dienender, und so buchstäblich von der todtten Hand in Beschlag genommener Grundflächen.³⁾

Ad 3. Weist man auf die in der Leichenverbrennung

²⁾ Ueber die Phasen der Leichenfäulniß finden sich sehr interessante Daten in Dr. Adolf Schauenstein's gerichtlicher Medicin S. 511, mit Berufung auf die Beobachtungen der berühmten französischen Aerzte Orfila und Levergic und die Untersuchungen Watherill's. Erfahrungen über die Schädlichkeit der Leichengase und Fälle eingetretener Leichenverfettung sind in Wegmann-Ercolani's citirter Broschüre angeführt.

³⁾ Noch weiter geht Král in seiner „Die irdische Auferstehung“ betitelten naturwissenschaftlichen, philosophischen Betrachtung (Brünn 1873), welcher die besondere Nutzbarkeit des durch Versezung mit Salzsäure gewonnenen Leichendüngers hervorhebt. Auch die Verwendbarkeit der bei der Leichenverbrennung frei werdenden Gase soll außer Frage sein.

liegende Behütung eines geliebten Körpers vor dem langsam und eilen Verwesungsproceß, und auf die bei der Beerdigung eintretende Störung der letzten Ruhe durch profane oder gar gewerbliche Manipulation mit den Knochenresten hin.⁴⁾

Die bezogene Broschüre von Wegmann = Ercolani enthält noch folgende, Befürwortung und Abwehr enthaltende Behauptungen: „Keine Religion kann sich durch die Verbrennung beeinträchtigt oder beleidigt finden, denn diese entspricht den Naturgesetzen auf weit strengere Art als jede andere Bestattungsmethode, indem sie die Elemente eines Organismus, welcher zu leben aufgehört hat, der Luft und der Erde zurückgibt, woher sie gekommen sind, und zwar unter Formen und Combinationen, welche mit denjenigen übereinstimmen, welche die Natur selbst anwendet, um solche Organismen auf ihre ursprünglichen Bestandtheile zurückzuführen. Die Religion als solche hat überhaupt mit der Bestattungsweise nichts zu thun. Zur Zeit der Gründung der christlichen Religion wurden die Leichen sowohl beerdigt als verbrannt; Letzteres ist von Christus nirgends verboten worden. Warum sollte man vor einer Urne

⁴⁾ Dr. A. Wittlacil bemerkt in seinem Aufsatze über Leichenverbrennung in der „Wiener Medicinischen Wochenschrift“ 1874, Nr. 21: „Wem ästhetischer Sinn nicht versagt ist, der muß die Fäulniß scheuen, die Flamme aber kann er nicht fürchten, denn was wäre an ihr fürchterlich? Sie schmerzt die Todten nicht mehr, und was an der Verbrennung etwa noch die Pietät verletzen könnte, das den Blicken der Angehörigen zu entziehen ist eine Aufgabe der Technik, deren Lösung ihr nicht schwer werden kann. Ja, die Pietät kann die ihr theuere Asche sammeln, sie mitten unter den Lebenden als eine heilige Reliquie aufbewahren; was kann sie aus dem Grabe sammeln? Leichenbegängniß und Grab (?) bleiben — nur die Verwesung entfällt und wird durch die Verbrennung ersetzt.“

mit der wirklichen Asche theurerer Verstorbener nicht dieselben religiösen Empfindungen haben können wie vor einem Steine, welcher ein verwestes unansehnliches Zerstörungsproduct bedeckt? Die Verbrennung kann auch Diejenigen nicht stören, welche an ein jüngstes Gericht mit Auferstehung des Leibes glauben. Derselbe Gott, der die todtten Knochen beleben kann, wird auch die todte Asche zu beleben die Macht haben. Wo sind übrigens die Gräber unserer Vorfahren, wo die Leichen der von wilden Thieren Zerrissenen, von Fischen Gefressenen u. s. w.?

Die Exhumirung hat allerdings der Strafsjustiz schon erheblichen Vorschub geleistet, aber mit Ausnahme der Vergiftungen, Kindes-tödtungen, von Knochenverletzungen, Identitäts-Erstellungen ist dieselbe meist nichts als Zeitverlust und eine Operation, welche sowohl dem Fiscus als den Parteien große Kosten auferlegt. Die Exhumation geschieht deshalb nur in ganz ausnahmeweisen und dringendsten Fällen. Wie oft sind nicht schon Exhumirungen ohne irgend welches greifbare Resultat vorgenommen worden? In Vergiftungsfällen läßt sich das Gift oft gar nicht mehr mit Sicherheit nachweisen, weil es durch die Verwesungsproducte schon absorbirt wurde. Die am Leichnam wahrnehmbaren Vergiftungssymptome sind oft nicht den Vergiftungen eigen, sondern den gewöhnlichen Krankheitsfolgen gleich oder ähnlich; bei langsamer Vergiftung durch Blei und Arsenik und wenn die Substanz durch Erbrechen oder Stühle abgegangen, bei organischen Substanzen, welche, wenn nicht sofort erforscht, ihre Natur verändern, läßt sich absolut nichts nachweisen. In der Asche läßt sich übrigens Vergiftung durch Antimon, Blei, Kupfer und Bariumzusammensetzung auch erkennen."

Hieran knüpft *Begmann-Ercolani* den Vorschlag einer gründlichen, durch die Forderung einer Krankheitsgeschichte des behandelnden Arztes unterstützten und von zwei Amtsärzten in Beschau und Ueberbeschau (wie in zwei Instanzen) zu vollziehenden ämtlichen Todtenbesichtigung, welche bei dem mindesten Anstande oder Verdachte sofort zur Obduction und chemischen Untersuchung der Leiche führen soll.

Nach allen diesen Ausführungen, welche das Material der bereits im vollen Zuge befindlichen Agitation für Leichenverbrennung skizziren sollten, erlaube ich mir, dem „Feuereifer“, welcher mit obigen Ausführungen und Vorschlägen die Frage selbst entschieden, alle Hindernisse besiegt und schon zur Bildung von Leichenverbrennungs-Vereinen schreiten zu sollen erachtet, mehrere allgemeine Erwägungen entgegen — und sohin Materialien zum eingehenden Studium der Sache zur Verfügung zu stellen.

1. Der reelle und praktische Boden der ganzen Frage steht noch nicht fest, es ist nämlich die Voraussetzung der imminenten und allgemeinen Schädlichkeit der gegenwärtigen und der vollkommenen Gesundheits-Unschädlichkeit der angestrebten Bestattungsmethode, es ist ferner die physikalisch-technische Durchführbarkeit einer Verbrennung, welche vollkommen viele Leichen ohne große Kosten in unschädlicher und der Pietät durch Aufbewahrung individueller Asche Rechnung tragender Weise zerstören läßt — noch nicht von fachmännischer Seite definitiv festgestellt.⁵⁾ Bedenfalls

⁵⁾ Das vom ärztlichen Vereine in Wien niedergesetzte Leichenverbrennungs-Comité hat seine Berathungen noch nicht beendigt,

würde nur durch eine obligatorische, nicht aber durch eine blos facultative Leichenverbrennung der übrigens nur für Städte aufgestellten Sanitätsforderung sofort entsprochen.

2. Die Bestattung der Leichen beruht im Allgemeinen auf zwei ihrer Natur nach verschiedenen, ja entgegengesetzten, aber praktisch zusammentreffenden und daher mit einander compromittirenden menschlichen Selbsterhaltungsbedürfnissen:

- a) dem materiellen Selbsterhaltungsbedürfnisse der Menschen, welches die Fortschaffung des für die menschliche Gesellschaft abgestorbenen und daher nun in seiner natürlichen Zersetzung schädlich werdenden Organismus fordert, und
- b) dem idealen Selbsterhaltungsbedürfnisse, welches die möglichste Schonung der beruhigenden Vorstellung einer Erhaltung des Individuums verlangt.

Das letztere (ideale und temporär beschränkte) Bedürfnis heißt Pietät (gegen Leichen), es entspringt aus dem idealen Selbsterhaltungstrieb der Individualität und wird befriedigt — durch Vorstellungen.

läßt aber in Wien durch Sanitätsrath Dr. Nowak Versuche mit einem von Dr. Köhler construirten Leichenverbrennungs-Ofen machen und soll zwei Comitémitglieder zu Experimenten des Prof. Reclam mit dem Verbrennungsapparate von Siemens nach Dresden entsendet haben. — Auch Friedrich Hellwald bemerkt in seinem Artikel: „Die Frage der Leichenverbrennung“ (Ausland 1874, Nr. 21): „Die Agitation für Leichenverbrennung überieht in ihrem Streben nach einem dermalen moralisch unerreichbaren und technisch noch unerreichten Ziele die näherliegende Aufgabe der thunlichsten Verbesserung des gegenwärtigen Friedhofswesens. Müssen wir von der rastlos fortschreitenden Wissenschaft erst die Erfindung einer rationellen Verbrennungsmethode erhoffen, so kann es nicht unbescheiden sein, ihr die Entdeckung eines Verfahrens zuzumuthen, wodurch, ohne den Rahmen der heutigen Begräbnißweise zu verlassen, der Verwesungsproceß der Leichen unschädlich gemacht werde.“

Das Begräbniß involvirt die Vorstellung eines blos temporären Schlafes im Erdenchooße, die Leichenverbrennung kann die Vorstellung einer Pünerung durch die Flamme und den Gefühlswerth der unmittelbaren Detention der Asche, rüdsichtlich subiectiv gedacht: des Zurückbehaltenwerdens als Asche, involviren. Daß die dem metaphysischen Bedürfnisse der Menschheit zu Hilfe kommenden Religionsconfessionen sich speciell auch des letzten Actus am Menschen, des Begräbnißes, bemächtigten und dieses wenigstens rituell normirten, ist wohl sehr einleuchtend, und ebenso darf nicht vergessen werden, daß nach der religiösen — auch die Weihe der Gewohnheit einer der Pietät dienenden Procedur ihre beruhigende Kraft gibt.

Von diesen vorausgeschickten abstracten Erwägungen zu concreten Einrichtungen übergehend, weise ich darauf hin, daß die Beerdigung der Todten eine kirchliche und staatliche Einrichtung sei. Für die sociale Durchführbarkeit der angestrebten Leichenbestattungsreform wird, deren technische Lösung vorausgesetzt, wohl die Stellung, welche Staat und Confessionen der Reform gegenüber einnehmen werden, ausschlaggebend sein, wobei freilich nicht zu verkennen sein wird, daß dogmatisch rituelle Normen der Confessionen in unseren Tagen socialen Reformen keine unübersteigbaren Schranken entgegenstellen.

Die Theologen der verschiedenen Confessionen werden vielleicht in nicht zu ferner Zeit sich veranlaßt fühlen, ihr Votum in der berührten „brennenden“ Frage abzugeben.

Ohne nun den katholischen Theologen in dieser Beziehung vorgreifen zu können oder zu wollen, glaube ich in der heiligen Schrift, von den zahlreichen, die Auferstehung Christi aus dem Grabe erzählenden Stellen abgesehen, unter den die Auferstehungs-Verheißung für die Gläubigen betreffenden Stellen nur

Eine, nämlich das Evangelium des heil. Johannes V. Capitel B. 28, als die Voraussetzung des Erdenbegräbnißes involvirend, ansehen zu können.⁶⁾

Aus dem dem Kirchenrechtsgebiete angehörigen Wissen erlaube ich mir ferner daran zu erinnern, daß das „kirchliche Begräbniß“ (*sepultura ecclesiastica* ⁷⁾) im innigen Zusammenhange mit den sogenannten Sacramentalien (kirchlichen Segnungen und Weihungen) stehe, daß nach canonischem Rechte (c. 105. C. I. 9, 1; c. 6, 28, C. XIII. 9, 2; c. 70, C. XII. 9, 2 und c. 24, C. XXIII. qu. 8, c. 1, 12, X. de sepult. c. 11, X. de poenit.) und nach kirchlichem Sprachgebrauche unter kirchlichem Begräbniß die Bestattung einer Leiche in ritueller Form an einem benedicirten Orte zu verstehen ist und daß das Anrecht hierauf Jedem zustehe, welcher zur Zeit seines Todes in kirchlicher Gemeinschaft gestanden ist, ferner daß die Verweigerung der Bestattung in benedicirter Erde eine strenge kirchliche Strafe sei, daß (wie Pachmann bemerkt) die kirchliche Ministerialgewalt nicht blos in Kirchen und Capellen, sondern auch an den von dem Bischöfe oder seinem Delegaten benedicirten Friedhöfe wirksam werde, und endlich daß in dem gemeinsamen Beerdigungsplatze der kirchlichen Gemeinde zunächst das katholische Dogma von der Gemeinschaft der Gläubigen, welche Gemeinschaft auch mit

⁶⁾ Die Stelle lautet: „Verwundert euch dessen nicht, denn es kommt die Stunde, in welcher Alle, die in den Gräbern sind, die Stimme des Sohnes Gottes hören werden.“

⁷⁾ Pachmann's Kirchenrecht III. B. S. 6; Hefert's Kirchenrecht VIII. Hauptstück und §. 4 der Literatur; Schmid's Liturgik III. Band; Aschbach's Kirchenlexikon, Artikel „Begräbniß“; Dr. Ginzel's Kirchenrecht II. Band, S. 638.

dem Tode nicht abgebrochen wird, einen in die Augen springenden Ausdruck erhalten soll. — Aber auch die Existenz kirchlich benedicirter und ganz isolirter Einzel- und Familiengräber ist eine Thatsache. Ob nun die Deponirung von Aschenkrügen an gemeinsamen Orten (ähnlich den alten römischen Columbarien) von der Ministerialgewalt der katholischen Kirche als ein geeignetes Surrogat des Begräbnisses in geweihter Erde angesehen werden, ob den einzelnen Aschenkrügen oder gemeinsamen Aufbewahrungsorten für Aschenkrüge dann auch die kirchliche Benediction zu Theil werden werde, bleibt wohl eine offene Frage, welche ich nicht beantworte, aber aufstelle. —

Ich wende mich nun sofort zur Citirung der staatlichen Gesetzgebung, welche vorläufig allerdings einer Aenderung der Bestattungsart im Wege steht.

Eine ganze Reihe von politischen Verordnungen normirt die Beerdigung der Todten, so zunächst die für die gesammten conscribirtten Provinzen am 24. August 1784 Z. 21027, für Wien am 9. October 1783 erlassene Hofentschließung, ferner die Hofanzleidcrete vom 1. December 1783 und 23. August 1784 (Zafsch I. S. 237), 11. October 1784, vom 13. September 1784 (Kropatschek Ges. 6. Band, S. 548), vom 24. Jänner 1785, vom 6. September 1787, vom 24. Mai 1825 und die Ministerialverordnungen und Erlässe vom 10. September 1859, Z. 36047, vom 18. März 1866, Z. 1452, vom 3. August 1871, Z. 9404, und vom 3. Mai 1874 (R. G. Bl. Nr. 56), welche Gesetze *) sämmtlich, indem sie Beisetzung in Leichenkammern, Friedhöfen, Gräbern, dann Leichentransporte und Leichenexhumirung normiren, die Bestattung der

*) Siehe Handbuch der österr. Verwaltungsgelehrtunde von Dr. Moriz von Stubenrauch II. B., S. 16, 17 u. ff., Pachmann's Kirchenrecht III. B. S. 86; Maierhofer's Handbuch für den politischen Verwaltungsdienst S. 656; Ad. Zaleisky's Handbuch der Gesetze und Verordnungen für die Polizeiverwaltungen im österr. Kaiserstaate II. B., S. 316. Erwähnt mag hier bei Anführung der österreichischen Begräbnißgesetzgebung werden, daß, wie Wegmann-Ercolani erzählt, in dem Entwurfe eines Sanitätsgesetzes für das Königreich Italien die Verbrennung als facultative Bestattungsart aufgenommen erscheine.

Leichen in der Erde voraussetzen. Das allgemeine bürgerl. Gesetzbuch spricht in den §§. 549 und 1280 vom „Begräbniß“, das allgemeine Strafgesetz vom 27. Mai 1852 bestraft im §. 306 die Beschädigung von Grabstätten, die eigenmächtige Eröffnung von Gräbern, die Hinwegnahme oder Mißhandlung von Leichen, und die Strafproceßordnung vom 23. Mai 1873, R. G. Bl. Nr. 119, normirt im §. 127 die durch die Leichenbeerdigung bedingte gerichtliche Leichenexhumirung.

Aus der Wichtigkeit des berührten Gesetzgebungsgegenstandes an sich und aus der Natur der Reichsgesetzgebung, welche zum Behufe der Ermöglichung eines auch nur facultativen Abgehens von der Beerdigung aufzuheben oder doch zu modificiren ist, muß wohl die Schlußfolgerung gezogen werden, daß ein neuer Bestattungsmodus nicht im Wege polizeilicher Erlaubniß oder Verordnung, auch nicht durch Verordnungen höherer Staatsbehörden (Statthalterei oder Ministerien), sondern nur durch ein Gesetz, und zwar durch ein Reichsgesetz eingeführt, rücksichtlich gestattet werden könne.

Ist doch auch die Medicinalgesetzgebung nach §. 11 lit. f des Gesetzes vom 21. December 1867 ausdrücklich dem Wirkungskreise des Reichsrathes vorbehalten. — Vielleicht wird schon das der n. ö. Statthalterei vorliegende Gesuch zur Genehmigung eines in Wien gegründeten Vereines für Leichenverbrennung und Versicherung der Leichengebühren (Urne) zu einem ämtlichen Ausspruche über die gesetzliche Zulässigkeit des einen Vereinszweckes führen, weil ja nach §. 6 des Gesetzes vom 15. November 1867 (R. G. Bl. Nr. 134) (über das Vereinsrecht) „wenn der Verein nach seinem Zwecke . . . gesetz- oder rechtswidrig ist, — die Landesstelle dessen Bildung untersagen kann“.

Ich komme nun zu den justiz-polizeilichen Hindernissen, welche dem Aufgeben der Leichenbeerdigung entgegenstehen. Der physische Organismus des Individuums überdauert das individuelle Leben immerhin einige Zeit und ermöglicht so erst die Constatirung des Todes überhaupt, in vielen Fällen aber auch die Constatirung der Identität der Leiche mit einem Vermissten oder Verschollenen, endlich unter Umständen die Constatirung eines an dem Verstorbenen begangenen Verbrechens. Die Constatirung des Todes erfolgt natürlich stets vor jeder Bestattungsart, auch die Identität wird zumeist vor der Bestattung constatirt, oder wenigstens zu constataren versucht, und der Fälle sind nur wenige, in welchen bei einer nachher vorgenommenen Exhumirung durch Auffindung und Auffindung unauffälliger, nur dem Kundigen kenntlicher Merkmale nachträglich eine Identitätsfrage gelöst wurde.

Unsere Gesetzgebung über Führung der Sterberegister (Patent v. 20. Februar 1784, Hofdecr. v. 19. Juli 1784, v. 24. October 1788, v. 21. October 1796 u. f. w.) kennt keine eigentliche Identitätsbeweissführung, die Eintragung erfolgt

auf Grund der „Angaben“ der Angehörigen oder der Umgebung des Verstorbenen. Die gesetzlichen Vorschriften über Todeserklärung (§§. 24, 277, 278 a. b. G. B. und Hofdecr. v. 17. Februar 1827, Nr. 2259 S. G. G.) normiren Edictalcitation des Vermissten selbst und von Zeugen, ferner Zeugenvernehmungen über Art, Ort, Zeit und Umstände des Todes und stellen schließlich gesetzliche Todesvermuthungen auf, enthalten aber keine Bestimmung über Identitätsconstatirungen an Leichen.

Eine photographische Aufnahme des Leichnams und eine genaue protokollarische Constatirung seiner Bekleidung, des Fundortes etc. kann übrigens jeder Bestattungsart vorhergehen und vermag zum Zwecke der Feststellung der Identität in der Regel mehr zu leisten, als die Exhumirung der in voller Verwesung begriffenen Leichen.

Dagegen erscheint die Exhumirung von Leichen und die diese Exhumirung bedingende, gewissermaßen eine ämtliche Aufbewahrung vorstellende Beerdigung der Leichen ungemein wichtiger vom criminalpolizeilichen Standpunkte.

Gedeckt durch den Mantel menschlicher Gebrechlichkeit und Krankheit, schleicht menschliche Bosheit und Tücke an das frische Leben des Nächsten, erzeugt kunstmäßig natürliche Zerstörungsprocessse, pflegt scheinbar liebevoll den Kranken, beweint heuchelnd den Todten, legt kaltblütig und ruhig den ärztlich Behandelten der Todtenbeschau vor und hofft, daß der Verwesungsproceß in kurzer Frist die Spuren vertilgen werde, welche zur Aufdeckung des abscheulichsten Verbrechens führen können.

Jede Beschleunigung der Zerstörung des Organismus, welcher durch die chemisch nachweisbare Veränderung seiner Bestandtheile, oder durch die verdeckten Verletzungen seines Knochengerüstes zum Verräther werden kann, muß solchen Ver-

brechern um so mehr erwünscht sein, als ja häufig der Verdacht erst in Tagen, Wochen und Monaten auf dem Wege geheimer Vermuthung und stiller Nachrede zur großen Wahrscheinlichkeit heranwächst — der Fälle nicht zu gedenken, in welchen erst eine von dem kühn gewordenen Verbrecher später geübte gleiche Schandthat, oder doch ein dafür angesehenes Ereigniß, z. B. der auffallend plötzliche Tod der zweiten oder dritten Gattin, mit Blitzesschlag die schreckliche Ahnung durch alle Herzen fliegen macht. —

Da wurden denn in **manchen** solchen Fällen aus den stillen Gräbern schreckliche, den objectiven Thatbestand constatarende Zeugnisse hervorgeholt, welche dann nicht mehr zu haben sein werden, wenn der chronische Verbrennungsproceß, welcher in der Verwesung liegt, mit dem acuten künstlichen Leichenverbrennungsproceße vertauscht werden sollte; wenn Asche, und noch dazu eine von den vielleicht schuldigen, aber Pietät heuchelnden Angehörigen zur eigenen Aufbewahrung erbetene Asche das temporäre einzige Ueberbleibsel eines Gemordeten sein wird.

Die strafgerichtliche Proceßur der letzten Jahrhunderte reflectirt daher auf das Beweismittel einer Leichenschau nach dem Begräbniß und verlangt darum auch Exhumirung schon beerdigter Leichen.

Ich gestatte mir an dieser Stelle einen kurzen historischen Excurs.

Zur ältesten Geschichte des Beweismittels der mit der Exhumirung verknüpften Legalsection mögen zuerst die durch ihren Inhalt und ihre Citate höchst interessanten, speciell auch die Leichenverbrennung im alten Rom berührenden, gewiß nur wenigen Juristen bis jetzt bekannten Bemerkungen des ausgezeichneten Criminalisten Dr. Gustav Weib (Beiträge zur Erörterung criminalistischer Fragen im Archiv des Criminalrechtes, Jahrgang 1839, S. 125—128) hier wörtliche Aufnahme finden: „Es ist allgemein anerkannt, daß der ganze Begriff von Legalsection, sowie dieser in der gemeinrechtlichen Praxis sich nach und nach entwickelt hat und von allen neueren Gesetzgebungen ausdrücklich recipirt worden ist, in dem römischen Rechte noch durchaus unbekannt war, Unter den Juristen des vorigen Jahrhunderts hat diesen Satz namentlich schon S. Fr. Böhmmer weiter ausgeführt ⁹⁾, und wenn man bedenkt, daß in allen Gesetzesstellen, welche sonst nothwendig hierüber hätten sprechen

⁹⁾ Boehmer ad Carpzov. qu. 26, Obs. 3, pag. 176.

müssen, sich wirklich nicht die geringste Andeutung der Art findet¹⁰⁾; daß ferner in sämtlichen Nachrichten über einzelne Criminalproceße aus den verschiedenen Zeiten der römischen Geschichte ebenso wenig etwas hievon vorkommt¹¹⁾, daß überdies gerade bei den hier in Sprache stehenden Verbrechen — Tödtung und Giftmord — der eigenthümliche, subjective Gesichtspunkt des römischen Rechtes ganz besonders hervortrat¹²⁾ und demnach eine genauere Ausmittlung des sogenannten objectiven Thatbestandes in der Regel gar nicht erforderlich war; ja, wenn man berücksichtigt, daß die Idee einer Section des Leichnams wegen des angenommenen engen Zusammenhanges zwischen Körper und Seele gewiß auch mit den religiösen Ansichten der damaligen Zeit überhaupt im Widerspruche stand, so läßt sich wohl an der Richtigkeit des ausgesprochenen Satzes selbst in keiner Weise zweifeln.¹³⁾ Allein freilich kann man auf der

¹⁰⁾ Vergl. l. 11 §. 3, l. 15 §. 1, l. 30 §. 4, Dig. ad legem Aquiliam; l. 1 §. 24, Dig. de Senat. Cons. Silianiano.

¹¹⁾ Vergl. z. B. Cicero Oratio pro Cluentio. In dieser ganzen Rede, in welcher doch fortwährend so viel über Mord und Vergiftung gesprochen wird, findet sich nirgends eine Spur, welche auf das Vorhandensein einer Section schließen ließe. so zwar daß dieselbe schon als Beweis angesehen werden kann, daß wenigstens in der damaligen Zeit auch noch Niemand an etwas der Art dachte. Für die spätere Zeit vergl. z. B. Tacitus Annal. II, 73. Ich (Vdler) erlaube mir dagegen auf die Erzählung des Suetonius (C. Jul. Caes. cap. 82) hinzuweisen, daß der Arzt Antistius an der Leiche Cäsar's von den 23 Stichwunden nur Eine, „quod secundo loco in pectore acceperat“, für tödtlich erklärte.

¹²⁾ L. 1 §. 1 und 3, l. 3 §. 1, l. 7, l. 14 Dig. ad l. Corneliam de sicariis. Paulus R. S. V. 23 §. 3, Collat. LL. Mos. et Rom. I, 6 §. 2, I, 7 §. 1.

¹³⁾ Die hier gewöhnlich angeführte Schrift: P. Gericke, Progr. quo inspectionem cadaveris in homicidio apud Romanos in usu fuisse ostenditur, Helmst. 1739 ist dem Verfasser (Herrn Dr. Gustav Weib) nicht zu Gesicht gekommen.

anderen Seite nicht leugnen, daß, wie hoch man hier immer den Einfluß jenes sogenannten subjectiven Gesichtspunktes der *lex Cornelia* anschlagen mag, denn doch sehr häufig Fälle vorgekommen sein müssen, wo, besonders seit der mit dem Anfange der Kaiserzeit immer mehr und mehr hervortretenden inquisitorischen Richtung des ganzen strafrechtlichen Verfahrens ¹⁴⁾, vorerst noch eine sorgfältige Erforschung des eigentlichen Thatbestandes im höchsten Grade wünschenswerth und nothwendig gewesen sein würde und es bleibt daher in der That merkwürdig, wie man auf dieses so höchst natürliche und wenigstens bei Vergiftungsfällen so nahe liegende Auskunftsmittel nicht verfallen konnte. Wenn jedoch, wie gesagt, vielleicht der Hauptgrund dieser Erscheinung in den Vorurtheilen der römischen Staatsreligion zu suchen sein möchte, so ist es dagegen gewiß bemerkenswerth, daß auch gerade dergleichen Vorurtheile wieder eine Art von Surrogat (für die *legalsection*) an die Hand gegeben zu haben scheinen, worauf man bisher noch nicht geachtet hat. In einer Stelle bei Plinius heißt es nämlich ¹⁵⁾: *Negatur cremari posse (cor) in iis, qui cardiaco morbo obierint; negatur et veneno interemtis. Certe exstat oratio Vitellii, quareum Pisonem ejus sceleris coarguit, hoc usus argumento, palamque testatus, non potuisse ob venenum cor Germanici Caesaris cremari. Contra genere morbi defensum est Piso.* ¹⁶⁾

¹⁴⁾ Geib's Progr. de confessionis effectu, pag. 6—8 etc.

¹⁵⁾ Plinius, Natur. Histor. XI. 37, §. 187.

¹⁶⁾ Uebersetzt: „Man behauptet, daß das Herz bei jenen nicht verbrannt werden könne, welche an einer Herzkrankheit gestorben sind, dasselbe soll bei den durch Gift Getödteten der Fall sein. Dafür ist die Rede des Vitellius ein Beleg, in welcher dieser den Angeklagten Piso des Giftmordes unter Hinzureißung auf obigen Beweis-

Nun will ich zwar keineswegs behaupten, daß dieser Aberglaube von der Nichtbrennbarkeit des Herzens eines Vergifteten die Wirkung gehabt habe, daß man überall, wo der Verdacht eines solchen Verbrechens vorlag, sofort zu jener Probe — etwa wie zu unserer heutigen Zungenprobe beim Kindesmord — seine Zuflucht genommen und auf diese Weise, wenn auch ungenügend, die Vornahme einer eigentlichen Section ersetzt habe; allein jedenfalls glaube ich doch so viel daraus ableiten zu können, daß, wenn dergleichen Erscheinungen zufällig bemerkt worden wären, es dem Ankläger immer erwünscht sein mußte, indem er jetzt wenigstens, wie in dem erzählten Falle Vitellius, seine sonstigen Beweismittel auf diese Art unterstützen und zur endlichen Ueberführung des Angeeschuldigten davon Gebrauch machen konnte; und aus diesem Grunde scheint mir denn auch diese ganze Nachricht höchst bemerkenswerth zu sein und zur Aufklärung des damaligen processualischen Verfahrens wesentlich beizutragen. Daß übrigens das angeführte Beispiel nicht so vereinzelt dasteht, wie man dieses vielleicht glauben könnte, sondern daß die erwähnte Ansicht wirklich eine allgemein verbreitete gewesen sein muß, ergibt sich auch aus einer Erzählung bei Plutarch, wo das Nichtbrennen der Leiche ebenfalls schon als Beweis der Vergiftung betrachtet wird.¹⁷⁾“

Diesen geschichtlichen Bemerkungen Geib's erlaube ich mir noch Folgendes anzufügen:

grund und mit der feierlichen Behauptung und Bezeugung beschuldigte, daß das Herz des Caesar Germanicus wegen des Giftes nicht habe brennen können. Dagegen wurde Piso durch Hinweisung auf die Art der constatirten (Herz-) Krankheit vertheidigt.“

¹⁷⁾ Plutarchus Ti Gracchus c. 13 (in Geib's Aufsatz wird die ganze griechische Stelle citirt).

Schon in den germanischen Gesetzen des Mittelalters (z. B. im Salischen und Ripuarischen Gesetze, finden sich Spuren einer gerichtlichen Todtenschau¹⁸⁾, auch im canonischen Rechte¹⁹⁾ ist die Nothwendigkeit des richterlichen Augenscheines erwähnt und in der peinlichen Gerichtsordnung Kaiser Carl's V. (Carolina vom J. 1532)²⁰⁾ wird bei den Verbrechen des fürsetzlichen Mordes und der Tödtung der richterliche Augenschein und die Zuziehung von Sachverständigen — allerdings **vor** dem Begräbniß zur Pflicht gemacht; von Leichen-Section und Erhumirung ist nicht die Rede.

In England bestand schon früh die Sitte, daß der *Coroner* (*Coronator*, *Kronfiscal*, Bewahrer gewisser Kronrechte in der Grafschaft), welcher die Ursachen plötzlicher oder auffälliger Todesfälle mit Zuziehung von zwölf Geschwornen zu untersuchen hat und unpräjudicirlich dem Geschwornen-Verdicte in der Hauptverhandlung das gerichtliche Verfahren wegen vorsätzlichen Mordes

¹⁸⁾ Lehre vom Beweise im deutschen Strafproceße von Dr. L. J. A. Mittermaier (Beweis durch richterlichen Augenschein) S. 166; Lehrbuch der gerichtlichen Medicin von Dr. Adolf Schauenstein, Einleitung S. 6.

¹⁹⁾ c. 18, X. ad homicid. voluntar.

²⁰⁾ Art. 149 der Carolina hat die Aufschrift: „Von besichtigung eynes entleibten vor der begrebnuß“ und lautet: „Vnd damit dann inn obgemelten Jellen gebürlich ermessung vnd erkantnuß solcher vnderschiedlicher verwundung halb, nach der begrebnuß des entleibten dessen minder mangel sei, soll der Richter sampt zweyen schöffn, dem gerichtschreiber vnd eynem oder meer wundtärken (so man die gehalten und solchs geschehen kan) die dann zuvor beendigt werden sollen, den selben todten körper vor der begrebnuß mit fleiß besichtigen vnd alle seine entpfangene wunden, schleg vnd würrß, wie den jedes funden vnd ermessen würde, mit fleiß merken vnd verzeihen lassen.“

oder Todtschlages einleitet, außer Zeugen auch Aerzte als Sachverständige beizog.²¹⁾

Aus den österreichischen Strafproceßordnungen ist Nachfolgendes zu citiren: Die peinliche Gerichtsordnung Maria Theresia (Theresiana) vom J. 1768 behandelt im 26. Artikel „die Erkundigung, ob die That wirklich geschehen, und die corpora delicti“ und in den §§. 6—21 den gerichtlichen Augenschein bei Todtschlag, Vergiftungen, Kindesmord und in „Entleibungsfällen“, sie verlangt die Zuziehung von „wohlverständigen und zu den Criminal-Sachen beehdeten Aerzten“ und ertheilt

²¹⁾ Vergl. die heutige englische Communal-Verfassung und Communal-Verwaltung oder das System des Selfgovernment in seiner heutigen Gestalt von Dr. Rudolf Gneist (Berlin 1860) im Capitel: Die Coroner, S. 33 ff. Die die Todtenschan ordnende und noch heute in Kraft bestehende Geschäftsordnung ist aus dem 13. Jahrhunderte (4 Ew. I st. 2 de officio coronatoris), die Mitwirkung ärztlicher Personen wurde in späterer Zeit gesichert durch 6 et 7 Will. IV. c. 89. Der Coroner soll zunächst den Arzt, welcher den Todten zuletzt behandelt hat, als Zeugen vorfordern. In Ermanglung eines solchen kann er auch einen andern gesetzlich qualificirten Arzt aus der Nachbarschaft verhören. Er kann eine Oeffnung der Leiche (post mortem examination) durch diesen Arzt oder mehrere Aerzte vornehmen, auch eine chemische Analyse des Inhaltes des Magens oder der Eingeweide veranstalten lassen. Befindet die Jury selbst am Schlusse des Verfahrens, daß die Todesursache durch die verhörten Zeugen nicht gehörig aufgeklärt sei, so kann sie selbst ihrerseits dem Coroner gesetzlich qualificirte Aerzte namhaft machen, welche als Zeugen zu hören sind und eine Leichenöffnung vornehmen können. Auch hat der Coroner die Befugniß, eine schon beerdigte Leiche zur nachträglichen Untersuchung ausgraben zu lassen, wenn es nur innerhalb einer solchen Zeit geschieht, daß ein Resultat verständiger Weise zu erwarten ist. Ist die Leiche begraben ohne vorgängige Anzeige, oder ist die Anzeige so lange versäumt, daß der Leichnam in Verwesung übergegangen ist, so kann der Gerichtshof eine Polizeibüße (americiament) gegen die Ortsgemeinde aussprechen. Ebenso, wenn der Coroner ein Polizeivergehen (nuisance)

im §. 20 des Artikels 26 eine Vorschrift über Leichen-
ausgrabung.²²⁾

Die allgemeine Criminal-Gerichtsordnung vom 3. 1788 und das Gesetzbuch über Verbrechen und schwere Polizei-Übertretungen vom 3. September 1803 enthalten wohl Vorschriften über die Erhebung der That, gerichtlichen Augenschein und Zuziehung von Kunstverständigen (Erstere in den §§. 22—32, Letzteres in den §§. 238—248), aber keine Normen über gerichtliche Leichenschau, Leichenöffnung²³⁾ oder Exhumirung, welche sich erst wieder in den drei letzten österreichischen Strafproceßordnungen vom 3. 1850, 1853 und 1873 vorfinden.

als Ursache des Todes findet. Die Gebühren und Kosten der Todesermittlungen sind in neuerer Zeit regulirt durch I. Vict. c. 68 (Gebühr der Aerzte: 12 Thlr. G.) — Für das behandelte Hauptthema liegt die Frage nahe, ob nicht durch eine Einführung eines Analogons der englischen Todtenjury ein Surrogat für die bei der Leichenverbrennung entfallende Möglichkeit einer nachträglichen Untersuchung gewonnen werden könne. Mit Rücksicht auf die Erfahrungen der englischen Criminalpraxis und darauf, daß nachträgliche Leichenschau ja nur bei ursprünglich gar nicht auffälligen Todesfällen ihre Bedeutung hat, daß aber die Einberufung einer Todtenjury über jeden Todesfall nicht möglich ist — möchte ich diese Frage verneinen.

²²⁾ §. 20 des Art. 26 der Theresiana lautet: „Wäre es hingegen nach Ermessen des peinlichen Richters um Besichtigung eines bereits begrabenen todtten Körpers zu thun, soll derselbe zu Einnehmung des Augenscheins, wenn es andern nicht schon zu lang angestanden und der Körper nicht etwann schon vermodert ist, wiederum ausgegraben; und, da solcher in einem geweihten Erdreich beugeleget worden, auch daselbst auf vorläufige Erinnerung des Pfarrers oder anderweit geistlichen Vorstehers ohne gestattende Jemandens Widerrede erhoben, außer des Freyhofs beschaut, sodann in seiner Grabstatt wiederum beerdiget werden.“

²³⁾ Bezüglich welcher aber im 3. 1814 eine eigene Instruction für die Aerzte erlassen wurde.

Nachfolgend wird der Wortlaut der bezüglichen Norm in diesen drei Strafproceßordnungen darum wiedergegeben, weil eine kleine Textvariante nicht ohne Bedeutung zu sein scheint. Die Strafproceßordnung v. 17. Jänner 1850 normirt im §. 127: „... Ist die Leiche bereits beerdigt, so muß sie zu diesem Behufe wieder ausgegraben werden, wenn nach den Umständen noch ein erhebliches Ergebniß davon erwartet werden kann und die Rücksicht auf die Gesundheit der Personen, welche an der Leichenschau theilnehmen müssen, es nicht widerräth.“ Die Strafproceßordnung vom 29. Juli 1853 enthält in dem Leichenschau und Leichenöffnung normirenden §. 86 den oben durchschossenen Beisatz (bezüglich der Gesundheitsrücksicht) nicht, während die jetzt geltende Strafproceßordnung vom 23. Mai 1873 im §. 127 anordnet: „... Ist die Leiche bereits beerdigt, so muß sie zu diesem Behufe wieder ausgegraben werden, wenn nach den Umständen noch ein erhebliches Ergebniß davon erwartet werden kann und nicht dringende Gefahr für die Gesundheit der Personen, welche an der Leichenbeschau theilnehmen müssen, vorhanden ist.“ Die Textvariante liegt in der Aufstellung oder Nichtaufstellung der die Rücksicht auf die Gesundheit der öffentlichen Functionäre normirenden Bedingung ²⁴⁾, deren Bedeutung

²⁴⁾ Ein ähnlicher Bedingungs-Beisatz findet sich auch im §. 2 der Verordnung des Ministers des Innern vom 3. Mai 1874 (R. G. Bl. 56) (betreffend die Ausgrabung von Leichen). Die Fürsicht des Gesetzgebers für die Nichtgefährdung der Gesundheit öffentlicher Functionäre hat schon früher in der Bestimmung des Hofdecretes vom 14. Juli 1791, Nr. 180 J. G. S., für den Fall der Zeugenvernehmung von Kranken im Civilrechtsverfahren Ausdruck gefunden. Ueber die Frage, ob Aerzte zur Untersuchung schon begrabener und in vorgeschrittener Fäulniß befindlicher Leichen verpflichtet werden können, besteht eine ganze Literatur, welche in dem Werke des Prof. Dr. Hier. Beer

und Berechtigung nach den Angaben der Anmerkung beurtheilt werden kann; — übereinstimmend sind die bezogenen Normen der drei Strafproceßordnungen hinsichtlich der ersten Bedingung, „daß nach den Umständen noch ein erhebliches Ergebniß erwartet werden könne“.

Diese, ich möchte sagen, skeptische Haltung des Gesetzgebers ist in natürlichen Verhältnissen und in den strafrichter-

(Einleitung in das Studium und die Praxis der gerichtlichen Medicin 1851, S. 108—120) übersichtlich dargestellt wird und aus welcher ich zunächst für den hier in Frage stehenden Punkt der Gesundheitsgefährlichkeit der Erhumirung Nachfolgendes hervorhebe: Die ältere Literatur und Praxis hält daran fest, der Arzt könne zur Untersuchung solcher Leichen, bei welchen die Fäulniß schon vorgeschritten ist, nicht gezwungen werden. So decretirt die Leipziger Facultät im Jahre 1671 in einem Falle, wo die Section an einer schon nach acht Tagen wieder ausgegrabenen Leiche von einem Arzte versagt wurde: „daß sie in verglichen casibus keinen medicum schuldig zu sein erachte, **seine samam** und gesunden Leib in Gefahr zu setzen“, und die älteren Lehrer der gerichtlichen Medicin, Bohn, Teichmaier (welcher sagt: „nec medicus cum dispendio sanitatis et propriae salutis putridum corpus inspicere tenetur“), Hebenstreit, Haller (welcher meint die Aerzte hätten Recht, dem Verlangen nach Section von seit mehreren Tagen begrabenen Leichen zur Sommerzeit nicht nachzugeben), Eschenbach, Plenk, Ploucquet, Silora und Meßger, Ruland und Mende sehen in der von ihnen behaupteten Gesundheitsgefährlichkeit stark verwesender Leichen allein schon einen Ablehnungsgrund.

Ganz abweichend von diesen Meinungen hat sich zuerst Prof. Berni in einem Aufsatze in den Beiträgen zur gerichtlichen Arzneikunde, Bd. I, Nr. I, und in seinem Handbuche der gerichtlichen Arzneikunde, S. 400, ausgesprochen. Er weist die aus der angeblichen Unziemlichkeit des in Rede stehenden Geschäftes hergeholte Einwendung als ein mittelalterliches Vorurtheil und mit der richtigen Bemerkung zurück: „ein Geschäft, welches die Begründung der Wahrheit zum Behufe der Schuld oder Unschuld bezweckt, kann nur die Achtung der Menschen für den Arzt erhöhen, nicht vermindern“, — begegnet der Einwendung, daß die Obducenten in Gefahr kämen, mit der Bemerkung: „der Arzt müßte seinen Beruf gänzlich aufgeben, wenn er das,

lichen Erfahrungen über die Bestrittenheit so mancher Obductions-Gutachten über erhumirte Leichen²⁵⁾ begründet.

Dagegen werden die richterlichen Erfahrungen über die höchst wichtigen Resultate, welche die Obduction schon lange begrabener und selbst in der Verwesung vorgeschrittener Leichen und zwar sowohl bei Vergiftungen, als bei Knochenverletzungen²⁶⁾,

womit Gefahr für seine Gesundheit verbunden ist, ablehnen wollte. Die täglich dem Arzte drohenden Gefahren dürfen ihn weder in Erfüllung seiner Berufspflichten, noch weniger in den Amtspflichten eines Gerichtsarztes stören.“

Berni fordert schließlich den Arzt auf, Vorsichtsmaßregeln zu beobachten, welche ihn vor Ansteckung (oder Selbstverletzung) bei der Untersuchung von Leichen schützen können.

Die Ansicht Berni's, in der Hauptsache noch von Henke und Friedrich, Beer u. A. festgehalten, dürfte auch mit Rücksicht auf die Mittel, welche heutzutage zur Abwendung von Ansteckungsgefahren zu Gebote stehen, die richtige sein, obgleich sie in der Gesetzgebung die ihr gebührende Berücksichtigung nicht gefunden zu haben scheint.

²⁵⁾ Ich erinnere an den bei dem Kreisgerichte Korneuburg in den Jahren 1857—1859 anhängigen, in medicinischen und juristischen Kreisen berühmt gewordenen Vergiftungsproceß, bei welchem die schon nach 10 Tagen vollzogene Erhumirung eines noch ziemlich wohl erhaltenen Leichnams nach den widersprechenden Ergebnissen der verschiedenen chemischen und medicinischen Untersuchungen und Begutachtungen (es waren deren nicht weniger als 6 ämtliche) zu keinem klaren Resultate für den concreten Strafproceß führte. (Der Korneuburger Vergiftungsproceß, dargestellt von einem praktischen Juristen, Buchhandlung von Jos. Klemm, 1860.)

²⁶⁾ Siehe den Fall im neuen Archiv des Criminalrechtes, Bd. II, pag. 315, dann Pyl's Aufsätze, Bd. I, pag. 198. Auch Frühwald bemerkt in seinem Handbuche des österreichischen allgemeinen Strafprocesses (1854) S. 94, daß ihm ein Fall bekannt wurde, in welchem der Untersuchungsrichter ungeachtet des Ab Rathens der Sachverständigen die Ausgrabung einer über sechs Wochen begrabenen Leiche anordnete und dieselbe sich noch so wohl erhalten fand, daß noch die feinsten, versteckten Spuren der erlittenen Gewalthätigkeit sich fanden und so dem nur theilweise geständigen Angeklagten gegenüber die Beweise an die Hand gegeben wurden.

bei scheinbaren Selbstverbrennungen²⁷⁾, endlich bei Untersuchungen über die Reife und Lebensfähigkeit von neugeborenen Kindern²⁸⁾ zu Tage förderte, nicht zu übersehen, und es wird nicht ignorirt werden können und dürfen, daß sich die Leistungsfähigkeit der Chemiker bei Untersuchungen exhumirter Leichentheile in Folge der Fortschritte der chemischen Wissenschaft in den letzten Jahren bedeutend erhöht habe und sich nun keineswegs mehr auf die Nachweisung von mineralischen Giften allein beschränke²⁹⁾, während wieder anderseits die Erfahrungsthatfache des häufigen Vorkommens von Selbstmorden durch Vergiftung — der Vergiftungs-Constatirung durch Experten in manchen Fällen ihre schuld beweisende Kraft nimmt. Leichen, die nur zu deutlich die Verbrechensspuren zeigten, wurden von den Mördern oder ihren Mitschuldigen und Theilnehmern wohl immer jeder Bestattung entzogen, und solche in Schlupfwinkeln versteckte oder vergrabene Leichen werden immer, auch wenn die Bestattungsart durch Beerdigung nicht mehr ausschließlich geübt würde, durch Zufall oder Nachforschung ein Substrat wichtiger sachmännischer Untersuchung werden.

²⁷⁾ Siehe Fundbericht und Gutachten über die Todesart zweier in ihrem abgebrannten Hause aufgefundenen Eheleute von Dr. Haugl in Henke's Zeitschrift 33, pag. 276.

²⁸⁾ Siehe Grüner, welcher mit Rücksicht auf die Lungenprobe constatirt, daß die Lunge am spätesten von der Fäulniß ergriffen werde — und Pfister's merkwürdige Criminalfälle, Bd. II, Nr. III, pag. 73, neues Archiv des Criminalrechtes, Bd. II, pag. 313, dann Dr. Krämer's Mittheilung in Henke's Zeitschrift, Bd. VIII, pag. 401.

²⁹⁾ Sehr aufklärend ist in dieser Beziehung der in den Mittheilungen des ärztlichen Vereines in Wien vom 2. März 1874, III. Bd., Nr. 4, S. 49 veröffentlichte Vortrag des k. k. Sanitätsrathes Dr. J. Nowak: „Welche Mengen genügen zur Erkennung von Strichnium und Atropin?“

Die Nachahmung der vorgeschlagenen und allerdings sehr gründlichen Bestattung mittelst Verbrennung durch Mörder ist wohl nicht unmöglich, aber immerhin in der der Schandthat nothwendigen Heimlichkeit und ohne besondere Voranstalten nicht leicht durchzuführen.

So viel steht nach einer aus Sammlungen von Criminalfällen und den Beobachtungen der Sachkundigen geschöpften Erfahrung immerhin fest, daß die durch die Beerdigung ³⁰⁾ der Leichen bedingte Exhumirung unter Umständen und in manchen Fällen eine große Bedeutung für den Strafproceß habe und durch kein Surrogat (auch nicht durch eine strengere Leichenschau) ersetzt werden könne.

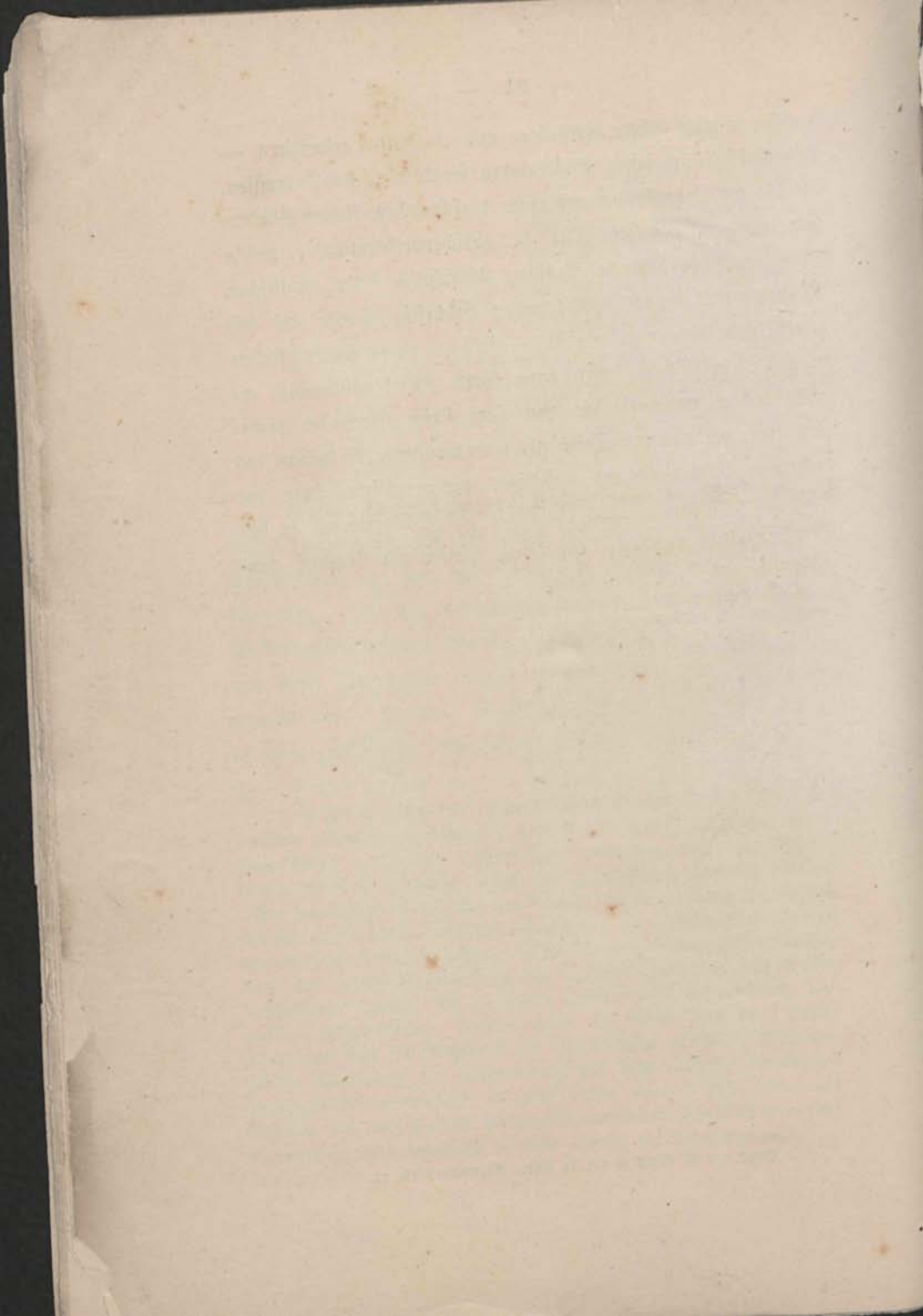
Die Statistik kann zur Lösung der Frage nach der Wichtigkeit und Nützlichkeit erst nach der Beerdigung gefolgter Obductionen für den Strafproceß nichts beitragen; wie bei allen ganz neu auftauchenden Fragen kann die Statistik wohl der neuen Frage ein Blatt eröffnen, aber sie kann nicht jetzt schon mit Aufzeichnungen dienen.

³⁰⁾ Insbesondere im **nicht** einbalsamirten Zustande. Die gesetzlich gestattete Einbalsamirung conservirt wohl die Leichen, ist aber wegen Entfernung der Eingeweide und der Injicirung von conservirenden Stoffen der Erhaltung von Spuren des zur Zeit der Section und Einbalsamirung noch ungeahnten Verbrechens sehr ungünstig.

Welche Beifügungen und Aenderungen diese Ausführungen und Bemerkungen, die sich gemäß der Natur des behandelten Gegenstandes auf den rein juristischen Gesichtskreis nicht beschränkten, von den competenten Fachmännern der berührten Wissensgebiete erfahren können, — welche Schlussfolgerungen ferner aus dieser skizzenhaften compilatorischen Studie für eine Frage gezogen werden können, in welcher vielleicht hygienische³¹⁾ und criminal = polizeiliche Rücksichten einander balanciren und in

³¹⁾ In Nr. 22 der „Medicinisches Wochenchrift“ (1874) beleuchtet nunmehr Sanitätsrath Dr. A. Witslaczil die Gesundheitsgefährlichkeit der in der hochgelegenen westlichen Umgebung Wiens bisher situirten Friedhöfe, betont die Zukunftsgefahren der nun im Osten angelegten Todtenstadt und schließt mit den Worten: „Werden wir also unsere Todten nunmehr verbrennen? Ich glaube nicht, aber es wird ganz gewiß die Zeit kommen, in welcher man es thun wird. Die Anträge auf facultative Zulassung der Leichenverbrennung sind bereits vorbereitende Schritte für die allein ihrem Zwecke entsprechende der einstige obligatorische. Anders wird die Sache auf dem Lande stehen, dort sind die Nachtheile des Begräbnisses weniger fühlbar und ist die Einführung der Verbrennung mit weit größeren finanziellen Schwierigkeiten verbunden; es wird daher eines langen Zeitraumes bedürfen, bis auch dort die Leichenverbrennung zur Thatsache geworden ist, wenn sie dort überhaupt je ohne Zwang zur Thatsache wird.“

welcher so viele andere Rücksichten und Interessen coincidiren, — das überlasse ich jener gründlicheren Ventilirung und Discussion, die die am Gedankenhorizont einer verschwindend kleinen Minderheit neu aufgetauchte Idee der Leichenverbrennung, welche Idee einer vorsichtigen Prüfung hinsichtlich ihrer praktischen Ausführbarkeit in vielen Richtungen bedürftig, aber an sich gewiß nicht vernunftwidrig ist — früher oder später finden wird. Diese Studie wird dann ihren Zweck vollkommen erreicht haben, wenn sie die von einer Seite überhastet protegirte, von der anderen Seite als eine monströse Ausgeburt des modernen Materialismus unbedingt perhorrescirte Idee der Leichenverbrennung — aus der Phase des Schlagwortes in das Stadium einer ruhigen, objectiven, vielseitigen Prüfung hinüberleiten hilft.



Blumenbach, J. F., Nova pentas collectionis suae craniorum diversarum gentium tamquam complementum priorum decadam.

Diese Ergänzung des berühmten Decaden-Werkes wurde nach dem Tode des Verfassers herausgegeben von Dr. med. H. v. Söhring in Göttingen. — Mit 5 Abbildungen. 4^o 1873. geh. 3 fl. — 2 Thlr.

Commentar

zur

österreichischen Pharmacopoe.

Ein Handbuch

Apotheker, Sanitätsbeamte und Aerzte,
mit Rücksicht auf die wichtigsten

Pharmacopoeen des Auslandes

Dr. F. C. Schneider,
o. ö. Professor am I. I. Josephinum,

bearbeitet von
und

Dr. Aug. Vogl,
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Ueber den Commentar zur österr. Pharmacopoe sind zahlreiche Recensionen, welche das Werk im günstigsten Sinne beurtheilen, erschienen, und erlauben wir uns die eine des Med.-Mathes Prof. Dr. Wiggers aus dessen Jahresbericht über die Fortschritte der Pharmacognosie u. ganz besonders hervorzuheben:

„Auch in specieller Beziehung haben beide Herren Verfasser ihre Arbeiten so befriedigend und erfolgreich ausgeführt, daß der ganze Commentar keiner besonderen Empfehlung bedarf, sondern daß sich derselbe selbst schon nicht nur allgemein in der ganzen österreichischen Monarchie, sondern auch über die Grenzen derselben hinaus einen Weg bahnen wird. Der Text ist flüssig, bündig und klar, überall auch da, wo es nöthig und wünschenswerth erschien, durch treffliche Holzschnitte noch versinnlicht u. u.“



THE DISPOSAL OF OUR DEAD.

The theme I have chosen for this discourse is one that has already taken a strong hold on the public mind, and is destined to be fully discussed in its various aspects: I mean the substitution of burning for burial; the adoption of fire, in the place of earth, as the power that shall decompose our bodies—reducing ashes to ashes, instead of dust to dust. The practice, though it has fallen into disuse and become unpopular, is as old as any, and as honorable. The discussion of it in modern times is not new; in Europe, at least, the idea has become familiar. It is favorably entertained by people of opposite cast of mind; by men of science, and men of religion; means have been perfected for making the idea an institution; and the ancient custom has been actually, in some countries, in essence, though not in form, revived. The sudden interest excited abroad and at home in the question, is due not to any love of novelty or desire for change; it comes from the side, neither of an excessive spiritualism nor of an excessive materialism; but is rather another phase of the interest in the

whole welfare of the living that is now engaging so much earnest thought. The care of men and women is characteristic of our time; it addresses itself to every department of life. It appears in better provisions for physical health; in thoughtfulness for the rearing and nurture of children; in the study of sanitary science, in improved methods of regulating cities; in solicitude for the housing and distribution of families; in short, in every kind of concern for temporal comfort. The subject of cremation falls immediately in the line of these discussions. It is a subject that is felt to be of vital moment to the living; and, by those who have the well-being of the living at heart, is to be approached in an earnest and serious spirit, for it is a subject that concerns us as human beings—not as adherents of a peculiar faith, or members of a particular church, or believers in a special creed. The movement in favor of cremation is not an infidel or pagan movement, but one in which a bishop may feel as deep an interest as a rationalist; a devotee as a doctor; a minister as a materialist; the most delicate and poetic, as the coarsest and most prosaic mind. Its significance is in its simple humanity.

Christendom borrowed, or rather inherited its custom of interring the dead, from the Hebrews, with whom it was universal. The burning of the dead is

scarcely mentioned in the Old Testament. But one case is spoken of in which bodies were actually burned—the case of Saul and his sons; but the narrative is not clear, and the instance was clearly an exception to a general rule. The burning there, moreover, was but partial, for the rites of sepulture were afterwards performed on the bones. Jacob and Joseph were embalmed, after the Egyptian fashion, for their more complete preservation. The care which Abraham took to purchase a plot of ground in Macpelah, as a family burial-place, was continued by his descendants. The tenderest feelings gathered around the family tomb. To be gathered to one's fathers was the familiar phrase applied to death. To remain unburied was revolting to the Jewish mind. It was the last misfortune. Even executed criminals were not allowed to remain unburied after sunset of the day of their execution. No doubt the dread of infection had its share in suggesting such an enactment—a danger at times so great, that, at least on one occasion, relatives were bidden to burn their dead to escape from it. The Hebrew burial-places were sacred. They were usually outside of the cities—only kings and prophets being honored with interment within the walls. The graves were commonly caves or grottoes, situated in shady, cool retreats, surrounded by trees. The suggestion for our

ornamental cemeteries may well have been derived from the usage of the ancient Hebrews, whose burial-places were often gardens. The graves were either dug, as ours are, in the earth, or hewn out in the side of a rock; in either case carefully guarded against spoliation. The tombs were often costly and magnificent—splendid mausoleums not unfrequently—with many chambers, where each person might lie, in his own separate niche, and so preserve individuality in death. Reverence for the dead body was profound.

The custom of interment did not rest solely in private or social feeling. There was an idea in it: the idea that the body contained, in some sense, the soul; and that its burial was somehow a guarantee of the soul's peace. This idea was spread widely throughout the ancient world. Primitive rites of interment indicated plainly that, when a body was buried, something living was supposed to be buried with it. The expression: "We enclose the soul in the grave;" the custom of calling thrice on the soul of the deceased person; the wish that he might live happy in his abode under the ground; the three farewells; the writing of the name on the tomb; the habit of burying with the body vestments, utensils, arms; of bringing food and wine to the sepulchre at stated seasons—all suggest that the soul was believed to remain with the body in the subterranean abode.

The body being unburied, the soul was not at rest, but hovered sadly about the lifeless form, or wandered, an unhappy spirit, or a malignant demon, tormenting the living with diseases, bringing misfortune on them, terrifying them as spectres—now pleading, now threatening, if by any means it might obtain sepulture. Hence the universal anxiety respecting burial; the directions given concerning it; the care that it should be done properly; the solemnity of the duty that was devolved on relatives and friends in regard to the last funeral rites. Hence the desperate efforts to rescue the bodies of chiefs slain in battle, that their souls might have rest in the sacred earth, instead of roving in sadness, as they must, if the bodies fell into the enemy's hands, and were left a prey to vultures and jackals. It seems to have been the earliest opinion that men lived in the tomb; that souls did not leave bodies, but stayed fixed to that piece of ground where the bones were interred.

This belief prevailed, and may be distinctly found, with certain tribes of North America. The evidence of such a belief cannot be detailed here, and need not be, if it could; for the bare indication of it is enough for my purpose. But evidence there is to show that the aborigines of this continent did, here and there, hold the doctrine, in a clear and emphatic form, that the soul would return to the bones; that the bones

would once more take on the covering of flesh; and that thus the man would rejoin his tribe. Language was employed very similar to that used by Paul, in the famous chapter of I. Corinthians. The bodies of the dead were spoken of as seeds, which, planted in the earth, or preserved safely in sheltered places, would in time germinate into living beings. In some dialects, the word for bone and the word for soul are essentially the same; the word for soul literally denoted "that which is within the bone." The same doctrine was applied to the bones of animals. (Brinton's "Myths of the New World," p. 254, &c.)

A belief not remotely akin to this may be found in the Old Testament. From the beginning, the Hebrews closely associated the soul with the body; and even when the notion of an under world for departed spirits, as distinct from the grave, had become well developed, the body was not left out of the account in the anticipation of a future state. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of the dead bodies of Israel's enemies, cries exultingly: "They are bodies that shall not rise again; shadows that shall not reappear; *thy* bodies (oh, Israel!) shall revive: the corpses of my own people shall be restored." The vision of the valley of dry bones, in Ezekiel, implies the same faith. Daniel, in plain words, announces a time when "many of those that sleep in the dust

the earth shall awake—some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Such representations prove sufficiently that belief in a resurrection of the dead, and a reunion of souls with their former bodies, and a continuance of the old human life on a new earth, was widely spread among the people. In the story of the Maccabees, the faith comes out with startling prominence. The heroes, mutilated and dying, console themselves and cheer one another by the thought that the members the tormenters had wrenched off would be restored to them at the last day; and the writer of the book solemnly ratifies the expression of such a hope. The Pharisaic belief in a resurrection involved, as one of its chief features, the revival, in some shape, of the form. The later rabbins refined on the idea; some of them surmising that, in a particular bone, the “ossiculum luz,” lay the germ of the future body, which, at the proper time, would appear in health and beauty, like the plant from its seed. Through Paul—who was a Pharisee, and who taught the resurrection of a spiritual form from the carnal body, which could not, itself, enter the kingdom of heaven—the doctrine passed over to the Christian Church, where it became domesticated, and has found an abiding-place ever since.

On such a basis as this that I have described rests

the practice of burying the dead. Thus deeply is the custom rooted in natural feeling, reverence, and faith. Thus dear is it through long experience and pious hope; thus closely wrought into the texture of the human mind. Lovely sentiments were associated with it. The buried dead seemed to preserve their identity after their decease; to the survivors they were still real as persons—palpable forms yet, although temporarily removed from sight. The dead had abodes; they were a company, a commonwealth; the cemetery was an underground city. The living lingered lovingly about the place where the departed lay; they fixed themselves in the neighborhood, made permanent homes, formed strong attachments to the soil, cultivated the spirit of permanence, and knit their communities together by steadfast clamps of association. To the practice of interment may be due, in a considerable degree, the solidity and persistency of the people, who would endure anything rather than leave or be driven away from their dead, whom they could not carry with them to other lands.

How sweet, too, the sentiment of rest that was associated with the grave where the beloved one lay! It is wonderfully expressed in Job. "Why died I not on issuing from the womb? For now should I have lain still and been quiet; I should have slept; I should have been at rest with kings and

counsellors of the earth; with princes that had gold and filled their houses with silver. There the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners repose together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there; the servant is free from his master." These pathetic words come to us now whenever we think of the still forms that lie so peacefully beneath the monument or the sod, sleeping their unbroken sleep "after life's fitful fever." We know, on reflection, that this is illusion. We know that there is no stillness in the grave; that Nature, which never rests, and allows no rest to organized or unorganized thing—Nature, which abhors rest, respecting not even the dread repose of death, seizes at once the cast-off body, and with occult chemistry and slow burning decomposes and consumes it. But the ancients did not know this as we do. That the body, left above ground, decayed, they perceived; and, to prevent the effect of it, would even resort to burning on occasion; but of all that went on beneath the ground they were not aware. They could not, therefore, be sensible, as we are, of the serious perils that were involved in their practice. That it endangered the health of the living they never conjectured. They did not care so much for the living—that is, for the masses of the living, as we do; they were not

such nice observers of cause and effect either; if the calamity fell, they did not trace it to that quarter; if the ravage came, that practice was not held responsible. The land was nowhere so thickly populated that room for interment could not be obtained in the vicinity of human dwellings; or, if it was, intramural sepulture was not regarded as dangerous. It was not suspected that the pestilence that walked abroad at noon-day, and the arrow that flew by night, proceeded from those sacred receptacles where they had so carefully, and with such tender ceremony, deposited the remains of their friends.

But all this we see, and cannot be blind to. The eager science of our century, exploring the secret places of the earth and air, analyzing all substances, and resolving the elements into finer elements, detecting the trail of the imponderable gases, and following the windings of invisible currents of movement, has brought to noon-day light the astounding fact that the dead are persecutors of the living, not as haunting spectres, but as mouldering forms. Yet there is no room to doubt that men and women who have been healers and comforters during life, may be destroyers and saddeners after death; that they who were living benedictions may be dead curses; that they whose presence sweetened the air, whose breath was an aroma, became poisoners on leaving the earth.

the grave, which their friends think of so tenderly, visit so piously, mourn over so sincerely, ponder upon so tranquilly, being, in fact, a laboratory where are manufactured the poisons that waste the fair places of existence, and very likely smite to the heart their own lovers. It is now demonstrated, the fact is attested by scientific observers and corroborated by medical testimony of unquestionable value, that the common practice of interring the dead is positively pernicious to the living. Were this the place to detail the evidence or give the testimonies at length, it would be easy to quote authorities from works within reach of all who can read. But now there is time only to say, in general terms, that the revelations made on this subject are of a nature to awaken serious reflection on the practice which, from old association, has become so dear to us, and to suggest a duty, on the part of true religion, to desist from a custom which the old religions sanctioned. There are many who feel that it is a case of religion against religion; religion enlightened by knowledge and sweetened by humanity, against a religion clothed in an ignorance that could not be put off, and associated with rites that could not be dispensed with.

Thirty years ago a systematic examination of the graveyards of London, made by well-known and trustworthy persons, disclosed a state of things that smote

the public with horror. People learned to shudder at the pretty green spots they had thought so pleasant to the eye. There was a strong feeling of objection to intramural interments, which found its way to America. Acts of Parliament were passed prohibiting it. What could be done was done to stay an evil, by putting the worst of the abominations away. Vaults were sealed ; in some instances the dead were removed and carried off to a considerable distance. But such removal, while it relieved a locality, did not abolish a process. The same thing went on outside of the city that went on within it. An evil was removed, but was not exterminated. Air was still poisoned, though it was not the air which thousands of human creatures breathed ; water was still tainted, though not the water which thousands of human creatures drank ; soil was filled with noxious vapors, though not the soil on which thousands of people built their habitations. Those mural cemeteries were once in the fields till the houses crowded upon them ; these cemeteries in the fields will one day be in cities, when the exigencies of the growing population shall have filled up the intervening space between them and the village border. If intramural interment is dangerous, all interments are dangerous ; for that which makes them palpably unsafe in the one case, and apparently innocent in the other, is merely the circumstance of being in their

neighborhood or not; a variable circumstance that has no solid or permanent weight, and never could have unless a safety line could be clearly drawn, and a complete seclusion effected from the approach of all deleterious influence.

But to effect such complete seclusion as would answer the purpose is practically impossible. The air is never still above the city of the dead, but like other air is set in motion by natural causes, and spreads its health-giving or disease-breeding elements abroad over wide reaches of territory. The springs of water, and currents from distant hills and rivulets formed by the falling of the summer's rain or the melting of the winter's snow, obey the law that governs all fluid bodies, trickle in directions that nobody knows of, and mingle with the streams that quench the thirst of villages and supply the need of cities. The water we drink and the air we breathe have histories that none can recite, and are employed in offices that none can question; and this being so, there is wisdom in doing what we can to make the history a pleasant one and the function blameless.

The earth is a powerful disinfectant, but it may be overworked. The London Report, before alluded to, contains this remarkable sentence: "We may safely rest the sanitary part of the case on the single fact, that the placing of the dead body in a grave, and

covering it with a few feet of earth, does not prevent the gases generated by decomposition from permeating the surrounding soil and escaping into the air above and the water beneath." Trustworthy authority is quoted to show that the absorbent qualities of the soil are, at present, not always sufficient to discharge deleterious gases of their noxious effect.

Researches into the composition of soil and water in different localities make it abundantly evident that emanations from the ground, striking upward and downward, are vigorous causes of disease and death; low, malignant fevers, dysentery, cholera, have here their source. In places and periods of more than usual mortality these causes are found to be active. We hear of this continually from boards of health and medical inspectors, whose business it is to watch over the sanitary conditions of our cities, to warn people against the perils of insufficient drainage, neglected garbage, and impure atmosphere. It is only another cry from the same voice that would put us on our guard against another unsuspected source of mischief.

This is the strong point against interment, and it is a point strong enough to overbalance many lesser arguments on the other side. There are other points that deserve consideration. The English economist, for example, objects to the ceaseless waste of an important natural fertilizer, which, under the existing cus-

tom, is sequestered from use, thus entailing a direct expense by its loss, and imposing another expense by the necessity of importing a substitute, in the very same form as that which was squandered ("Popular Science Monthly," March, 1874, p. 597); a consideration that looks light enough when mentioned in general terms, but which, when fairly taken in pieces and weighed, has great force—in an old country like England, immense force. The economist objects against the cost of interment to the poor in all cities and large towns. They must purchase land, keep it in order, employ men to prepare the receptacle for their dead, transport them no small distance thither, and, if they wish to mark the place with a suitable memorial, take from their scanty income the means necessary to do it. This objection has little weight now in country villages and small towns, where the land is cheap and the open fields are within easy reach; but in great cities like New York the tax, as I have reason to know, presses heavily already on people of moderate means who wish to preserve their self-respect and perform what the customs of society require. Every clergyman knows that the tax on such as these is serious, and cannot be paid without encroaching on the provisions for comfortable subsistence.

But this is not the point I would urge here. The prime consideration is that of the public health, and they must

be very momentous arguments that can countervail this. No sentimental or religious considerations can be fairly urged, for the healthy sentiment is ever the noblest sentiment, and every form of religion must give way to the religion that consults human weal. The religion that is satisfied to make or keep the earth a graveyard in face of all consequences, is not for these times.

There is but one method of disposing of the dead that is not open to similar objections, or to others almost equally weighty, peculiar to itself: that is the removal of them by fire. The practice of burning the dead does not, as I have said, yield in antiquity or in honorableness to the one we adopt. It is found among people in all respects as intelligent, refined, and worshipful as any. It is associated with feelings of the noblest kind, with veneration and tenderness, and regard to moral obligations. This practice, too, has an idea at the centre of it; a religious idea, and, curiously, an idea intimately connected with that of immortality. It is the fashion to call cremation a pagan custom; and so it is; but it must be remembered that the whole ancient world was pagan, in the usual sense of the word; and that, in their day, the pagans were the greatest people on earth. If pagans burned, pagans buried too: the worst of pagans buried; so that if there is any reproach in the paganism it must be shared by the custom of interment.

The practice of burning the dead was sacred with people who, in the sun, the central fire, the glowing source of life, the visible lord of creation, saw the emblem of the Supreme Being. Fire was the holy element, spiritual, pure at once and purifying. These people kept the sacred fire always burning in their temples and their houses. It was divine; they worshipped it; they ascribed power to it—power to bestow health and happiness. They prayed to it, the eternal, the ever young, the ever beautiful, the universal nourisher and bestower of good. We find this worship throughout the East—in India, Greece, Italy. It dates back to the time when there were no Italians, Greeks, or Indians; before the tribes that came from Central Asia separated into groups of nations. How it came to the Continent of America will never, probably, be known. But on the Continent of America it has been found, and wherever found it has been in connection with the custom of burning the dead. (Brinton, p. 144.) This was a privilege commonly reserved for the few, the priests and the nobles, who were destined not to rot in the ground like the vulgar herd, but to mount aloft to immortality on the wings of flame. Not to be burned was the sign of humiliation; not to be burned was to be condemned to transformation into some bestial form. Fire meant life, and to be taken up by

fire was to be lifted to the higher regions of life. The fire consumed only what must die; it sublimated and purified everything that could not. The soul being formless, the destruction of the body did not compromise its identity. Rather the consumption of the body by the immortal flame rendered the spirit wholly free to assume a new environment, and fashion its own form from the elements furnished by its new conditions of existence.

Christians object to cremation that it destroys the soul's tabernacle, and thwarts the hope of personal resurrection. How can the form revive after such a process? A moment's reflection suggests that, as nothing less than a miracle of Almighty power will avail to restore the form that has been dissipated into vapors by the chemistry of the soil, the same exertion of power will avail to restore it when it has been dissipated by the action of flame. To recover a shape from a heap of ashes can be no more difficult than to recover it from a mound of dust. The slow burning in the earth is as fatal to identity as the swift burning in the fire. The final result is as imponderable. If there be somewhere within the frame a spiritual form which disengages itself at death, or if, in some deep recess of it, there be an infinitesimal germ of life from which the spiritual man shall spring, fire could no more injure it than earth. It must, from its