

## **Cremation considered in reference to the Resurrection / by a truth-seeker.**

### **Contributors**

Grindon, Leo H. 1818-1904.  
Royal College of Surgeons of England

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# CREMATION

CONSIDERED IN REFERENCE TO

## THE RESURRECTION.



BY A TRUTH-SEEKER.

JAMES SPEIRS,  
36 BLOOMSBURY STREET, LONDON.

1874

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## Cremation and the Resurrection.

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WHETHER from considerations of expediency or of the health of the human community, it is better that the remains of the deceased should be buried or burned, I do not propose to discuss. With many, the question is immutably decided already on the ground of sentiment;—with others, burial is deemed an item of orthodox Christianity;—in the famous treatise by Sir Henry Thompson, cremation is dealt with upon its merits, or as a matter of social economy—whatever may be thought by my fellow-believers in the Resurrection, if they find comfort in their belief, by all means let them cleave to it. I seek to influence no one as to what is best to be done with the remains of the departed, nor do I express any opinion of my own. My sole object in these pages is to show after what manner the great and solemn doctrine of the Resurrection stands affected.

When pious and learned men are found espousing opposite views, and supplying substantial reasons for what they believe to be best, it is but fair, however, to look the matter full in the face. Premature condemnation is the conduct only of ignorant prejudice; strongly as a man may feel opposed to a given doctrine or suggestion, if he be honest and sincere, he is always willing to give it an impartial hearing, since it is only by inquiring of both sides that the essential truth can be got at and secured. I could not possibly respect an advocate for “Christian burial” who refused to listen to the arguments for

cremation ; nor could I possibly respect an advocate for burning who did not look with kindly feeling on the established preferences of Englishmen for the coffin. Each method of disposing of the relics of those we have known in life has its advantages. Each has been regarded, and is still regarded, and will probably always be regarded, by individuals, and perhaps by whole communities, with horror. Of this, as of the former, there can be no doubt ; so that upon neither side must custom or natural tendency be employed as an argument ; —the blade will be found to be two-edged. At no period, again, of the world's history, has either method been universal among mankind, not even among the nations rather arrogantly termed the "civilized" ones ; and except for its having been the local and current practice, each would probably have been departed from even more frequently than is well-known to have been the case. Among the nations of antiquity, of whose usages we have any authentic written memorials, interment was unquestionably a very common practice. In ancient Sparta, according to Thucydides, no other mode of dealing with the dead was ever in vogue. The same author alludes to coffins constructed of cypress-wood. The sarcophagi now so much valued by antiquaries were expressly designed to hold the bodies of the deceased. The familiar saying, "One foot in the grave, and the other out of it," had its origin with the ancient Greeks. The embalming of corpses by the ancient Egyptians, whereby the remains were converted into mummies, and the subsequent deposition of them in catacombs or cemeteries, was virtually and practically the same as burial. The classical poets, as well as the prose-writers, have many an allusion to the same, often exquisitely tender, as for example in the tragedies of Sophocles. That the body of a friend should remain unburied was esteemed the most sorrowful of misfortunes. Affection strove at all hazards to scatter if it were only a few handfuls of earth upon the loved remains. Probably, moreover, interment was the elder

practice. It is unquestionably the earliest mode mentioned in history—we may at all events fall back upon the Old Testament accounts of the death and burial of Abraham and the patriarchs.

But, on the other hand, the practice of burning dates also from immemorial antiquity, and received, in ancient times, very extensive and sustained approval. With the Greeks, at the time of the Trojan war, it was the established method, and so thoroughly did it come to be identified with their general usages, that when Lucian enumerates the various methods employed by different nations, while he expressly assigns interment to the Persians, he represents burning as the custom of the Greeks. Socrates speaks of both customs, and clearly regarded it as a matter of indifference whether an indestructible soul should have its earthly abode burned or buried. Other philosophers espoused one idea or the contrary, according to the school of doctrine they belonged to,—those who regarded the human framework as a compound of the “four elements,” fire, air, earth, and water, inclining to burial; while those who regarded fire alone as nature’s first principle, naturally viewed cremation as the most consistent. The reason they assigned for preferring cremation was at all events a pious one. It was considered that the soul, being separated by the combustion of the gross terrestrial matter which had encumbered it during its time-life, was set free to take its flight towards the heavenly mansions. For however convenient it may be to certain modern disputants to deny that the pagan ancients believed in immortality, and in a future state of rewards and punishments, simply because the complexion of the heavenly world as they thought of it was poor and weak compared with that of the Christian’s heaven;—however convenient it may be to do so, that the ancients really and truly understood in their inmost hearts that there is a life awaiting every one beyond the grave, is perfectly certain. Individuals

no doubt were unbelievers in a future state ; there are plenty at this very moment who profess to be the same ; but ignore it as much as they may, in conceited and foolish words, spoken while in health, they acknowledge it in their fears, and on their death-beds. It was upon the very same ground as that which led the ancient Greeks in certain instances to prefer combustion, as the readiest means of liberating the soul, that the Brahmans of ancient India introduced the practice of cremation upon the "funeral pile,"—often foolishly thought and spoken of as an institution purely Hindoo ;—they considered that by resorting to it they would so much the sooner find themselves dwellers in the Better Land. Numberless illustrations of what has been stated might be quoted from the literature of twenty to thirty centuries ago, old Homer leading the way, in his magnificent description of the burning of the remains of Patroclus. It is needless however to adduce what every one who can read may find in a few moments for himself. Suffice it to say, that with the ancient Greeks, when the funeral pile was wholly consumed, and the flames were extinguished, the embers were cooled with wine, and the bones and ashes then collected, care being taken not to disturb the innermost centre of the heap of residue, where, from the position in which the corpse had been laid, it was reasonable to suppose that the *bonâ fide* ashes would be concentrated. The ashes were then placed in some kind of urn, stone, earth, brazen, silver, or gold, according to the wealth and taste of the relatives, and the social status of the deceased, the urn itself being put where it was easy of access, without being actually in the house. Let it not be supposed that the Greeks and the Hindoos were the only ancient nations who burned their dead. The practice extended, in primitive times, far into the western parts of Europe, having existed with the Celts, the ancient Gauls, the primitive Germans, and the Scandinavians. We must not forget either that it was by no means foreign to the usages of the Hebrews in the Old Testa-

ment times, the body of the unfortunate Saul having been burned as an act of pious regard by the brave and grateful men of Jabesh, who subsequently buried the ashes beneath the boughs of a tree; while in Amos vi. 9, 10, cremation is expressly commanded as right and proper in times of pestilence. This of course is a recognition of the principle that to an immortal soul it is unimportant what is done with the "flesh and blood" it formerly occupied. That cremation was resorted to in the case of Saul on account of the sadly mutilated condition of the corpse is likely enough; and that the injunctions recorded by the prophet Amos had reference purely to the remains of those who died of an infectious disorder is not to be doubted. Let us be fair in all things, and seek not to make more of these two Old Testament facts than they really warrant. Fairness requires at the same moment, that those who look with horror upon cremation, and who regard it as altogether shocking, pagan, and unscriptural, should not forget that the Divine Wisdom which gave us the Bible, has put cremation before us as a thing by no means foreign to humanity, and certainly as in no way interfering with the Resurrection.

It must not be overlooked either that the idea of the burned ashes and of the urn holds a far more prominent place in men's associations with death and its adjuncts than does the coffin and consequent putrefaction. For when a sculptured emblem is wanted for a monument, the thing adopted, if it be not a weeping figure, or an angel, is a model of a Grecian urn. This of course is understood to supply a sort of picture of what has been done with the remains of the deceased; and of course just as far as cremation is from burial, the introduction of it is practically a falsehood and an imposture. It is placed on the monument, nevertheless, as if in a sort of tacit acknowledgment that although the body was buried, it ought by rights to have been burned. Christian consistency, to say the least, if it does not desire the marble to declare an untruth,



should place there, instead of the urn, a bas-relief of "worms," a skull with its belongings, in a state of decomposition, jaws without lips, horrible crawling things in the sockets where once were beautiful eyes.

Many people seem to think that the deposit of the dead in the earth is a Bible statute. Not at all. Scripture nowhere recommends or enjoins interment, though it is quite true that the most solemn of all obsequies the world has ever witnessed, or can ever possibly witness, consisted in laying the body of Him who died upon Calvary in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock. Neither can the idea of interment be identified, as many seem to suppose it is, with the foundation of the Christian religion, and therefore to be an integral part and parcel of it. The terrestrial body of our Lord was placed in a tomb, not because He was the Saviour, not because He was the Dayspring to the world of all that makes it worth while to exist; it was thus dealt with because burial was the usage of the time and place,—a usage, as we have already seen, dating back to the earliest periods of history, but still only *one* of the usages of mankind in regard to the disposal of the dead. It is not for man to talk of Divine motives; we may think, nevertheless, with reverent thankfulness, of the benignity which allowed the Crucifixion and the subsequent disposal of the Divine body to take place in a country where interment was in vogue, rather than the process observed in other countries, of cremation, since it allowed of a more palpable and conspicuous idea of the Resurrection being furnished, and for all time, to those of the human race whose minds are inapt for belief in spiritual things, and who must *see*, if it be only a picture or an effigy, before they will consent to believe. "Seeing is believing" is one of the most mischievous utterances that language has ever coined. It may be all very well to say so in regard to the lowest and meanest of temporal and secular affairs; but if seeing is to be the condition and ground of belief in regard to what is

noblest, and sweetest, most inspiring in the heyday of life, and most solacing when death approaches, then good-bye Truth, and farewell all philosophy and religion.

Some lay great stress upon burial having been the practice of the "early Christians." That it was so is quite true. It is true likewise that their pagan persecutors sought to dismay them out of their faith by causing the bodies of their dead to be burned, and the ashes to be cast into rivers. That such an argument should have had weight with those simple-minded people merely demonstrates how sunken these unfortunate "early Christians" were in materialism. Their reason for adopting burial was founded upon their fancy (a fancy built on misconception of the writings of St. Paul), that the Second Coming would be very speedy, and that their bodies would be scarcely decayed before they would be called upon to rise. Had they carefully read St. Paul, they would have perceived that the apostle gave them no sort of encouragement, since he states expressly that although sown "a natural body," the resurrection consists in the rising of "a spiritual body." The word "sown" of course refers, as no intelligent student of Scripture needs reminding, not to the laying of the dead body in a grave, but to the placing of the human frame in this present or temporal world, as a living tenement of the spiritual body, which in due time will rise or be raised out of it. Ask any gardener, and he will tell you that when he wants flowers he sows in his borders not dead *rejectamenta*, but living seeds. The world is one of the Divine gardens. God sows it with natural bodies, in order that spiritual ones shall be perfected for immortal existence. He never sows or puts anything in graves or churchyards; nor does He look to graves or churchyards, nor yet to the sea or to funeral piles, for the "spirits of good men made perfect." He looks only to the face of the earth, leaving to men to deal as they like with their animal residuum, to bury it or to burn it, as they list: enough is it for passport to heaven that the spiritual body has not barred its entrance thereto by sin.

Not only did the "early Christians" practise burial for the reason above stated. They were heretics and outlaws in the eyes of the existing governments, and as such, they would be only too glad to adopt a means of disposing of their dead which would not bring themselves under public observation. They were constrained to worship in private; their manners and customs were matters of ridicule and odium; they would be careful, we may be sure, to do as little as possible that would attract attention on the part of their persecutors, and when there was a corpse to be disposed of, doubt not but that they would go to the very opposite extreme of the publicity involved in cremation. Besides, good and pious people as they were, they belonged chiefly to the lower strata of society, and their poverty, compared with the wealth of the pagans, would naturally incline them to what was cheapest and readiest. With the progress of Christianity as a social institution, and the concurrent decline of paganism, no doubt burial gained in favour, while cremation gradually lost it and at last vanished. The total cessation of burning the dead dates, in western Europe, from the fifth century, or thereabouts; and at the same period it was, of course, that the practice of burial must be considered to have become established as a "Christian" one. In the fifth century, it is needless to say, Christianity, as an institution, was sunk in the very lowest depths of ignorance and barbarism it has ever known; so that interment, as a Christian usage, dates from the darkest, dreariest, and most unintelligent and most irreligious period in the history of that which in this current nineteenth century we reverence so profoundly and love so dearly. Cremation, in a word, went out, as a popular practice, just when thought, intellect, science, philosophy, the "beauty of holiness," and everything else that adorns the world, was in abeyance, beneath the rule of ignorance, war, cruelty, rapine and folly.

My purpose, however, as said at the outset, is not to

inquire into the merits of cremation ; nor yet to contend for the preferableness and the Christian propriety of interment ; nor yet to trace the history of the changes in men's ideas and practice. My object is to show, so far as I may be able, that regarding the matter from the logical, the philosophical, the Scriptural, and therefore the common-sense as well as Christian point of view, it is a matter of the profoundest unimportance whether a man, when he dies, be either buried or burned, or cast into the depths of the ocean. Therefore that to import theology into the question as to which is best, is quite beside the mark and the requirements. It is not religious creed which has to pronounce whether burning or burial is best, or right and proper ; the question must be decided upon grounds which are totally independent of "religion," though they may still be in perfect harmony with religion. As said before, I do not pretend even to examine them, still less to offer an opinion on what for my own part I regard with consummate indifference. As a matter of Sentiment,—mind, not of feeling, but of Sentiment, which is a very different thing, and as far below exalted Christian feeling as fancy is below taste ;—in England, no doubt, it is considered very important indeed, that a person's body should after death be placed in a grave, neatly, if not expensively enclosed, with decking of a wreath of flowers, etc. Sentiment, however, very generally translates itself into unmanly and unwomanly weakness, referable to defective education alike of head and heart ; so that, whatever its practices may claim on the score of universality, we may still be allowed to ask questions as to their consonance with what is wise. But then it is so widely diffused that the question as to the wisdom has no chance of a friendly hearing ; and constituted as English people are at the present moment, sentiment no doubt is likely to keep in the ascendant. Hereditary sentiment, in a word, intensified year by year, by reciprocal suffrages on every hand, has so long declared for interment, and

so oddly connects it with the Resurrection, with which it has nothing whatever to do, that it would be very remarkable indeed if in England there were anything but hostility to burning. That Sentiment supplies no argument for burial, or for cremation, or for submergence in the Atlantic, or for anything else, of course needs no effort to show. But it exists, and in favour of burial; and until prejudices become amenable to logic, of course it must needs continue to exist. And yet not so much perhaps, in favour of the interment of *one's-self* when dead, as in favour of other people when they die. Few sensible men or women would insist on the Christian importance of their being let down with ropes into the ground as soon as deceased. Ninety-nine out of a hundred of the sensible would probably say it mattered nothing; but people are gratified in being able to render the "tender offices," etc., to those they have loved during life, and in this way, Sentiment, though it would be rejected as a rule for one's-self, still gets the upper hand, and everybody gets buried. Had Sentiment happened to be invited towards cremation instead of to burial, the condition of things would have been precisely analogous, and the notion of having one's wife, or parent, or child placed in the earth, would have become correspondingly repugnant. Neither course can be advocated in the face of Sentiment upholding the contrary; the latter is the feminine human element which, like echo, never surrenders. Simply and sufficiently because it is a mere sentiment, for a long time to come, burial will unquestionably prevail in England, and be confounded with the Resurrection. Yet one cannot but regard with pity an expression of sentiment which, though at first sight so pretty and so poetical, involves, when pressed home, so much that is exactly the reverse. Translated into the facts of the churchyard, modern English sentiment in regard to the disposal of the dead means simply this:—Let my darling turn into a foetid mass of crawling corruption; let the features

once so lovely and loveable become so ghastly and loathsome that my flesh creeps at the very thought ; let her become so foul, and hideous, and sickening, that a diseased dog shall be an angel in comparison. Don't pause, or hasten to conclude ; oh no, let all go on, slowly, slowly, in the way that pleases ghouls ;—to what end have we placed her in the grave, save that of slow conversion into blue and slimy putrescence ? Alas for sentiment, when below its wreaths and chaplets there is scenery like this ! One would almost think that a handful of pearly ash would do quite as well. Subject to no change, and secure in its little urn, from those harrowing sacrileges and exhumations which every day bring skulls and bones to the surface ; to say nothing of the desecrations that come of altering the lines of city-streets,—the relics of one's beloved would in any case be rendered by cremation not unpleasing, and sweet thoughts could be cast around them just the same. This, however, is for the people to discuss who care about it. I am content to feel that I myself, *in propria persona*, once out of the body I at present inhabit, shall have done with it wholly and for ever. It may seem more correct that the dissolution should be effected slowly, by nature, as men say ; rather than expeditiously, by an artificial or scientific process, but the final result is precisely the same ; the remains are resolved into their original elements or chemical constituents, never to be gathered together again into the same fabric, certainly not to be wanted again by the man or woman who once animated them, seeing that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven."

For it must needs be that the body of flesh and blood will never be wanted again if we consider who and what is man, and what is the resurrection. The doctrine of the resurrection, let us remember, is the very pivot of all rational and hopeful existence. It is the centre of wisdom and religion ; the best ally of common-sense that the world contains ;—weak and boneless indeed must be the conception of it, if i

be considered to be touched, even so distantly, by anything whatever that can ever happen upon earth. That it is affected, or may be affected, by certain human procedures, those of cremation, for instance, seems, nevertheless, to be feared by some, even by some among the "chief priests and the elders." What a sorrowful sentence they pronounce upon those whose bodies have been burned in days gone by! For if cremation hurtfully affects the resurrection at all, of course the deleterious influence has been operative in the ages and years gone by—not for a moment can it be supposed that the hurtfulness, if there be any, has not existed always. In that case the thirty-three poor creatures who were burned to ashes in the awful railway accident at Abergele in 1868, must have been shut out, by their mode of death, from the world to come; and the "noble army of martyrs," the exemplary Christians who were burned at the stake in the time of Queen Mary, must also be excluded from one's thoughts of the redeemed in Heaven. The simple truth of the matter, as with all other sound and unimpeachable Christian verities, lies in very small compass. So far from a man being ever either buried or burned, such a thing has not only never happened, but never can happen. And so far from natural death being a preliminary to the Resurrection, and in a certain sense the proximate cause and antecedent thereof; it is the Resurrection which induces death, and which comes first in chronological order. That mankind, imbedded in the material, should consider the exquisite fabric which is constituted of the skeleton, the muscles, the nerves, and so forth, and which we call the human body, to be the genuine and essential MAN, is very natural. Nothing else is visible; nothing else is tangible; and accepting the doctrine of a future state, the reconstruction of the old fabric, the putting it together again just as it used to be, seems the only way in which corporeity can be re-established, and a future state become capable of realization. But then the question

arises in the thoughtful mind, "Am I right in supposing that the body of flesh and blood which every morning I dress and feed, is after all really and truly *me*? It is *mine*, of course, but is it really and truly *ME*?" Every consideration, whether pertaining to religion, philosophy, or common-sense (the best certificate of which last is its identity with *uncommon sense*), declares that the body in itself is simply an instrument, actuated and governed as to its deeds by something within, higher and more excellent than flesh and blood, and which must therefore be the real and essential man. Some will reply, "We do not doubt it; we admit, of course, that the government lies with the soul or spirit." But when the nature of the soul is asked for, it is commonly adjudged to be simply a force, an energy, a motive power; which is contrary to all first principles. St. Paul tells us what the soul really is. "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." Not *there will be* a spiritual body, but *there is*. Every man and woman in the world, that is to say, is a twofold being, a dual or binary compound, consisting, on the one hand, of a body of flesh and blood; on the other, of a body composed of spiritual substance, the spiritual body inhabiting the material one just as thought and affection inhabit spoken words. Substance is by no means to be confounded with *matter*. Of the last-named there is only one description, namely, that with which our five bodily senses make us acquainted. Substance, on the other hand, is of *two* kinds. First, there is material substance, which is the same as "matter;" secondly, there is spiritual substance, and it is of this last-named that in our highest and inmost nature we are essentially constituted. Thought, emotion, hopes, wishes, fears, love, surprise, cannot pertain to a mere force or energy. They can only inhere in a substantial spiritual fabric, though employing, while in this present state of being, a material fabric for their outward communication. The soul or spirit, in a word, is a name for what St. Paul denominates the spiritual body, and this latter is the true and essential



man, who simply dwells in the fabric of flesh and blood, and by and by becomes dislodged from it. That man is thus constituted St. Paul is by no means the only one to testify. The existence of a spiritual fabric competent to continue its existence intact, and to go on as usual when it leaves the material one, is assured to us in many different ways. There is proof of it in the wonderful vision vouchsafed to the disciples when "their eyes were opened," and they beheld Moses and Elias, who, although in the heavenly or spiritual world, presented all the completeness of the human frame. Whatever may be misconceived as to the "translation" of the prophet, there is no reason to suppose otherwise than that Moses died in the way that every one else does; thus that the figure seen by the disciples, and recognized as the great Lawgiver, was purely and simply his spiritual self, the material body in which he had lodged while upon earth having gone to decay in the usual manner. They could not have been the material bodies, since we are told so decidedly that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. There is nothing left therefore but to accept this sublime disclosure as illustrative of the great fact that man is essentially a spiritual organism, and that what we call our body is simply an effigy of our veritable and immortal self. Another assurance of the independent reality and existence of the spiritual body is found in the universal intuition which has for its popular utterance the absurdities called "ghost-belief." Take care not to confound the two things. We have nothing to do here with the vulgar, ignorant, and disgusting side of belief in the spiritual body which introduces winding-sheets, spectres, sepulchral visages, and the adjuncts in general of the grave and the coffin. Ghost-belief has its pure and scriptural side as well as its corrupt one. Let conceited people laugh as they may, there is a solemn and serious truth in it, a truth which has lived in the minds of pious men in every age, and which has been associated, at the same time, with a profound conviction

that the spirits of the departed are subject to the laws of the Divine order;—that they are not idle visitors of the earth they have quitted, much less that they come at the summons of men who are still in the flesh; and that if their visits be ever permitted, it is through some special behest of the Divine Ruler, for some direct and definite purpose of His benevolent providence. Nothing is more foolish than to suppose that the spiritual frames of the deceased can or could ever become appreciable by the organs of our material or terrestrial senses. To see a ghost, or to listen to one, may possibly be allowed to man by the Divine Order, but even then the seeing and believing can only become practicable by the opening of adequate powers. Eyesight and hearing, as powers of the material body, are adapted only to the material world. To view spiritual forms, which belong to a different realm of creation, there are needed, as a matter of course, senses of quite another kind. We possess, no doubt, every one of us, spiritual sight. It is one of the prerogatives of the spiritual body. But during our time-life it is not wanted. It lies in abeyance, latent until the time shall arrive for us to lay down the body of flesh and blood. Then, standing free and independent in our spiritual reality, we shall become conscious of our possessions, and spiritual forms will be seen as plainly as at this moment we see material ones. It has pleased God, no doubt, to open men's spiritual eyes for a little while, even in this present life, but it has always been for great and holy purposes, including the intimation to ourselves that spiritual senses really exist. Take for instance the sweet and soul-stirring narrative of the events upon the eve of the Nativity, when the angels were allowed to be seen and heard by the shepherds, and which has been made the theme of one of England's dearest old hymns. Take again the account of what happened during Saul's journey to Damascus; and the incident in the life of Elisha when "the eyes of the young man were opened," and he saw,

with the prophet, how many were ready to help. This latter narrative is one of peculiar value to the Christian thinker, intimating, as it does, so beautifully, that whatever number of friends a good man may possess upon earth, visible to his material eyes, he has far more in the spiritual world, though for a while he is not able to see them.

Such then being the true nature of man, whose spiritual body is *himself*, while the material one is simply *his*, a thing merely owned, the proprietor having perfect liberty to do with it just what he pleases;—it follows that what we call “death” is to be compared simply to the burning down of a villa, to the wreck of a ship, or the demolition of a palace. The owner can no longer do with it, or do *in* it, what he was accustomed to do; he himself, however, remains—man himself *never dies*; nor does his consciousness of organic surroundings and phenomena probably cease for a single moment during the period of the change denominated death. It follows that a man is never buried, or burned, that he never has been, and never can be. It has pleased God to place us, you and me, our friends, acquaintances, and mankind in general, spiritual beings every one of us, on the surface of the earth, in order that we may qualify ourselves by comely, pious, and prayerful work for an exalted and permanent existence by and by, in the inner or spiritual world. Preparation for that higher and richer existence can only be accomplished, so far as we are allowed to perceive, by dwelling for a certain length of time in a material and perishable body. In due time, when the preparation is completed, or when, as in the case of infants and little children, Divine Wisdom has its own way of superseding the usual programme,—our Father in heaven calls us thither, to dwell consciously, that is, in the spiritual world, our consciousness of the material one becoming, as an inevitable consequence, completed and finished. This taking of our essential and veritable selves into consciousness of the spiritual world (in which we have dwelt in

reality all along, or ever since birth, but *unconsciously*),—this detaching of the spiritual or veritable man from his now-no-longer wanted body of flesh and blood, is essentially the Resurrection. The immediate result of it is the dissolution of the material body, which, left to itself, soon perishes, decomposing into its original chemical elements, and these last, taken up by vegetation and the atmosphere, go, all in good time, towards the manufacture of other material bodies, just as the types in a printing-office, after the book has been printed off, are first loosened from their temporary places, and then put together anew to make another and different book, perchance a poem, perchance a history. What the new book shall be matters nothing at all. The same types will serve for a thousand books, every one on a different subject. Each and every time they are marshalled they do their work, just as the atoms of oxygen, of carbon, of lime, and of phosphorus that went to the composition of certain of the primævals, are now comfortably located in you and me, and in our companions, some perhaps in potatoes, and others in palm-trees, in every case fulfilling their purposes; and when you and I no longer want such of them as have fallen to our own particular share, giving them notice to quit, by reason of our resurrection, they will similarly get distributed over again, and go to the composition of our children and the rest of the “coming race.” Men, therefore, do not “rise again” because they “die,” for they never die. They move, at the behest of God, out of their lodgings, into their home, and the sign that the change has been accomplished is that the lungs cease to breathe, while the heart ceases to beat. Solemn is the occurrence no doubt. But one thing is quite certain, viz. that God, in His infinite mercy and love, never calls men away from their material bodies till it is best for their eternal welfare that they should quit, nor does He leave them in the material world longer than may be good and useful on their behalf to the same end. He calls them, be it

early or late, just when they are ripest for abiding with Himself. The father of a family perhaps is called away, a man who is the pride, the solace, the support of his loving and beloved home-circle, and just when to appearance he is fulfilling his temporal duties most worthily and efficiently. Never mind : had he been left longer, we cannot tell how, but we may be sure that his heaven would have been less bright. Contrariwise the wicked often grow old in sins and iniquities, not only not mending, but to human eyes daily corrupting. Again, never mind. It is not for us to judge or wonder—God will never fail to punish ;—of that the wicked may again be quite certain ; but He, in whose hands are life and death alike, regulates it even in this case, by considerations of infinite mercy as well as of justice. It is not the wicked who always live to be old, any more than it is the good and pious who are always the ones to die early. How shocking when a man violently and unlawfully wrenches either himself, by the act of suicide, or another, by the act of murder, out of the body ! How frightful again when men precipitate the resurrection by means of sword and gunpowder ! Perhaps it is not far removed from deeds like these when men force their fellow-creatures into the spiritual world by Act of Parliament, calling their dreadful performance “judicial,” and the “last penalty of the law.” This, however, is irrelevant to the question. The idea cheerful to hold to, is that we shall remain in the flesh precisely as long as may be conducive to our eternal welfare, and not an hour or a minute longer ; that life will never be interrupted, no, not for a single day, and that we shall never either be buried or burned. When Socrates was about to die, “where,” said one of his friends, “shall we bury you ?” “Bury me !” was the wise reply,—“Bury me if you can catch me !” Socrates knew well enough that he should never die, and although a “heathen,” his language may be repeated by every Christian. “I shall never die. I shall never be buried. Bury me if you can

catch me!"—this is what all Christian men and women must needs say, and energetically think, if they read Scripture aright, and wish to liberate themselves from materialism,—the grossest of temporal errors, and which vitiates everything it touches. "Poor fellow," observe people, when somebody dies, "he is gone from the land of the living." What nonsense! The *other* is the land of the *living*—this present one is the land of the dying.

While, then, the practice of burial is no doubt deserving of the kindest consideration and respect, alike because of its antiquity and of people's sentiment in regard to this mode of disposing of human remains ;—consequently not to be lightly spoken of, and certainly not to be abandoned except under the pressure of immensely important social or sanitary considerations ;—the contrary course, or that of cremation, is not to be thought of as impious and irreligious, or as in the slightest degree affecting the Resurrection. Man is immortal in any case. In ancient times it was precisely those nations which were most thoroughly satisfied of the reality of a future state by whom cremation was practised ; and it is remarkable that they resorted to it on identically the same grounds as those which now rule in favour of interment, namely, the Sentimental ones. They burned the remains of their dead in order that they might retain in their possession the residue, slender no doubt, but fixed, pure, and unchangeable, of the forms once honoured and beloved, and that they might feel assured, at the same moment, that the relics would never be profaned or disturbed. Urns are certainly more picturesque than coffins, and tell their story quite as impressively as a well-filled vault. People won't miss their salvation should their bodies be incinerated any more than if put into the earth. If lost, it is through forgetting to fear God and to keep His commandments. Omnipotence asks no questions of mankind, and will give every man the resurrection whatever be the ending of his material frame. When the Church of

England Burial Service employs the words "In sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life," it refers, not, as many persons weakly imagine, to some sort of established connection between burial and salvation, belief in which is indispensable, they suppose, with all who claim to be "orthodox." The allusion is simply to the general fact of immortality;—it bears in no degree upon salvation, which depends solely upon the immutable laws of regeneration. If the doctrine of the resurrection is to stand or fall by the observance of burial or the contrary, then it remains only to remark, "So much the worse for the doctrine." Few, probably, of the people now living in England, will ever be called upon to decide which is best, but it may be well for every one to ask himself the question in some serious moment, "Is it better to be reduced rapidly to ashes, or to be nailed down in a wooden box, and left for worms to worry?"

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