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THE DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD:

A PLEA FOR

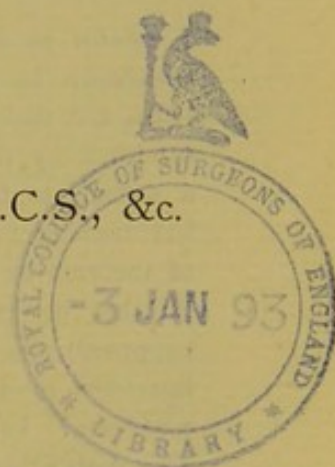
LEGISLATION,

AND A

PROTEST AGAINST CREMATION.

BY

FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN, F.R.C.S., &c.



"The natural destination of all organized bodies that have lived and that die on the earth's surface is the earth."—*Letter to the Times*, Jan. 12, 1875.

"Lay her i' the earth."

A PAPER READ AT THE CHURCH CONGRESS AT MANCHESTER,
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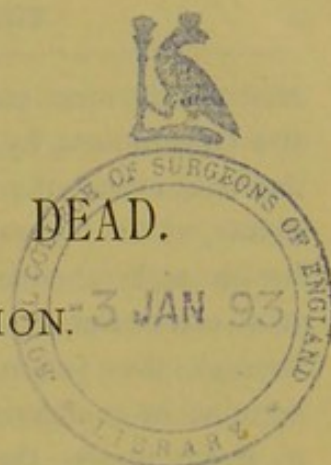
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POSTSCRIPT.

I LEARN at the moment of going to press that the Cremation Society has withdrawn its promise of making a *post-mortem* examination of every body it burns and that it is now satisfied with the usual certificate of the cause of death furnished by the practitioner in charge of the case, supplemented, however, by a second, to be given by a practitioner who, being called in after the death, has nothing to go by but the appearance of the body and such an account of the case as the practitioner in charge may choose, or be able, to give him. So that if the practitioner in charge be mistaken or deceived (as has often happened), or, like Dr. Cross, of Dublin, or Mr. Palmer, of Rugeley, is himself interested in deceiving the second comer, where is the security of this second certificate? I submit that such a certificate offers none of the security claimed for it. The destruction, therefore, by cremation, of all demonstrable evidence of the cause of death—of all such evidence, that is to say, as is only to be obtained by the exhumation of the body—is a danger to society, and an arbitrary act on the part of an irresponsible body of persons, which ought to be at once made the subject of competent investigation, and, if its dangerous character is recognized, to be declared illegal.

THE DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD.

A PLEA FOR LEGISLATION.



IN 1839, when the population of London was less by three millions than it is at present, Mr. Walker, a member of the profession to which I belong, drew attention to the over-crowded state of the City graveyards.* At that time every church in the City—I am now speaking of the City proper—had its graveyard in which burials had been going on uninterruptedly since the fire, and, as these churches were numerous and close together, it followed that no small portion of the City ground was in the permanent occupation of the dead. At that time, also, people who had business in the City lived there and shared with a dead population many times more numerous than themselves the soil they lived upon, the water they drank, and the air they breathed. The danger and discredit of this state of things Mr. Walker exposed and vigorously commented upon; reminded the inhabitants of the plague; and, pointing to the soil—if soil it could be called—which had become raised many feet by the accumulation within it of the human remains of two centuries, plainly told the Government that if it did not at once close those graveyards (he ought in my opinion to have insisted on their entire removal) a great national calamity—a second plague in fact—might be expected to occur. In 1843, Mr. Edwin Chadwick, in an exhaustive report† on the same subject, confirmed and ably seconded the representations of Mr. Walker; and, at length, in 1848, that is to say, five years after the issue of Mr. Chadwick's

* Walker on Graveyards. Longmans, 1839.

† Chadwick, Edwin, C.B., on Interment in Towns. W. Clowes, 1843.

report and nine years after the publication of Mr. Walker's book, the Government, by the machinery of a board of health created *pro hac vice*, closed the graveyards in question and forbade further interments within the walls. Then, in 1854, having dissolved the board of health and sanctioned the opening by joint stock companies of new cemeteries, it ceased all further action. Practically, therefore, beyond the fiction of forbidding intramural interments, and the opening of cemeteries outside the town to become in no long time as much inside the town as those they had abandoned, Government did nothing; while, so far as the recommendations of its own board went, many of them of great practical value and founded on evidence taken in all parts of Europe, and all pointing more or less to the absolute necessity for legislation, it disregarded them altogether. Given, the growth of a great living city, it seems to have taken for granted that a great dead city must, of necessity, grow up with it. In the City proper, the dead having shouldered out the living, the living left and went to live elsewhere. The inhabitants of the suburbs would have to do the same. The fault was in the great city. A generation would elapse before the new cemeteries would become full. The matter might therefore wait. But a generation did not elapse, or anything like a generation, before, the new cemeteries being already full, the whole question cropped up again. The living population having increased by three millions, the dead population increased two millions, and with this important condition attached to the latter fact, that, while the living died, the dead ~~did not, but~~ remained. And this was not all, because the tenure of the soil by the dead being permanent and the rate of their increase over the living in the ratio of two to one with each generation, the question of their disposal, then difficult enough, became out of all proportion more difficult as time went on. Meanwhile the problem to be solved was always spoken of as "over-crowding," and the only remedy suggested for it the repeated opening of new cemeteries.

It was under these circumstances that, in 1875—impatient of a position at once so helpless and so little creditable to us as a practical people, and scarcely less so of certain fanciful proposals which were just then being put forward for its correction—I ventured to advance the alter-

native recommendation of a simple reliance on the provisions and prescriptions of nature, and to promise as a return for such reliance a speedy extrication from all our difficulties. Fortified by the well-defined cosmical law, which provides for a return to the earth of all organized bodies that had lived and died upon its surface, I pointed out that by enclosing the bodies of the dead in hermetically sealed coffins we were vainly seeking to make them an exception to that law, and, by preventing their dissolution, were ourselves the cause of their embarrassing accumulation. Further, I showed that by the simple expedient of enclosing them in coffins which would not prevent the resolvent action of the earth—in coffins, that is to say, as perishable as themselves—we had it in our power, at any moment we pleased, if not wholly to undo the mischief we had done, at least to stay its progress, and to avert its ultimate consequences. Finally, I declared that if the dead were only thus properly buried, in from three to five, or at most seven years from the time of such proper burial, not a single dead body would remain to infect the soil, and a quantity of land of incalculable value, now hopelessly alienated, would be liberated for purposes of hygiene or of utility.*

Nor had I long to wait for a striking confirmation of the soundness of these propositions. About that time it leaked out that the Prussian Government were issuing a secret commission to enquire into the condition of the dead in the battle-fields of the Vosges. A year and nine months, or thereabouts, had elapsed since those battles were fought, and it was feared, as many dead bodies were known to have been only very superficially buried, that epidemic disease might result. What the commissioners found, however, entirely put an end to any such fears. In cases in which as many as 800 dead bodies, in the hurry incident to rapid military movements, had been thrust into one shallow excavation, these bodies, it was found, had already disappeared, their bones and accoutrements alone being left. But to this unexpected disappearance there was a remarkable exception. The bodies of officers buried in macintoshes, and which thus represented more or less the condition of

* Haden, Francis Seymour, F.R.C.S. Three letters to the *Times*, January 12, March 13, and June 16, 1875. Reprinted by Macmillan.

bodies buried in coffins, had not so disappeared. I was not at the time allowed by the rules of our Intelligence Department to make any use of the information which, through its instrumentality and the courtesy of our ambassador at Berlin, I had thus obtained. There can be no harm in my using it now, though I do not know that it adds anything very material to the previous knowledge which I had acquired by experiments conducted on a small scale in my own garden and, on a larger, during the removal of the Holborn burial ground, in which latter case it was found, as I have stated elsewhere, that the only bodies which had wholly disappeared were those which had been thrown without covering into the plague-pit. And here I may as well mention of other plague-pits which I have seen opened—since we shall presently hear of the danger which attends the disturbance of all such ground—that I never heard of any harm whatever having arisen from such disturbance or from the exposure and removal of the bony residuum which constituted their sole contents. No harm, indeed, resulted from the removal of the whole of the Holborn burial ground, though the operation if I remember rightly was carried out in the middle of summer.

The impression produced by the proposals referred to, and which took the form of a series of letters to the *Times*, was, if I may be permitted to say so, considerable. No one gainsaid them. No one was offended by them. On the contrary, evidence of a consensus of opinion in their favour, and in favour of the change of practice which they recommended, came from all quarters. Thinking men who had before given no attention to such things made provision by will for the proper disposal of their remains after death. Noblemen and persons of consideration and influence announced that henceforth their family vaults should be closed and that they themselves, when their time should come, would set an example of what it was right to do. The customary interval of a week or more between death and burial was curtailed by one-half. The mock heraldry implied by the procession through the streets fell into discredit and was to a great extent done away with. Friends from a distance met, not at the house of mourning, but at the grave ; and, at the grave itself, much of the paraphernalia formerly in use was discarded. Associations, clerical and lay, were formed in different parts of the country to give still

further effect to changes in the direction of simplicity and good sense, and everything seemed to promise a return on a scale even of national proportions to a more intelligent practice. Then came a check. The Government action necessary to support and regulate the details of such a change, and to give it a working form, was, as usual, not forthcoming. That which as an obscure individual I had not hesitated to write, and which the *Times* with a greater responsibility had not feared to publish, and which the public had shown they were fully prepared to accept and be guided by, the Government of that day had not the courage to make compulsory. Not that some of its members were not fully alive to the importance of the change proposed. They admitted that. They even understood the sanitary benefit amounting to a diminution of the death-rate which was likely to result from the removal of the dead from among the living, and they certainly understood the immense money saving which such removal would effect, but, collectively, they could not, or would not, see that a national change of such proportions could only be practically carried out when regulated and safe-guarded by legal prescription. The consequence was a foregone conclusion. Though the interval between death and burial had been shortened, being left to individual caprice it was not shortened enough to fulfil the very first condition requisite to the successful working of the new scheme—the disuse, that is to say, of the imperishable coffin. I doubt even whether the pardonable device of proposing a form of coffin which made it *impossible* to prolong this interval was ever fully understood. I doubt whether it is fully understood now.* And yet the least reflection will show that, without such an understanding, or without legislative action to supply its place, no good whatever can be either done or expected.

The case, therefore, as left by the failure of Government assistance, was this: while the proximate and *material cause* of the so-called “over-crowding” of our cemeteries was pretty generally understood to be the strong coffin, the remote and *moral cause*—the unreasoning sentiment, that is, which prompts us to keep the body unburied till its use becomes

* The Basket Coffin. A better perishable coffin than this, of *papier-maché*, has since been invented by Mr. Julian Larkman and patented by him for the Necropolis Company.

a necessity — escaped observation, or at best, was but imperfectly recognised. Yet it is this retention of the dead in the dwelling-house, if only for one day beyond the time prescribed by nature, which is the head and front of our error, as it is also the cause of all our difficulties ; since it is that retention which necessitates the strong coffin, and the strong coffin again which prevents the resolution which it is the office of the earth to accomplish and which it should be the first care of the living to promote. This is but a simple sequence of simple ideas, and yet I know not how this necessary sequence, simple as it is, is ever to be brought home to, and practically applied by, the common understanding, without the aid of legal prescription. I shall, therefore, have to return to the subject. Meantime, the object of keeping the body unburied, though arising partly no doubt from an indisposition not wholly unnatural to part with it, is yet, I imagine, chiefly to gain time to summon friends from a distance to attend it to the grave, and to prepare the customary mourning against the day of the funeral. But are these reasonable objects? The dead body being what it is—what we see it to be by the changes going on in it—can such an indulgence, the terrible cost considered, be reasonably defended? Frankly, I think not, or rather I should think not if I believed we were aware of the full consequences of such indulgence. It is here, therefore—*with this moral cause*—that the clergy who have already done such good work in encouraging moderation and in discouraging those minor errors in the direction of excess which arise out of a sincere but wholly mistaken desire to do honour to the dead, can be of most use. It is they who on the occasion of a death, especially in small communities, have the readiest access to the ear of the survivor, and who can best explain to him what, as a good citizen, he ought and what he ought not to do. I beg pardon, however, for these reflections, and return at once to that part of the subject which more properly belongs to me.

And here, it occurs to me, I may perhaps disarm the prejudice which shrinks from exposing the bodies of the dead to an actual contact with the earth if I describe in popular terms what that friendly contact means. Some curiously mistaken notions exist as to what happens to a dead body when, in the words of the old ritual, it “is laid into the ground,” the common notion being that it becomes a part of that clay to

which it is committed. Nothing of the kind, of course, is the case. A body properly buried—buried, that is to say, in such a way that the earth may have access to it, does not even remain in the earth, but returns to the atmosphere. Let me explain. Suppose a body buried three or four feet below the surface, the earth, as earth, affects it in no way whatever. The part played by the earth in its resolution is that of a mere porous medium between it and the air which is above it. Through this medium the air with its dew and its rains filters, and, when it reaches the body, in chymical language, oxidizes it, that is to say, resolves it into new and harmless products; and then these new products, passing upwards again through the same sieve-like medium, re-enter the atmosphere and become the elements of its renewal, and of the nourishment and growth of plants. The body in fact, literally as well as figuratively, ascends from the dead and fulfils the cycle of its pilgrimage by becoming again the source and renewal of life. Is it possible to conceive a provision more beautiful, more benign, more suggestive, not of gloomy, but of elevated and consoling trains of thought? And yet it is this very provision which, with our strong imperishable coffins, we are doing our best to prevent, and which the apostles of cremation would have us believe they can improve upon! Another mistake, too, is to suppose that, after a time, the coffin itself decays in the earth. It does not. Substances only which contain nitrogen decay in the earth, decay being, to use a familiar figure, the effort of the nitrogen to get out. But wood is a non-nitrogenous body, and does not decay; so that, in the Holborn burial ground, the coffins of Charles II.'s time were found just as they were buried, and with their contents just as putrid, while the surface had been raised no less than eighteen feet by this mass of boxed-up putridity. That is what we are doing with our strong and costly coffins—dishonouring the dead, poisoning the living, and abusing the great gift of that friendly earth which lies at our feet only ready to serve us.*

I regret to have to add anything to the length of this paper by a further reference to cremation. I shall say little about it. I have elsewhere shown that in the case of proper burial it is uncalled for,

* Xenophon *Cyropædia*.

and in the case of improper burial, at best, but the substitution of one evil for another. I shall be much surprised if I am not also able to prove that it is dangerous, and, being dangerous, that it is, fortunately, on anything like an extended scale, impracticable. I will say nothing of the objection to the burning of the body, as a *rite*, which, however, I apprehend will always be felt by the majority of persons in this country. That it can be intended by its promoters to take the place of, or even to make any appreciable impression upon, the larger national custom of burial (divested of course of the abuses which disfigure it), I can scarcely believe. In fact, I do not believe it. Nor do I suppose do they. It is useless, therefore, to speculate as to the precise objects of their agitation.

To take cremation first on its impracticable side. It is all very well to achieve the burning (with an occasional failure) of a single dead body, or even of half a dozen, and to put a record of the achievement into the newspapers; but quite another thing to deal with the mass of animal matter represented by the 2,000 deaths which occur weekly in greater London alone. Do the members of "The Cremation Society of England"—for with such a title they must contemplate operations on a large scale—believe in the possibility of their ever being able to cope with such a mass? Have they ever calculated the time necessary for such an undertaking, including the performance of the *post-mortem* examination of each body they burn, which, for reasons to be presently noticed, they have found it necessary to promise; ever considered the magnitude and extent of the apparatus necessary to drive into vapour a vast recalcitrant residuum of this sort; ever counted the cost of it; ever proved the effect of such a proceeding on the respirable air around? Let those who know what it is to live in the neighbourhood of a single bone boiling, glue making, soap manufacturing establishment, or of a pottery, or within half-a-mile of a brickfield, or even to windward of one of those comparatively innocent *vomitoria* engaged in the dispersion of the calcined vegetable refuse of Covent Garden Market—answer; and then contemplate the perfect ease with which Nature effects her sublimation of the same thing, or any amount of the same thing—and does it, too, not to our hurt, but our benefit!

Then, to take cremation on its philosophical side. What are we to think of its boast that it is able—as an improvement on nature's method—to do in two hours that which she, Nature, takes three years to do ; or of the assurance that cremation and burial are “the same thing,” and that they “come to the same thing”? Surely, not only are they not the same thing, but they never come to the same thing. Nature in all she does proceeds slowly and by measured steps, each step depending for its perfection on the perfection of the step that immediately preceded it. Every day we are witnesses of the constancy of this law. We see it in the growth of plants, the succession of the seasons, the alternations of heat and cold, of drought and moisture ; in the progress of the child to manhood, the fusion of manhood into age, the refuge of age in the grave. And not even there does this wonderful continuity end. By the slow disintegration which goes on there and by the products which are returned by the buried body to the atmosphere—and let the cremationist observe they are so returned only in the exact proportions in which they are needed—plants are nourished, animal life is renewed, and the atmosphere itself is replenished and purified. Does cremation do the same thing or anything like the same thing? Would it be the same thing—for what is true of part is true of the whole—if the rainfall, say, of three years came down upon us in three hours ! The statement is inexact and unscientific, and there I leave it.

Again, in their arguments against burial as a principle, it is noticeable that the advocates of cremation deal largely in “germs” and other matters equally occult and speculative, and, by a pretty free use of Pasteur's term especially, seek to shake our faith in the plan pursued by nature for the resolution of dead matter since the beginning of the world. Well, all I can say to that is that, without being in a position either to affirm or to deny the existence of these hostile germs and the harm they do, I should like to hear from the cremationists something of the friendly germs and the good they do. If it should come to be proved, which is possible, that the great operations of nature, destructive as well as constructive, are carried on chiefly by germs, all I can say is that I am prepared to think as highly of germs as I do of chymical action or of any other of those forces, physical or vital, by which nature is pleased

to work. I object, however, to their employment as missiles, and to their being held up at us as bugaboos.*

More seriously. To take cremation on its dangerous side ; its advocates, strange to say, encouraged by a mere failure of jurisdiction in the prosecution of a recent case, make much of the law and assume it to be in their favour, whereas the judgment of Sir James Stephen amounts to no more than this, that cremation is only not illegal, because the law, having had no reason to contemplate its revival, has made no provision against it. In the same way it has made no provision against cannibalism, and, till lately, had made none against the unforeseen use of explosives. Such a judgment, therefore, ought no more to be regarded as an encouragement to cremation than as an expression of the insufficiency of the law to prevent it. Nor, one would have thought is the revolting incident on which that judgment is founded—the finding of a crazy old man at the top of a mountain trying to burn his child in a barrel and threatening to do “the same to his bull Morgan” —an incident of a nature to commend itself to anybody.

Be this, however, as it may, as a commentary on the little value to the cremationist of such a judgment, the practical fact remains that the medico-legal objections to cremation, since it would facilitate all those forms of secret murder the evidence of which is *only to be found in the body of the victim*, are insuperable. To be convinced of this we have only to consider the circumstances which usually surround one of the commonest of those forms—murder by poison ; the variety, the subtlety, often the novelty, of the poisonous agent ; the extreme improbability that the surgeon called in—if he be called in—has ever seen its effect either on man or on animals ; the care now taken by a class of well-meaning but mischievous enthusiasts that he shall not see it ; the symptoms of the

* In reply to the wild statements of the Cremation Society as to the mischief done by germs, and of the powerlessness of the earth to counteract that mischief—such as the reappearance upon the surface of infectious disease after long periods of burial—the Duke of Westminster has well observed that in Cheshire, where thousands of cattle affected with pleuro-pneumonia and rhinder-pest—the most infectious of infectious diseases—were buried, there has been no reappearance whatever of that disease, though their burial was in many cases hasty and in all cases superficial.

dying state which are common to death by poison and to death from disease ; the advantage of preparation on the side of the poisoner ; and, finally, the fact that discovery when made is generally made at some *variable period after death*, and then rather in consequence of an aggregation of suspicious collateral circumstances pointing to the commission of other crimes of a like nature, than of any possible observations at the bedside of the murdered person. To meet this array of formidable difficulties, the Cremation Society contents itself with offering to make and hopes to satisfy the public by making a *post-mortem* examination of every body they burn. But of what use can such an examination (which must be perfunctory since it is to be made in *every* case) possibly be ? A moment's consideration is sufficient to demonstrate its worthlessness. In many, if not in most cases of systematic poisoning, the poisonous agent is to be looked for, not in the stomach or intestines (as a cursory examination supposes), but in organs remote from the digestive track, and is at last only to be discovered in them by processes which necessitate not hours but days and weeks in their application—by a destructive analysis, in short, of every absorbent organ of the body. Are the Cremation Society really prepared to embark in such an analysis ? Are they quite sure that in this they are not counting rather too much on public ignorance ? But even supposing them to be in earnest, would that section of the public now so anxious to be cremated and to cremate their wives and daughters, be able to look with equanimity on the necessary conditions precedent to such a proceeding—conditions which may be hinted at, but not described ? Are they even prepared to submit to a *post-mortem* examination at the hands of strangers at all ?

It would therefore seem, and my own experience of the last ten years fully confirms such a supposition, that what is wanted is not a Bill to regulate cremation—which, on the contrary, *as a measure of public safety*, ought rather to be at once declared a misdemeanour—but a Bill to regulate and insure *safe and proper burial* ; which Bill to be effectual should, besides dealing with the whole subject of cemeterial management, contain the following provisions :—

- (1) For burial within the earth as the only legal mode of disposing of a dead body.

- (2) For a limitation of time beyond which it should be illegal to keep a dead body unburied.
- (3) For the illegality of strong coffins, brick graves and vaults, and of all contrivances having for their effect to retard resolution, and to confer on the dead a tenure, practically illimitable, of the soil which is necessary to the purposes of the living.

But I would go further, and venture to affirm that such a Bill, besides being a measure of great social, economical, and sanitary importance, would be a positive and grateful relief to everybody. It is because we are without legal formulæ to guide us that, when a death occurs among us, we know not what to do, and have no choice than to put ourselves into any hands that will tell us. Hence the "undertaker" and all the evils which follow in his train—the strong coffin, the vault, the catacomb (for he is also the cemetery proprietor)—and all the mischievous and costly contrivances which it is his business to saddle us with. In saying this I am not imputing anything to the undertaker which does not fall within the legitimate exercise of his calling. My reflection is on the blindness and apathy of the Government* which does not see that the undertaker is an anachronism, and which leaves it to him, or to the Cremation Society, or anyone else, *even the survivor*, to do as he pleases with the bodies of the dead. It is surely in every way surprising that, while providing by law for a better drainage, the prevention of floods, and the over-crowding of dwellings, we should, *unlike any other people in Europe*, have as yet made no provision for the larger and more serious question of the safe and proper disposal of the bodies of the dead. In no country but England is a latitude in every way so dangerous allowed. In every other civilized country in the world it is the State which assumes the protection and undertakes the direction of everything connected with the disposal of the dead. On the occurrence

* It will scarcely be credited that, notwithstanding all that has been said and written on the subject within the last fifteen years, the Local Government Board has just issued (1888) a "MEMORANDUM ON THE SANITARY REQUIREMENTS OF CEMETERIES," which exhibits an entire ignorance of every point essential to effective burial. In this memorandum instructions are actually given not for the *resolution* of dead bodies, but for their *preservation*!

of a death in his house in every other part of Europe it is the duty of every householder to give immediate notice to the authorities of the event, and of those authorities to take immediate cognisance of the fact. This it does by sending an officer of health, who is always a member of the medical profession, to view the body, partly to assure the survivors that death has really taken place, partly to verify the cause officially assigned for it, and, generally, to see that the circumstances attending it are in no way abnormal. The same authority informs the survivor of the steps he has to take, the day and hour of the funeral, and even arranges with him, by a tariff which he shows him, the expense he wishes to go to. In all cases is the visit of this functionary, who occupies the position of an educated gentleman, welcome. The funeral, also, in every one of its details is carried out by the State, and according to a scale of charges published by law. These charges vary in different countries, but in all cases are much more moderate than anything we are accustomed to.* In no case is any deviation from these charges permitted. There is, therefore, no room for extortion, no hurry, no trouble, no uncertainty of any kind whatever, even as to the smallest details. The depth and dimensions of the graves are also matters of municipal regulation, one body only being permitted in each grave, and an undisturbed tenure of from 10 to 20 years allowed to each body. The cemeteries themselves are also the property of the State, and under State control. The fullest information on all these points is given in Mr. Chadwick's report, and this report should, in my opinion, be made the basis of an immediate application to the Government, not for an inquiry into the state of our cemeteries, as has been proposed (that state being perfectly well known), but for *a complete and radical change in the law in all that relates to the disposal of the dead.*

* At Frankfort, at Munich, and throughout Germany the charges range from £4 7s. 6d. for a first-class funeral to £1 6s. 3d. for a fourth-class. There are also charges on a reduced scale for children from £1 18s. 6d. for a young person of from 10 to 15 years of the first class to £1 1s. 0d. for a child of 5 years, and so on, the rates being considerably lower for funerals of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th class. In France the arrangements are more costly and elaborate, and range from a State funeral with all its pomp, religious and civil, which costs £150, to that of the poorest person, which is 10s. 6d.

I have only now to add that, roughly summarized, this paper and all that I have written on the subject will be found to be embodied in the following six propositions, namely :—

- (1) That the natural destination of all organized bodies that have lived, and that die on the earth's surface, is the earth.
- (2) That the evils which the cremationists would have us believe to be inseparable from the principle of interment are independent of that principle and of our own creation.
- (3) That the source of these evils is to be found, not in the burial of the dead, but in the unreasoning sentiment which prompts us to keep them unburied as long as possible, and then to bury them in such a way that the earth can have no access to them.
- (4) That the principle of burial supposes the resolution of the body by the agency of the earth to which we commit it, and that the earth is competent to effect that resolution, and to effect it innocuously.
- (5) That to seek to prevent the beneficent agency of the earth by inclosing the dead in imperishable coffins, brick graves, and vaults, is in the highest degree irrational, since it engages us in a vain resistance to an inevitable dispensation, and has led us to accumulate in our midst a vast store of human remains in every stage and condition of decay.
- (6) That the remedy for such evils is not in cremation, but in a sensible recognition of, and a timely submission to, a well-defined law of nature, and in legislative action to enforce the provisions of that law.

Within the scope of these propositions I again submit, lie, not only the whole question, but a ready solution of all the difficulties which surround that question.

Woodcote Manor, Alresford.

October 2nd, 1888.