A cry from the tombs: or, facts and observations on the impropriety of burying the dead among the living, in various ages and nations / [James Peggs].

A

CRY FROM THE TOMBS:

OR,

FACTS AND OBSERVATIONS

ON THE IMPROPRIETY OF

BURYING THE DEAD AMONG THE LIVING,

IN VARIOUS AGES AND NATIONS.

BY JAMES PEGGS,

LATE MISSIONARY IN INDIA.
AUTHOR OF INDIA'S CRIES TO BRITISH HUMANITY.
A PRIZE ESSAY ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, &c.

"When Jesus came nigh to the gate of the City, behold there was a dead man *carried out*, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the City was with her."—*Luke* vii. 12.

"The Mussulman never disturbs the ashes of the dead—there is no burying and reburying on the same spot, as with us: the remains of the departed are sacred."—*The City of the Sultan.*

"Piety should teach us to reverence the dead."—*Plutarch.*

London:
PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR,
BY JOHN SNOW, 35, PATERNOSTER-ROW; SOLD ALSO BY SIMPKIN AND MARSHALL, AND BY G. WIGHTMAN, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1840.

DANIELL, PRINTER, MARKET-PLACE, BOURN.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE.

Introductory remarks—The ancient practice of disposing of the dead among various nations, particularly the Greeks and Romans, Jews and Primitive Christians—Rise of the present practice of interring the dead among the living—Extent, nature and futility of efforts to repress it—The energetic and successful measures of the French—Views of the New York Board of Health —Progress of these enlightened views..... 1

CHAPTER II.

Various statements and facts from different Nations, shewing the evils of burying the dead in Towns and Cities, and especially in and near places of Public Worship. 15

CHAPTER III.

State of many burial grounds in the Metropolis and the Country—Various observations to show the propriety and importance of the discontinuance of the present method of sepulture—Authorities—Objections answered—Value of new Cemeteries properly situated and conducted—Importance of sanatory regulations—The subject connected with the interests of philanthropy and religion—Duty of an enlightened Government—Concluding appeal.....28

ADVERTISEMENT.

The author of this Pamphlet, during his residence in India, was much affected by the inhumanity manifested both to the living and the dead; and this has doubtless prepared him to sympathize with the affecting details presented to his readers. He trusts that motives of philanthropy have lead him to issue this publication. The various facts here recorded will shew that this is a question affecting the public health, as well as the disposal of the dead in a manner becoming those who believe in 'the resurrection of the dead;'—a question that comes home to 'men's business and bosoms!' It is feared that the evil here the subject of animadversion is very extended in its range, and deadly in its effects, and probably many will arrive at the same conclusion as a writer upon this subject in London:—"I am 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 interment in the vicinity of the living."

BOURN, Lincolnshire, Dec. 22nd, 1840.

A CRY FROM THE TOMBS.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory remarks—The ancient practice of disposing of the dead among various nations, particularly the Greeks and Romans, Jews and Primitive Christians—Rise of the present practice of interring the dead among the living—Extent, nature and futility of efforts to repress it—The energetic and successful measures of the French—Views of the New York Board of Health—Progress of these enlightened views.

THE writer, during a few years' residence in India, was deeply affected by the miseries of Idolatry, so strikingly fulfilling the language of Holy Writ, "*Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god.*" The burning and burying alive of Hindoo widows, (now abolished in the British territories,)—the exposure of the sick on the banks of the Ganges—the mortality of the pilgrims to Juggernaut's Temple in Orissa, frequently permitting the dead to be devoured "by the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air;" yea, human bodies to be left exposed as "dung upon the face of the earth;" or if buried, so slightly covered with earth, as to be disinterred by wild dogs and jackals. Such scenes as these have left an indelible impression upon the mind; and disposed it to sympathize with any thing in this country, in the least approximating to such inhumanities. For some years he has been struck with the inhumanity of the sexton "digging through whole rows of kindred dead, by far his juniors," and knowing the history of the owner of almost every "skull cast up!" A circular or pamphlet upon this subject has been for some time contemplated, but not attempted; until a very elaborate work recently fell into his hands, which has afforded the most ample materials for this humble effort. The volume referred to is entitled "*Gatherings from Grave-Yards, particularly those of London.*" By G. A. WALKER, Surgeon. 1839. Longman & Co.* The author trusts that this Pamphlet will make this Volume ex-

* See also The Speech of J. FENWICK, Esq., of *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, relative to a new Cemetery for that Town.

tensively known, and considerably promote its circulation. Who can tell the effects of a well-directed effort?"

> "Words are things, and a small drop of ink
> Falling like dew upon a thought, produces
> That which makes thousands, perhaps millions think."

Burial places (says Mr. Walker) in the neighbourhood of the living are, in my opinion, a national evil—the harbingers, if not the originators of pestilence; the cause, direct or indirect, of inhumanity, immorality, and irreligion. These remarks may appear extravagant and untenable. I have to request an attentive and impartial perusal of the following pages: the proof will be found convincing—the justification complete. The peculiar character and virulence of diseases in the proximity of grave yards first excited my suspicion: evidence, positive and circumstantial, has established the fact—that the *miasmata* from animal putrescency may occasion not only the instantaneous loss of human existence, but increase the intensity of pestilential diseases. 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 removal of previous deposits. The mere allusion to this particular will, I am aware, arouse the sensibilities of our nature; but the proof is adamantine. It would not be difficult to shew, 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!

It is not necessary, nor would it be useful, to detail the unsatisfactory opinions and statements of many writers, as to the superstitions and absurd customs relative to the interment or distribution of the dead, among nations scarcely civilized, or among the most barbarous tribes. We are informed, that some Indians feasted on the slain, and murdered and devoured the sick and aged—that some exposed their dead, to be devoured by wild beasts—that others cast their dead into rivers and ponds, and that the Scythians buried them in snow, or burned them to cinders. Undoubtedly, the most ancient and the most common practice, was to bury the dead in the ground; for, "it appeared just to restore human bodies to the common mother from which they sprung." It would be tedious to point out how much

the customs of different nations have varied upon the subject of burials. We may judge of them, by the following description, extracted from Spondanus. According to this author, the Syrcanians abandoned their dead to the dogs; some Indians left them to the vultures; the Garamantians covered them with sand; and the Celts, by a singular caprice, took from them the bony cap of the cranium for cups, which they set in gold! The Ethiopians, and the greatest part of the Ictytophages, threw their dead into the water, willing to give back to the fish the food derived from them. The inhabitants of Colchis, and the Phrygians, hung them on trees, to present to the air a part of the aliment it had furnished. The Egyptians embalmed their dead; the Persians enveloped theirs in wax; and the Babylonians and Syrians preserved their dead in honey. The Islanders of Delos buried their dead in the neighbouring islands. The Megarians, in the Island of Salamis; the Greeks and Romans destroyed their dead by fire; the bodies of infants, however, were excepted, for it was feared, says Pliny, that their teeth would be consumed; and, according to the opinion of these nations, the teeth contained the principle of resurrection; and many Jewish Rabbi yet believe, that there is a bone in the skeleton called *Luz*, which they place in the spinal column, and believe it to be indestructible.

The Germans, who possessed large forests, burned their dead. Homer says the same thing of the Phrygians, and Virgil of the Trojans. Inhumation, however, was not forbidden; and we find among them many instances of it. The respect which the Persians had for the sun and for fire, induced them to consider the burning of the dead as criminal. The Assyrians, Medes, Parthians, Tyrians, Phœnicians, Ethiopians, the Egyptians themselves, and the Persians had always vaults for their dead, and places particularly destined for them. The Chinese and the Peruvians, situated on the opposite extremities of the earth, had the same practice in this respect. The tombs of Kings, and of great men of the most remote antiquity, were in caverns, carefully made in the midst of the most solitary mountains. Gyges, King of Lydia, was buried at the foot of Mount Tmolus. The Kings of Persia had their sepulchres on the Royal Mountain, near the city of Persepolis; Sylvius Aventinus was buried on the hill that bears his name, and King Dercennus within a high mountain, as Virgil attests.—(Æneid, l. 11, 850.) The ancient Russians transported the dead bodies of their Princes to the deep caverns along the Boristhenes; travellers who are curious, yet visit them daily. The Danes constructed artificial mountains, to entomb in them the bodies of their Kings.

Contagious diseases had more than once shown the necessity of removing the dead to a distance from the habitations of the living. The great number of dead bodies, after a sanguinary battle, compelled the survivors to burn them, and to preserve their ashes. These means were judiciously employed to destroy the custom of *embalming*, then too much extended; and they succeeded so much the better, as they were not opposed to the prevailing opinions. In a short time, the whole face of things was changed, and tombs and urns were filled with the ashes of the dead. The custom of burning the dead extended even among people, who till then, had practised simple inhumation. It was observed that long wars, frequent transmigrations, the destruction and rebuilding of cities, might, with the revolution of times, overturn the whole surface of a country; and that bones, 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 practice of burning the dead—their repose, from that moment, was considered as secure.

They went still further: *they excluded from the walls and precincts of cities these ashes*, which they ever regarded, however, with respect; and the places which had been consecrated for ordinary burials, were destined to receive the urns. The highways were for a long time bordered with tombs, and with grave-stones, covered with inscriptions. Thus the passer-by was readily instructed in the glorious actions of his ancestors; and every one found there examples for conduct, and subjects for emulation. A glance over the remains of great men made every one feel his own weakness. Carnage, fire, and destruction were thus also kept at a distance from the cities; the people being compelled to leave their walls to defend these sacred deposits; it would have been criminal to abandon them to the enemy. In the midst of so many customs which caprice and vanity produced in different states, the influence of nature, of laws, and of religion, was always exerted to separate the dead from the living; and the end for which tombs had been constructed at a distance from cities was always kept in view.

The most ancient custom among the *Greeks* was inhumation. The custom of burning the dead, was introduced among them, at a subsequent period. The urns, containing the ashes of the dead, were kept in private houses, in the interior of cities, and sometimes even in temples. These examples were, at first, of rare occurrence: and this distinction was only granted to the heads of government, and to generals who had saved their country. Inhumation was always more general in Greece, than elsewhere, and *the very*

salutary custom of conveying the dead to a distance from cities, was inviolably preserved. The Thebans, the people of Sicyon, of Delos, and of Megara, the Macedonians, the inhabitants of the Chersonese, and of almost all Greece, adopted the same custom in this respect. The most celebrated legislators made it an interesting point in their code. Cecrops, at Athens, wished the dead to be carried beyond the walls. Solon adopted and re-established this wise regulation in all its vigour; and it was only during the last days of the republic, at Athens, that a small number of persons were inhumed in the interior of the city. This honourable distinction was only permitted in favour of some heroes. It was thus that they left in the Ceramicus, the tombs of those brave citizens, who sacrificed themselves for the defence of their country. Plato, in his republic, did not even permit *inhumation in fields fit for tillage;* he reserved for that purpose, dry and sandy grounds, and those which could be employed for no other use.

The same laws were in force in *Grecia Magna.* The Carthaginians found the tombs of the inhabitants of Syracuse outside the city. The same thing occurred at Agrigentum. Religion gave its sanction to this custom. The holiness of tombs, many of which became the temples of certain Divinities, and were regarded as asylums for the unfortunate and the accused—the respect paid to the ashes and the memory of their ancestors—the punishments with which their holy laws threatened the violators of these customs—the maledictions denounced upon them by the priests:—in one word, the whole religious doctrine and mythology of the Greeks, tended only to support the laws, which *directed the bodies of the dead to be removed far from the habitations of the living.*

The *Romans* preserved the custom indicated by nature, that of *inhuming* their dead, although they had the right of erecting tombs in their country residences. Numa was buried upon Mount Janiculum, which was not then within the city. The Kings, who succeeded him, had their sepulchres in the *Campus Martius,* between the city and the Tiber. The vestal virgins enjoyed the privilege of burial within the city—those who had violated the vow of chastity, to which they had pledged themselves, *were buried alive,* in a field called *Campus Sceleratus.* The law of the Twelve Tables expressly forbids the burning or burial of any dead body in the city. By the terms even of the law, "*Hominem mortuum in urbe ne sepelito neve urito,*" it clearly appears, that from the fourth century of the republic, they adopted, indifferently, the custom of burning and inhumation.

In the obstinate wars carried on by the Romans against

the barbarians, bones, which had been buried, were frequently seen to be outraged and exposed. The horror excited by religious feelings at such profanations, and the wisdom of the magistrates, united to encourage the burning of the dead. It was the means of preventing the evils which the martial genius and superstition of the people were calculated to produce. It was ordered by their laws to respect the dead; their asylum was inviolable, and their sepulchre was sacred. Religious scruples, upon this point, were carried so far, that, not coutented with respect for the tombs, the Romans required that the places also destined for sepulchre, should be held particularly sacred.

Under the consulate of Duillius, the most illustrious houses had tombs for their family, in their own grounds, which daily became more enlarged. The lands, however, produced nothing, for want of culture, and the extent of cultivated ground greatly diminishing, the magistrates felt it to be their duty strenuously to oppose the increase of the evil. *Sepulchres were no longer made in fields.* The sepulchres of the most illustrious families, as those of the *Metelli*, the *Claudii*, the *Scipiones*, the *Servilii*, and the *Valerii*, were removed, and placed along the highways; and thus contributed to the embellishment of the city.

The traces of *Judaic* antiquity lead us back to the most ancient times, in which inhumation was generally practised. A dreadful crime brought death into the world. Cain, after having killed his brother, thought to conceal his crime by covering the body with earth; after this dreadful example they continued to *inhume* the bodies of the dead in open deserts and uninhabited places. Abraham bought from the children of Heth, the Cave of Hebron, where he deposited the corpse of Sarah. He himself was buried there; and after him Isaac, Rebecca, and Leah. The tomb of Rachel was placed along the road from Jerusalem to Ephrata. Jacob likewise purchased from the children of Shechem a piece of ground, where he had a tomb erected. He was buried there with much pomp, by his son Joseph, who had him brought from Egypt, where he died. Joseph and all his brethren were buried in the same place. During the Egyptian captivity, the tombs of the Israelites were undoubtedly made in some distant place, according to the custom of the people in whose country they were fixed. Their long wanderings in the desert served also to establish this custom. Moses was buried by the order of God himself, in the Valley of Moab; Miriam, his sister, at Kadesh; Aaron, at Hor; and Eleazar, the son of the latter, as well as Joshua, on the mountains of Ephraim. After the entry of the Jews into the promised land, the establishment of

the Jewish law, and the inauguration of religious ceremonies, it was acknowledged that the commands of God were opposed to the dangerous vicinity of the dead. According to their customs, the touch of a dead body contracted a legal impurity; to efface which, the clothes were to be washed. To bury the dead in the houses of individuals, was to render them unclean. This regulation made them attentive 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, and which were distinguished by the erection of small pillars. They took care to paint the outside of their tombs white, which they renewed every year. They were permitted, however, to have their sepulchres at their country residences; and there, in full splendour, was exhibited the luxury of the great and of the heads of the nation. The nurse of Rebecca and Deborah was buried at the foot of a tree. The unfortunate Saul had the same fate. The priests were buried on their own estates. and sometimes in the tombs of kings. Vaults, dug on Mount Zion, under the foundations of the Temple, and in the royal gardens, were destined for the sepulchres of the Kings of Judah. No remarkable change in this particular afterwards occurred, notwithstanding the eventful vicissitudes this nation experienced.

Thus we see that caverns and fields have always been destined for places of burial. Elisha was inhumed in a grotto, where other bodies also were placed, among which was one that, according to the Holy Scriptures, miraculously recovered life by touching the prophet. Lazarus was buried at Bethany—Joseph of Arimathea, a man of importance among the Jews, had a tomb hewn out of a rock in a garden, near to Golgotha, the place of the sepulchre of Jesus Christ. Many holy persons who were resuscitated, at the death of our Saviour, were entombed out of Jarusalem, for it is written in the Scriptures, that immediately after they had been restored to life, *they returned into that city*. Every city had its public cemetery beyond the wall. Some thiuk that, that of Jerusalem was in the valley of Cedron, near which the Pharisees bought the Potter's Field, as a burying ground for strangers. A custom so constant, among a peowho had received it from God, and who always very strictly observed it, ought to be considered as paramount authority among Christians.

Of the funeral rites of the *early Christians*, a few remarks may suffice. The three nations who composed the primitive church, found inhumation established among them by the dogmas of their religion and the laws of their country. The

custom of burning their dead was confined to the great and rich. Burial out of cities was an obligation upon all: if there were any exceptions they were but few in number, and they were never granted to the common people, nor those who died in private retirement.

The most unjust and unmerited contempt having been the first portion of that holy and admirable religion, which in its rapid and miraculous progress has since enlightened so many nations, the burial of the first Christians was, at first that of the people, or that of individuals the least distinguished. When they became a distinct and recognized body, they had their own particular ceremonies, which were derived, partly from the Jews, and partly from the Gentiles. Inhumation was thus established among the Christians: it was the only practice of the Jews whose laws served them for a rule upon all points which were not the object of a particular sanction or belief. If to these considerations, we add the small number of believers, their extreme poverty, the fear they had of the Jews, and their decided aversion for everything which might resemble Paganism, we shall easily believe, as we have already stated, that the burial of Christians was that of the common people, of whom they formed part.

Some influential citizens having embraced the Christian religion, applied their riches and their lands for the interment of the dead. Many patricians, and some pious Roman ladies gave also vast portions of land, to be appropriated to this purpose. Such was the origin of Cemeteries. In these same places altars were raised and chapels constructed, which served as retreats during funeral ceremonies, and other assemblings for religious purposes.

We have seen that the practice of the ancient Romans was to inter their dead beyond the bounds of their cities. There were, however, some exceptions in favour of particular individuals. The vestal vergins never lost the privilege of burial within the walls; generals who had received the honours of triumph, possessed the same right; the priests, and afterwards, the ministers of public worship equally enjoyed it. Such a distinction was flattering to self-love; from that time it was generally sought after. Some of the Cæsars, however, were buried out of the walls of Rome. Domitian, in the *Via Latina;* Septimus Severus, in the *Via Appiana;* and another emperor, in the *Via Liviniana.* This soon ceased to be considered a privilege; it was either granted too easily, or it was invaded during the frequent revolutions which the city of Rome experienced. The Emperor Adrian was compelled to prohibit, anew, inhumation in cities; by accident, he did not mention the capitals: but Antoninus Pius, in his re-

script, included the cities and suburbs of his vast empire. The practice of burning the dead was less common under this Emperor; it became less so under his successors; and ceased altogether under the Emperor Gratianus. Ambition, restless and extravagant, had almost thrown the law of the Twelve Tables into oblivion, when the Emperor Adrian restored it to its ancient power. Antoninus Pius extended it to the entire empire; a new law, or one which is just renewed, is always strictly observed. Their dead were then carried out of the city; but they soon again relapsed, and one hundred and fifty years afterwards, Diocletian and Maximian were obliged to enforce it by new decrees.

When the Church, from a motive of gratitude, conferred on Constantine the privilege of being buried in the vestibule of the Temple of the holy Apostles, which he himself had built, this concession was regarded as a very remarkable testimony of honour and distinction. St. Chrysostome, to impress upon the faithful the extent and importance of such a privilege, states that the greatest Prince of the earth regarded it as a new lustre to his supreme dignity. Other successors of Constantine obtained the same honours; and it was for a long time reserved for those princes who boldly declared themselves the protectors of the Church. Sometimes it was granted to benefactors who had provided liberally for the decoration of altars, and for the expenses incurred in performing the ceremonies of religion. The resemblance between imperial power and the priesthood procured afterwards the same privilege for the Bishops. Their sanctity and the eminence of their situation, palliated this innovation in the discipline of the Church. The motives which rendered this distinction valuable, so deeply concerned the interests of piety and religion, that it was not sought after by the majority of believers. The priesthood, the cloister, and irreproachable morals, were titles necessary to obtain it. The laity, to whom no elevation could confer a claim, endeavoured to obtain the privilege by presenting handsome donations to the church, and distributing alms with liberality.

So rapid a revolution was not general; many Churches shewed great attachment to ancient rules, and were more rigid as to exceptions. This change could only be the effect of a relaxation in discipline, relative to an object, to which both Popes and Bishops could present more or less of opposition; for which reason, ecclesiastical history, during this period, furnishes statements which appear contradictory. In some Churches, at certain epochs, the exception had not as yet been admitted, whilst in many others it had been granted to all Ecclesiastics. The more respectable seculars

soon received this honour. The arrangements having been left entirely to the Bishops, it is not difficult to understand how, in one Church, eminent dignity or singular piety were the only grounds for anticipating the distinction, whilst in another it was very easily obtained; so far, indeed, was the abuse afterwards carried, that interment in churches was granted to Pagans and Christians, to the impious and the holy. Notwithstanding these variations, they did not change the place in which they had at first resolved to erect the public tombs, and those to whom the honour of sepulchre in the city was granted, were always small in number.

Up to this time, they had not dared to penetrate into the interior of churches; they had not yet determined to mix the bodies of the profane with those of martyrs and saints; the tombs were placed along the walls, near to, and *without the churches*. As people met there to perform the duties of religion, it was soon necessary to protect the faithful from exposure to the weather. With this view they constructed vestibules and porticoes, and this is the reason also why cemeteries were always near to parish churches. It appears unquestionable that the number of inhumations had greatly increased in Constantinople and in the other towns of the empire; since in accordance with the Emperors Gratian and Valentine the Second, Theodosius the Great, a prince of exemplary piety, whose zeal for the well-being of the Church is generally acknowledged, was obliged to renew the edicts of his predecessor, and to publish the famous constitution called the *Theodosian Code*. His design was to prevent the infection of the atmosphere, which so many funerals would necessarily occasion. He forbade the interment of the dead in the interior of cities, and what is still stronger, he ordered that the bodies, the urns, and the monuments which were in the city of Rome, should be carried without the walls! The Emperor desired that on this point, modern Rome should equal ancient Rome. This decree was soon carried into effect throughout the whole Roman empire. If we run through ecclesiastical history, we shall see that the custom of interring in churches was already very prevalent. In one place it had been introduced from pious motives; in another, the space in the neighbouring cemeteries was found too small; similar exceptions were always justified upon the plea of merit or necessity; but they were not allowed until after the most rigid examination.

Whatever difference there may have been in the mode of thinking between Pagans and Christians on the subject of a future state—whatever changes may have been effected in the ceremonies and customs of the Christian Church, we always see that the most enlightened Princes have maintained,

by the laws of their government, in regard to sepulchres, that which was most conducive to the good of the people. The ancient Ecclesiastical Constitution—the bulls of the Popes—that inviolable tradition which they endeavoured to establish,—all concurred to preserve cities from the infection of the dead : but this abuse, far from being destroyed, acquired new strength. The many reasons advanced to remove the dread entertained of the dangers of putrefaction,—the flattering hopes they indulged of participating in the merits of the just, by mixing with their tombs,—the distinctions of those who had been judged worthy of this honour, warmed the religious zeal of some, and excited the self-love of others. At length the prevailing custom was directly opposed to the established law—*the prerogative, which originally was reserved for the Emperors, became the portion of the lowest class of citizens, and that which at first was a distinction, became a right, common to every one.*

The prohibition of inhumation in towns was established in the Roman law of the *Twelve Tables*, enacted by the Decemviri ; it continued to be incorporated in the laws of all the succeeding forms of government. The prohibition, after Constantine, was laid down in the code of Theodosius, A. D. 381 ; and the admission into Churches of the bodies of holy personages, was pointedly forbidden. The same was renewed in the Justinian code. *At the commencement of the sixth century, the Senate of Rome had not as yet permitted any cemetery in or near the city of Rome.* The *Capituliaries*, or civil and religious statutes of Charlemagne, forbid interment in Churches. Though the discipline of the Church after this, through the interested motives of individuals, became relaxed to an alarming degree, yet continual efforts were made to restore its pristine integrity by the decrees of more than twenty councils, convened at different periods, from the 8th to the 18th century. It is certain that the Church, animated by the same spirit, never ceased to endeavour to re-establish the ancient customs. The new law of the Emperor Leo had no force in the West, and soon ceased to be observed in the East. We must admit, however, that discipline was afterwards much relaxed. The councils held, from the 10th to the 18th century, and in many parts of the Catholic world, are incontestable evidences of this. We have a council of Ravenna, under Gilbert, and afterwards under Sylvester II, in 995 ; the sixth of Winchester, 1076 ; the famous synod of Toulouse, in 1093, in which it was determined to make two cemeteries, one for the Bishops and Nobles, the other for the common inhabitants ; a Council at London, in 1107 ; one at Cognac, 1255 and 1260 ; and at Bude, in 1269 ; one at Nismes, in 1284 ; one at Ches-

ter, in 1292; one at Avignon, in 1326; one at Narbonne, in 1551; one at Toledo, in 1556; one at Malines, in 1570; a Committee of the Clergy of France, assembled at Melun, in 1579; a synod at Rouen, in 1581; at Rheims, in 1583; one at Bordeaux and at Tours, in the same year; one at Bruges, in 1584; one at Aix, in 1585; one at Toulouse, in 1590; another at Narbonne, and one at Bordeaux, in 1624: all these have given on this subject the same precepts, and admitted the same doctrine!

May we not conclude from all these authorities, that the custom of interring bodies in and near churches ought to be proscribed, as contrary to the spirit of our religion? We shall prove, in another place, that it is not less repugnant to the principles of sound philosophy.

The French Government has exerted itself with commendable zeal for the public health. The Parliament of Paris, in 1765, took a decisive stand against the abuses of interment. It will not be unncessary to observe, that Parliaments in France had a portion of legislative and executive authority in their districts, and were thirteen in number. A Court of Parliament was also an intermediary power between the people and the Sovereign, whose orders remained without force until registered therein. Parliaments, in fine, were high courts of civil and criminal judicature, composed of many Presidents, and about thirty Privy Counsellors. The following decree *(arret)* of the Parliament of Paris is the more remarkable, because it was occasioned by an almost universal complaint from the inhabitants of parishes, on *the noisome and sickly influence of Churches and cemeteries.* It is asserted, in the preamble, that "daily complaints are made on the infectious effect of the parish cemeteries, especially when the heats of summer have increased the exhalations; then the air is so corrupted, that the most necessary aliments will only keep a few hours in the neighbouring houses: this proceeds either from the soil being so completely saturated that it cannot retain or absorb any longer the putrescent dissolution, or from the too circumscribed extent of the ground for the number of dead annually interred. The same spot is repeatedly used; and by the carelessness of those who inter the dead, the graves are, perhaps, often re-opened too soon." The provisions of the act, in nineteen articles, are absolute, and admit of no exceptions:

First. All cemeteries and churchyards in the city of Paris were to be closed, and to remain unoccupied for the space of *five years,* or longer, if thought necessary by proper officers and physicians.

Second. Eight cemeteries were to be established forthwith, at a distance from the suburbs; each to be of a size proportionate to the number of parishes to which it should belong, and to be fenced with

a stone wall eight feet in height; an oratory chapel to be erected in the centre, and a small dwelling for the keeper, at the gate; the graves not to be marked by stones; and epitaphs, or inscriptions, to be placed on the walls.

Third. To facilitate the transportation of bodies, there was to be a conveniently situated house of deposit for every cemetery; the walls of it to be four feet high, with iron spikes on them; the building six feet high, surmounted with a dome, open at top: one or two rooms to be connected with each place of deposit, where clergymen, selected in rotation, by the rector of the parish, might have charge of the bodies until removed.

Fourth. Every day, at two o'clock in the morning, from the first April to the first October, and from four A. M. from October first, to April first, the bodies were to be carried from the deposit to the cemetery, in a hearse, covered with a pall, and drawn by two horses; and the hearse to be attended by one or more clergymen, and some torch bearers, who were to be grave-diggers. In this decree there were no regulations for proprietors of vaults, dignitaries of the Church, or public officers; except that, for the sum of two thousand livres, paid to the parish, a body might be consigned to the family vault in a church, if the coffin were of lead: and that the high Ecclesiastics might have their burial in the same manner.

In 1790, the National Assembly passed a law, commanding all towns and villages to discontinue the use of their old burial places, and to form others at a distance from their habitations. An imperial decree was issued in 1804, ordering high ground to be chosen for cemeteries, and every corpse to be interred at a depth of at least five or six feet. Another decree, in 1811, still in force, ordained a company of undertakers, to whom the whole business of interment is consigned, who have also arranged funerals in six classes, and established a tariff of expenses. The cemeteries of Paris are four in number, *Pere-la-chaise*, *Montmarte*, *Vaugirard*, and *Mont Parnasse*. The French Government has therefore shown itself pre-eminently attentive to the health, and consequently, to the happiness of its members. Commissions were 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; whilst in almost every other country, the putrefactive process, emanating from those who have gone to their last homes, is allowed to accumulate in the very midst of the habitations of the living, and to form the nucleus of increase, if not the origin, of the most malignant diseases!

In America, the subject has attracted attention. The Board of Health in the city of New York, 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. The extract is from the report of the Commissioners to the Board of Health, drawn up by Dr. Miller:—

"The interment of dead bodies within the city *ought to be prohibited.* A vast mass of decaying animal matter, produced by the superstition of interring dead bodies near the churches, and which has been accumulating for a long lapse of time, is now deposited in many of the most populous parts of the city. It is impossible that such a quantity of these animal remains, even if placed at the greatest depth of interment commonly practised, should continue to be inoffensive and safe. It is difficult, if not impracticable, to determine to what distance around, the matter extricated during the progress of putrefaction, may spread; and by pervading the ground, tainting the waters, and perhaps emitting noxious exhalations into the atmosphere, do great mischief. But if it should be decided still to persist in the practice of interments within the city, it ought to be judged necessary to order the envelopment of the bodies in some species of calcareous earth, either quick lime or chalk. The present burial grounds might serve extremely well for grove and forest trees, and thereby, instead of remaining receptacles of putrefying matter and hot-beds of miasmata, might be rendered useful and ornamental to the city. This growing evil must be corrected at some period, for it is increasing and extending, by daily aggregation, to a mass already very large, and the sooner it is arrested the less violence will be done to the feelings and habits of our fellow citizens."

The following extract from the *Scottish Pilot*, published in Edinburgh, Sep., 1840, shews that the subject is attracting attention in Scotland. "From the resolution which has been lately passed by the West Kirk Session, prohibiting sabbath funerals, coupled with the general tone and temper which pervaded the meeting, held last week in Dr. Peddie's church, I think it is highly probable that measures will be shortly taken to put a complete extinguisher upon such tyrannical proceedings, by establishing a new cemetery in this city. Our public spirited countrymen, in Glasgow, have set us an example in this matter which we should do well to follow. They have lately taken measures for establishing a new cemetery in the south part of the city, which I believe is to be called "The South Necropolis." The principles on which this intended place of sepulture are to be founded, seem well calculated to meet the approbation and

gain the substantial support of the public. There are to be, I believe, about 2000 separate layers, or places of interment, varying in price from £1. to £6. The price to be paid by weekly instalments, proportionate to the price of the place of interment purchased. By this plan the artisan and respectable tradesman, &c., by paying for a short time 3*d*., 6*d*., or 1*s*. per week, may procure, for their *own private and exclusive use*, a piece of ground wherein to bury their beloved relations and friends, on *any day of the week* that suits their convenience; and where their remains may repose in peace, without being liable, as at present, *to be disturbed and exposed to view in order to make room for some new tenant of the tomb.*"

The example just given by several Princes of Europe, and the increase of cemeteries in the populous towns and cities of Great Britain, justify the hope that the custom of placing cemeteries at a distance from cities and towns, will be re-established. At Vienna, there are no cemeteries in the neighbourhood of churches. The Empress, Maria Theresa, established a public cemetery beyond the capital. The Chancellor, D' Agnesseau, whose name alone is an eulogy, desired to be buried in the cemetery of Auteuil. The promotion of such enlightened views is the design of the publication of this pamphlet.

CHAPTER II.

Various statements and facts from different Nations, shewing the evils of burying the dead in Towns and Cities, and especially in and near Places of Public Worship.

The necessity of removing burial places to a distance from the habitations of men, has been felt by various nations, in different ages. It is founded upon the dangers which arise from the exhalations of animal decomposition.

The vast number of burying places within the bills of mortality of the city of London, 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.

Towards the latter period of the government of Athens, Sophocles found no tombs in that city; although it was besieged by the Spartans; and Sulpitius, at a far less remote period, could not obtain there a sepulchre for Marcellus.

Van Epsen assures us that the Christian Emperors always censured the custom of burying in cities; they feared contagion: *Imperatores Christiani sanctitatem civitatum violari credebant per corpora mortuorum, quod nimio suo fœtore civitates infecerunt.*

Non defunctorum causa, sed vivorum inventa est sepultura, ut corpora et visu et odore fœdo amoverentur.—SENECA.

In the Theodosian Code, A. D. 381, is the following law:—*Omnia quæ supra terram urnis clausa vel sarcofagis corpora detinentur extra urbem delata ponantur, ut et humanitatis instar exhibeant, et relinquant incolarum domicilio sanctitatem.*

The Council of Auxerre, in A. D. 585, decreed, *Non licet in baptisterio corpora sepelire.*

Chrysostome informs us, *(Hom.* 84,*)* that cemeteries were not permitted in cities, because the presence or vicinity of the dead would not only contaminate pure air, but incommode the inhabitants by the effluvia they would occasion. *Nullum in civitate sepulchrum struitur.*

In the early ages, burial in Churches had been expressly forbidden, or even inhumation in cities. But, by the gradual increase of a fatal condescension, the evil has arrived at a height that demands attention. Cemeteries, instead of being beyond our walls, are among our habitations, and spread a fetid odour even into the neighbouring houses. *The very churches have become cemeteries.* The burial of Christians in an open place, set apart for the purpose, is considered a disgrace; and neither the interruption of the holy offices, occasioned by the repeated interments, nor the smell of the earth, embued with putrescence, and so often moved; nor the indecent state of the pavement of our churches, which is not even as solid as the public street, nor our repugnance to consign to the house of the Lord the impure bodies of men worn out with vice and crimes, can check the vanity of the great, whose empty titles and escutcheons must be hung on our pillars for the sake of their empty distinctions, or of the commonalty, who must ape the great. Death at least should level all men; but its lessons are lost, and the dearest of interests, self preservation, must yield to the reigning foible. The civil law could not but agree on this point with our religious canons, because the preservation of the lives of the members of a community is a duty of the first magnitude; *and it suffices to enter our churches, to be convinced of the baneful effects of the fetid exhalations in them. (Ordinance of the Archbishop of Toulouse concerning interment in Churches.)*

The following facts, selected from many contained in the valuable work to which the Author is indebted for the principal materials of this Pamphlet, speak volumes against the practices which are the subject of animadversion.

The first is taken from the *Cyclopædia of practical Medicine*, p. 356. art. *Plague*: and the other is an extract from a "*Tour through Germany, by the Rev. Dr. Render*," inserted in the American Gazette of Health, No. 1, p. 2:—

"An American merchant ship was lying at anchor in Wampoa Roads, 16 miles from Canton. One of her crew died of dysentery. He was taken on shore to be buried. No disease of any kind had occurred in the ship from her departure from America, till her arrival in the river Tigris. Four men accompanied the corpse and two of them began to dig a grave. Unfortunately, they began in a spot where a human body had been buried two or three months previously. The instant the spade went through the lid of the coffin, a most dreadful effluvium issued forth, and the two men fell down nearly lifeless. It was with the greatest difficulty their companions could approach near enough to drag them from the spot, and fill up the place with earth. The two men then recovered a little, and with assistance reached the boat and returned on board. On the succeeding morning, they presented the following symptoms: very acute head-ache, with a sense of giddiness and dimness of sight (which had existed more or less from the moment of opening the grave): eyes of a peculiar muddy appearance; oppression about the præcordia; dull heavy pain in the regions of the heart and liver, with slight palpitation at times, and fluttering pulse. On the fourth day from the commencement of the attack, numerous petechiæ appeared over the breast and arms, and in one of the patients, a large bubo formed in the right groin, and another in the axilla of the same side, which speedily ran to suppuration. To one, the disease proved fatal on the evening of the fourth day; to the other, on the morning of the fifth! One of the two men, not immediately engaged in digging the grave, was attacked on the eighth day from his being on shore. The symptoms resembled those in the preceding cases. For three days previously to the avowed attack of illness, there had been pain and enlargement of one of the inguinal glands, which at the period he was visited, had acquired the size of a hen's egg; and early in the disease, the breast and arms were covered with petechiæ. By active treatment this person recovered; as likewise did the fourth man, who had slight indisposition of no decided character."

How pernicious the burying in churches and chapels is to a congregation, will appear from the following serious instance of the consequences resulting from it. My readers will, I hope, permit me to suppress the real names of the clergyman, and the place where this event occurred.

"In the month of July, 17—, a very corpulent lady died at ——. Before her death, she begged as a particular favor, to be buried in the parochial church. She had died on the Wednesday, and on the following Saturday was buried, according to her desire. The weather at the time was very hot, and a great drought had prevailed. The succeeding Sunday, a week after the lady had been buried, the Protestant clergyman had a very full congregation, upwards of *nine hun-*

dred persons attending, that being the day for administering the Holy Sacrament. It is the custom in Germany, that when people wish to receive the Sacrament, they neither eat nor drink until the ceremony is over. The clergyman consecrates the bread and wine, which is uncovered during the ceremony. There were about one hundred and eighty communicants. A quarter of an hour after the ceremony, before they had quitted the church, *more than sixty of the communicants were taken ill: several died in the most violent agonies;* others of a more vigorous constitution survived by the help of medical assistance. A most violent consternation prevailed among the whole congregation, and throughout the town, and it was concluded the wine had been poisoned. The sacristan, and several others belonging to the vestry, were put in irons. The persons arrested underwent very great hardships: during the space of a week they were confined in a dungeon, and some of them were put to the torture; but they persisted in their innocence.

On the Sunday following, the magistrates ordered that a chalice of wine, uncovered, should be placed for the space of an hour, upon the altar: the hour had scarcely elapsed, *when they beheld the wine filled with myriads of insects*—by tracing whence they came, it was perceived, by the rays of the sun, that, *they issued from the grave of the lady who had been buried the preceding fortnight!* The people not belonging to the vestry, were dismissed, and four men were employed to open the vault and coffin; in doing this, two of them dropped down and expired on the spot! the other two were only saved by the utmost exertions of medical talent. It is beyond the power of words to describe the horrid appearance of the corpse when the coffin was opened. The whole was an entire mass of putrefaction; and it was now clearly perceived, that the numerous insects, together with the effluvia which had issued from the body, had caused the pestilential infection, which was a week before attributed to poison. It is but justice to add, that on this discovery, the accused persons were liberated, and every atonement made by the magistrates and clergyman for their misguided conduct."

Dr. Haguenot, of the University of Montpelier, is the first among the moderns who strenuously exerted himself against the custom of burying in churches. He was restrained from publishing his views from apprehensions that he should not succeed in convincing others, but the following catastrophe determined him to break silence, which, if prolonged, would have become culpable:—

On the 17th August, 1744, at six o'clock in the evening, Wm. Boudou, a layman, was buried in one of the common graves of the parish church of Notre Dame, at Montpelier; Peter Balsalgette, a street porter, was employed as grave digger; he had scarcely descended into the grave when he was seen to be convulsed, and he soon fell down motionless. Joseph Sarrau offered to draw out the unhappy man,—he descended, holding by a rope; he had scarcely seized the dress of the street-porter when he became insensible—he was drawn up half dead. In a short time he recovered his senses, but he experienced a kind of vertigo and numbness, the forerunners of

convulsions and faintings, which displayed themselves a quarter of an hour afterwards; during the night he felt weak — his whole body trembled, and he experienced palpitations which were removed by bleeding and cordials; he was for a long time pale and emaciated, and throughout the city bore the name of "*The Resuscitated.*"

This sad event did not prevent John Molinier from exposing himself with a similar zeal, to save the street-porter,—but scarcely had he entered the grave, than feeling himself suffocating, he gave signs to be drawn up and supported, he came up so weak and so faint that a moment's delay would have been fatal. Robert Molinier, brother of the last, stronger and more robust, thought he might brave the danger, and gratify the kind feeling by which he was influenced; but he fell a victim to his temerity, and died as soon as he reached the bottom of the grave! This tragical scene was terminated by the death of Charles Balsalgette, brother of the street-porter, who remained in the grave. As he was obliged to arrange the body of Robert Molinier, he stayed longer than he ought, and he was forced to get out. He thought he could safely descend a second time, by placing between his teeth a handkerchief, dipped in Hungary water; this precaution was useless—he staggered to the ladder, and used every effort to ascend, but, at the third step, he fell back lifeless.

Notwithstanding the most earnest entreaties by priests and others, no one could afterwards be found willing to risk the danger of withdrawing from the grave the bodies of the victims—they were taken out by hooks, and their clothes exhaled a disgusting odour.

Dr. Haguenot was commissioned to examine and report upon the nature and qualities of this destructive vapour. With this intention, he went several times to the Church of Notre Dame, and made the following experiments:—

First.—He had the grave opened,—a very fetid odour issued from it, which impregnated linen, thread, even glass bottles and clothes, with a cadaverous odour.

Second.—Lighted paper, chips, and tarred rope, placed at the opening of the grave, were entirely extinguished.

Third.—Cats and dogs thrown into this grave, were strongly convulsed, and expired in two or three minutes,—birds, in some seconds.

Fourth.—The mephitic vapour from the grave, was collected and preserved in bottles, and six weeks afterwards submitted to the same experiments; it had lost none of its destructive properties.

These experiments were made in the presence of a Committee of scientific gentlemen, and demonstrate the danger arising from cadaverous vapours, and consequently that of interment in churches With the view of convincing those yet doubting, Dr. Haguenot adds the following considerations:—

Air, to support animal life, ought to possess all its activity. Vapours from wine, in a state of fermentation, from bodies, in a state of putrefaction, &c. deprive the air of its

respirable property. He attributed the malignity of the small pox, which had proved very destructive that same year at Montpelier, to emanations from dead bodies.*

Dr. Maret points out the evils which may be produced by animal exhalations :—

A mild catarrahl fever, he says, prevailed at Saulieu, in Burgundy, in 1773. The body of a very fat man was buried in the parish church of St. Saturnin ; twenty-three days afterwards, a grave was opened by the side of the former, to bury a woman there, who had died of the same disease. A very fetid odour immediately filled the church, and affected all those who entered. In letting down the body, a rope slipped, by which the coffin was shaken—a discharge of sanies followed, the odour of which greatly annoyed the assistants :—of *one hundred and seventy persons* who entered the church, from the opening of the grave until the interment, *one hundred and forty-nine* were attacked with a malignant putrid fever, which had some resemblance to the reigning catarrahl fever, but the nature and intensity of the symptoms left no doubt that the malignity was owing *to the infection of the cathedral.*

The Curate of Arnay-le-duc, after having breathed the infected air arising from the dead body of one of his parishioners when he was performing the funeral rites, contracted a putrid disease, which reduced him to the last extremity,

A nobleman of a village, two miles from Nantes, having died, it was thought proper, with a view of giving a more distinguished place to the coffin, to remove several others, and among them, that of one of his relations, who had died three months before ; a most fetid odour spread through the church : five of the assistants died a little after. Four persons who had removed the coffins, also died, and six curates, who were present at the ceremony, nearly perished.

The Abbe Rozier, in his *Observations de Physique*, &c. Tome I, relates that a person at Marseilles had ordered a piece of land to be dug up for a plantation of trees. During the plague of 1720, many dead bodies had been buried in this place ; the workmen had scarcely commenced their labours, when three of them were suffocated without the possibility of recovery, and the others with difficulty escaped.

Lancisi makes several reflections upon the subject on which we are treating, in his work upon the dangers to which the neighbourhood of marshes is exposed. Ramazzina assures us, that those who dig graves do not live long ; the vapours which they respire soon destroy them. The same author, in a well known work upon the diseases of artizans, mentions all the diseases by which those who empty cess-

* In the effects of these exhalations we may obtain an explanation of certain phenomena which some authors have considered as miraculous, Gregory, of Tours, relates that a robber, having dared to enter the tomb of St. Helius, this prelate retained him, and prevented him from getting out. The same author informs us that a poor man, not having a stone to cover the place in which one of his children had been buried, took away one which closed the opening of an old tomb, in which rested, without doubt, says Gregory of Tours, the remains of some holy personage. The unhappy father was immediately and simultaneously struck dumb, blind, and deaf. These facts may be attributed to mephitic vapours.

pools and sewers, are ordinarily attacked. Mons. Pare saw, at Paris, five young and robust men die in a ditch, which they were to have emptied, in the Fauxbourg St. Honore. George Hanneus relates a fact nearly similar, which took place at Rendsburg, in the Dutchy of Holstein; four persons died in a well which had been a long time shut up, and the waters of which were corrupted. A young child also was suffocated at Florence, in a pit of manure, into which it had fallen; another person, who ran to its assistance, also perished; and a dog thrown in was suffocated. Sennert speaks of a disease called *Febris Hungarica*, which broke out in the armies of the Emperor, and spread like a contagious disease throughout all Europe. This sort of fever, often happens in camps, when troops remain a long time in an unhealthy situation during the summer. Dr. Pringle observed, that the same thing happens in hospitals badly managed and very full of patients, as well as in prisons which are too much crowded.

Haller, in his Physiology, has given an extract of all that has been written upon this subject. Tissol, in his "*Avis au Peuple*," has also presented these objects in a very striking point of view; he complains of the dangerous custom of interment in the interior of churches.

Ramazzina relates that a sexton, having descended into a grave to strip a corpse, which had recently been deposited there, was suffocated and fell dead on the spot. At Riom, in Auvergne, the earth was removed from an ancient cemetery, with the view of embellishing the city. In a short time after, an epidemic disease arose, which carried off many persons, particularly of the poorer class, and the mortality was especially prevalent in the neighbourhood of the cemetery. Six years before, a similar event had caused an epidemic in Ambert, a small town in the same province. *Such a train of facts leaves no doubt of the infection produced by the exhalations of dead bodies.*

We learn from Haller, that a church was infected by the exhalations of a single body, twelve years after burial—and that this corpse occasioned a very serious disease in a whole convent.

Raulin relates, that the opening of a corpse occasioned a dreadful epidemic in the plain of Armagnac. Sensitive and nervous persons frequently became ill, and fainted after having been attacked with cadaverous exhalations when walking along a cemetery.

Workmen were digging vaults in the church of St. Eustache, in Paris, which compelled them to displace some bodies, and to place those which came afterwards in a vault which had been long closed. Some children who went to

catechism in the place were taken ill there; several adults also were similarly affected. Dr. Ferret, Regent of the Faculty of Paris, was directed to report upon it. He found the respiration of the patients difficult, the action of the brain disordered, the heart beating irregularly, and, in some, convulsive movements of the arms and legs.

A place, upon which a convent for nuns of St. Genevieve at Paris had been situated, was afterwards built upon, and converted into shops. All those who lived in them first, especially very young persons, exhibited nearly the same symptoms as those above mentioned; which were attributed, with justice, to the exhalations of dead bodies interred in this ground.

Dr. Rush, in enumerating the causes of yellow and bilious fevers in Philadelphia, says, they are as follows: exhalations from marshes, and from *animal and vegetable substances in a state of putrefaction*, bilge water, stagnating rain water, duck ponds, hog sties, locusts, weeds cut down, and exposed to heat and moisture near a house; and the matter which usually stagnates in the gutters, common sewers, and alleys of cities, and in the sinks of butchers. Of the ill effects of the latter, the Dr. states:—A gentleman in Philidelphia, who had a sink in his kitchen, lost a number of cats and dogs by convulsions; at length one of his servants was affected by the same disease and died. This led him to investigate the cause, and he traced it to the sink, which on its being cleared and closed up, was completely deprived of its unhealthiness. *Colonial Mag., Oct.*, 1840.

When Caspar Hauser passed on one occasion, in the autumn of 1828, near St. John's church yard, in the vicinity of *Nuremberg*, the smell of the dead bodies, of which his companion had no perception, affected him so powerfully, that he was seized with ague, and began to shudder. The ague was soon succeeded by a feverish heat, which at length caused a violent perspiration, by which his linen was thoroughly wetted. When he returned towards the city-gate he said he felt better, yet he complained that his sight was obscured thereby. What would have been the effect produced upon this being, of so delicate a nervous susceptibility, had he passed by some of the crowded burial places, many of which are in the most thickly-peopled districts of London? Although such remarkable effects are not produced upon people in general, yet the same gases are eliminated from the thousands of dead bodies in London, in all stages of decomposition, which become mixed with the air, and are breathed by the people, incorporated with their blood, and thus the very putrefactions of the dead become part of the fluids of the living! In the case of Caspar, a living chemical test was applied, of such exquisite sensibility, that the presence and noxious qualities of these agents were demonstrated. The difference between the effects produced upon him and upon other human beings is a difference rather of degree than of kind. The ema-

nations are equally poisonous, equally destructive to health; but most persons are less sensitive, and therefore they are better able to withstand them than Caspar.

The two states of decomposition in the dead body, says Dr. Macartney, which render the animal substance most dangerous, are, that which takes place *immediately after death*, and *the extreme degree of putrefaction*. G. A. Walker, Esq., the Author of the work from which the principal materials of this Pamphlet are drawn, adduces the following cases, in confirmation of these positions.—

In the month of June, in the year 1825, 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 the 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—he recovered; he had been in excellent health up to the instant when he was exposed *to this malaria*.

Mr. M——, 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 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; 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 recognized in 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 voluntary 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 seven months, a grave digger was employed in preparing a grave close by a tier of coffins; he had dug about four 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 removed.

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—his death was attributed to that cause. He was buried, I believe, at the expense of the parish; his wife and children are now in Cleveland Street Workhouse.

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.

In the summer of 1757, five cottagers were digging on the heathy mountain above Eyam, in Derbyshire, which was the place of graves after the church yard became too narrow a repository. These men came to something which had the appearance of having once been linen; conscious of their situation, they instantly buried it again. *In a few days they all sickened of a putrid fever, and three of the five died.* The disorder was contagious, and proved fatal to numbers. The plague had previously been in the village.

The following important fact was communicated 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 changes of air, and the best medical assistance that could be obtained.

On the 10th of July last, I was called to attend a widow, named Adams, the 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, near the Strand!* She died of typhus, accompanied with symptoms of extreme putrescency. Can the cause be problematical?

The following account of two men, suffocated in a Grave in Aldgate, September, 1838, is well known, and deserves to be preserved as a warning to posterity.

On Friday evening, September 7th, 1838, an inquest was held in the Committee Room of the Workhouse of the parish of St. Botolph's, Aldgate, on the bodies of Thomas Oakes, the grave digger belonging to Aldgate church, and Edward Luddett, a fish dealer, at Billingsgate market, who came by their deaths on that forenoon, under the following circumstances. Mr. Edward Cheeper, the master of the workhouse, stated, that about eleven o'clock, while passing through Church Passage, Aldgate, he heard the loud screams of a female in the church yard, and he instantly hastened to the spot, and looking into the grave, about twenty feet deep, on the North side of the church yard, he saw the deceased grave digger, Oakes, lying on his back apparently dead. A ladder was instantly procured, and the deceased young man, Luddett, who by this time, with several others, had been attracted to the spot, instantly volunteered to descend to the assistance of Oakes. On his reaching the bottom of the grave, witness called out to him to place the ropes under the arms of Oakes; *and the instant he stooped* to raise the head of Oakes, he appeared as if struck with a cannon ball, and fell back with his head in a different direction to his fellow sufferer, and appeared instantly to expire. King, the former grave digger, made two or three ineffectual attempts to descend, but so foul was the air, that he was obliged to be drawn up again, and it was full twenty-five minutes, or half an hour, before the bodies were taken up by means of a hook attached to a rope. Every possible exertion had been made to recover the men, and the conduct of the medical gentleman, Mr. Jones, who promptly attended, was beyond all praise.

The following facts are very striking:—

At *Valladolid*, during the war in Spain, the palace of the "Holy Inquisition" was appointed for the barracks of a British regiment. Under the colonnade was a well, from which water could be drawn into the uppermost stories. The water had a sweetish decayed taste; but for the want of better, the soldiers used it both for drinking and cooking. No other regiment in the garrison was so unhealthy; *and the prevailing disease was putrid fever, of which there was not the slightest symptom in any af the other regiments.* At last the reason was discovered; skeletons were found in the well, and several were observed with pieces of the flesh adhering to the bones. If the chlorides of soda or of lime had been then known, or if that which had been long previously recommended, had been employed, the mortality from this fever, and from putro-adynamic dysentry, would not have been so great as it proved during the Peninsular campaigns,—*Copeland's Dict. Prac. Med.*

A correspondent in the Farmer's Magazine, for May, 1839, says,

"To show the great power of cattle in discovering nauseous smells, the writer of this article cannot avoid mentioning a curious circumstance that was a short time since related to him by a gentleman of undoubted veracity. A cow, belonging to the above gentleman, was found dead in a ditch of the pasture, and was deeply buried there: about two years after this, a trough was fixed in the field near this spot, and supplied by a small run of water; the cattle refused to drink, or even to come near the water. On seeing this the gentleman made his men dig about the place, to see if there were anything particular in the soil, when they discovered the dry bones of the animal that had two years previously been buried there. The bones were removed, two or three cart loads of the soil carried away, and replaced by fresh. *After this the cattle drank freely.* Had the supply of water passed over the remains of the dead animal, we could easily imagine the cause of this aversion; but this was not the case, as the water came in an open gutter, above the trough, and the animal was buried below the trough, and lower down the hill."

At the eastern side of St. Clement's Church a pump was formerly fixed; this has been removed, and a brick erection placed upon its site; the well was sunk in the year 1807, but *the water became 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 particles 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.

From information recently obtained, it appears that several persons have been buried near this spot, and that in particular, the coffins of two very respectable inhabitants of the parish, as soon as let down into the graves, sunk below the surface of the water which had percolated into them. It is even stated that the deceased, from a wish to be buried in a watery grave, and knowing the situation, had particularly fixed upon it for the interment of their bodies. Can it be surprising, then, that *the water of this well should have become impregnated and corrupted?*

The irrational creatures rebuke man in his treatment of the dead, both in Heathen and Christian countries. Thousands do not "die like men,"—there is too much reason to add, that they "sink below the brutes;" and the noblest animal is treated by his fellows infinitely worse, in his state of non-resistance, than the commonwealth of animals, termed by man instinctive, treat their dead.

Mr. O. Smith has furnished us with an instance in illustration of this remark:—

Walking on Coombe Down, near Bath, some years since, he observed a sheep busily employed in arranging a piece of old canvass; his curiosity was excited by the apparent anxiety of the creature; he stepped up, threw the canvass some distance, and found he had un-

covered a dead lamb; he retired some paces, the sheep brought back the canvas in her mouth, and, very carefully, again covered the object of her solicitude and affection.

"To Dr. Williams, who did carry me into his garden, where he hath abundance of grapes: and he did show me how a dog that he hath, do kill all the cats that come thither to kill his pigeons, and do afterwards bury them, and do it with so much care, that they shall be quite covered; and if the tip of the tail hangs out, he will take up the cat again, and dig the hole deeper; which is very strange; and he tells me that he do believe that he hath killed above one hundred cats."—*Pepy's Diary, Sep.* 11, 1661.

Every school boy will remember with what diligence birds exert themselves to eject the dead from their nests. I have seen rooks and starlings labouring, apparently with the greatest anxiety, to get rid of a dead offspring; and in some instances, where they could not effect their object, they have left the remaining young ones to their fate.

I have often noticed a couple of sturdy bees, bring out a dead one from the hive, and support it for some distance, before allowing it to fall to the earth. These little creatures, thus anxious to remove their dead from the neighbourhood of their dwellings, offer, in their instinctive efforts, a severe commentary on the conduct of, and a lesson to, the "proud reasoner" man.

CHAPTER III.

State of many burial grounds in the Metropolis and the Country—Various observations to show the propriety and importance of the discontinuance of the present method of sepulture—Authorities—Objections answered—Value of new Cemeteries properly situated and conducted—Importance of sanatory regulations—The subject connected with the interests of philanthropy and religion—Duty of an enlightened Government—Concluding appeal.

The burial grounds of the Metropolis, and many cities and towns, are so overcharged with dead, and even saturated with the products of putrefaction, that our comparative freedom from pestilence can only be ascribed to the natural, or acquired power of resistance of its inhabitants; the favorable seasons, diminished temperature, but more especially to a merciful Providence. It is impossible, in this pamphlet, to refer to many of these places, but the following from Mr. Walker's book, will shew the necessity of reform in London.

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 surrrounded 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 (if open) 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 aggravated form, has attacked by far the majority of the residents, and death has made among them the most destructive ravages.

Burying Ground, Portugal Street. The effluvia from this ground, at certain periods, is so offensive, that persons living in the back of Clement's Lane, are compelled to keep their windows closed; even the walls of the ground which adjoin the yards of these 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 present year, 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 into the "Green Ground," 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 the "Green 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; 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 in 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. *(Clement's Lane.)* 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 was covered only by a few inches of earth; a sewer runs angularly across this "burying place." A few years ago, the Commissioners of Sewers, for some cause, interfered,—and ultimately, 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.

Drury Lane. 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 substratum 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; 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.

St. Giles'. This parish has the melancholy notoriety of originating the plague in 1665. It was the fashion, in those days, to ascribe the visitation to *imported contagion.* I will not pause to consider, 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, p. 157. expresses himself strongly on the condition of this church yard:—"I have," says he, "in the church yard of St. Giles', 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 with 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 light 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."

Whitechapel Church.—The vaults *underneath this church*, have been suffered to fall into a very dilapidated state; and 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 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 of what were once gay, perhaps virtuous and eminent, are treated with ruthless indifference. They are exhumed by shovelsfull, and disgustingly exposed to the pensive observation 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 in 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 shallow,—*some entire coffins, indeed, are to be found within a foot and a half of the surface!*

Bunhill Fields, *City Road.*—This old established dissenting burial ground contains about seven acres. It was originally let on lease to Mr. Tickell; it was first opened in 1665. More than one hundred thousand interments are

supposed to have taken place in it. The monument of the Rev. John Bunyan contains the following inscription :—

JOHN BUNYAN,
AUTHOR OF THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS,
OBT. 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.*

SPA FIELDS.—This ground was originally taken as 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.

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.

ST. OLAVE'S, bottom of Tooley Street, consecrated in 1583.—A grave digger, named Stewart, died of typhus, in May last. His wife was buried with him, who also died of typhus.

NEW BUNHILL FIELDS, *New Kent Road.*—The burial ground and vault 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 vaults connected with it. Yet, around this tainted atmosphere, many houses are erected and boards are placed offering ground to be let upon building leases !

BUCKINGHAM CHAPEL, about three minutes walk from the Palace.—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 seven 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 permitted on a Sunday.

I could not but be 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.

From *official* documents it 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

In a communication from J. Finlaison, Esq., Actuary of the National Debt Office, to T. H. Lister, Esq., Registrar General, dated February 2, 1839, it is stated, that the *annual number* of burials in England and Wales, upon an average of five years, is 335,968. *Can we then wonder, that disease and death are making frightful ravages, when millions of human bodies are putrefying in the very midst of us.?*

This enquiry naturally proceeds from the metropolis to the country. Physically, politically, and morally, when "the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint;" (Isaiah 1. 3.) and the prevalence of the unnatural custom, under animadversion, in the metropolis, may confirm the conjecture of its probable existence in the provinces, the colonies, and foreign dependencies of the empire. The writer's observation has lead him to apprehend that this evil is of general and almost universal prevalence. Perhaps some brief references to places which have passed under his personal notice, may awake the attention of readers to institute enquiry upon this subject in their own vicinity.

Bourn, *Lincolnshire.* This is the writer's place of residence. He has heard frequent complaints of the state of the church yard, which is small for the extent of the parish and has long been in a very crowded state. In January, 1834, and in 1838, a fever prevailed which carried off many of the inhabitants; can it be improper to suggest an enquiry whether the air, or the water of the river passing very near the burial ground, is not impregnated with mischievous qualities?* Steps have been taken to enlarge the ground, but at present without success: it will afford the author great satisfaction when this object is accomplished.

Boston.—On a recent visit to this town the author observed a grave near the church, and noticed its depth; it

* See pages 26, 27.

could be scarcely three feet. Some large pieces of coffin wood very little decayed, lay near the spot, two coffins were distinctly seen, and some children were playing near it; an unpleasant effluvia was perceived, which I did not lose for some time. A few hours afterwards the funeral was seen; it was a child about twelve years old, the coffin carried by children about the same age. How probable the increase of diseases from such interments. As if to mock the public, some houses, looking into this burial place, are called *Paradise Row!* There is a larger cemetery in the vicinity of the town.

Spalding.—One of the Baptist chapels in this town has a very small burial ground attached. The chapel has been rebuilt, and the foundation laid over the dead. The builder, in a recent conversation, expressed his fears for the future security of the edifice. Surely there needs reform in these things! The church yard is very crowded.

Wisbeach.—The church yard is near the centre of the town, and until very recently, was traversed by three public paths; thousands of town and country people continually passing and repassing through "this house appointed for all living."—It has been closed for a few years. A beautiful cemetery has been opened, and its public spirited proprietors have given an example worthy of imitation by every provincial town in the united kingdom.

Coventry.—The writer resided in this city nearly seven years. The burial grounds of the two principal churches are in the centre of the city, and have been but little enlarged, though most probably used for sepulture more than a thousand years. The burial grounds of the dissenters are very small. There must be great need of a public cemetery in this city.

These references may be sufficient. Public attention is awakening to the subject, as may be inferred by the opening of new cemetries in the Metropolis, Liverpool, Manchester, Norwich, Nottingham, Newcastle upon Tyne, Wisbeach, &c.

The same error in reference to the location and crowded state of burial grounds, it is feared is prevalent in the Colonies, where, from the high temperature, the effects must be very injurious. The author, in his voyage to India, in thesummer, 1821, touched at Madeira, and he has now before him, his letter from that island, in which the following observations occur.—"The great church at Funchal is most magnificent, but unwholesome from the dead interred in it without coffins. We proceeded to the monastery of St. Francisco. Here the greatest magnificence was displayed; but alas! it appears like dressing a putrid corpse in rich attire. In one chapel of it which we saw,—*hundreds of human skulls*

formed the ceiling of the roof, and covered also a part of the walls. How similar the barbarity of the African Ashantees and the mistaken zeal of Popish Christians."

MOZAMBIQUE.—Of this City, the Colonial Magazine, July 1840, states:—"The cathedral is so crowded with dead bodies, buried immediately under the floor, that the air in it would be intolerable if it were not for the burning of incense."

INDIA greatly needs that spirit of reform here recommended.—Of the few European burying grounds which the writer has seen in Bengal and Orissa, he has no particular observation to make, except that they appear too small.—The Hindoo and Mussulman sepulture is too generally very slovenly performed. The dead, mostly buried without a coffin, and but slightly covered with earth, are easily disinterred by wild dogs, jackals, vultures, &c., thus infecting the air with disease and death. Some castes among the Hindoos burn their dead, burning being considered more respectable. From poverty, negligence, or covetousness, the dead are frequently exposed, being cast into the rivers. "The practice" says the late Rev. W. Ward, "of throwing dead bodies into the river, is, in many places, a dreadful nuisance; as, in case a body should float to the side of the river, and remain there, it will continue to infect the whole neighbourhood till the vultures, dogs, jackals, and other animals have devoured it. The throwing of dead bodies and other filth into the river Ganges, in the neighbourhood of large towns, makes it resemble a common sewer. Still the natives drink it with the greatest appetite, bathe in it every day to cleanse their bodies and their souls, and carry it to an immense distance, as the greatest imaginable treasure." Of the exposure of the dead in India, the writer has frequently been an eye witness, at Cuttack, and particularly at the Temple of Juggernaut. The scenes in this high place of Idolatry, beggar all description. Happy day for Hindostan when the knowledge of Christianity shall humanize and evangelize its teeming millions.

It is of great importance that the ancient custom of the Christian church should be restored; and what nations of Christendom should be so prompt to adopt it, as those which are most enlightened in their views of Christianity, and most liberal in their form of Government? It is scarcely necessary to enlarge our observations, upon the propriety and importance of the discontinuance of the present modes of interment in towns and cities. We all know (says Mr. Walker, in his valuable work,) how much the different modifications of the air influence the animal economy and the health of man. This element continually surrounds us

within and without; its action incessantly balances that of the fluids which tend to become rarefied, and to be decomposed; it increases the resistance of the solids; it insinuates itself into our humours, either by mixing with our aliments, or by penetrating through the pores of the membrane which lines the lungs after having combined with the halitus of the bronchi. It is equally certain that the qualities of the atmosphere depend upon a great number of causes which more or less concur to preserve its natural properties, or to supply it with factitious ones; to render it light or dense, pure or charged with heterogeneous principles, elastic or rare. The smallest insects, as well as the globes above us; meteors, seasons, the temperature of different climates, the number of inhabitants in a country, the practice of the arts, the operations of commerce, all act upon the air, and produce changes in it.

Air confined, heated, and deprived of its elasticity, is of itself dangerous from whatever body it proceeds, even if it results from the perspiration of persons in the best state of health. If the perspiration of the sick, and the exhalations of dead animals diffuse poisonous vapours; if each of these properties of itself can produce the most fatal consequences —to what dangers may we not be exposed by interment in churches, where the air is impregnated with the most dangerous materials, and where all the causes of contagion, elsewhere divided, are found combined? The atmosphere in churches is ordinarily moist and heavy—it acquires these qualities from the emanations of those who there assemble. The mixture of sepulchral exhalations, which necessarily penetrate through the layers of earth by which the bodies are covered, cannot fail to become injurious in a place where every thing tends to concentrate the deleterious vapours. There is another cause which increases the putridity of the air contained in churches, and that is, the necessity of frequently opening the tombs to inter in them new bodies, or to remove those which have been there deposited, when the ground is not sufficient for the burials. In these two cases they are obliged to be kept open a considerable time. The atmosphere is then charged with the noxious vapours from bodies which are only half decomposed, or the putrefaction which is recent.

The only remedy for evils which necessarily result from so pernicious a custom is the renewal of the air, whereas it is almost always stationary in churches; and, if even a portion of this fluid experiences any motion in them, the whole mass is never entirely displaced. These expressions may perhaps appear exaggerated—they may be attributed to a fear of contagion altogether imaginary; but it is humbly

presumed, that the facts, reasonings, and authorities here adduced, justify the salutary warning of this Cry from the Tombs.

The *authorities* are very ancient and numerous for that mode of disposing of the dead here advocated. Mr. Walker's volume, among many others, contains the following:—

A dreadful crime brought death into the world. Cain having killed his brother, thought to conceal his crime by covering the body with earth. After this dreadful example, men continued to *inhume* the dead in open deserts and uninhabited places. Abraham bought from the children of Heth, the cave of Hebron, where he deposited the corpse of Sarah; he himself was buried there, and Isaac, Rebecca, and Leah.*

The Roman law of the *Twelve Tables* expressly forbids the burning or burial of any dead body in the city. The terms were "*Hominem mortuum in urbe ne sepelito neve urito.*"†

"When I inter a dead body" says Seneca "though I never saw or knew the party when living; I deserve no merit for so doing, since I do but discharge an obligation which I owe to human nature."

In the second century the Christians had churches; their situation, but not their construction, are known. It was not till peace was restored to the church, that tombs were transferred to the cities.‡

Theodolphus, an Italian bishop, of Orleans, in the eighth century, eminently distinguished at that period, and highly esteemed by Charlemagne, complained, that *the churches of France had almost become cemeteries.*‖

Dr. Haguenot shows that the civil and ecclesiastical laws have always forbidden interment in churches. That at first cemeteries were chosen in country places, at a distance from towns—that the custom of inhumation in temples had gradually prevailed, but not without having several times been abolished, and that it is countenanced only because people have wished to confer honours upon certain Princes and Pontiffs—because ambitious laymen have offered considerable sums to enjoy this distinction; and finally, because the clergy have been more willing to relax the discipline of the Church, than to sacrifice pecuniary advantages.**

Dr. Navier inveighs with reason against the practice of *charnel houses*, in which the remnants of carcases and bones, still covered with putrefying flesh, are exposed, and the odour of which infects both churches and cities. These dangers would not be apprehended if the barbarous and unreasonable custom of burying, in the midst of the living,

---

* Gatherings from Grave Yards, p. 28. †30. ‡41. ‖54. **96.

thousands of the dead, which convey the germ of putrid and malignant diseases of every kind, were abolished.*

Chitelius has proved, that the air in churches, charged with the vapours that arise from tombs, readily contracts pernicious qualities in proportion to the extent of the place and the number of dead bodies in it; in addition to which, that the ground in which dead bodies have been left for a long time to putrify is so saturated with fetid particles, that whenever tombs are opened, accidents are likely to happen.†

Old Weever has the following quaint reflections. "You see by the premises how magnificent our ancients were in the ordering and expenses of their funerals; how sumptuous in their houses of death, or sepulchres; and how careful to preserve their dead carcases from putrefaction; for so much as the soule, saith Sandy's, knowing itself by Divine instinct immortal, doth desire that the body, her beloved companion, might enjoy as far as may be the like felicity, giving by erecting lofty monuments and those dues of funeral, all possible eternitie".

In large towns in England, and more especially in the Metropolis, it has become more difficult to find room for the dead than for the living. There are many church yards in which the soil has been raised *several feet above the level of the adjoining street*, by the constant accumulation of mortal matter; and there are others in which the ground is actually probed with a borer before a grave is opened! *In these things the most barbarous savages might reasonably be shocked at our barbarity.—(Quarterly Review*, Sept. 1819, p. 380.)‡

Hugh Latimer, Ex-Bishop of Worcester, in a sermon preached by him in Lincolnshire, in 1552, has the following passage:—"The citizens of Nain had their burying places without the city, which, no doubt, is a laudable thing; and I do marvel that London, being so great a city, hath not a burial place without: for no doubt it is an unwholesome thing to bury within the city, especially at such a time, when there be great sicknesses, and many die together. I think verily that many a man taketh his death in St. Paul's Church Yard! and this I speak of experience; for I myself, when I have been there on some mornings to hear the sermons, have felt such an ill-savoured unwholesome savour, that I was the worse for it a great while after; and I think no less—but it is the occasion of great sickness and disease."

Dr. Adam Clarke, in his Commentary on the raising from the dead the widow's son in the city of Nain, Luke vii.

---

* Gatherings from Grave Yards, p. 99. †109. ‡197.

v. 12—15, has strikingly illustrated and confirmed the above remarks. The Jews always buried their dead *without* the city, except those of the family of David. No burying places should be tolerated *within* cities or towns, much less in or about *churches* and *chapels*. This custom is excessively injurions to the inhabitants; and especially to those who frequent public worship in such chapels and churches. God, decency, and health, forbid this shocking abomination.*

Schoettgen says, "Others were accustomed to bury their dead *without* the city. We Christians, not only bury them *within* our cities, but receive them even into our *churches!* Hence many nearly lose their lives through the noxious effluvia."

Rosenmuller has the following sentiment.—"Both the Jews and other people had their burying places without the city:—*Et certe ita postulat ratio publicæ sanitatis, quæ multum lædi solet aura sepulchrorum:* and this the health of the public requires, which is greatly injured by the effluvia from graves."†

Mr. Walker declares, "From long observation I can attest, that churches and chapels situated in grave yards, and those especially, within whose walls the dead are interred, are perfectly unwholesome; and many, by attending such places, are shortening their passage to the house appointed for the living. What increases the iniquity of this abominable and deadly work, is, that the burying grounds attached to many churches and chapels are made a source of *private gain*. The whole of this preposterous conduct is as *indecorous* and *unhealthy*, as it is *profane*. Every man should know that the *gas* which is disengaged from putrid flesh, and particularly from a human body, is not only unfriendly to, but destructive of, animal life. Superstition first introduced a practice, which self-interest and covetousness continue to maintain.‡

Captain Marryat, in his "*Diary in America*," comments strongly upon the inhumanity of the Americans for suffering rail roads to pass through church yards. "Here, in Rhode Island, are the sleepers of the railway laid over the sleepers in death; here do they grind down the bones of their ancestors for the sake of gain, and consecrated earth is desecrated by the iron wheels, loaded with Mammon-seeking mortals. And this is the puritanical state of Rhode Island!"**

"The examples of the Old world," says Collison, in his *Cemetery Interment*, "have not been thrown away upon the inhabitants of the New, and the United States now possess

---

* Gatherings from Grave Yards, p. 209. †210. ‡210. **214.

cemeteries hardly inferior to the models after which they were formed. The provident arrangements which the Americans make in designing the plans of their towns and cities, always keeping in view the health, the comfort, and commercial conveniences of the inhabitants, induce a feeling of surprize that their sagacity should not have been earlier exercised with reference to the subject of cemetery interment."

An American publication, published a few years since, gives the following suggestion :—"Avoid, as much as possible, living near church yards. The putrid emanations arising from church yards are very dangerous ; and parish churches, in which many corpses are interred, become impregnated with an air so corrupted, especially in Spring, when the ground begins to grow warm, that it is prudent to avoid this evil, as it may be, and in some cases has been, one of the chief sources of putrid fevers, which are so prevalent at that season."

Civilians make sepulture but the law of nations, and others do found it, and discover it also in animals They that are so thick skinned as still to credit the story of the Phœnix, may say something for animal burning. More serious conjectures find some examples of sepulture in elephants, cranes, the sepulchral cells of pismires, and practice of bees, which civil society carrieth out their dead, and hath exequies if not interments.—*Sir Thomas Browne.*

As for ourselves, *our sorrow was greatly increased* because we were deprived of the melancholy satisfaction of interring our friends. Neither the darkness of the night could befriend us, nor could we prevail by prayers or by price.—*The epistle of the churches of Vienne and Lyons, to the brethren in Asia and Phrygia.* Euseb. iv. c. 1.

It was finely said by Cyrus, when taking farewell of his children, "As to my body, my sons, when life has forsaken it, enclose it neither in gold nor silver, nor any other matter whatsoever. Restore it immediately to the earth. Can it be more happy, than in being blended and in a manner incorporated with the benefactress and common mother of human kind ? "

Cicero's opinion was, that of the various modes of burial which have prevailed in the world, inhumation is the oldest ; and the records of history undoubtedly corroborate the notion.*

It might be expected, that the *poets* would not overlook this subject. The following extracts are interesting :—

---

* Speech of J. Fenwick, Esq., of Newcastle upon Tyne, relative to a new Cemetery in that town. Two Cemeteries have been established in that town since its publication. p. 2. 8.

The dead how sacred! Sacred is the dust
Of this heav'n-labour'd form, erect, divine!
This heav'n-assum'd majestic robe of earth,
HE deign'd to wear, who hung the vast expanse
With azure bright, and cloth'd the sun in gold.—*Young.*

————————And who would lay
His body in the city burial-place,
To be thrown up again by some rude sexton,
And yield its 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?
No, I will lay me in the village ground;
There are the dead respected.—*H. K. White.*

See yonder maker of the dead man's bed,
The sexton,—hoary-headed chronicle,
Of hard unmeaning face, down which ne'er stole
A gentle tear, with mattock in his hand
Digs through whole rows of kindred and acquaintance,
By far his juniors. Scarce a scull's cast up,
But well he knew its owner, and can tell
Some passage of his life.—Thus hand in hand
The sot has walk'd with death twice twenty years;
And yet ne'er younker on the green laughs louder,
Or clubs a smuttier tale:—When drunkards meet,
None sings a merrier catch, nor lends a hand
More willing to his cup.—Poor wretch! he minds not,
That soon some trusty brother of the trade
Shall do for him, what he has done for thousands.—*Blair.*

Hamlet. Why e'en so: and now my lady worm's! chapless, and knocked about the mazzard with a sexton's spade: Here's fine revolution, an' we had the trick to see't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at loggats with them? Mine ache to think on't.

Clown. This same scull, Sir, was Yorick's scull, the King's jester.

Hamlet. This?

Clown. E'en that.

Hamlet. Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, and most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kiss'd, I know not how oft!—*Shakspeare.*

Judge Story's admirable address at the dedication of the *Mount Auburn* cemetery, in America, contains two touching poetic thoughts, observing 'Poetry has told us the truth, in lines of transcending beauty and force, which find a response in every breast.'

"For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned;
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies;
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of nature cries;
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires!"

Who contemplating his last resting place, that is not ready to exclaim with the enthusiasm of the poet?

"Mine be the breezy hill, that skirts the down,
Where a green grassy turf is all I crave;
With here and there a violet bestrown—
Fast by a brook, or fountains murmuring wave,
And many an evening sun shine sweetly on my grave."

The affectionate attention to the graves of friends, in days gone by, has been noticed by the poet, and its disuse lamented.

"———O'er the recent graves to strew
Their offerings—rue and rose-mary flowers.
* * * * * *
These gentle rites
Pass'd out of use—now they are scarcely known;
And rarely in our cities may you meet
The tall larch, sighing in the burying place,
Or willow trailing low, its boughs to hide
The gleaming marble.—Naked rows of graves
And melancholy ranks of monuments
Are there instead."

BRYANT.

What *objections* can be urged against the reform here advocated? How can we indeed put into competition the powerful suffrage of the universal custom of all times, and of the most polished nations, with the transient complaints of a few, always prejudiced in favour of the customs of the day, utterly incapable of knowing their own interests—influenced by the uncertainties of opinion, and ever undecided in the choice of what is useful?

In the ordinance of the Archbishop of Toulouse concerning interment in churches, occurs the following calm and forcible replies to objections.—

"The civil law could not but agree on this point with our religious canons, because the preservation of the lives of the members of a community is a duty of the first magnitude; and *it suffices to enter our churches, to be convinced of the baneful effects of the fetid exhalations in them!*

"Some of our dearly beloved brethren may blame the rigour of our ordinance; but can they make any reasonable complaint? Churches were not intended for sepulchral monuments; and so little was such an use of them ever expected, that, according to the remark of a celebrated canonist, there is no prayer in the liturgy relating to such a ceremony, while there are some expressly intended for the benediction of burying grounds. And do you think that titles, *whose abuses would continually cry out against them*, are to prevail over the dignity of our temples or the sanctity of our altars?

"Would you insist for this privilege *on account of the standing, the offices, the rank, you hold in society?* We have every reason to believe, that those who have the greatest right to distinction will be the least eager to obtain it. Exceptions are odious, and multiply pretences and objections. Who will dare to complain, when the law is general; and what law can more justly be general than one that relates to the grave?

"Would you say that *we are depriving a holy life of its rewards and prerogatives?* If the voice of the public testified to the sanctity of your career, how joyfully would we receive your bodies into our temples, as those of the martyrs were welcomed by the primitive Church! But piety, while meriting and obtaining the honours reserved for the saints, is far from assuming them as her right; and while she feels that peculiar benedictions have been passed upon public burying grounds, she acknowledges that *the most magnificent obsequies are of no use to the sinner.*

"Would you reproach us with *depriving you of a right, bought by the donations of your ancestors?* But do you think that those virtuous men, from whom you are proud to derive your descent, wished to leave to their posterity a right to disturb our holy mysteries, and to spread pestilence among their fellow-citizens? Then take back their gifts, if these are to be construed into titles in fee simple. Our rules for the future must not be violated; and the Church will satisfy your avarice rather than your pride!

"We will not suspect our worthy coadjutors in the clerical functions of *regretting the privilege so long granted to their holy habits.* We are obliged daily to sacrifice ourselves for the happiness and weal of our people, and will therefore think the less of the renunciation of a gratification that might be harmful to them. Our most precious advantage is the power we enjoy of being examples to them in all that is useful and religious; and great indeed will be our pleasure, if our example engages others to allow without murmur or complaint, the re-establishment of a law equally necessary for the good of society, and of religion.

"Ye whom the vows of the cloister have united under the yoke of the Lord! *will you object to the retrenchment of your funds that this ordinance must produce?* No; for you wish not to support existence at the expence of the lives of others. We will do all for you that just toleration will allow; but you yourselves would blame us, if rather than deprive you of a source of revenue, we were to authorize your chapels to continue or to become, centres of infection and death. Render your temples worthy of the presence of the Deity; gain the attendance of the faithful by assiduous and fervent prayer! inspire

confidence by the decorum of your conduct, and the purity of your manners, and you will find the gratitude of the pious lavish alms upon you to supply the loss you have cheerfully undergone for the public weal.

"And you, right worthy magistrates, who are charged with the care of the laws, be assured that *it is with no view to pass the bounds of our powers that we revise our canons*. We know that interment is a civil affair. We would direct nothing relating to it without your agreement and participation. Then let the perfect accordance of our measures, blend our united decrees into one authority; and while we speak in the name of God, whose ministers we are, secure obedience to our mandates in the name of the King; for this affair touches not only the credit of the Church, but the interest of the people. We have investigated and examined the request of our venerable Chapter; the petitions from divers parts of our diocese; the *proces verbaux* of the inspection of many parishes, from which it appeared that the abuse of church-interment was carried to its height; and, finally, the reports and opinions of physicians on the pernicious consequences of this custom; and *therefore* we, as far as in our power lies, and in full confidence that the civil authorities will sanction our ordinance, have ordained and enacted, and do ordain and enact, &c."

It may be said that in many instances graves are dug to a great depth. I know that this is sometimes true, and I also know that an inducement is held out to the grave digger of an additional shilling or eighteen-pence for every additional 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, perhaps 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 is 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 men, who being men, would not, dare not, execute the tasks imposed upon them.

The importance of public Cemeteries properly distant from the busy abodes of men; and where the remains of our dear departed may indeed sleep in peace, till the great resurrection morn, must be self evident. It will afford the author much satisfaction to know, that this feeble effort of his pen has been in any humble measure conducive to their establishment. The Editor of a London paper very justly observed, a few weeks since:—"The British population are

indebted for one of the most important and salutary modern improvements connected with public health, to the enterprizing spirit of commercial speculation, and the strange passion which seems deeply rooted in human nature, for allying the picturesque to the trophies of mortality. We allude to the substitution of ornamental suburban cemeteries, for the *dank, crowded, pestilential* burying grounds and consecrated church yards, which have too long been allowed to endanger the health of the living, within the precincts of our crowded cities and towns."

The writer would here strongly recommend to public notice an interesting work recently published by Longman and Co., called *Cemetery Interment*, by G. Collison.

The propriety of *sanatory regulations* in all orders of society, is very evident. Mr. Walker in his valuable work, has some very striking observations upon this subject:— "Diodorus, of Sicily, speaks of pestilential diseases which were produced by the putrefaction of different substances. Egypt is ravaged almost every year by malignant fevers; and from that country the small pox has spread through all the earth. The waters of the Nile, according to some writers, after remaining some time in the fields they inundate, leave there an immense number of aquatic insects, which, as they putrify, exhale pestilential miasmata. Forestus and John Wolf relate, that several fish, thrown dead upon the shore, occasioned a very dreadful epidemic. The putrefaction of locusts, in Ethiopia, often occasions epidemic diseases. Those on the sea coast suffer much from the putrefaction of whales, thrown upon the beach. Pare informs us, that in his time, the putrefaction of a whale produced a pestilence in Tuscany, and Lancisi writes, that the exhalations from a putrefying ox killed an unfortunate traveller, in the environs of Pessara. Lucan speaks of an epidemic which occasioned dreadful ravages in the army of Pompey, near Durazzo; and which was caused by the putrefaction of the horses which had been killed and left upon the field. Ammianus Marcellinus also makes mention of a great desolation in the camp of Constantine the Great, through the same imprudence. How often, indeed, have the numerous bodies, scattered over the field of battle, after a very sanguinary engagement, been the occasion of disease and death! Aristotle advised Alexander to remove from Arbela immediately after the defeat of Darius, to avoid the pestilential influences of the dead. France was frequently exposed to dreadful pestilences, from the tenth to the sixteenth century; and history informs us, that during this period, she was often ravaged by civil wars and dreadful famines. Provinces then sometimes remained uncultivated,

and their inhabitants crowded into cities, where, by the sudden and excessive increase of population, they were reduced to the most distressing privations. Almost all long sieges, in which much blood has been shed, are accompanied by fevers and fatal diseases. The war of the Swedes, in the seventeenth century, occasioned a terrible pestilence which desolated Poland. Cruel and obstinate wars have had the same effect in Hungary, in Austria, in Syria, and in many other kingdoms,—the same thing has frequently happened in Asia. Paré relates, that in 1572, a pestilential fever spread nearly ten leagues round in Guienne, occasioned by *the putrid exhalations of a pit, into which several dead bodies had been thrown, two months before.*"

Dr. Mead, speaking of *Grand Cairo*, in Egypt, says, "this city is crowded with vast numbers of inhabitants, who live not only poorly but nastily; the streets are narrow and close; the city itself is situated in a sandy plain, at the foot of a mountain, which keeps off the winds which might refresh the air, consequently the heat is rendered extremely stifling. A great canal passes through the midst of the city, which at the overflowing of the Nile is filled with water; on the decrease of the river this canal is gradually dried up, and the people throw into it all manner of filth, carrion, and offal. The stench which arises from this and the mud together is intolerably offensive, and from this source the plague, constantly springing up every year, preys upon the inhabitants, and is stopped only by the return of the Nile, the overflowing of which washes away this filth.

In Ethiopia, the swarms of locusts are so prodigious, that they sometimes cause a famine by devouring the fruits of the earth, and when they die, create a pestilence by the putrefaction of their bodies. This putrefaction is greatly increased by the dampness of the climate, which, during the sultry heats of July and August, is often excessive; the effluvia which arise from this immense quantity of putrefying animal substance, with so much heat and moisture, continually generate the plague in its intensest form; and the Egyptians of old were so sensible how much the putrefaction of dead animals contributed towards breeding the plague, that they worshipped the bird Ibis for the services it did in devouring great numbers of serpents, which they had observed injured by their stench, when dead, as much as by their bite, when alive."

Dr. Southwood Smith, in his report to the Poor Law Commissioners, 1838, observes:—"The exhalations which accumulate in close, illventilated and crowded apartments, in the confined situations of densely populated cities, where no attention is paid to the removal of putrefying and excre-

mentitious substances, consist chiefly of animal matter; such exhalations contain a poison which produces continued fever of the typhoid character. There are situations as has been stated, in which the poison generated is so intense and deadly, that a single inspiration of it is capable of producing instantaneous death; there are others in which a few inspirations of it are capable of destroying life in from two to twelve hours; and there are others, again, in which the poison generated, although not so immediately fatal, is still too potent to be breathed long, even by the most healthy and robust, without producing fever of a most dangerous and mortal character.

"But it would be a most inadequate view of the pernicious agency of this poison, if it were restricted to the diseases commonly produced by its direct operation. It is a matter of constant observation, that even when not present in sufficient intensity to produce fever, by disturbing the function of some organ, or set of organs, and thereby weakening the general system, this poison acts as a powerful predisposing cause of some of the most common and fatal maladies to which the human body is subject."

The following account of malaria is striking:—The first effect of *malaria* on those who are unaccustomed to it, is a depression of spirits; sometimes accompanied by excessive nervousness, listlessness, torpor, an acute pain across the forehead and breast, with oppression of breathing; the eyes become dim, the face of the sanguineous, flushed, and after a slight resistance of the nervous and vascular system, slumber succeeds, which if the sufferer be in a situation prolific of malaria, is almost sure to be fatal. Many instances have occurred of travellers, who have lain down in such places, having been overcome with their sleepy sensations and never rising again.—*Colonial Mag.*, *Nov.*, 1840.

W. Farr, Esq., in his letter to the Registrar-General, states:—"The epidemics, whether influenza, typhus, or cholera, small-pox, scarlatina, or measles, which arise in the East end of the town, do not stay there; they travel to the West end, and prove fatal in wide streets and squares. The registers shew this; they trace diseases from unhealthy to healthy quarters, and follow them from the centres of cities to the surrounding villages and remote dwellings."*

"It is not a mere theory, but well founded opinion, that all the destructive epidemics that have afflicted this globe, have had their origin in *malaria;* which in a cold climate has produced *typhus fever;* in a more temperate one, *plague* and

* By referring to the works of Hippocrates, it will be found that the City of *Abydos* was several times depopulated by fever, &c., but that, on the draining of some contiguous marshes, the city and its vicinity became perfectly healthy.

yellow fever; and within the tropics, *cholera*, &c., each modified according to the idosyneratic state of the sufferers. India affords numerous examples of ill chosen sites for towns and cities, where the population never enjoy good health. Moorshedabad, on the banks of the Cossimbazar river, contains upwards of 200,000 inhabitants; it is low and filthy, built with narrow streets, having numerous stagnant pools; there are no drains, and even the natives find it exceedingly unhealthy; scarcely a year passing without some *epidemic* raging in the city.

Lancisius, physician to Pope Clement the second, relates, that 'thirty ladies and gentlemen of the first rank in Rome, having been on a party of pleasure towards the mouth of the Tiber, the wind suddenly shifted and blew over the putrid marshes, when twenty-nine were immediately seized with a tertian fever, one only escaping.' Batavia, in Java, was intersected with half filled canals and tanks, and so completely environed with trees and shrubs, as to prevent the free circulation of the air. A creditable historian has stated that within the space of *twenty-two years*, although there was no particular extent of sickness, yet the number of deaths within the city was upwards of *one million!* In Jamaica, a magnificent hospital was erected for seamen, which obtained the name of Greenwich Hospital. It was built near a swamp, and the patients who entered even with trifling complaints, were seized with the most malignant diseases: the mortality became so alarming that the hospital was abandoned, and *another erected* in a more healthy situation. It was not uncommon to find all the sentinels at this place, seized in the middle of the night with sickness of various kinds, and several relief of guards required before morning."—*Colonial Mag. Oct.* 1840, *pages* 165—173.

"So convinced am I," says Dr. Armstrong, "of the truth of the doctrine of *malaria*, and a local taint, or contamination of air, that I believe, that with the aid of the Legislature, *I could go far to annihilate typhus fever in the British metropolis.*"*

The whole subject, it is presumed, is intimately connected with *the interests of philanthropy and religion.* The Archbishop of Toulouse, in his ordinance concerning Interment in Churches very justly declared—"Believe not dearly beloved, that our solicitude and anxious care for the public health is the only motive that induces us to break silence. Such is the harmony always existing between religion and

* The Typhus Fever.—This dangerous complaint has of late been very prevalent, and we regret to add, excessively fatal in Lincoln and the neighbourhood; nor is it likely that its spread will be prevented until all the stagnant water places are removed, and the herding of people in lodging houses in such numbers is prevented. It behoves the authorities to exert themselves in times of such visitations.—*Lincoln Paper, Oct.* 1840.

sound policy, that what is acknowledged as decorous and useful by the one, is also commanded and prescribed by the other. *To the instinct of self-preservation, which calls loudly for a reformation of the present system of burial;* we may add the commands of God, which direct us to be careful of our lives, that we may serve him and prepare for a happy eternity; and the orders of the church which have always reprobated, as a profanation, the general admission of the dead within the walls and in places held sacred: and the dictates of our christian duties, which require attendance at the temple, notwithstanding all pretexts to the contrary."

J. Fenwick, Esq., in his interesting Pamphlet before quoted, justly observes, "The greatest and best of men, who have adorned our species, have been celebrated for this kind of charity.—I expect to be told, that what I have asserted is to be attributed to a morbid sensibility and superstitious feeling; but I reprobate *the philosophy so called*, which *could* repudiate our obligations to the dead or desecrate the tomb of our bitterest enemy. Who among us can attend the last sad duties to a departed friend, without being shocked at the idea that the ground, in which he is to be deposited, must *first be probed by a long instrument*, to ascertain whether the last coffin placed there, is in such a state of decay as to justify an exposure of its contents; and should the coffin be penetrable, then to behold the skulls and principal bones of his departed friends, it may be, his nearest relatives, scattered about the mouth of the newly formed grave? In the metropolis, the bones of the dead are collected in charnel houses, whence they find their way to places for the reception of the bones of the inferior animals, and being mixed with them are shipped to the north, where, after passing the crushing mill, they are sold to our farmers, and by them employed in manuring the land!"

It is *the duty of an enlightened Government to take cognizance of this state of things.* It would be absurd to say, that the Government ought to wait for the more palpable existence and prevalence of the evils of burying the dead among the living, before it has recourse to precautions at all times wise and necessary. The dangerous effects of putrid exhalations shew themselves more promptly in individuals exposed to them, of a disposition favourable to their development; but on all occasions, the animal economy suffers much under their influence. Putrid and malignant fevers, and periodical diseases often prevail in densely populated cities, when the remote cause of them cannot be ascertained. Is it not possible that this cause, of which we are ignorant, and which is demonstrated only by its fatal effects, *is no other than the interment in cities?*

The French Government, as before stated, stands pre-eminent in its arrangements to secure the health, and consequently, the happiness of its members. The dead interred within their cities have been removed; public cemeteries have been established at a distance from towns; sanatory laws have been enacted and rigidly enforced. New York, Pennsylvania, and a few other States have followed the example; but England yet retains within the bosom of her population the germs, the nuclei of diseases,—the food, if not the principles, of malignant epidemics! To what cause is this supineness on the part of the British Government to be attributed?

It has been suggested in one of the London Papers, that, "the Government should provide (as the French Government does) cemeteries, one in each quarter of the metropolis, and assign to every parish a portion thereof, in accordance to its population, receiving the ground fee for every burial, (except for paupers). The burial service to be performed in the parish in which the person died. A hearse should be provided to convey the paupers, and a building erected to enable the mourners to dress or undress. It is conceived that the above plan, if carried into effect, would prove of immense benefit to the public."

It is said, "a determination has been expressed by influential members of both houses of parliament, to introduce *a general measure in prohibition of the old system*, as soon as the cemetery projects now in operation shall have been made sufficiently extensive and properly adapted to meet the necessity." A step of this decisive character might lead to the most important results throughout the country, and indeed throughout the empire.

It does not fall within the province of the author, to enlarge upon this view of the affecting subject which has awakened his sympathies. His object has been to shew the existence of an appalling evil, assured that if the public awake to a deep conviction of its malignity and extent, effective remedies, through a kind providence, will be found and adopted. The ancient sentiment is worthy the deepest attention of the legislature of every country: "*Salus populi suprema lex.*"

Why should we not learn by the references in scripture to fields and trees, gardens and caves, in connexion with interment, not to crowd our dead near the abodes of the living, and around and within our places of worship? Let this evil be remedied as speedily and effectually as possible. Surely there is room upon the surface of the earth for the proper interment of the generations of men. Why should a parish of several thousand acres of land, have but two or

three appropriated for the ravages of death in a thousand years? Let our cemeteries more closely approximate to those of the ancients. The author of Sylva remarks in his peculiar and original style, "that the most ancient conditoria and burying places were in nemorous solitudes. The cave in Macpelah, purchased by the patriarch Abraham for Sarah, his own dormitory and family sepulchre, was conveyed to him with particular mention of all the trees and groves about it.—*Gen.* xxiii. 17. This is the very first precedent of conveying a purchase by a formal deed. Our blessed Saviour chose the garden sometimes for his oratory, and dying for the place of his sepulchre. And we do avouch for many weighty causes, that there are no places more fit to bury our dead in, than our gardens and our groves or any fields, where our beds may be decked and carpetted with verdant and fragrant flowers and trees and perennial plants—the most natural and instructive hieroglyphics of our expected resurrection and immortality."

The well known sentiment of the Roman is highly becoming every Christian:—*Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto.* 'I am a man; nothing that relates to mankind I think alien from me.' An American writer, upon this subject, Dr. Pascalis, very forcibly observes,—"It is the duty of those who by their profession or study, obtain a greater share of knowledge on some points than their fellow citizens may possess, to remonstrate with them against practices that endanger their own safety, or which are contrary to the well-being of the community at large." The inhumanity to the sick and the dead witnessed in India, prepared the author to sympathize with every thing in the least similar in his native country. Perhaps some of his friends will be ready to smile when they hear the title and the subject of this pamphlet, but he doubts not that the most facetious and captious will soon become serious in its perusal, and tender their thanks for this exposure of a very crying and common evil. It is astonishing that this subject should be so generally overlooked. The "graves of the common people," are generally disturbed in a very few years; but who cherishes the sentiment of Nehemiah to "the place of his father's sepulchres?" * Who knows them or thinks of them after the lapse of a few years? Shall these inhuman scenes continue to transpire at our very door, and no cry be lifted up on behalf of poor degraded human nature—no warning voice of the dangers to which health and life are exposed—no regret and indignation expressed at the solemn farce which these evils render the

* See a well written article in the G. B. Repository, 1840, pages 325, 328.

burial of the dead—no general effort to make the grave yard the school of our common christianity, and the safe and useful resort of those, whose 'meditations among the tombs,' enlightened by the gospel which has brought "life and immortality to light"—would aid them to "*prepare to meet God!*" In the language of Mr. Walker, he trusts that this little work will "furnish ample materials to exercise the serious consideration of the enlightened Statesman—the profound Philosopher—and the sincere and benevolent Christian: in truth, all men are interested in the weighty matters here discussed. Our best affections are involved, and call upon us to secure, by every contrivance, the peaceful repose of the departed; and, at the same time, to remove as far as possible from the living, the pestiferous exhalations of the dead!"

But to conclude, We have been communing with the dead, viewing the grave 'the appointed place of rendezvous where all the travellers meet,' and whose sensibilities are not moved by this solemn subject? "*It is appointed unto men once to die and after death the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*" How can we be duly impressed with the importance of a happy death and a glorious resurrection? In the language of an eloquent minister, let us reflect in reference to the departed generations of men.—"*The dead shall live;* earth teems with the elements of future being, and in the throes of the universe, shall cast forth from her mighty womb, the germs of myriads of men. Let us realize the event, sublime in its own magnitude, the importance of its relations, and the perpetuity of its results. Let us endeavour so to believe and feel and act, that when we shall behold the distant point of light in the heavens approaching and swelling into intensity of brilliancy, until we can descry amidst its supernatural splendour and glory, the burning chariot of the First and the Last, with the keys of Hades and of Death at his girdle, we may feel He comes to take us home—home to Himself, and to all that is noble, etherealized, sanctified in mind and refined, fresh, unfading in bliss; home where death will never separate hearts linked in deep, undying sympathy, and from which, safe in his presence, we shall behold in the rushing ruins of worlds and systems, the final overthrow of the matchless conquests of Him who vanquished death by submitting to its stroke!"

THE END.

DANIELL, PRINTER, BOURN.