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# ASHES TO ASHES

A Cremation Prelude

By REV. H. R. HAWEIS, M.A.

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*N.B.—The Author requests any of his Readers to send him corroborative evidence, information, or corrections of any kind, for use in a future Edition.*

**"VERMIBUS EREPTI, PURO CONSUMIMUR IGNI."**



I.

## AFTER THE STORM.

2 **I**T was a melancholy autumn night. I had strayed on to the beach, and stood watching the foamless but still heaving waters as they lifted up great masses of tangled sea-weed and shells, torn from the rocks during the late storm. The last glimmer of lilac from the sunset had faded out upon the sea.

The moon rose in a watery mist, and lighted up dimly the little bay. The ruined church-tower stood out dark against the

B

pale sky, as if deprecating the encroachments of the hungry ocean. The air was damp and warm. I turned and walked slowly along the shore, in the direction of St. Anselm's Tower. When that saint had been chosen as patron of the place, the modest little church was built on a hill inland, at the back of a small fishing-hamlet. The graveyard sloped down the hill to the hamlet, and the hamlet sloped to the sea; but by degrees the huts and cottages had been swallowed up by the ever-encroaching tides.

In one terrible night, seventy years ago, thirty houses had been swept away. The villagers deserted the rest, and retreated to the centre of the bay.

The church had been forsaken, and was falling into ruins, and the relentless ocean

had already begun its work of desecration in the graveyard.

Whilst the authorities were debating what steps should be taken, a gale of unusual violence blew along the west coast. Fishing-boats were dashed to pieces, and many who, having left St. Anselm's, had put well out to sea to avoid the rocks never returned.

For two days the storm raged with unabated fury. On the evening of the third all was calm and peaceful again,—only the quiet ground-swell rose and fell without a breaker, bearing on its cruel bosom fragments of planks and waifs and strays of wreck.

As I neared the churchyard, I noticed that the last barrier of mouldering wall had been completely swept away. I could not

even tell where the beach ended and the graves began. My foot stumbled against what I thought was a spar or plank. I stooped and picked it up. At that moment a black cloud drew across the quivering moon.

The intense loneliness of the place—the dark gloomy tower, from whose ruined turret flapped a huge black-looking cormorant with a loud scream—the tumbled tombstones close by me—the smell of rank sea-weed in unaccustomed places—the desolate company of the uncared-for, uncomforted dead,—all this unnerved me strangely for the moment; but I had picked up something. I sat down upon a still-undisturbed mound, holding it mechanically in my hand. I then noticed the presence of several other companions. They were sea-birds and other

birds of prey—doubtless kites and cormorants. They were too busy to notice me at first. I dared not think why they had assembled there; I remembered that, long after the church had been disused, graves had been opened not far from the beach, and new bodies deposited there. Sea-weeds covered them now, and the birds were ravenously tearing up the sea-weed.

I sat motionless like one spell-bound. I felt as if I was the intruder—as if I had no place there, and must remain unobserved, and leave the night-birds to their ghastly work: it was like a strange, disordered dream.

I started;—something rustled close to me and tumbled or rather leaped forth, out of a great rift in a hollow stone tomb. It was a large rat. I watched it in a kind of stupefied



way; it, too, seemed quite at home. Presently it stopped: it had found something.

The moon shone out more brightly again, and the birds stirred uneasily. They saw me, and flew away screaming. I was left alone, still holding something, which I had picked up, in my hand. It was white and dry. I examined it closely by the light of the moon. Being a fair anatomist, I saw immediately what it was; it was a human bone.





## II.

### WITH THE DEAD.

**I** SUPPOSE I looked somewhat pale and shaken when I regained my lodgings ; for my friend Le Normand, on opening the door, started back as though he had seen a ghost. Then laying one hand on my shoulder and removing a half-consumed cigar from his lips with the other, he said with an almost caressing solicitude peculiar to him, " Dear friend, what has happened to you ? Come in ; are you not well ? "

" You have often spoken to me," I said, sinking into an arm-chair, " of the horrors

of Christian burial,—of what has happened, of what may happen, to any graveyard in the long run. Now I believe you ;” and I had soon told him my ghastly adventures in the churchyard of St. Anselm.

Le Normand was a Frenchman by birth, but he had been educated in England ; and both his parents being dead, he had been thrown on the hands of guardians at an early age.

He was a man of remarkable attainments, with an omnivorous appetite for books. Whatever he took up he soon became absorbed in, and in conversation would pour forth stores of information upon almost any subject.

He had taken up the medical profession with all his wonted ardour ; he loved it for

its own sake; and its varied and exciting scenes suited well his impulsive nature and restless imagination.

I had known him watch the stages of putrid fever as though witnessing the most exciting of dramas, whilst he would tend the sufferer with the patience and tenderness of a woman.

I had seen his face glow with enthusiasm and triumph, in the atmosphere of a dissecting-room in which I nearly fainted, when some *post mortem* proved that his diagnosis had been correct. "Is there any excitement," he once exclaimed, "equal to watching the ingenuity of disease!" And at another time: "To remove pain—to hunt it from one place to another and expel it—to see the smile return to the troubled brow, and the colour come back to the cheek;

Nature rise and shake herself from the dust, and say to Death, 'Not yet—*pas encore !*'" and he would lay both hands on my arm in his excitement, until I could not resist the glow of his enthusiasm.

This may explain to some extent the fascination which Le Normand exercised over me ; why I was glad to spend part of my vacation with him in a kind of rambling walking tour, staying sometimes for a few days or weeks at any retired and romantic spot that pleased us, ready to pack up and be off at any moment ; and never, whilst in his society, at a loss for conversation or amusement. How could I be with Le Normand ? Every question of the day he was up in, and especially every question of sanitary reform ; but the one subject which had lately attracted him powerfully, was

the question of inhumation or the burial of the dead. Upon this he had collected an immense store of information; and he eagerly seized every opportunity of descanting upon the danger, the horror, and upon what he called the generally pestilential practice of our burial system.

To-night, of course, our conversation drifted that way, and as I lit my pipe and revived my nervous energies with the aid of a steaming tumbler cunningly mixed by Le Normand, "You will never get our people to adopt your favourite Cremation," I said.

"It is not yet a question of Cremation: the first thing is to disenchant the world with burial. You have seen something to-night which has given you a little shock. We must make others feel what you have

felt. With people in general this will never be a question of health or utility first; but first a question of *sentiment*. The churchyard sentiment is false—the vault-sentiment is false—it is untrue to facts. You think of the body in its quiet hermetically sealed vault, but time knows of no such seal. You think of its protecting slab, of the solemn arches and the consecrated ground, but to-morrow all this may be changed. You think of the churchyard sown with flowers, with its groves of weeping-willows—the quiet graves, each with its silent denizen walled off from the rest: it is all a dream, a fancy! In the past there has been no such seclusion, nor will any amount of legislation make it possible in the future; the world is not the world of the dead, but

of the living, and every attempt to make it a dead-house will break down, as it has broken down.

“Listen,” he continued, drawing his chair closer to mine, whilst his whole countenance seemed strangely animated by the force of the accumulated facts he was about to pour forth in defence of his thesis. “The history of vaults, graveyards, and cemeteries is one long history of desecration and outrage. They do not sleep well, they cannot sleep well, those who are buried there. Where are the thousands who were laid in the heart of Paris, and who slept for centuries in the graveyards of the Innocents, St. Eustache, St. Étienne des Prés? Every tourist who takes a return ticket to Paris may gaze upon their bones, speculate upon their skulls, and finger



their dust.<sup>1</sup> By order of the Minister of Police, they were all dug up in 1787 and carted off to the catacombs. The bones were cleaned and arranged in grim and picturesque symmetry. In one gallery are the arms, legs, and thighs, intersected by rows of skulls; the small bones are thrown in heaps behind them. Whose dust is separate there?—whose ashes are sacred? and yet they were borne to this grotesque sepulchre with priests and tapers!

“But have not roads and railways been often driven through churchyards? No funeral rites can save us from the navvy’s spade, or prevent the remains of our dearest relatives from being carted away at some future period, and mixed up indiscriminately with others. They are not even always respected, these poor bones, as the relics of

the dead. Nay, your *Quarterly Review* (No. XLII., p. 380) affirms ‘that many tons of human bones every year are sent from London to the North, where they are crushed in mills constructed for the purpose, and used as manure!’ You think they are safe in their graves? Your churchyards have not even protected the dead from the most ghastly exposure by the elements.

<sup>2</sup> “In 1854, at Herrenlauersitz, upwards of one hundred bodies, most of them still in their coffins, were washed out of their resting-places by an inundation. They were found lying amongst the flower-beds in the neighbouring gardens, and the reapers came upon them in the corn-fields. But the brutality of the elements is nothing to the brutality of man. I repeat, you can-

not preserve the buried dead securely from the outrages of the living. The people who dig graves, or are employed to remove bones, are not as a rule scrupulous, but they are very often drunk.<sup>3</sup> The other day only, a number of wild Irish were so employed,—says a correspondent at New York,—the bodies were offered for sale on the ground to a party of medical students. These young fellows had the grace to shrink from the horrors they then witnessed. One coffin was found full of a heavy decomposed mass, like spermaceti: it was used to grease the axle-tree of the cart. Another coffin contained the body of a woman, aged twenty, as the inscription announced. She had rested for one hundred and seven years—laid there with what tears, what tender regrets of husband, or lover, or mother!

but now her head was rudely seized and kicked like a football from one ruffian to the other."

"Stop, Le Normand," I said; "such atrocities cannot happen in England. You cull, it may be, baseless and horrible romances from sensation prints beyond the sea. Perhaps, after all, these are only the invention of unscrupulous newspaper writers."

"I tell you," said my friend, rising in his excited way, "that in England and Scotland such things have happened. Indeed, until the passing of the Burial Acts in 1852-56, the violation of graves throughout Scotland, England, and Ireland was systematic. I speak not now of body-snatching: that had been successfully suppressed. But in most crowded burial-

grounds there was a bone-house, and in many a burning-ground—not for the bodies, but for the coffin-wood. You paid for your grave; you were laid decently with solemn ceremony in your last (?) resting-place; your friends thought you would lie undisturbed. If you were in a vault, your coffin might still be there; but, after a certain number of years, not your bones. If you were in a grave, your tombstone might survive both you and your coffin for many years. Your bones would be in the bone-house, or sold for manure; your coffin burnt.<sup>4</sup>

“In many low parts of London coffin-wood was used habitually for firewood; and ‘coffin-furniture,’ consisting of second-hand plates, nails, &c., was a well-known item with marine-store dealers. No, I am

not speaking at random : as you will have facts, facts you shall have. Mr. Walker, surgeon, visited the burial-ground in Portugal Street, on 27th April, 1839. He found two graves open, several bones lying about, and heaps of coffin-wood, some quite fresh, waiting for removal for firewood. A gentleman writes to the *Times*, 25th June, 1838, 'I was shocked to see two men employed in carrying baskets of human bones to the back of the ground through a small gate. I have twelve of my nearest and dearest relatives consigned to the grave in that ground (Portugal Street), and I felt that perhaps I might at that moment be viewing, in the basket of skulls which passed before me, those of my own family thus brutally exhumed.'"

Le Normand read from a book of scraps

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here is the evidence for the  
aults, even in this century:—  
ker who had charge of a funeral  
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A coffin recently deposited was  
for his arm with the greatest ease.  
d, doubting, poised the coffin, and  
ected to tears from the conviction  
the body had been removed. Several  
coffins were in the same condition.’—

"*ib.*, p. 202.

"Now see," continued Le Normand, with  
happy French faculty of arranging



everything under heads, "there are two chief causes for these outrages on the dead. The first is Love of Gain, and the second is Want of Space. Love of gain nerved the body-snatcher for his ghastly trade. It has driven many a professional grave-digger before now to dig up the bodies of high-born ladies, in the hopes of finding rings still on their fingers. Coffins have been rifled for treasures from time immemorial. There is hardly a museum in Europe which does not bear witness to this kind of spoliation. Cupidity tempted men to steal the coffin-plates, nails, and coffins themselves for firewood, and to sell the bones of the dead for manure; and the love of gain, in the shape of burial fees, has shamefully overcrowded all our intramural and many other burying-grounds; and this is the point

where the love of gain touches the Want of Space—second cause for the desecration of graveyards.

“The dark caravans keep pouring in their hosts of silent applicants, but the ground is already full: full, say I?—more than full. See, there is not one old churchyard that has not risen high above the level of the intersecting walks. The mould in many places, as in the old Cimetière des Innocents at Paris, or in your horrible St. Giles or St. Pancras, London—the mould is literally saturated with corpses; yet long after this was the case the hearses streamed in to deposit their ghastly freight of human merchandise,—but where? It was an outrage upon the dead by the living—the living who loved gold better than decency, better than health,—ay, better than your

much-vaunted sentiment, which extols churchyard burial as the most Christian and poetical of institutions."

"And surely, under right conditions," I interposed, "there is much to be said for it. Its outward aspect is at least soothing and peaceful."

"Neither within nor without is it clean," burst in my friend. "I will show you that by-and-by. But even were it so, the 'right conditions' you allude to, and which are many, are seldom realised at all, and never realised for long, that first condition of ample room will and must fail over and over again. I still attack your sentiment for burying-grounds on that weak point. You build your church; beneath it are vaults, around it is a graveyard, beyond are open fields; but in those fields are

houses; they creep nearer and nearer to the church, they surround the churchyard; they are a close, dense mass—row on row of houses; perhaps, narrow, unwholesome streets between them—no possibility of enlarging the churchyard with this rapid growth of the population,—on each side it is hemmed in. Go through London and many another large town, once a rural hamlet, now a crowded city with a pest-house in its centre. That is the history of your burial-grounds; that in time must be the history of all burial-grounds. Look at your Brompton, your Kensal Green, your Norwood Cemeteries, and others—but yesterday in open fields, now the centre of a growing population,—now fast filling, nay, full to repletion. Look at those other hundreds of plague-acres closed by the late Acts of Par-

liament!—think what overcrowding came to there. Yet sentiment was satisfied, down to the last, with any kind of burial that could be obtained within those foul but consecrated precincts.

“And how was it done? I shudder to relate, my friend. It was done by what the grave-diggers called ‘management.’ This ‘management’ resulted in facts the most incredible, the most appalling.

<sup>5</sup> “I will again refer to my notes. At Southwark, in making a grave on one occasion, I find that a body was dug up. A shovel of earth was thrown over it: it lay by the side of the open grave. They were ‘managing’ for the next occupant. The funeral arrives; a mourner steps by mistake on the thinly covered corpse, and nearly falls into the grave.

“A young woman visits the sacred spot where a short time before her mother was laid to rest; but the grave again had been ‘managed,’ and the poor girl recognises the finger of her mother amongst a heap of rubbish! (See Walker, ‘Gatherings from Graveyards.’)

“Want of space! love of gold! As long as these exist, your burial sentiment never can be free from the fear of such outrages. I will allude to but one more case in the past. The ‘management system’ probably culminated in the burial-vaults of Enon Chapel, Clement’s Lane, London. The vaults measure 59 ft. 3 in. by 28 ft. 8 in. Allowing an average of nine feet per person, we shall quite overcrowd the whole area once with about two hundred bodies.

Fill that area six times ; then the coffins lie in tiers six deep, and that is quite an extreme allowance : the whole space then could not possibly contain more than 1,200 of them ; and yet, my friend," continued Le Normand, gesticulating with unusual earnestness, as though he had at last arrived at his crowning fact, "instead of twelve hundred, between ten and twelve thousand bodies were crowded into those vaults at different times. What became of them ? They did not, they could not, all rest there. Thousands of them had to be 'managed.' And what becomes of sentiment or sacred regard for the relics of the dead ?"

He paused for a few moments, and re-lit his cigar, which had long ceased to show

any signs of life; and now he continued to blow off his own excitement and rest himself by puffing large volumes of tobacco. As he stood with his back to the fire-place, his note-book tumbled on the floor, his light curly hair thrown back with a peculiar gesture, his bright intelligent eyes looking out straight before him fixed upon vacancy and still dreamy with thought; I could not help admiring his earnestness, and the evident sincerity of his strong convictions.

I had listened patiently to his exposure of the systematic outrages to which Christian tombs had been exposed, even during the present century; but I thought he had allowed his excitable mind to dwell too morbidly upon these past abuses. I saw, indeed, that graves were, and always would be, liable to natural catastrophes, which



know no distinction of time or place, and one of which I had witnessed that very evening under circumstances unusually impressive and horrible. But I now reflected with complacency that all abuses of "management" were effectually put an end to by the stringent burial laws passed in 1852, 1853, 1855, 1857, and 1860.

As I began to describe our supposed immunity from desecration under the new Acts which forbid intramural burial in London, and lay down all kinds of stringent regulations in connection with vaults, graves, and cemetery management throughout the three kingdoms generally, I saw my friend smile incredulously, and with a slight impatient wave of his hand—

"Your Acts of Parliament are so much

print. Your new burial code is a paper constitution."

"But," I rejoined, "are the Acts null and void?"

"Worse," he replied; "they are valid, but futile."

I was sure now that he was overstating his case, and I said, "Explain yourself. Is it not true that during the last ten years, since the passing of the first Burial Act, a great sanitary revolution has taken place? Have not four hundred local Burial Boards been constituted? Is not every large town at this moment engaged in providing adequate means for the decent interment of the dead beyond the dwellings of the living, and that under conditions which will make 'management' or future desecration impossible? Have not 500 orders in

Council been issued, and nearly 4,000 old burial-grounds been closed or placed under regulation? Are not all the new cemeteries commodious and well drained? And are there not government inspectors to protect the Acts? And have not £1,400,000 been raised for the provision of the various parochial cemeteries? And have not these beneficial Acts been extended to Scotland and Ireland?"

"Valid, but futile," repeated my friend, who would never recant whatever he had once affirmed.

"Hundreds of Burial Boards to thousands of parishes! Besides, how can you expect these to be efficient when local improvement means self-taxation? You know how that is met in England. The clearest laws are evaded, and the Government winks: the

minimum will be done, and the community will suffer. You run your engines till they burst,—you leave your roads till they are impassable,—your public edifices until they tumble down,—your Temple Bars till they crumble,—and will your graveyards fare any better? Will your Local Boards protect your graves from desecration? They will not see,—they will not smell; they will only think of their pockets, and the law will let them alone as long as ever it can. This is your noble self-government.

“You passed several Acts from 1852 to 1860; you appointed government inspectors. There was to be no more crowding of graves,—no more digging up of bodies,—no more ‘management’ of any kind.

“Well, in March, 1874, I read in all your papers an account copied from the *Scotsman*

relating to events that happened at Edinburgh in March, 1874. It there came out before the Sheriff's Court what had been going on under the very eyes and noses of the local officers, and in the very teeth of the Acts of Parliament. The burial-ground of St. Cuthbert is situate in the centre of the city of Edinburgh; it is one of the oldest. In the last fifteen years 10,800 bodies have been placed there. Graves were re-opened up to 1874; some every seven, some every three years (although your Act prescribes fourteen and twelve years as the legal period, and even then only in cases where decomposition has been complete). Coffins with no plates were usually broken open; the remains were often not 'ripe,' that is undecayed,—the coffin-wood was burned, the remains heaped back pell-mell upon

others, to make room for more. At last but one or two inches of earth could be placed between the coffins (your Act requires one foot as a minimum).

“When all this came out in court the Sheriff observed that, although these revolting practices were freely carried on in other churchyards, that was no reason why they should continue in the heart of Edinburgh. It appeared that the yard was overcrowded with dead, and that revolting scenes in consequence took place. The Act of Parliament spoke of regulating graveyards; it might be possible to ‘regulate’ St. Cuthbert’s. It was said to be unhealthy, and the inhabitants complained of it as a nuisance. Crowded graveyards were notoriously unhealthy, and generally a nuisance. It was not actually proved

that St. Cuthbert's was unhealthy, &c. In short, the Sheriff's address amounted to a mild defence of St. Cuthbert's, and a vague suggestion that it might still be 'regulated'—and this in 1874!

“Look again at that portentous modern scandal, the burial-ground of St. Mary's, Sheffield, closed several years ago as being unfit for burial, and re-opened by the desire of the inhabitants. They have been burying there ever since, and are burying there at the rate of about 1,000 bodies per annum. No one will even pretend that the Acts of Parliament are observed there; they might as well have never been passed. In the *Times* of August, 1874, I notice the following paragraph:—

“‘**LAMBETH CEMETERY.**—A special committee of inquiry in reference to the cemetery has reported

unanimously :—1. There was a deficient quantity of earth—namely, from four to five inches, instead of one foot—placed between the coffins in what are called the common graves in the third-class ground ; and on the re-opening of private graves, it is the custom to expose the lid of the coffin, without leaving the foot of earth prescribed by the Secretary of State's regulations. 2. It had been proved that gratuities were received, but not verbally asked for. 3. That disturbances might occur without the knowledge of the Superintendent, and that disgraceful scenes have occurred despite police supervision. 4. That the clerk had admitted that any infringement of the regulations of the Secretary of State and the by-laws of the Burial Board might happen without his knowledge. 5. The Superintendent admitted that as many as three bodies in one day had been interred in a third-class common grave, the regulations of the Secretary of State prescribing only one per day. 6. It had been stated in evidence that in one instance, a few days ago, in the belief of the witness, there was only three feet of space between the lid of the coffin and the surface of the ground, and the superintendent declined to examine the witness on this point, and would not undertake to say that there were no adult coffins within a distance of three feet from the surface.'

“ The closing of old burial-grounds, pro-



vided they are not re-opened," continued my friend, "is good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. Your Government is the laughing-stock of Europe in these matters. It is jealous over the liberties, but regardless of the lives, of its subjects. It allows them to be free, but forbids them to be healthy.

"My friend, the supineness and incapacity of your administration is incredible. 'In 1850 your Board of Health condemned the cemeteries of Highgate, Kensal Green, Norwood, Nunhead, Brompton, and declared that they must be closed in the interests of public health. A central burying-place at Abbey Wood was to be purchased, and Parliament was to buy up the old cemeteries. It bought Brompton Cemetery alone, and—closed it? Oh, no!

—used it, and is using it at this moment. Your own Government is using, mark you, at high pressure and remunerative rates a graveyard condemned by its own board twenty-four years ago. A Government that will do this is capable, you conceive, of passing Acts without enforcing them; and there is therefore, under your improved legislation, the same danger and the same desecration as before.

“As to the cemeteries in general what says your greatest authority, who was charged to report to your Government? ‘The only cemetery company which combines in its practice a proper regard to public health and decency is the London Necropolis Company.’—(*Dr. Sutherland’s Report addressed to the Secretary of State for the Home Department.*) And why?

Simply because at present it is beyond the reach of temptation : that is all. It secludes for the burial of the dead two thousand acres of land, and renders them unproductive for three or four hundred years,—and then—and then? Why the Necropolis will probably be another plague-spot in the middle of another city; and, possibly, long before that time most of the old evils of management will be rife there,—not in the lives of the present managers, but after. But your advocates for burial are like ostriches; they hide their heads, eyes, nose, and all, in the sand, and defy the enemy, who is some way off, and whom they cannot see. You produce with greater and greater difficulty, here and there, a cemetery less poisonous and indecent for a few years than its con-

demned neighbours, and cry *Eureka!*—we are safe! But wait—and the yard is full, and your great-grandchildren have to recommence the same old story of corruption and abuse over and over again—and so on.

“Time, time—it is all a question of time; there is no such thing as an eternal Necropolis—an eternal burial: the living want the land, and the dead must make way. All this would be otherwise with Cremation, but with burial—never.

“You speak of government inspectors; but when the Government itself is indifferent, what is the use of inspectors? Nay, how can they inspect?—how can they really test the registries? how can they test the ground? How do they

know, how can they find out, that burials in old overcrowded churchyards never take place when their backs are turned? They do take place.

“I could produce you cases in country churchyards, where the good rector, who pockets his fee, has never even heard of the Acts which forbid such interments. I could show you vaults here, there, and everywhere, where the coffins are not bricked up or cemented up, as the Act directs, but are lying exposed. <sup>a</sup> So notoriously is this the case, that at Norwood Cemetery there they lie in the vaults; each has its compartment, but each compartment is open and exposed at one end, &c.

“The only adequate inspection is an impossible one, and one which, if it were possible, would be worse than the evil it is

sought to cure. The inspector must go round with a probing-rod and dig up the doubtful grave, to see whether the regulations have been complied with.

“No: sentiment is not really on the side of burial; burial does not, and never can be respectful to the dead. What has been, will be. All the conditions are bad. Love of gain and want of space will sooner or later operate to procure the evasion of laws which weigh too heavily on the pockets and the convenience of interested classes. What is going on at Brompton, Sheffield, Lambeth, &c., in England, and at Père la Chaise in France, will, in the long run, go on in every cemetery, however spacious and well planned.

“Mind, my friend, I do not say that

you are blind to the evils of burial in your country,—you cannot be; nay, every move you have made has been in the right direction. You have closed your vaults—well; you have closed your urban cemeteries—well; you have closed, or will shortly close, several of your suburban cemeteries—well; you have at least made regulations about graves which, though not kept, are intended to shield the dead from desecration and the living from disease,—well: but the last change has still to be made—the change from burial to Cremation.”

Knowing that my friend would continue on the same tack, I thought I might as well divert the stream of his discourse to one branch of the subject specially interesting to myself; so I said, “I have often

had a great horror of being buried alive. Do you think that people have often suffered this dreadful doom?"

I could see from the working of Le Normand's mobile features that I had touched some deep chord; there was a restless light in his eyes; he was extremely agitated. He came close to me, and clasping my arm tightly, as was his wont in moments of unusual excitement—

"Buried alive! it has happened—it will happen. It is my horror. Listen! I myself have fallen into lethargies which looked like death. Once after a long fever, as I was recovering, I relapsed, and lay for forty hours like one dead. I heard, but I could not move. I felt them measure me for my coffin, but could make no sign. I recovered in time to save myself. But I know that



all this may occur again, and therefore I charge you now, dear friend, if I die before you, to see that a deep incision be made in each of my arms, and that the jugular vein be also severed before my burial—if burial be my doom.”

I promised faithfully to obey my friend in these particulars, on condition that he would perform the same kind office for me in case of his survival.

“But,” I asked, “are your fears well grounded? Do you know of many cases of premature burial?”

“Undoubtedly I do. I will not say that in our temperate climate they are frequent, but they do occur. Hardly a graveyard is opened but coffins are found containing bodies not only turned, but skeletons contorted in the last hopeless struggle for life

underground. The turning may be due to some clumsy shaking of the coffin during burial, *but not the contortion.*

“At Bergerac (Dordogne), in 1842, a patient took a sleeping-draught: he fell asleep, but he woke not. After several hours they bled him; the blood scarcely flowed, and he woke not. At last they declared him to be dead, and buried him. But after a few days, remembering the sleeping-draught, they determined to re-open the grave. The body had turned—and struggled.”<sup>9</sup>

“The *Sunday Times*, December 30, 1838,” continued Le Normand, turning the pages of his voluminous note-book, “relates that at Tonnens, Lower Garonne, a man was being buried, when an indistinct noise proceeded from the coffin; the reckless

grave-digger fled in terror to seek for aid. A crowd soon collected. The coffin was hauled up and burst open. A face stiffened in terror and despair, a torn winding-sheet, contorted limbs, told the sad truth—too late.

“But only the other day I read in your *Times* (May, 1874), that in the August of 1873 a young lady died soon after her marriage, in the intense heat: she was buried the same day. Within a year the husband married again, and the mother of his first bride resolved to remove her daughter’s body to her native town, Marseilles. They open the vault, and find the poor girl’s body fallen prostrate, her hair dishevelled, her shroud torn to pieces. She had risen, my friend; she had burst her narrow prison, to find herself in one a little larger, but far more inexorable. How

long did she cry piteously for help? how long did she struggle and pray, this poor young mother, never destined to clasp her child to her bosom—hurried alive out of a sunny world into the dark and pitiless tomb? We cannot tell; we can but guess her agonies. Twelve months after they found her where she fell.”

“Enough, Le Normand,” I cried, rising and beginning to pace up and down our room, whilst my friend stood once more with his cigar perfectly extinct, staring at the wall as if he saw ghosts. “These horrible tales oppress me; I will hear no more. Already I feel as if I were underground: I awake—all is dark: what is this air? Ah! I cannot breathe. Where am I? I raise my head; my forehead strikes a board; my elbows strike the sides of—

yes! my coffin. Horrible! I cannot move—I stifle: I feel the hot tears of terror and despair in my eyes—the last tears I shall ever shed. My loudest cry is muffled and dumb with death. Have pity on me, Le Normand: see what you have brought me to!”

“All this,” he answered eagerly, “could never happen in Cremation. The body exposed at first, if you will, to a gentle and genial warmth, under due vigilance might, at the last moment, revive. Or entering at once into the fierce heat, life (if any) would instantly become extinct. . . .”

“Come, dear friend, it grows late; I feel an oppression in my chest—I want more air.”

I went to the window and threw it wide open; a gentle night breeze stole in from

the sea. Le Normand joined me, and laid his hand gently on my shoulder. We both looked out on the great expanse of moon-lit water. The clouds had broken; all was calm and peaceful, and the air was deliciously scented with seaweed. We heard the ripple break upon the shore.





### III.

#### WITH THE LIVING.

**ON** the following afternoon I proposed to my friend a stroll along the cliff. Whenever we settled down anywhere for a few days, it was our custom to study in the mornings, and spend the rest of the day in exercise and recreation.

As we sallied forth we met several men with spades starting for the further end of the bay, where lay the old graveyard. I turned away. "Let us go up yonder path," I said, "and walk right along the top of the cliff."

We soon stood looking down from a great height at the sea beneath, the distant horizon rising up like the line of an immense wall in front of us. The air was soft and pleasant, the light was veiled, and thin clouds went to and fro, intercepting the sunshine. Every now and then a great sea-bird flapped by, coasting along the rocks, or sank with its white bosom breasting the sea below.

Anything less suggestive of death could hardly be imagined. The full peacefulness of life, the gentle summer winds, the lazy lights of a warm autumnal sun,—all these might have made us pensive, but could hardly account for the strange discourse upon disease, decay, and mortality that we were about to enter upon.

But I knew what was uppermost in Le



Normand's mind. He had been inflamed by reading that morning an elaborate defence of the burial system in an American paper, in which Cremation was denounced as unchristian, and all the evils of burial were denied.

As we sat down upon a hillock overlooking the sea, I plucked a stem of the yellow corn which grew nearly up to the edge of the cliff.

"You said last night," I continued, picking out the grains one by one, "that burial was not respectful to the dead; but you only hinted at its unwholesome effects upon the living."

<sup>10</sup> "They are denied, you see," cried Le Normand, "in this American journal. Indeed, I have often been told that only

decomposed vegetable matter, and not animal matter, is injurious to health. This delusion must be swept away. It is true that neither dissecting-rooms nor slaughter-houses are necessarily injurious to health; coroners' inquests are worse. But, in the first case, the body is not usually exposed in its earlier, but in a certain later and less dangerous stage towards decomposition, and only after the veins have been injected. In the second case, the carcasses of beasts are fresh; and, in the third, proper precautions are taken. But in graveyards and vaults the emanation of gases from the dead are the deadliest poison.

“We talk vaguely of the earth and trees absorbing this poison. Under favourable circumstances this undoubtedly often happens to some extent, but there is no security.

I will, from this point of view—the sanitary point—once more glance at the past, and then will show you how far the past is actually the present state of things, or is rapidly tending to become so.

“I say the living have, over and over again, been poisoned by the buried dead. The undertakers and sextons are first to furnish evidence. The surgeon, G. A. Walker, who has written a book on this question, declares that, of all the grave-diggers he has spoken to, not one has wholly escaped. Many had been overpowered by the gases on commencing to dig.

“At Paris, in 1852, three men died from inhaling an escape of gas from coffins. M. Fourcroy declared that all the grave-diggers he had examined showed signs of slow poisoning. M. Patissier records several

deaths from grave-digging. Mr. Chadwick affirms that the sexton's vocation entailed a loss of one-third of the natural duration of life. Only the strongest men could bear it, and they drank habitually to resist the mephitic vapours. The escapes from leaden coffins are the worst: the longer the gases are confined, the more fatal they become.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>12</sup> "When the coffin of Francis I. was opened at the end of the last century, the dreadful vapours drove the men back, although he had lain there two hundred and fifty years. <sup>13</sup> In 1845, the burial-pits closed up at Lewes during the Black Death, in the fourteenth century, were opened, and the navvies employed were overpowered by the smell. And *we* re-open graves freely after fourteen years by Act of Parliament!

"Now realise, my friend, the effect of

such gases not concentrated, but diffused through the air. You may not smell them, but they are there; or you may smell them. Your Marylebone graveyard, closed for more than thirty years, smells; your St. John's Wood graveyard smells; <sup>14</sup> your suburban cemeteries smell.

<sup>15</sup> “Dr. Selmi, of Mantua, has lately taken the trouble to bottle the air of some cemeteries in calm weather. He finds it to contain an organic corpuscle, which he calls *septo pneumonia*. This corpuscle, administered in a solution to a pigeon, developed putrid fever, and destroyed the bird on the third day. You may breathe this air without smelling it, just as you may drink clear sparkling cholera-water without tasting it,—but it may be poison for all that. And water brings me to the

wells and springs. There is no limit to the poisoning of these in the neighbourhood of graveyards. It is true that in most large towns our water comes from surface springs, or is regulated by water companies; but this is not the case in thousands of country villages—and remember the old village churchyards have, many of them, been open for one thousand years—they are densely crowded—they are often on the slope of a hill—wells are sunk indiscriminately in the neighbourhood—the evil consequences are incalculable.

<sup>18</sup> “Dr. Pietra Santa lately reports that a fearful epidemic decimated the villages of Rotondella and Bollita, which could be clearly traced to the water which had been drained into the wells through the neighbouring hill-cemetery. At Leicester, wells

were found tainted. At Versailles, the wells near the Church of St. Louis stank. A well is sunk in the middle of the churchyard of San Miniato at Florence. At Paris, M. Ducamp discovered a spring that filtered entirely through cemeteries, and tasted strongly; and Dr. Pappenheim declares that springs tainted with the organic matter of graveyards have been found at great distances from those sources of pollution."

"But," I said, somewhat impatiently, "you speak of a state of things which is surely very rare now. Well-water is seldom used in our towns now; and the poisonous escapes of gas and other exhalations belong only to thoroughly ill regulated vaults and overcrowded cemeteries."

"I admit the town water is better than it was, but by no means safe; but how about

the country? Then, as to vapours and gases, have I not affirmed, on the best authority, that vaults are still mismanaged, and notoriously mismanaged; that cemeteries are overcrowded, and notoriously overcrowded, and are still kept open; so that evils which ought to belong to the past are present evils? But I will go further. I will say that there is nothing, even in our model legislation, which can ensure us against mephitic vapours and poisoned wells.

“Are you aware that your greatest legal authority, Mr. Baker, in his ‘Laws relating to Burials,’ states (p. 297) that ‘there is no law to prevent houses being built, and wells sunk, close to a burial-ground?’ and he goes on to point out that there is a growing tendency to build near ceme-



teries. Of course there is. Land is wanted. Houses in time will creep round every cemetery, and the dead will continue to poison the living. Why, at the present moment, it is proposed to open a cemetery for Hampstead within five hundred yards of a reservoir constructed in 1871; and another company is being formed to work a cemetery at East Ham, two miles nearer the City than Ilford. And what is true of London and its environs is true, more or less, of Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and thousands of other towns and villages throughout the land.

“Burial-grounds have been ruinous to health. Under the best conditions they are not without danger, and all experience shows that your best conditions are every year more difficult to realise. Read

the conditions (*Baker*, p. 293) — light porous soil, secluded, yet ample space, dry neighbourhood, &c., &c.—which alone fit ground for wholesome burial. You will at once see that seldom, if ever, can all these conditions be met with, and, with one exception, they are not met with, as Dr. Sutherland affirms. And then the very light porous soil, which most promotes speedy decay, is the most poisonous to the neighbouring houses.

“On whichever side I turn, I find nothing but fresh evidence against the practice of burial. Not one section, but many sections of the population suffer annually disease and death. Allowing an average of but two grave-diggers to every important place in Great Britain, and we have a class of the population, to be counted by hundreds of

thousands, steadily kept, for the benefit of the dead, for the most part in a chronic state of enforced drunkenness, ruined in health and *morale*, and prematurely poisoned, after spending but two-thirds of a natural life, and a good portion of that literally in the grave !

“ But all engaged in this unwholesome system suffer—the men who trim the gardens, the men who repair the vaults and tombstones, especially the men who keep the vaults, the men who dig and drain the land, the men who lower the coffins, the friends who stoop over the graves and swallow the effluvium whilst taking a farewell look into the unwholesome pit, which, as soon as it is dug, fills rapidly with foul gases from the neighbouring graves ; and, lastly, the whole of the funeral *cortége*,

who stand very often bare-headed in the pelting rain. There is, I repeat, no redeeming feature about this Christian burial of ours—degrading to the dead, pitiless to the living: *delenda est inhumatio!*”

In his eagerness, Le Normand had not observed the approach of two other persons, who now stood behind him and listened to his last few sentences. A middle-aged man with grey hair, whose white tie proclaimed him to be a clergyman, but whose costume and bearing in every other respect were remarkably free from anything like the affected stiffness of his class. By his side stood a sweet English girl of eighteen, such as may be met with in many a quiet rectory-house throughout England.

Her cheeks were bright with that glow

of perfect health which has a charm of its own; her eyes were shaded with long lashes; and a profusion of dark hair was gathered up in loose folds at the back of her head, just showing two little shell-like ears, and forming a lofty cushion for quite a fashionable modern hat of the period.

But she was no girl of the period, for a close observer might see that, although those red lips were ready at any moment to break into laughter, they could be firm and serious enough on occasion. It was the thoughtful expression that was in her face, as she stood eagerly listening to the last few sentences of Le Normand, it was the sunny smile habitual to her, that greeted him when he turned suddenly and recognised in his two new listeners the rector of the parish and his daughter.

If the truth must be told, that kindly and intelligent man and his beautiful daughter had more to do with our prolonged sojourn in that sea-side village than either of us chose to admit.

Mr. Morant was an enlightened man, who, having been fellow of his college, in due time came in for a good living, which, like many others, combined a large salary with a small cure of souls. At first he fretted over what he called his banishment from civilization; but in point of fact he took up his favourite pursuits, discharged his parochial duties creditably, kept up his reading, and settled down to make collections of sea-birds, fossils, and local antiquities, as many others have done before him. His wife was dead; his son was at college; he lived alone with his young

daughter, who entered eagerly into her father's pursuits, and soon became his apt pupil.

Soon after our arrival we had met the rector. He seemed to take a great fancy to both of us. We found him thoroughly up to all the questions of the day; and we were often glad to stroll up to the Rectory in the evenings, where we frequently met a retired sea-captain who had plenty to say; a middle-aged lady, who had been a poetess in her youth, and now busied herself with schools and soup-kitchens and coal-clubs; and besides these there were occasionally one or two other parishioners. But the flower of the company was always Miss Ellen Morant, and Le Normand and I were never tired of extolling her charms to each other.

My friend's extraordinary power of con-

versation and range of information soon attracted her attention, and it was quite obvious to me that she began to watch for those occasions when, feeling his audience thoroughly sympathetic, he would pour out upon some subject of general interest his rich store of argument and illustration.

What happy evenings were those at the quiet but hospitable Rectory! The bow windows opened on to the green sloping lawn. In full sight lay the broad expanse of sea, flushed with the last rosy hues of sunset, or silvered with the rising moon. On a low seat at the window would sit our sweet hostess, before her steaming urn; and those who would, dropped in and were cordially greeted by the rector.



How varied was our talk ! Now a disquisition on coins, or comets, or Darwinism from the rector, conveyed with that tact so rare, which contrives to impart knowledge pleasantly without making others feel their ignorance ; then some question of poor laws or School Boards, started by our genial ex-poetess ; or politics, invariably started by the captain, who was, of course, a staunch Tory, as all good captains should be. These last discussions were the only ones thoroughly distasteful to Ellen. The rector being an advanced Liberal, the debate was always narrowed into an excited duel between the Radical priest and the Conservative officer. Ellen would often rise unobserved by the disputants, and glide out into the garden.

“ When papa begins fighting,” she would

say, "I always run away. They get so dull and rude to each other."

Need I say to whom these confidences were addressed? Of course *we* had followed Ellen; and equally of course I found myself playing dummy, as usual, to Le Normand, who had soon absorbed Ellen's whole attention with his brilliant schemes for the reconstruction of society generally, or his description of Victor Hugo's last romance, &c., &c.

But we left the rector and his pretty daughter listening to my friend's excited denunciation of burial, or inhumation, as he called it.

"Well, gentlemen, you have selected a genial topic for this lovely afternoon; but after the havoc which the late storm has

made in our poor little churchyard yonder, I understand your thoughts."

"He can talk of nothing else," I said; "he is mad about Cremation. It appears that for eighteen hundred years the Christian world has been quite wrong in burying its dead."

"Not the only thing in which the Christian world has been wrong," interposed the rector. "But, although I agree with much that has of late been advanced against burial, I confess I cannot quite see my way to Cremation. I think there are too many practical difficulties in the way. You will have to fight popular sentiment. Many would give their own bodies to be burned who would not burn their relations. Then how is it to be done? What will be the expense? How will you combine Crema-

tion with a religious rite? What will you do with the ashes? Our friend here"—indicating Le Normand—"may have thought all this out, but I think there are several points that have to be cleared up before I see my way to substituting Cremation for burial."

"What do you say, Miss Morant?" I observed, turning to that young lady.

"Oh, I am in favour of Cremation. I am sure Mr. Le Normand explained it all beautifully to me the other evening, whilst papa was talking politics."

"Oh, so Mr. Le Normand let you into the secret alone, did he?" said the rector, smiling.

"Yes, papa, and you would all have heard if you hadn't been talking those horrid politics; and I asked him to write it

all down. Did you write it down?" she asked, turning with a slight flush towards my friend.

"I began to write out what I could recollect, Miss Morant. It will only be a poor little fragment of a better work which I hope to produce before long."

"And may I see it and copy it for myself?" she asked eagerly.

"You can keep the manuscript if it is worthy of your acceptance," replied Le Normand, with a little French bow peculiar to him; "if," he added, "you can decipher my illegible handwriting."

"Come," said the rector, "we are not going to be left out in the cold whilst you two keep all this wisdom to yourselves. Come you up to the Rectory to-night, Le Normand; bring this same manu-

script on Cremation along with you, and read it out to us. I warrant you, whoever is there, you shall have an attentive audience."





IV.

BY FIRE.

**T**HAT very evening we repaired to the Rectory, Le Normand carrying with him a bundle of notes.

We found the captain already there, taking his pipe on the lawn. We saw Miss Morant sitting by herself at the bottom of a long garden-walk, and Le Normand soon found it necessary to walk in that direction. I accordingly fell into the hands of the rector, who, at that moment, sallied forth from his study-window, which opened on to the garden.

"I think," he said, "Miss Molesworth (the ex-poetess) will probably look in after tea. Although she is not likely to side with our clever young friend's opinions, she is always interested in new ideas, and fortunately, never scandalized. Captain Douche," said the genial rector, with a sly look at that excellent retired officer, "will of course be in opposition; so I think we shall form an extremely fit and impartial audience."

"I suppose," said the captain, knocking the ashes from his pipe, "we may interrupt sometimes. These young fellows seem to think they can set all the world to rights without consulting their elders. Why, damme! (beg pardon), I for one am against Cremation. Why, sir, Nelson was buried in a vault, so's the great



Duke; and a vault's good enough for me."

"You can be Cremated first and buried afterwards," said Le Normand carelessly, strolling up with Miss Ellen.

"Oh, you must not Cremate the captain," cried she, laughing; "it would break his heart."

"Roast his heart, I should say," growled the opposition.

"Come, Ellen," broke in the rector, "we have got a formidable subject to deal with to-night. Ring the bell for tea."

Soon after tea Miss Molesworth made her appearance. She was the very model of what a middle-aged young lady ought to be—always sweet and cheerful and ready to fall into everything that happened to be

going on. She was an acquisition to every company: she knew how to make herself liked by every one. In the parish she was indispensable, with quite a genius for organizing; and yet none felt that they were being meddled with, or domineered over, by her. She ruled, it is true, but by a silent gift of ruling—a kind of natural right; and no one complained, because every one felt the better for her rule. And there were even rumours that she ruled the rector, too, and would be likely to rule him more; in short, people said that she would ere long be installed in the Rectory as permanent home-ruler,—of all which rumours Miss Molesworth appeared to be profoundly unconscious.

“My dear child,” she said, coming in suddenly and embracing Ellen like a mother,

“I’m so tired. I’ve been standing up at that cutting-out and dressmaking club all the afternoon ; but do give me a cup of tea, and I shall be all right. Your father looked in at my little cottage, and left word that your friend, Mr. Le Normand, was going to read something about Cremation. Dear me, there he is. So we are all to be burnt, are we, Mr. Le Normand ? Well, I suppose we shall get accustomed to it like the eels. I really do not think it much matters, my dear, turning to Ellen, what becomes of me when I’m dead ; but I shall be so interested to hear what Mr. Le Normand says—he has the gift of making one understand everything.”

Le Normand bowed, and, taking his seat at a little table where he could command a full view of Ellen as she sat on her low

stool by the window, he laid his scattered notes before him, and began as follows:—

### “CREMATION.

“As I have not had time fully to write out my essay, you must allow me to put my notes together after the manner of an informal address, as I go on.

“You would hardly imagine the number of different ways that man’s ingenuity has devised for the disposal of the dead.

“The Jews adopted simple entombment, or inhumation, although Cremation was occasionally adopted to do honour to their kings (Jeremiah xxxiv. 5). <sup>17</sup> The Greeks and Romans burned; the Egyptians embalmed; the Parsees expose their dead upon the tops of lofty pillars, called the

Towers of Silence, where they are visited by the fowls of the air; the Kaffirs convey their dead to some lone spot in the bush, where wolves and jackals do the rest; the Fans bury them first, and afterwards dig them up and eat them; other savage tribes place them standing or sitting in vast caves; the Hindoos burn. Modern science has suggested a quick solution of quicklime and caustic potash. A Florentine professor lately exhibited a process of petrification. A lamentable attempt to petrify the body of the illustrious Mazzini ended recently in utter failure, and, after many months, the corpse had to be committed to the earth. Other petrifying experiments have been more successful, but the best exhibit nothing but a hideous and waxen-looking parody of life. <sup>18</sup> The sentence is

inexorable. It is ordained that you shall not stay the fleeting grace of life when once the hour has struck; it must pass beyond recall. Burial in the ocean has had its advocates."

"I have seen many such," remarked the captain approvingly; "and, providing I were quite dead, I for one should not object to be food for fishes."

"But only remember," interposed Miss Molesworth, "who the fishes are food for."

"Nature's laboratory, my dear Miss Molesworth," said the rector philosophically: "we must not inquire too closely into the various steps of resolution and reconstruction."

"I am sure," said Ellen, seizing instinctively the poetical side, "nothing can be

more solemn and beautiful than Turner's Burial of Wilkie at sea."

"*Live* burial at sea is not so pleasant though," remarked the captain, falling back on his recollections. "Man overboard—and sharks! or even ladies bathing in the tropics have been attacked, Miss Morant."

"I have heard," I added, "of river burial of the same sort. Children on the Nile are occasionally snapped up by crocodiles; and inside these beasts are not unfrequently found their indigestible playthings, or even women's ornaments;—but go on, Le Normand."

"I next come to burial in the earth, or inhumation. When the world was thinly populated, and there was plenty of earth for

each person, there was nothing to be said on the score of public health against inhumation. To this day the Jews, who fold the body in a cloth and oppose the fewest obstacles to its speedy decay, are wiser than the Christians who encase mortal remains in wooden and even leaden and iron boxes; for the longer you withhold from Mother Earth her own dead children, the worse it will be for her living ones.

“On the many evils of burial as it habitually takes place in our midst I shall not now descant; I shall take them as proved.” (The rector here nodded assent.)

“I can assure you that so great are those evils, so impossible is it to prevent abuses of all kinds, so increasingly difficult is it to find appropriate sites for cemeteries, so inexpedient is it to seclude and render un-



productive large spaces of land for long spaces of time, that the abolition of burial in the recognised sense is only a question of time, and Cremation will soon become, nay, has become, the question of the day.

“It is the fortune of England to be often before the world in suggestion : it is her fate to be behind it in practice. Since the appearance of the pamphlet of your great surgeon, Sir Henry Thompson, Cremation has been discussed with renewed ardour in France, in Italy, in Austria, Prussia, in Switzerland, and in America ; and what we are disputing about, they across the Channel have adopted. This has been the work of those governments who not only aid but actively direct the formation of public opinion.”

"You are a terrible Bismarck," said the rector.

"In matters of the public health—yes: I would not leave that to companies, to local boards, or still worse, to what you call your private enterprise."

"But is Cremation an accomplished fact?"

"It is. The *Presse* of Dresden records that on the third day of Pentecost, 1874, the first body was burned at the Establishment for the Incineration of the Dead, Rue de Tharand.

"In Austria, February, 1874, the communal council of Vienna adopted unanimously the following proposal:—'Referring to the buildings which it will be necessary to raise in the new Central Cemetery, the superior administration will take immediate

steps to introduce Cremation with as little delay as possible.' <sup>19</sup>

“ America is following in the same track ; but strange to say, for the moment, both London and Paris hang back. It is a curious spectacle ; the most revolutionary and the most conservative nations in Europe pause nervously before opening the door : the good Angel of Fire is still kept waiting without.

“ But already the public mind is being won by the logic of facts—the logic, nay, the poetry of facts, so much more beautiful, so much more pure, than the poetry of fiction.

“ Nature lends you an earth-envelope for a little while ; you pay her interest for it ; but you must not try and retain her capital, and render it unproductive, by arresting the decay of matter, as the Egyptians have done

for three thousand years ; and with what results ?—to be pillaged by Arabs, trampled on by travellers, and gaped at through glass cases in all the museums of Europe !

“No, put it what way you will, life is a flame, and what of the body has been left unconsumed by human life is still owed to life of some kind. This body is a mere wick ; at one time *your* life is the flame, at another the life, of animals and vegetables ; and when this bodily structure has become unfit for your own use, you have no right to withhold it from others. You *must* burn : the water will burn you, the earth will burn you, the air will burn you, and the fire will burn you ; you must, sooner or later, give your body to be burned for the life of the world. Nature calls. ‘When,’ says Sir Henry Thompson eloquently—‘when shall I

follow? With quick obedience or unwillingly, truant-like, traitor-like, to her and her grand design?' He has put the question in a nutshell, when he states his problem thus in its simplest terms:—'Given a dead body, to resolve it into carbonic acid, water and ammonia, and the mineral elements, rapidly, safely, and not unpleasantly.' I see you do not think the problem so simple."

Le Normand paused for a moment as though to elicit a reply.

"Is it not difficult," said Miss Molesworth, "suddenly to regard a form which we have associated for years with love—a face, every expression of which has been connected with intelligence and affection—as simply an inert mass to be reduced as speedily as possible into gases and minerals?"

We know that this will be the action of time. We commit the body to Mother Earth, there to be dealt with by silent and unseen processes, but we do not like to lift our own hand actively to mar the beloved features ; it is even natural to delay that process as long as possible."

"You delay no process which saves even the appearance ; you merely cheat the earth, and poison the living, when you entomb the dead. Can any of us bear, even in imagination, to raise the coffin-lid after a very short time ? Nay, the last appearance of the beloved often lingers in the memory as a hideously passionless parody of the breathing rosy life that we love to remember. Wherever your beloved are, they are not there ; they would shrink to be associated with that decaying envelope, now grown so

loathsome, which has indeed ceased to belong to them.

“But you say we must not lay our hands upon the dead,—you might as well say we must not lay our hands upon the living.

“Are, then, the processes of Nature so sacred that they are never to be regulated or withstood? When I see a living body growing corrupt with fever or catarrh, I interfere with the natural process of decay. I stop Nature, or I hasten the process by which she seeks to expel disease. And when I see a corpse on the point of decay am I not to step in to hasten its dissolution and thus render it innocuous? That at least is better than encasing the body in lead or even wood, and thus rendering decay perilously slow and unspeakably loathsome. Yet this is called leaving the dead to

Nature. I call it standing between Nature and her dead.

“If the dead still hovered sympathetically earth-bound about their former tenements, think which would they rather contemplate? —the horrible mass for which, as Bossuet says, there ‘has been found no name in any human language,’ or the pure white ash in the memorial urn of porphyry or alabaster?”

“I think,” said the rector, “Miss Molesworth will find it difficult to answer you; but still the feeling which forbids us actively to destroy the bodies of those whom we love, belongs to a class of associations which, in many minds, will carry weight against your very excellent arguments.”

“But an opinion based upon feeling, upon custom, upon prejudice!” replied



Le Normand warmly. "A feeling without facts is no more respectable than a forged note, and it will fare in the long run no better; it may impose upon many, but in the end it will be dishonoured. See," continued the young speaker, who, in his excitement, had risen, and now stood grasping with one hand the back of an old Spanish chair, "we must bow to Nature: we are her children; her decrees are inexorable; when we obey them we prosper, when we thwart them we suffer. But we can hasten her beneficent work. Medical art assists Nature, and you applaud; surgical art hastens or anticipates her salutary processes, and saves pain or disease, and postpones death, and you applaud; the chemist, who hastens the impaired digestion, who expels poison from

the system with which the forces of life are struggling, the operator, who cuts away in a moment what Nature would but slowly reject by putrefaction, you applaud. Their efforts, you say, are lawful and good ; but when science steps in to render innocuous a process loathsome at all times and often dangerous,—when, for the slow action of air and water and earth upon a decaying body, we propose to substitute the rapid and absolutely inoffensive action of fire, — when we interpose after repeated warnings and awful experiences, summoned alike by the importunate cries of civilization and science—to desecrate? no, but to save the living from the dead,—we are repulsed, we are met by sentimental objections, we are even called monsters without religion, without reverence for the dead ! But too

long, too long, has the fair earth been made a reeking charnel-house; too long has prejudice ridden the broken-down horse of sentiment, and love for the dead brought death to the living. The fires are kindled, and the purification has already begun."

Le Normand's eyes, fiery with enthusiasm, had insensibly met those of Miss Morant, whose whole face, glowing with the orange light of the evening sky, was upturned towards him with an expression of unconscious but almost passionate admiration. As he paused her eyes fell, and I could notice that her long eyelashes glistened with something like tears, which made her look strangely lovely in the deepening twilight.

"Oh," she said, "how pure, how beauti-

ful ! All that is mere earthly about us to be taken and purified by fire, instead of being left to the mouldering corruption of the grave !” and as the first little chill wind blew in across the dewy fields, she shuddered as with the cold breath of death. “No more long terrible months, with wind and snow and rain above, and the lonely dark prison-house of decay beneath ; nothing but fair golden fire for half-an-hour, and a delicate white ash—at once a symbol of earth-life, and heavenly purity !”

“You anticipate my thoughts, Miss Morant,” said Le Normand, gazing at his youthful enthusiast with undisguised admiration. “You are indeed well qualified to continue the lecture.”

“Oh, please forgive me ; I was hardly

thinking of the silly things I was saying. I cannot bear to interrupt you."

"We should like to hear how all this is to be done," said the captain, who had been tolerably unimpressed with the rather French flights of eloquence by which Le Normand had a tendency to be carried away. "*Facta non verba*. I believe that's good Latin" (the captain's Latin did not go very far); "at all events, it's good sense."

"I agree with my friend so far, that we should be glad to get some idea of the actual process."

<sup>20</sup> "I can give you a general idea of the process advocated by Sir Henry Thompson. He used one of Siemens's furnaces, consisting of a *generator*, in which the coal or wood generating the gas mixes in certain proportions with the air; a *regenerator*,

or square chamber intersected with perforated brick walls, which receives the gas at a high temperature, and becomes quickly heated through; a *calefactor*, or actual combustion-room. This chamber is flooded with gas and air at a temperature of 700° Fahr. It contains a cylindrical vessel, about 7 ft. long by 5 ft. or 6 ft. in diameter; into that vessel is slid the body: the whole is at white heat. The gases of combustion rush off, but are not allowed to taint the air; they are caught and carried over cunningly disposed surfaces of heated brick; thus they are winnowed and winnowed among thousands of fire-bricks. The oxidation is soon complete. Not a particle of smoke at length issues from the Siemens chimney: nothing but a little perfectly harmless gas reaches the outer air.

“Throughout, nothing repulsive or in the least degree unpleasant has been smelt or seen: simply the body, conveyed to the hidden furnace or crematory, has been placed in its shroud—or, if you will, even in its coffin—at the mouth of what seems to be a small cave at the entrance of a Gothic edifice; the door has been closed; and, whilst the mourners enter the funeral chapel to hear the usual service read, the body glides into the crematory by the simplest machinery, and is returned, in the words of your English Burial-service, “dust to dust, ASHES TO ASHES,”—words culled, it well may be, from the old Greek or Roman Cremation ritual, misapplied for centuries to Christian burial, but which ere long will find their place in a new and a better Cremation ritual.”<sup>21</sup>

“But,” interposed the rector, “our usage is to bring the body into the chapel.”

“Bring it in, then, deposit it on a bier, shroud the bier with a close canopy and pall. The canopy and pall will remain, but the body will have sunk silently and unseen into the crematory below. Let your service but last fifty minutes: at the close, let the mourners remove the pall; they will find, not the corpse, but lifted into the place of the corpse will be literally the ashes of the dead, which may then be deposited in any urn brought for the purpose, and conveyed by the procession to the niche or vault destined to be their last unsullied resting-place.

*“Under no conceivable circumstances should the body be seen or touched after being placed upon the bier in the mortuary chapel. The*



*simplest mechanical contrivance should suffice to transfer it silently to the crematory, and to restore in place of the lifeless tissue, already a prey to decomposition, the harmless elementary white ash.*

“Those who have family vaults in churches should brick up with cement that part of the vault already occupied by mouldering ancestral coffins, admit plentiful light and air, and adapt the remaining space for the innocuous funeral urn, containing from three to six pounds weight of ashes.

“Then, once more, our chapels and churches might be extensively used for the dead. Instead of hideous tablets and effigies, instead of bare walls, our architects would provide rows of sculptured niches, giving rise to quite a new feature in church

architecture. Each niche would contain an exquisitely carved urn of some costly material. The rows of niches would be allotted to different grades of society, and the fee would vary according to the position of the niche. Thus," said Le Normand, turning to the rector, "Cremation would immediately bring in an increased revenue to the clergy, whose intramural interments in so many vaults and churchyards have been stopped."

"You have left the Cremation-cemetery too soon," said Miss Molesworth. "We should like to know how those are to fare who have neither family vaults, private chapels at family seats, or niches in churches. There are the vast poor populations, and many of the richer classes who

would require cemetery accommodation. This would still make large demands upon space."

"I will reply to your question. Our Cremation-cemetery would contain an ornamentally designed furnace, called the crematory, which need have no conspicuous chimney, as no foul vapour would ever issue from it. Not far off would be situated the chapel. But there is another far more conspicuous object. It is a pyramid. It is built of masses of brickwork, each brick of which is a Cremation coffin."

"Why," asked Miss Morant, "is it to be a pyramid?"

"Because a pyramid is the one indestructible form of architecture. Every crumbling of a pyramid is along the line of its elevation. You will see this if you knock

over a loose pile of stones; they fall at once into the pyramid shape. You might case your pyramid with cement or granite. The Egyptian pyramids would have all been perfect still, had it not been for man's ravages.

“We therefore construct a solid pyramid, each block or stone of which is to contain the ashes of one person. This quadrilateral pyramid—fifty feet high, with a base covering an area of 9,801 square feet, *i.e.*, 99 feet square, would have a solid content of 166,650 cubic feet, and allowing an average of one cubic foot for each person, whether infant or adult, one pyramid would then contain the ashes of 166,650 persons; erect only two such pyramids and you will accommodate 333,300 persons.

“But, I have not nearly done yet. My

cemetery occupies, let us say, twenty acres ; of these four are covered by the two pyramids, by the crematory, by offices, and by mortuary chapels. We may also deduct one for pathways. We then have left fifteen acres for a third mode of sepulture—the burial of the ashes.

“If we bury these twenty feet deep in layers (a not unheard of depth in cemeteries), we shall then have thirteen million sixty-eight thousand cubic feet of space (13,068,000),—and giving an average of a cubic foot to each person, infant and adult, we shall bury 13,068,000 persons in the earth.

“But now let us run cloisters round the outside of our twenty acres. Let the cloister walls be ten feet high. The outer wall is fitted with niches for funeral urns

on one side only,—but the inner wall might be fitted on both sides. Obviously, the length of wall would depend upon the surface of the cemetery-ground and the general shape of the cemetery; but on a very moderate reckoning, allowing two square feet for each urn and niche, you would have accommodation for 50,000 exposed urns. It is quite obvious that I have not exhausted the resources of our Cremation-cemetery, for the mortuary-chapels themselves, with their vaults, might be utilized to the extent, say of 5,000 more, and cloister walls multiplied indefinitely over the ground. But leaving out this last indefinite item, we have now in our cemetery of twenty acres, with its double cloister wall, room for 13,118,000. Now, supposing that an average of 80,000 who die annually in London

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were all buried in this little cemetery it would suffice for at least one hundred and sixty years for the whole of London. It is true that the gigantic Necropolis at Woking, measuring 2,000 acres, undertakes to bury the whole of the dead of London for some centuries, but a Cremation cemetery of 2,000 acres would accommodate the whole of London for about 16,000 years !

“You can see at once that these figures may be handled in a variety of different ways. I have said enough to show you the enormous economy of space. I need not dwell upon the fact that in exchange for many acres of ground saturated with corruption, you have a compact plot here and there devoted to the burial of innumerable dead, no inch of which need be the source of any baleful influence whatever to the

living, for whether you bury or expose ashes they are equally inoffensive.

“By the time the Cremation cemetery was full, it would be valuable as an open space for the people,—situated probably by that time in a more or less densely populated neighbourhood.”

“I think,” said Miss Morant, “I should like to be buried near the surface; say in the last layer, close to the grass and flowers.”

“Yes, and that reminds me of a beautiful suggestion, made, I think, by a Sicilian poet, that along with the ashes of some beloved one should be deposited the seeds of some flower, so that when it sprung up the friends and relatives might gather the blossom as a dear memorial of the life that lasts beyond the tomb!”



“Oh, that is a beautiful idea!” exclaimed Ellen; “we could sow the flowers again and again from their own seeds, and we should then have, as it were, a new token of the departed every year.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Miss Molesworth, “to gather fresh flowers sprung from the pure ashes of the dead would be so much more lovely than to lay bright flower-wreaths to wither above their mouldering corpses. There is nothing more depressing, in its way, than to see beautiful flowers lying, in various stages of decomposition, upon fresh graves. We are forced then to think of death and corruption, instead of life and immortality.”

“I must not engage your attention much longer this evening,” rejoined Le Normand, in his calmest accents; “but I will ask you

now to observe the variety of ways in which Cremation sepulture may be carried out, each method equally inoffensive, and more or less economical, appropriate, ornamental, often impressive and touching.

“I. Ashes bricked up, marked by tablets in pyramid or church, or in long covered arcades carried right round and across the Campo Santo.

“II. Ashes contained in urn, in pyramid, or church-niche or covered arcade.

“III. Ashes entombed in parish vaults

“IV. Private vaults at family seats.

“V. Mortuary-rooms in houses.”

“VI. Earth burial, without urn or coffin, in layers; the topmost layers being retained for flower-burial, with or without urn.

“VII. Borrowing from the great Roman

highways, many a solitary road might stretch beyond our great cities, lined with graceful mausoleums.

“VIII. Miles of soft chalk cliff might be quarried for catacombs.

“IX. Thousands of useless and deserted gravel, clay, or sand pits, and worked-out mines throughout the land, might be utilised as urn-cemeteries.

“These are only a few of the practical hints that might be given.”

“It is too late now,” said the rector, “to enter upon quite another branch of the subject. You have had it all your own way, and we are much obliged to you for the information you have given us, which I think has interested every one of us; but I propose that we should all meet here to-

morrow night, on which occasion a list of objections shall be handed to you, and you shall be bound—without being personal to any one, for they will be in writing and with no names affixed—then and there to reply to them.”

“I agree, on condition that I be not obliged to go over ground already traversed, or notice at length objections which I have already answered to the best of my ability.”

“We won’t be too hard on you,” said the rector, smiling.

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As we rose, there was a general move into the garden. The moon had risen, and shed a soft splendour over the lawn and colourless flower-beds ; beyond, the silence was broken by the low wail of the nightin-

gales in the little copse below. The rector paced slowly up and down with the captain. Miss Molesworth had already hurried away home. I turned naturally to seek for some companion. Against the dim bushes across the lawn, I thought I saw the gleam of Ellen's white dress. Presently even that vanished. Le Normand I could not see. I was not indiscreet enough to seek any further, but I had my own ideas. Presently the rector's voice was heard calling "Ellen!" and Ellen soon appeared, bringing a shining glow-worm in her hand; but she was alone. As I passed her, however, I came upon Le Normand. He seized my arm in a hurried and excited manner. I felt his hand tremble.

"What is the matter?" I asked, with affected surprise.

"I have fever in my head, my friend: the air suffocates me; these nightingales oppress me. What faint, heavy perfumes rise from these flower-beds! I shall remember them to my dying day."

"You are excited," I said; "you have talked too much."

We walked home in silence.





V.

## TWO ROSES.

**W**E met, the rector and Ellen, in the lane next evening. Had I not read between the lines, I should have been surprised to find Ellen so cordial with me and so constrained with Le Normand; but then she cared for Le Normand, and she did not care for me. Certainly a change had come over this young girl. She had lost some of her natural frankness, and a little of her old easy, graceful, laughing manner; but then, as I hinted above, she was in love,—that was plain to me; and her slight embarrass-

ments and sudden blushes were not one whit less winning in my friend's eyes than her simple cordiality to every one had been before; but then Le Normand was also in love.

I might have found Miss Ellen more interesting personally to me before; but then she was not in love with me. Not that I was jealous—far from it; at least I am not aware that I was. Perhaps I might have had a slight feeling of what a middle-aged spinster experiences when called upon by some blooming girl to play what I believe is vulgarly called “gooseberry,” in the interest of some young lover, who looks upon her, by way of return, as a necessary nuisance. I do not wish to be bitter—far from it; indeed, the case suggested is not really a parallel. I was not an *old* bachelor;



and I am certain Miss Ellen did not detest me,—she did not think enough about me for that; and I declare I was never in the way. I can't bear getting in the way of young people under circumstances which it is needless to specify.

Then I was not in love with Miss Morant; at least, not exactly in love—not at all in love; a little smitten, perhaps. Anyone is apt to be a little smitten when a beautiful girl puts her hand in yours, and says, with all sorts of looks—

“You *will* come and have tea with us to-night, won't you? and—and Mr. Le Normand will come too, won't he?”

“Oh yes, of course,—I should rather think he would; at least, I'll try and induce him.”

“Oh, don't *press* him to come.”

“He won’t want pressing,—at least, not by me; but perhaps I shall not be able to come myself.”

“Oh, *do* come!”

Well, what had I to complain of? Nothing; only, as I said before, Miss Morant was not in love with me. A girl can’t be in love with two men at the same time; at least, she ought not to be. Certainly, I was not bad-looking; I was young—older than Le Normand, but young; I was thought clever; and, I repeat emphatically, I was not in love with Miss Morant: so there the matter rested—exactly.

So we met the rector and Ellen in the lane. After greeting us, Ellen turned to gather a wild rose. I might have helped her, but I did not choose to be quick

enough. I said before, I hate getting in people's way.

Le Normand was there, and he gathered the rose for her; he gathered two roses and gave them to her. How was I to know what was going on? I was talking to the rector, with my back to both of them. I did know though; she gave him back one flower; his hand touched hers. Well, I happened to turn just then; they were looking at each other,—how absurd! I don't think they said anything at all; it was all over in a minute. There was absolutely nothing to remark upon, and yet I went over the silly little episode again and again. It seemed to worry me. "She tried to gather a wild rose—he helped her—he gave her two roses; she gave him one back; he touched her hand; they looked

at each other." Pshaw, what a fool I was !  
What did it concern me ?

We all walked up the hill together, the rector dilating eloquently on the several objections which were to be made to Cremation, and Le Normand not hearing one word of it all. I was there. Those two were behind again. Ellen had got a stone in her shoe, or something. I don't know what happened then ; I believe she sat down on a stile. The rector walked on, absorbed in his conversation with—I believe it was me.



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## VI.

### ANSWERED.

**A**S we sat after tea that evening waiting for Le Normand to begin the discussion of certain objections that had been handed to him on different slips of paper, I fancied I did not notice the same interest and ardour in his face as he turned over the papers. There was even a slight look of *ennui* and impatience as he resumed—

“First, the sentimental objection is again urged. I must really be pardoned for saying no more upon that head.” Indeed, he

had spoken strongly enough, even fiercely, against it on the previous evening.

“It does not weigh with me. It is not true to really deep feeling, founded on facts, this talk about destroying beloved lineaments and desecrating the sanctities of death; it is *only* sentiment, pardonable it may be, natural apparently to some minds, but shallow and inconclusive.

“Secondly, that Cremation is contrary to Christian practice. To which I reply, many Christian practices are no parts of Christianity, and many distinctly Greek and Roman, *i.e.*, heathen practices have been adopted approvingly by Christians. You teach boys from the classics; you teach artists from the models of Greek art; much of your philosophy is heathen, more of your jurisprudence. When the Greeks or Romans



knew better than you know, you do as they did without compunction. They were wiser than you in practising Cremation ; confess it, and imitate them. The only reason the Christians buried was, first, because the Jews buried, and Christianity was originally nothing but a Jewish sect.

“The Jews buried because they had inherited the custom from ancient times, when there was plenty of room in the world ; and being the most conservative of people, they had never altered. !

“The only other reason why the Christians buried, was because it was a cheaper and quieter rite than Cremation in those days, with its costly asbestos shirts and aromatic woods and spices. They used the Catacombs, and hid away the beloved dead from a persecuting heathen

world. Christ, indeed, was entombed; but in this He is no example to us, for according to Christian belief He rose from the dead and saw no corruption. But for me this question of Christian practice is soon settled. *Postulo*.—Burning is better than burial in the old sense: that is my premiss.

“The heathens burned; the Christians bury. *Conclusion*.—Either heathenism is in this respect wiser than Christianity, or burial forms no essential part of Christianity, but remains strictly a question of circumstance and expediency.

“Thirdly, that Cremation interferes with the doctrine of the Resurrection, or tends to loosen its hold over men’s minds. Then what becomes of the holy army of martyrs, or many worthy people who have been reduced to ashes by great public conflagra-

tions, such as the burning of Rome under Nero? No sane persons believe that we shall rise with the old framework of bone and the particles of flesh which have been dispersed by death through a thousand new forms of organic life. Those who plead for the survival of our individual selves after the shock of death, simply mean that life, instead of being the mere product of force and matter in certain combinations, is the subtle thing which builds itself a mortal tabernacle by the aid of force and matter, and can survive again and again the shock which destroys that special envelope called the human body, using new elements for self-expression adapted to the altered conditions of another life. This is the utmost that the advocates of Resurrection must now be permitted to claim, and our

German physiologists have denied them even that.

“But even if the old literal Resurrection doctrine be held, Cremation cannot affect it. For any power capable of recalling and arranging the atoms of a body consumed in one hundred years by earth, air, and water, could equally collect and re-arrange the atoms which, in one brief half-hour, have been dispersed by fire.

“Fourthly, that the exhalations from Cremation are unwholesome. Hindoo Cremation and the old heathen funeral pyres doubtless were; but not the modern crematory, as I have described it.

“Fifthly, it is argued that future palæontologists would have no skulls to examine, if we burned all our bones. The objection is farcical. But in fact, however prevalent

Cremation may become, some people are certain to be buried still in all ages and countries; and secondly, in all civilized museums skulls and skeletons of each age are certain to be preserved as anatomical specimens. Besides," he added, with the contemptuous laugh of a man who felt that to argue the point was wasting time, "posterity has given me no bones; why should I give my bones to posterity?"

"A sixth objection is that Cremation would be impracticable in thinly populated country places: furnaces enough would be too expensive,—would either have to be kept burning, or constantly relit for an inadequate supply of bodies; on the other hand, reduce the number of furnaces, and you would enormously increase the distances which the dead would have to travel.

However just may be such objections, they still leave the question of crematories for all the large towns untouched. I may say here that I am confident this rural difficulty can be met, although such a question of detail would be too tedious to discuss at present.

“Seventhly, some worthy people dislike the notion of fire, as too suggestive of the fire that ‘should never be quenched.’ In short, they seem to look upon Cremation as a kind of symbolical anticipation of the final doom assigned by popular theology to impenitent sinners. But, surely, if Cremation suggests the fires of hell or purgatory, burial serves to remind us still more of ‘the worm that never dieth.’ But why not think of the fire of love instead of hell fire? If it comes to association, choose the most agreeable, since you are free to choose.

But such fancies are too childish : as is also that other fancy, that somewhere in the brain is the subtle germ of the after-life ; burn that, and you destroy the soul. Alas ! then, for shipwrecked mariners devoured by fishes, and, as I said before, for martyrs consumed by flames, and thousands of other good and innocent victims of fire.

“ Again, it is objected that Cremation is no better than burial as a guard against desecration, for in time the ashes of the dead after Cremation may be scattered, as well as bones after burial. Granted ; but if so, how infinitely less shocking is the sight of a few ashes than the exposure of bones and skulls, which are the very framework of the human body, recalling its shape and fashion, and which are ever felt to be intensely personal. I, for one, could view

without disgust a few white ashes cast by some mishap abroad in the fields; whilst the sight of a skull or a thigh-bone, or a skeleton hand and wrist lying on a road or meadow, could never fail to shock the most insensitive. Cremation thus places the human form for ever beyond the reach of that species of desecration, to which the chances of burial must ever expose it.

“I have now left three rather more weighty objections — the Costliness, the inducement to Poison, and the Legality. I will say a few words on each.

“First, the costliness. This is also a question of detail; but let me say that although Cremation would be cheaper, it is not on the ground of cheapness that it is admirable. From the highest to the lowest, the one thing which people, as a rule, are



willing to spend money on is a funeral. I need not fatigue you with many calculations which have already been made; I will only state enough to prove to you that Cremation is not the costly affair that some persons have supposed.

“The original ‘plant’ of a Cremation-cemetery would of course be large,—the erection of furnaces expensive; but the present original outlay of cemeteries is very large, and in any case there would be the expenses of transit and the cost of vault, niche, or grave.

<sup>22</sup> “As to the actual cost of the process itself, Professor Gorini states that it would cost from two to three pounds to cremate a single body; but, once lighted, several bodies might be cremated in their separate cells simultaneously. Ten bodies would

reduce the price of Cremation to between five and six shillings apiece. The consumption of fuel would no doubt be considerable; but as we do not grudge its incessant expenditure—I had almost said its scandalous waste—for the transit of citizens by land and sea, and the production of wealth in all our manufacturing cities, so neither ought we to object when it is proposed by Cremation to invest fuel in the health and safety of the community.

“Leaving to experts more abstruse calculations, I notice another objection. It is thought that by destroying the evidence of crime in the intestines you would increase poisoning.

“Let us have the courage of our opinions and say at once that, for so grand a benefit

to mankind, a few more cases of poisoning would be a small price to pay.

“The objection, though not futile, is positively inadequate. Who thinks of stopping fairs, races, and public holidays, because theft, debt, and drunkenness are increased thereby? who would make it illegal to wear purses for fear of increasing the number and skill of pickpockets, or to sell razors for fear of promoting suicides? But still the poisoning objection has seemed important enough to induce Sir Henry Thompson to suggest that the materials for a *post mortem* should be retained in each case.”

“I hardly like to interrupt you,” said Miss Molesworth, in her very decided but quiet manner, “but I do not think that you medical gentlemen estimate the opposition,

I might say disgust, which such a proposal is certain to meet with from the general public, even the objections to a reasonable *post mortem* are in many cases absolutely insurmountable; but as regards the systematic treatment which you mention as a precaution against poison, the advocates of Cremation had better keep it quite in the background,—the remedy would be thought worse than the disease.”

<sup>23</sup> “A more subtle remedy has been suggested by Dr. Persifor Fraser. He proposes that in each case of Cremation, or at all events in every case of sudden or otherwise suspicious death, the incandescent gaseous products should be examined by a government spectroscopist appointed for the purpose.”

“That,” said the rector, “would indeed

be a new and brilliant triumph for science ; but somehow it has not the ring of probability about it."

"Then I have done my best with the poison argument."

"I think," I said, "you had better fall back on your first bold sentiment, with which I heartily agree. In the great progress of social and sanitary reform I cannot conceive what it signifies whether or not an additional Smith or Jones gets poisoned here and there."

"In short," said the rector, "you would have him swallow his hemlock-cup quietly, and leave others to sacrifice cocks to Æsculapius?"

"I would," said Le Normand, evidently taking less and less interest in the discussion. "One only question remains—Is Cre-

mation legal? The opinions of your highest authorities have been taken upon this subject, and they all agree that, providing it be accomplished without creating a nuisance, violating decency, or injuring the health of the community, there are no legal objections to Cremation."

The yawning by this time had become pretty general: even Miss Morant showed signs of *ennui*. Le Normand was evidently preoccupied, he was not up to his usual mark, but his statements to-night seemed more in accordance with the captain's taste; there were, in short, no flights of eloquence.

"I don't agree with any of your answers, my friend," he said, with amusing and innocent bluntness; "but I followed you

to-night: I understood what you meant,  
you know. I like things plain and smart,  
you know, and, as we used to say at school,  
'longum et breve hujus est hoc.'"





## VII.

### BY MOONLIGHT.

**A**ND thus matters stood when we sallied forth into the garden. It was not nearly so late as the last night, for the discourse had been more brief. Le Normand put his arm this time carelessly within mine. Ellen was trying to find her glow-worm in a geranium bed where she had placed it. We naturally joined in the hunt, but in vain. My friend stooped down, and said to her in a low voice—

“Might we not find another?” She did not answer.



"Come," he said, decisively, and, to my surprise, he dragged me in the direction of the little wood at the end of the lawn. Ellen was by his side. I felt myself miserably *de trop*, but still Le Normand held me tight. We reached the wood. Suddenly I felt his grasp loosen. He whispered in my ear, "Dear boy, do not go back without me."

I understood my *rôle* again. I paused to mark the noiseless flight of a white owl. I was alone. They were both lost together in the deep shadows of the wood; still I heard their footsteps; suddenly they stopped. Glow-worm hunting indeed! How long they were there I do not know. My owl did not come back again, and they found no glow-worms. Ellen's name was not shouted.

Were we not all three absent ? Yes, alas ! but only two were together.

I forget how I passed my time. I think I can guess how they passed theirs ; but perhaps that is all my fancy. At last we all emerged in the most natural manner into the clear moonlight again. Ellen's eyes were certainly unusually bright ; but she did not look at all unhappy. The captain was sparring loudly with the rector as usual ; but Miss Morant seemed indisposed to join them. She ran into the house by the study-window without saying good night to any one (perhaps she had said good night to *him* in the wood) ; at any rate we saw her no more that evening ; and it is a very remarkable thing that, although Le Normand

and I had talked over Miss Morant very freely at first, neither on that night nor on the previous one did her name once pass our lips.

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All this of course had an end. It was about four o'clock on the following afternoon. I missed my friend; he had doubtless gone out for a stroll by himself.

I went out for a stroll, and, without knowing why, I strolled towards the Rectory.

There was a short cut through a field leading to the little filbert wood at the bottom of the Rectory garden.

I found myself going mechanically towards that wood. I entered it. The air was deliciously warm and fragrant. I

plucked a bunch of nuts, and sat down idly on the grass to crack them. Presently I was aware of footsteps; I was aware of Ellen's dress through the trees. I have said I hate being in people's way; but I was aware of Le Normand's arm round her waist; I was aware of one long embrace, and then I rose hurriedly, and the lovers started asunder; and I—I know not why, but I took to my heels and never stopped running until I had reached my lodgings.

When Le Normand came in, I said, "If you are trifling with that girl, Le Normand, it is an abominable shame!"

"I have never trifled with her," he said, flushing up fiercely.

"Do you mean to marry her then?" I asked, as impressively as I could.

"Certainly, I will if I can."

"Have you asked her father?"

"If I love a girl, I don't ask her father;  
I ask her *first*."

"It is contrary to the practice of your countrymen, who usually ask the parents before proposing."

"D—— my countrymen!"

He certainly used a strong expression; but he was growing impatient with my calmness and apparent indifference.

"My dearest fellow," I said, breaking through the ice, "if you have proposed and been accepted, may you be happy: you have got a rare jewel, and I congratulate you with all my heart."

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Le Normand was not a man to do things by half. He was a man of talent, with good prospects and some means, and had lately received an excellent appointment at one of the metropolitan hospitals.

The lady was willing, the rector not inexorable, and in a few days Le Normand left the little seaside village, with its ruined graveyard and its genial Rectory, the happy and openly accepted lover of Ellen Morant.





## VIII.

### VIEWS AND OPINIONS.

**A** WEEK or two after the last-mentioned events, Le Normand was summoned to London. There had been a recent out-break of low fever in the neighbourhood of the hospital to which he was attached. The study of fever had always exercised a peculiar fascination over his mind. It is of all bodily sicknesses the one which constantly exhibits the mind in the most abnormal conditions.

“The psychologists,” he would say, “are for ever analyzing the normal and healthy

processes of mental activity; but if you want to find out about any organ, you should study it in disease, not in health: two minutes of eccentric activity will often reveal more than a lifetime of healthy action.

“Your metaphysicians are for ever abusing us for viewing everything physically, and neglecting what they call mental phenomena. They may be right; special studies no doubt generate special habits of mind; but they forget that every mental operation is accompanied by a purely physical movement; and all the recent progress that has been made in the study of mind has been made not by the analysis of its thought, but rather by examining the different physical movements which accompany thought.

“Study the common phenomena of a hasty



temper; hear the intemperate language; scrutinize the motives: you advance not one step until you perceive that it means a tendency to congestion of the blood vessels of the brain. You can alter that by attention to diet, and so forth. You then perceive that the intensity of thought depends largely upon the flow of blood to the brain. When that is below par, mental energy languishes; when it is above par, within certain limits, there is an increase of mental force; beyond that limit eccentricity, incoherence, delirium; but in any case it is the abnormal state which has taught you the conditions of healthy action, and has therefore put you in the right way to restore and to maintain it.

“There is nothing more exciting in science than the pathology of disease. Metaphysics

and physiology must shake hands over many a corpse before the true science of mind is reached. Too long has the product we call thought been analysed; too long has its special organ been neglected."

In this way Le Normand would run on, expounding to me what he called the physical philosophy of mind, and he asserted that the fever-bed was pregnant with revelations for mental science which invested it with an interest at once dramatic and profound. The outbreak of enteric fever in Marylebone, in 1873, had specially attracted his attention; but he was so well satisfied by the persistent ingenuity and enthusiasm with which the evil demon on that occasion was tracked to his lair in the milk-farms, that he took no prominent part

in the discussion, although repeatedly urged to do so ; for, young as he was, he was beginning to be looked upon as an authority on such questions.

But Le Normand's devotion to science was touched with that genuine modesty which made him never put himself forward to meddle with what was being well done by others. Yet he never recoiled from what he conceived to be the duty of saying important but unpopular things when no one else cared to say them. He would, for instance, denounce in no measured language the abuses of hospital management, and indicate with remarkable clearness the kind of reforms most urgently required.

I am glad to note these things now that I have nothing of him to fall back upon but the memory of them.

After his engagement we not unnaturally prolonged our stay, and were constantly at the Rectory; and as the lovers had plenty of time to themselves during the day, our evenings were still frequently devoted to discussions of subjects specially interesting to Le Normand, and, as I think, generally interesting to the public.

It was on these occasions that I noted how wide and, as it seemed to me, wise were his views and opinions on all questions connected with his profession; and although upon almost every subject that could be started he could generally speak more interestingly than most men, yet upon medical and sanitary topics he possessed, as it seemed to us all, a clearness of vision which was at once destructive and constructive in a remarkable degree.

Perhaps it was the latter quality of constructiveness, so rare and yet so all-essential in reformers, which led me to retain so many of his conversations and monologues.

I bitterly regret that I did not retain more. But I had latterly another recorder in the person of Ellen Morant, who, after an unusually interesting evening, would frequently note down and write out afterwards the substance of what he had said. One of these brief sketches of hers, corrected in red pencil by himself, and which came into my possession, I cannot resist the temptation of inserting here.

He was never weary of talking about hospital reform; and the question of the Hospital Sunday Fund, introduced by the

rector, called forth from our friend the following remarks, which seem to me to be much to the point:—

LE NORMAND ON HOSPITAL BLOTS.

There are two grave blots on your English hospitals and dispensaries; one involved in the constitution, the other in the administration, of most of them. And all who are connected with them as subscribers and patrons should bear those blots in mind, and try and wipe them out.

The first is the blot of patron-power. Tickets are issued to subscribers, and they expect an equivalent for them in the power of selecting patients. They dictate to the medical officers throughout the land,—directly, whom to treat (by letter), in-

directly, whom not to treat (by occupying the ground).

There should be no hospital letters at all, or rather there should be none conferring such power as this upon patrons. The hospital authorities alone should decide who are the fit objects; but what doctor cares to overrule a patron's letter? He fears to damage the hospital funds; he dare not tamper with privilege. At present a nobleman's servant, suffering chiefly from an ample salary and high feeding, can apply with a letter, and be treated over the head of a poor deserving mechanic who cannot get one. Real charity seeketh not her own — thinks not of the power of patronage, but of the *fittest objects for relief*. The hospital, not the patron, should be left to decide that.

People who can pay ought to pay. Hospitals should exact a payment, however small. Dispensaries should all be provident, that is, supported by a small weekly or monthly donation by all who claim their aid. Cases too poor to pay should be regularly and systematically taken up by the parochial, lay, clerical, or governmental authorities, or by private charity, and be provided with small sums needful to satisfy the hospitals or dispensaries.

Under these wholesome restrictions, *all* hospitals and dispensaries should be free, and the objects always selected by the medical officers. This system has been adopted, more or less, throughout Scotland, and works admirably.

Hospitals suffer in two ways from patrons' letters. The letters issued are out of all pro-



portion to the subscription. If all subscribers used *all* their letters, the hospital would be bankrupt, just as a bank is in a panic when all depositors want their money out at once.

These patrons' letters overcrowd hospitals—the wrong people often get served, the right objects rejected; but both classes suffer from the overcrowding.

This overcrowding is the second blot, and it is one of administration. It may be met in three ways.

1st. Sift the crowds, either by restricted use of letters on one side—the *patrons*, or by restricting the number of patients to be seen at the other side, *i.e.*, at the *hospital*. This might lessen the quantity of advice; but would materially improve the quality, as no man can treat patients properly at the rate of two minutes apiece.

2ndly. Lengthen the hours for medical attendance: but this would be hard upon the medical man, who often gives his services.

3rdly. Increase the staff and accommodation; but this involves increase of expenditure, and therefore suggests at once the expediency of some such institution as the Sunday Hospital Fund.

From the foregoing remarks arise three hints for practical action—

1st. As regards the Fund itself;

2nd. As regards the Public;

3rd. As regards the Hospital.

As regards the Fund, let us insist upon a clear and public exposition of the principles on which the committee of distribution act, and let us demand an account of their stewardship. Let us above

all things take care *that no medical men be on the committee of distribution*: no such committee could be satisfactory to the hospitals or the public. A judiciously selected consulting council of the medical profession might be used advantageously by the committee of distribution; but once put medical men on the committee, and questions of privilege and party purposes instantly arise; *and the committee should be impartial, above all suspicion.*

As regards the public, let them waive their rights as patrons, seek to give without expecting an equivalent; that would be real charity—to leave the hospitals free to choose when they send their letters—to select carefully their applicants—to avoid, when possible, issuing all their letters, and to advocate the abolition of all letters, as in Scotland.

As regards the hospitals and dispensaries, let a fearless scrutiny and selection of patients be made; let hospitals require a small donation according to circumstances; let all dispensaries be on the provident system, and let overcrowding be discouraged—chiefly by discouraging applications from persons who can well afford to pay, and ought to pay for private advice, and ought not, therefore, to crowd out fitter applicants.

Le Normand was equally strong on the present system of parish doctors. I remember him saying indignantly—

“ You take a poor man who has probably a young family to support. You pay him an absurdly inadequate salary, out of which he is obliged to provide drugs. What will

you? The drugs are absurdly inadequate. There are only a few drugs which really do any good: these are constantly in demand, but they are expensive. Quinine, cod liver oil, iron, etc., cannot be got for nothing; yet, as a rule, when fit to be given at all, they should be given in abundance. What is the natural substitute?—peppermint-water and imagination. What is the result? It is negative, my friend: the people do not get well.

“I will tell you what happened to me not long ago in an East-end parish in London.

“The clergyman was an enlightened man. He visited his people; he knew their sick. He said to me one evening after dinner, ‘I have had a large sum of money given to me for my sick poor, and if you will

undertake to help me to make a charitable experiment, I have determined what to do with part of it, at least. I will give you one side of a street. There is a good deal of fever in the district just now; the parish doctor is over-worked. I will also give you *carte blanche* on a good chemist for the drugs: let him send his bill in to me. I am curious to compare the work of the parish doctor, on the south side of the street, with yours on the north.'

"I accepted his offer, and gave my services gratuitously. I'm afraid to say how much quinine and cod liver oil I ordered; but at the end of the year the rector came to me and said, 'Frankly I tell you, that whereas on the parish doctor's side an unabated reign of mortality and disease has prevailed, on your side there

has been something like a series of resurrections.'

" 'And this,' I replied, 'is not owing to my superior abilities—your parish doctor is a clever man—but owing to the excellence of the drugs that I have been able to administer.' Doctors are often depressed at the little impression produced by the most powerful drugs upon the upper classes. The opposite experience is made with the poor. When you treat the poor you treat, as a rule, raw and untried constitutions. You sow your drugs as it were upon a virgin soil, and the results exceed your expectation. Dr. Livingstone noticed the same thing in connection with savages. Small doses of good drugs produced effects little short of miraculous.

"One of the great difficulties which the

poor man's doctor has to contend with is the improper and inadequate food supply; but even good food is useless unless there is the appetite for it; and that can often be restored only by a judicious use of good drugs; and those drugs the parish doctor cannot afford to give,—*ergo*, he fails. He is over-worked; he is under-paid; he is unsupplied. Go to him, he will be the first to confess it!"

Le Normand's views on special and general hospitals seemed to me to be equally just; for whilst he was fully aware of the dangers of professional puffery and the abuses of irresponsible management, and all the other objections which have been brought against special hospitals, he urged very sensibly that the public were, in the long



run, the best judges of what did them good. People with some special complaints went to some special hospitals, because they got cured better there than elsewhere ; they got cured better there because they were attended by men whose special attention had been turned to their special maladies. And whilst he fully admitted the narrowing tendency of special studies, he still maintained that studies, to be worth anything, ought to be special ; and declared that it was quite as possible for a man who had a special acquaintance with diseases of the throat, or the skin, or the eye, to be an excellent general physician, as for a great animal painter to be a good general artist.





III.

### A PERILOUS SPHERE.

**B**UT it is time to return to my narrative, although I would fain linger over these and many other instructive memories of my friend.


I said that fever had broken out in the neighbourhood of his hospital, and that of all maladies fever cases seemed to possess for him the most powerful attractions.

But there were circumstances connected with the present outbreak which rendered it especially interesting to him; and, with that keen professional ardour which was

one of his most admirable characteristics, he hastened from the side of his affianced bride to the sick beds of the sufferers who so sorely needed his skill.

On arriving in town he soon followed up some of the clues that had been given him. He found, after several domiciliary visits to those streets which sent up most fever cases, that the water-butts supplying the back premises were in a filthy condition, and that the sewage in many cases leaked into the pipes connected with various drinking-cisterns and pumps.

On reporting these cases to the medical officer of the district, he was surprised to find that days passed before that functionary could be induced to inspect the premises complained of. At last he went,



and the utmost he could be prevailed upon to advise was that the leaky pipes should be cheaply soldered, and the foulest tubs cleaned out. For this purpose the landlord entrusted each of his tenants with a few shillings, and they were directed to carry out the repairs themselves. Of course in many cases the poor tenants neglected the repairs and pocketed the shillings; and in no single case were the pipes properly isolated from sewage, or the repairs properly executed; consequently in a few weeks everything was just as bad as before.

Astonished and shocked at this criminal neglect, Le Normand went to the health officer, and spoke in the strongest manner of the disgraceful condition of certain houses under his charge.

He was heard respectfully; but he was

told that the repairs called for had been executed, and that any other repairs would shortly be made after a fresh inspection.

My friend soon found that all this was talk; that for some reason the sanitary officer would not press the landlord, and the landlord was not likely to act of his own accord. It finally appeared that the medical officer had married the daughter of the man who owned the houses complained of, and that he dared not speak out.

This was not the only occasion in which Le Normand complained that local government broke down in the face of crying abuses. "Your local people," he would say, "respect the pockets of their friends and

their own. If a drain has to be cleaned out, your vestry will oppose it; if a nest of rotten houses has to be pulled down, your vestry will prop them up rather than incur any greater pecuniary risk. If work-house food is bad and dear, it is some member of your Guardian Board that supplies it, and it must not be scrutinised; and in nine cases out of ten, if an old graveyard has to be shut up, your local powers, who get fees or would have to provide a new ground, show cause why the old plague-spot should be still used.

“ I do not say that local government has not its merits; but it has its great evils, which you in England under-estimate. You cannot get men to see that abuses should be put down, if the money is to come out of their own pockets. The convenience of

many will be invariably sacrificed to the interest of a few. It is natural, but it is not well."

In the present instance, Le Normand traced the local outbreak of fever partly to the prevalence of tainted water; but there was another cause—foul air.

An old burial-ground had recently been disturbed. It is true it had not been used for several years, but it was one of those that had up to 1850 been shockingly overcrowded. <sup>24</sup> Under the new Acts it had been recently sold for building purposes, and the remains were (nominally), as the Act directed, removed to one of the suburban cemeteries; but the work had been roughly done. At the request of the inhabitants, the men worked chiefly at night, and

the bodies were usually removed in the twilight. It was said that many leaden coffins had been broken open, and the gases that had escaped had seriously affected the men employed, and been the source of great discomfort to the surrounding houses. Then several large holes used for pit-burial were opened, and found to be in a terribly poisonous state. The thick clay soil had, in fact, materially suspended decomposition, and the overcrowding of bodies had further complicated matters. The effluvium from these places was fearful; and it was, indeed, a very difficult matter to know what to do. The remains could not well be removed in their present state. Burning in the close proximity of houses was thought to be unsafe, as well as a public nuisance. Finally, it was resolved to use large quan-



tics of chemical dissolvents and disinfectants, and to close up the pits.

It was generally supposed that all the bodies had thus been either destroyed or removed before the ground was handed over for building purposes to the purchaser; but those who knew declared that vast quantities of bones had been sent off to be ground up for manure, numbers of leaden coffins stolen for the sake of the lead and plates, whilst every one seemed agreed it was safest at last to leave off hunting for more coffins in the densely packed ground for fear of coming upon those awful pits.

Probably only a small minority of the dead ever found their way to the suburban cemetery; and, in deference to a generally

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expressed feeling the surface of the yard was flattened as quickly as possible, and declared to be a perfectly disinfected and highly eligible building site !

However this may be, it is certain that before it became so it was the source of disease and death to the neighbourhood cursed by its sacred precincts. <sup>25</sup>The old inhabitants had long complained that their cellars were not fit to use owing to the foul gases which filtered into them from the churchyard, and to this cause, as well as to the recent disturbance of the crowded graves, did Le Normand ascribe much of the general unhealthiness of the district.





§.

### CONFIDENCES.

**A**S I was left alone and had only a short time more before I returned to my chambers in London, I felt it was hardly worth while to move away from the little village where I had passed my time so happily, and where I had stayed so much longer than I had dreamed of at first.

Somehow the Rectory and its inmates had become very dear to me. How much of the pleasantness was connected with Miss Morant, how much with my friend,

how much with the other good genial folk, and how much with the general loveliness of the spot, I need not now pause to inquire.

No doubt in one way and another Miss Ellen took up a large share of my thoughts.

My feelings about her since her formal engagement were much more settled and comfortable; and now that I could be nothing to her but a friend, she kindly contrived to fit me into the circle much more conveniently than before. Indeed she was quite affectionate. Perhaps she felt a sort of reflected glory of Le Normand about his most intimate friend in his absence; perhaps the summer love of her fresh young nature, beginning for the first time to unfold, overflowed upon everything and everybody about her. She looked twice as bright, she talked twice as much; she

had all sorts of sympathy and to spare for her poor people, her sick servant, her school-children; nay, even her rabbits got hugged unmercifully, and everything, including a certain black cat, which she detested before she was in love, came in for a stray caress or a tender little word.

“ Oh, dear Mr. Pomeroy,” she said to me one day, as we sat on a little garden-seat, by the side of a little artificial canal that was dammed up at one end, and went leaping down hill at the other. She never said *dear* Mr. Pomeroy to me, except in connection with Le Normand. The fact is we had been talking over the days that had just glided by, and all that had passed: we were always talking of what had passed before Le Normand left.

"Oh, dear Mr. Pomeroy, you are so kind and obliging: we never should have fallen in love without you, you know."

The flattering part in that transaction which I had been forced into taking was certainly thus described in the most naïve and least embarrassing way.

"Upon my word," I said modestly, "I do not know what I have done to deserve your gratitude."

"Oh, you know, you were always in the way when you were wanted, and you did not bother or fuss, and prevent us talking to each other."

"Except once," I said, rather maliciously.

Ellen crimsoned, but tossing her head gaily.

"That doesn't matter; we didn't mind

you: we thought it might be somebody else. But why did you run away in that ridiculous manner?"

"All out of true, true love."

"I did not know that true, true love always ran away."

"When it is all on one side," I said, with just an imperceptible touch of sentiment.

"All on one side!" said Ellen, with the most provoking little pout; "why we both dote on you. You're never to marry at all—do you hear?—because we cannot dispense with you. And I'm sure I should never like your wife."

"Not if she were like you?" I said, whimsically enough.

She burst out laughing.

"You nice, absurd creature! how could she be like me?"

"Do you mean that no one could be as good as you, or that any one as good as you would be too good for me?"

"How you twist everything! I mean you're not to be married, because then you can come and stay with us when we are married in London."

"Why do you want me to stay with you?"

"Why, because it would be so good for Francis" (François was the name of Le Normand's father, and he was called Francis after him); "and—and I like you too *so much!*" and she laid special and affectionate emphasis on the last words, feeling perhaps that the first half of her sentence was hardly strong enough to express her private regard for me.

"But why," I asked, "am I good for



Le Normand? He will have you; he won't want me so much as before his marriage. Wives always supersede old friends, and quite right of course," I added stoically.

"What nonsense you do talk! you don't understand."

"Well, explain."

"First, then, you know I like you very much, and so does Francis—so *we* both love you; and it's good for Francis to have you with him—you make him talk."

"Does he never talk to you, then, when you are alone?"

"Of course he does. How can you be so silly!" she said, digging up a daisy-root with the tip of her parasol. "But that's so different."

"More cheerful?" I suggested.

"I don't know what you mean by cheerful : people are not always cheerful."

"I should think not," I said, with a comical sigh.

"How provoking you can be, Mr. Pomero! Besides, you are very rude, and interrupt me when I'm just going to explain."

"Pardon ! Continuez, s'il vous plait."

"You don't pronounce French like Francis. Why don't you stick to English?"

"I was defeated in English, and called rude. I thought French, being half *his* native tongue, it might find more favour in your eyes."

"When *he* speaks it—but I see you want to pick a quarrel with me. Why won't you be nice? I was going to say so many nice things to you."

"I can wait," I replied, leaning back in

my seat and contemplating leisurely a couple of wood-pigeons billing and cooing in a tall horse-chestnut tree some little way off.

“Well, now, this is what I mean about it being good for Francis to be with you, even when he has got *me*,” waving her hands expansively, to indicate the vast wealth and treasure of that possession. “Francis wants a certain collision or a kind of friction to bring out his mind. Another man’s mind, like yours, brings him out—makes him think. A woman’s mind and nature, however incomparable—mine, for instance—never acts in that sort of way: I can feel it, and I am not jealous—there! even now that he is dreadfully in love with me. Yes, you may sneer, you sceptic, but he is, I repeat it, dreadfully in love with me; and yet I know he would miss you.

And then," she added, growing quite serious at the very thought of possible ill, "if anything happened,—if he got ill, or was obliged to leave me for any time, or was persecuted by those horrid routine people at the hospital for his opinions, I don't know what I should do. You would have to be sent for; and if we were not on speaking terms," she added archly, "how awkward it would be."

I could not help being inwardly gratified by the confidence which this charming girl placed in me, for her sincerity and simple trust were quite transparent all through the irony and serio-comedy of our dialogue. I naturally waxed confidential in my turn.

"Dear Miss Morant, there is no one in whose welfare and happiness I take a more deep and lasting interest than in yours; I

only ask that you may always be able to speak to me about all that is dear and interesting to you in this open and unconstrained manner. Your confidence shall never be abused; and if ever the time should come when either of you, or both, should need any slight service that I can render, trust me freely, and give me the happiness of helping you."

As I spoke, the loud cooing of the doves ceased suddenly, and the first few heavy drops of rain began to fall. We rose hastily. She had left her garden-hat indoors. I helped her to draw her light shawl round her neck, and pinned it close for her, half over the silky profusion of rich brown hair: she looked for all the world like a soft moss rose.

Our dialogue had ended more gravely than it had begun. I don't know why those simple artless words of hers, "You would have to be sent for," rang in my ears ominously; I hardly noticed them at the time, but they came back again and again to me. The time when both would need me, and I could help neither, was not far off.

One night on my return from the Rectory a telegram was put into my hand. It was from Le Normand; it merely contained the words, "Come up, if you can: I want you."

There was no train that evening. I passed a sleepless night of conjecture. I had a presentiment that all was not right. If the truth flashed across me, as I believe it did once or twice, I would allow it no

lodgment in my mind. A dozen things might have happened: some disturbance with the parish guardians; some quarrel with the hospital authorities; a question of resigning his position, or how to fight it out; the death of some important relative—or was he ill himself? Surely he would have hinted this in the telegram. On the whole, I managed to make up my mind that some new post had been offered him, and he wanted to talk it over with me,—and then I fell asleep.

Early the next day I wrote a hurried line to the Rectory, to say that I had been summoned to town by important business; but, by a kind of instinct, I avoided connecting my departure with Le Normand, or giving any hint of his telegram.



## XX.

VALE!

**I** HASTENED to my friend's lodgings: they were dark and dingy-looking enough after the bright country air and clean dwellings I had left. I knocked: the door was opened by a slovenly girl with a sulky-looking face.

"Show me to Mr. Le Normand's room."

"He won't see nobody."

"He'll see me. Say Mr. Pomeroy wants to speak with him."

She took a good look at me from head to foot with her stupid wet mouth half open.



"Go," I said; "make haste;" and I pushed by her. "Come! is this his room?"

"Second floor," she said, pointing with her grimy finger; and before she could shut the door or recover from her surprise, I had ascended the narrow flight and stood at Le Normand's door.

I knocked, but there was no answer. I knocked again: I think a voice said, "Come in."

I entered upon a sitting-room; it was empty, but a door leading into a back bedroom was half open.

I was literally trembling all over, for I now knew something was wrong—very wrong.

I entered the bedroom without further

ceremony, and stretched on the bed I saw Le Normand. He was dressed as usual. He turned his head round,—raised it with an effort: there was a faint smile,—his eyes brightened; he was evidently very glad to see me, but very weak, and his head fell back immediately on the pillow.

He motioned with his hand; and said eagerly, but with an effort, “Don’t come near me, dear boy,—and open the window.”

“What is the matter?”

“Typhoid,” he replied; “I caught it in the hospital. It is curious how indifferent I feel to everything: I don’t even care to get well for myself,—but I think I shall. But there is Ellen, my poor darling,—she must not know.”

His eyes closed, and a sort of torpor seemed to be getting the better of him, from

which he roused himself with a great effort. My grief and anxiety knew no bounds. I inquired who was his doctor. He mentioned Dr. M——, the noted authority on fever. Whilst I was there, that excellent man entered. Before he left I heard from him in the adjoining sitting-room how it fared with my friend.

It appeared that he was stricken down two days before in the midst of his unremitting labours at the hospital and at the sick beds of the poor; indeed, he himself traced his seizure to one particular house, built close upon the old churchyard, the cellars of which were even then too foul to enter, and the back windows of which had actually to be boarded up for a time because they happened to give directly upon that

portion of the yard containing one of those dreadful burial-pits which had been recently opened.

“Do you think he will recover?” I asked.

“At this early stage it is impossible to say,” replied Dr. M——.

“The fever is now setting in ; his pulse is rising. You must not be surprised if, in a short time, he grows delirious. That will last about a week, and at the end of the fortnight we shall know more about it.”

As I have always been peculiarly insensible to the dangers of contagion, I established myself at once as his guardian, had a bed made up in the next room, hired another room for a trained nurse, and determined, come what might, never to leave him.

The next night, knowing well the stages of the disease from which he suffered, after sending the nurse out of the room, he called me to him. I felt, somehow, as if he were going to make his last will and testament, though I knew, with his systematic forethought, *that* had been done before. He was restless; his lethargy seemed to have left him, but he was hot and feverish. He felt, however, that his head was quite clear, and he wished to make use of his lucid moments.

“The fever,” he said, “is rising; I shall probably get delirious. In a week more you will see a change for better or for worse. Now listen, and promise faithfully to obey. I will not have my friends told of my illness whilst there is any hope. Promise!”

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I promised.

“There is one, you know, whom I should like to see above all before I die. If I die, tell her,” he continued, with great emotion, “that I would not see her,—that you could not persuade me to see her. She is one whom fever would feast and revel upon. Those fresh, childish bodies are the special food for this typhoid demon; he is ravenous for them. Tell her,” he continued, with a trembling voice, “tell her that I died loving her more than anything on earth, and that is why I would not see her. It is the first and last sacrifice I shall make for her. If I get well, she will see the wisdom and fitness of this resolution; if I die, why should I imperil her young life? why should I blight that dear rosebud?”

“You lay a heavy responsibility upon

me, dearest friend: but for you I will bear even this; only I ask one thing. Let me at once record your formal wishes in writing, and do you sign them, that my conduct may be clear in this matter, whatever happens. But be not, I entreat you, so gloomy: you will pull through."

"The worst is still to come," he replied calmly.

"But yesterday you were hopeful about yourself."

"My own feelings may be worth little in the matter. Remember the action of my brain is growing diseased,—more so every half-hour. Yesterday I was excited and sanguine. To-night I am not hopeful."

His head fell back; he closed his eyes. He was evidently exhausted by the effort he had made.

Presently he opened his eyes with a look of great earnestness.

“Remember our compact. Leave it to no other hand; your own hand, mind—your own hand.”

“I swear I will not fail you in this matter,” I said. “Trust to me.” I knew what he alluded to.

He, no doubt, had a sort of instinct that these were his last lucid moments, for he was trying to remember everything of importance.

There was a little gold watch of delicate workmanship on the table by his side. Presently he pointed feebly to it.

“Take it now,” he said; “let me see you take it; and after—give it to Ellen, from me.”



A jewelled gold pencil-case of exquisite workmanship lay beside it.

“That pencil-case is for you. Keep it for my sake. It will remind you of our happy times—by the sea.”

“I know I shall have to give these back to you again when you get well,” I said, trying to feel confidence in my own words.

“Dear boy,” he answered, with his old tender look running into a faint smile, as his eyes rested affectionately upon me, “I *do* hope you may ; but I fear, I fear ;” and, in spite of my brave and sanguine tone, I feared too.

The fever increased steadily. The next day my poor friend was slightly delirious, the day after raving,—and this went on for a week. I shall pass over this dreadful

time. We sometimes tried to speak to him, but he was apparently quite deaf. At the end of a week Dr. M—— gave no hopes of his recovery. He sank into a stupor, in which he remained until he died.

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I need not dwell upon the rage and apparent grief of his relations, who had never treated him well whilst he lived, when they found that they had not been told of his illness until all hope was past. His sister and an uncle came up to town; but hearing that it was typhoid, and learning also that he was quite delirious, did not think they were justified in going into his room for fear of infection. I knew of one who would eagerly have rushed to his sick-bed even then and died in his arms, if only

she had known of his deadly malady and been allowed to sacrifice herself.

With the really callous relations I had short work; but my communications with others who had loved him were inexpressibly painful.

I think that Ellen, though quite heart-broken, had the sense to see that, in following out to the letter the wishes of her lover, I had done what was, on the whole, best for all; and she bore her bereavement with more fortitude than I could have believed one so young and devoted capable of. But the nature deepest for love is often most strong to suffer; and I saw with admiration that Ellen's nature was made to bear, without losing its balance, the severe strain of sorrow, as it had borne sweetly and worthily the strain of short-lived joy.

But if I have drawn a veil over the last monotonous and gloomy days of my poor friend's life, I cannot treat some of the incidents which immediately followed in the same manner.

His own funeral seemed the one thing wanting to give weight to the arguments in favour of Cremation and against Burial, which had occupied so much of his attention during the last year of his life; and as the object of this narrative is to give full effect to my late friend's views upon these matters, I feel bound to record the way in which his own last mortal remains were disposed of.





### XIII.

#### COMFORTABLY BURIED.

**I** WAS soon given to understand that I was to have no voice in the arrangements for poor Le Normand's funeral—and as it was not possible to carry out the Urn-burial after Cremation which he himself would most have desired, it little mattered to me who undertook the last rites.

As I cannot, from what I witnessed, believe that all undertakers are such as are here described, I am quite willing to sup-

pose that many funerals may be free from the degree of coarseness and annoyance to which I was subjected on this occasion, and, indeed, we are well aware that there are many honourable exceptions to the vulgar irreverence that was once unhappily the rule. Moreover, many intelligent and respectable undertakers have themselves been foremost in attempts to remedy the defective conduct of funerals, and they have doubtless to some extent succeeded. On the other hand, I dare say that as some funerals are less offensive than Le Normand's, his, for aught I know, was not worse than many others. The present system of Christian burial is inevitably exposed to the sort of thing I witnessed, and here describe. Let those only whom the cap fits put it on.

By the family I was treated with a coolness bordering on incivility; and as for the good rector and his bereaved daughter, they were so absolutely ignored that they were not even invited to the funeral.

At first Miss Morant, in her passionate sorrow, expressed her earnest wish to be present; but at last I think she was wisely deterred by the combined persuasions of myself and her father.

“Remember, dear Miss Morant,” I urged, “he is not there; nothing visible now is left of him on earth: the form that once clothed him whom we love has forfeited every claim it ever had to the possession of him; it is absolutely nothing but a dangerous worn-out fabric, which he himself would have had reduced instantly to ashes. The kind of care and treatment

that is about to be lavished upon that inert mass, from whose clutches he with so much pain has escaped, would have been most repugnant to him could he witness it. Keep your memory of him bright; let it not be sullied by association with the graveyard and the rites he so abhorred; think of him as the pure, the loving, the aspiring soul that we once knew, and believe that goodness can never perish, and that all noble deeds like his, all working and suffering for others like his, shall bear good fruit, and live in the memory of God even as he lives in the life of God."

With such words I attempted to comfort this poor child. Whilst I spoke she would seem to grow calmer. She was not like some mourners, who reject sympathy and



nurse their griefs alone; she seemed in her utter forlornness from the very first to be grateful for any kindness, providing that everything that was said referred to him—to speak of the future life, of the possible reunion after death, of the possible communion between the living and the dead, “unseen though felt,” and especially to go over again the late bright days, the late long talks, so many of which both I and she remembered and could recall in detail; these were her only consolations, but these were her real consolations. In this vivid calling up of the happy past we sometimes forgot for the moment that all *was* past; we neither of us should have been surprised if the door had suddenly opened and Le Normand had walked in in the flesh. Indeed we never seemed alone.

But I anticipate. Miss Morant was at last dissuaded from attending the funeral ; but I confess that many of the arguments which were employed to dissuade her did not weigh with me ; and although officially I had no business with the funeral, I somehow could not help watching every detail of it as though he were still alive, and required this last service at my hands.

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On the morning of the funeral I hastened to his lodgings. It was a dark, miserable, stormy day. Two wretched Mutes were standing one on each side of the door ; one at least of them smelt atrociously of gin, whilst the other had a beery, melancholy look ; and although the sight was inexpressibly revolting, still, as the poor victims of

this conventional parody of grief stood there all dragged and cold, with their hearsey finery sticking to them, I could not blame them ; nay, I pitied them, for I could not help reflecting that, as they were probably both soaked to the skin, they might very likely be added to the long list of drunken martyrs so ruthlessly sacrificed to the fashionable though costly sorrow of a first-class funeral pageant.

A gentleman, described in the undertaker's advertisement-card which I soon found placed in my hand as "the Superintendent with silk hatband and gloves," next made his appearance ; this respectful official, careworn with other people's sorrows, but apparently resigned, opened the door.

I was going to pass him and proceed upstairs, but in this there seemed some breach

of funeral etiquette ; in fact, the black gentlemen were now in possession. The "Superintendent with silk hatband, &c.," was master of the situation, and friends and relatives must bow before him without a murmur ; in short, it soon appeared that *their* reign was over, and the reign of "silk hatbands, gloves, wands, and truncheons" had begun.

I was going straight up-stairs to where my friend's coffin was lying, but I was stopped at the foot of them. A sad though business-like little man in excellent black clothes stepped forward and took from me my hat ; another man, pale with anguish, handed me black kid gloves, remarking in tones of the deepest melancholy—

"I think you'll find them fit, sir."

Now, thought I, I suppose I can go upstairs ; but, just as I was turning, I was touched on the arm by the "Superintendent with silk hatband and gloves : " he pointed with an air of unutterable dejection to the open door of the dining-room, and whispered in a sad but authoritative manner—

"Glass of sherry, sir,—cold ham and chicken."

I turned away abruptly, and brushing by these professional masques I hurried upstairs.

They stood aghast at my eccentric behaviour. I evidently had not caught the right funeral tone at all. There were two more sable men at the top of the stairs ; they had evidently been watching me below, and were prepared for me. They seemed to feel that it was time to adopt some decisive measure.

They met me with reproachful looks. I read their thoughts—unless I “fell in” a little better, and took my stage directions more intelligently, it would be impossible to conduct the funeral in that first-class style which had been charged for.

I was making for the door of the room where I knew the body of my poor friend lay, when one of these officials, grown desperate at last, laid his hand upon my arm, and, pointing to the staircase with the other, said, “The company meet down-stairs, sir; the mourners are now taking refreshment in the dining-room.”

“But I will go in and see the coffin.”

“Beg pardon, sir, but it is not customary, sir, for the mourners to visit the room after the coffin is nailed up. ‘Last-look-at-the-departed’ took place last evening, sir; and

the Superintendent's orders is strict to admit no one, to avoid confusion, sir."

Dreading anything like a disturbance on my account, knowing that I was surrounded not only by these coarse and misguided dummies, but also by persons utterly unsympathetic to me in poor Le Normand's relatives, choking with a painful feeling of disgust, indignation, and contempt, I slipped a shilling into the fellow's hand, and said,

"Open the door, man: I mean to go in."

"Of course, sir, if you are a *principal* mourner, certainly, sir." And I soon found myself alone by the coffin, though narrowly watched by both men, whilst the door was held ajar.

Everything was closed. Presently one of

the watchers slipped into the room, and advancing softly on tiptoe, "There's a lead coffin, sir, name-plate, strong elm case covered with superfine cloth, brass plate of inscription, four registered handles and gripes, lid-ornaments to correspond, &c."

I had turned to get out, finding there was no peace even in the chamber of death; and he had followed me with his revolting professional volubility, hoping, I suppose, to secure a fee for himself like the other man.

As I passed through the hall, I heard the clatter of knives and forks in the dining-room, and the anguish-stricken man who had handed me the gloves was just engaged in uncorking more sherry. The respectful Superintendent handed me my hat with a huge scarf upon it. My patience was nearly



exhausted. "Take off that scarf, and take these gloves; and give me my hat, and let me out."

They looked as if they would like to have handed me at once over to the police.

It was pouring with rain; but I was thankful to get out of that awful place, peopled with those myrmidons of mockery. I got into my own brougham, and waited until the procession started.

Several other private carriages, filled with people who had been attached to and respected Le Normand, had gathered in the road by this time.

When the chief mourners at length issued from the house, I noticed they all had pocket-handkerchiefs stuffed into their mouths, although I cannot say that I had

ever surprised tears upon any of their faces ; indeed Le Normand's family had been extremely angry with him for adopting the medical profession instead of going into the army, and they had quarrelled with him on that account some years before. Happily he was not dependent upon them, for he had money settled upon himself ; so that when they withdrew his allowance in a mean-spirited way, he was not, as a young student, left by any means destitute.

The sorrowers then got into their high spring coaches. The sable gentlemen described in the advertisement card as "two Mutes with silk dresses, eight Assistants with silk hatbands and gloves, truncheons and wands, &c., &c.," all fell into good order under the direction of "the Superintendent with silk hatband and

gloves," and the procession moved on at a very slow pace through the principal streets and fashionable squares towards—I shudder to relate—the X—— cemetery,—in fact, one of those condemned by the Board of Health in 1850!

When the right effect had been produced upon the more fashionable squares and streets by the slow dead march, the procession stopped. I happened to look out of the window. The two Mutes skipped by in quite a frolicsome way; the eight Assistants with silk hat-bands were jumping up on the box seats; the pale coachmen whipped up their sable steeds, and we all trotted off at a brisk and lively pace to the densely-packed graveyard.

At last there was another pause at the


gates ; the men with wands and truncheons, the Mutes with silk scarves, and the other *walking* gentlemen had to dismount, and the right effect had to be produced on the gate-keeper and the stragglers about the grounds.

A small idle crowd of loungers mustered at our approach, and followed us a little way, although, the rain coming on again, they soon dispersed.

In the absence of the regular chaplain, the service was read by a middle-aged person with a port-wine nose, who bore such a strong resemblance to our "Superintendent with silk hatband and gloves," that I could not divest myself of the notion that he must have been his brother. At all events, he and the Superintendent were evidently on

terms of the closest intimacy. After the first part of the service, whilst they were removing the coffin and preparing for the procession, I noticed, through a half-open door, the Superintendent handing the chaplain his skull-cap, whilst the reverend gentleman tossed off a glass and, filling it up, handed it to the master of the ceremonies.

It certainly did not look well; but then it was not intended to be seen, and, after all, I could not in my heart blame either of them. The requirements of Christian burial, as understood in the year of our Lord 1874, demanded that this rheumatic-looking minister of religion and his consumptive though somewhat beery satellites should presently tramp through the mud in a pelting shower to a remote corner of the crowded graveyard, and then stand



shivering in the wet and soaked to the skin over a loathsome pit, out of which all sorts of foul vapours would probably exhale, looking on at about the most dismal spectacle which it has ever entered into the heart of man to conceive.

As these reflections crossed my mind I began to relent even towards the Superintendent and the Mutes. I thought, if I had to go through such a life as theirs, I too might take to drink. Christian burial, if it had its depressing side, must not be wholly without its consolations; and I perceived now how short the step was from the graveyard to the pot-house, and back again.

On issuing from the chapel, where half the service had been mumbled through inaudibly, we began the long pilgrimage.

The procession was smartly executed on the whole by the pall-bearers, wands, truncheons, and silk hatbands; they bore the rain like men, and got over the ground faster than most of us could follow, until, by some dreadful mishap, one of the pall-bearers struck his foot on a clod, the man on the other side was thrown out of step, the coffin tilted, two men were presently down in the mud, and the "lead coffin with name-plate, strong elm case covered with superfine cloth, brass plate of inscription, &c.," in spite of the "four registered handles and gripes," came down with a heavy crash to the ground.

A loud oath burst from one of the Mutes, who very pardonably forgot his professional dumbness in the excitement of the moment. But the master-mind was instantly on the

spot in the person of "the Superintendent with silk hatband and gloves." I could see that he was not quite unfamiliar with this sort of *contretemps*: in a moment he marshalled his men,—the coffin was lifted, "the rich velvet pall," the "use" of which was included in the bill, was wiped, and, with the promptitude quite worthy of such a first-class funeral, the whole procession resumed its progress—this time at a somewhat slower pace.

The grave selected was evidently a cheap piece of ground in a densely crowded portion of the cemetery; it was, however, a deep one. The earth on either side was piled up round the brink, and sundry boards placed about to prevent it from falling back into the open pit.



I had a quick eye by this time. Le Normand's descriptions were all too fresh in my memory. Under the boards I did not fail to discern traces of "management;" and some of the broken wood that was lying about, though stripped of its cloth, was clearly old coffin-wood.

I was not surprised when I remembered that X—— Cemetery was one which Le Normand had described as hideously overcrowded, it having, as I have said, been condemned many years ago by the Government Board of Health. How deeply thankful I was that the Morants had stayed away!

The moment now came for the coffin to be lowered into what I somehow felt would not be its last resting-place. The two men

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who had stumbled were, amongst others, engaged in this delicate task. Whether they were new hands, or had got nervous, or were unsteady with drink, I cannot say, but something again went wrong. The ropes on one side stuck at the very moment when the others were being lowered, and the consequence was that the coffin was turned completely upside down before it reached the bottom of the grave!

This appeared to be so common an accident, that no one was much discomposed by it; and after a good deal of jolting and heaving about of the heavy leaden box, it was got right, and the highly inappropriate words, "Ashes to ashes!" were pronounced over it; the superintendent throwing down a handful of damp mud, which we could all hear fall with a wet splash upon the coffin.

\* \* \* \* \*

I would see no more. I got away before the end of the service. I reached my brougham, and drove from the loathsome spot, leaving the professional crew to complete the offensive ceremony after their own fashion.

Poor Le Normand! every detail that he had condemned, every practice that he most abhorred, seemed, by a strange irony of circumstance, to have met and been heaped together over his lifeless body.

The leaden coffin so often denounced by him, the double case intended to keep mother earth from her own as long as possible, every device for the generation and concentration of the most poisonous gases,—the stagey undertaker, the whining

of false friends, the useless trappings, the dismal and gloomy *cortége*, the indecent accidents, the irreverent service, the overcrowded cemetery, the worst of clay soils, the pelting wet, the foul exhalations from the open grave, nay, even the management,—nothing was spared.

And this sort of thing, I said, is what is still going on, not only in our condemned metropolitan cemeteries, but in the heart of hundreds of large towns throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland—in Sheffield, in Edinburgh, at Tooting, even at Lambeth. The Government Acts cannot, it seems, put it down. The local authorities are too often afraid to interfere. Even if they did, they could only postpone to a future but no distant day the evils inherent in a system radically unsound.

Truly, the unclean monster of burial has been too long on trial. He has been tried and found guilty of murder, robbery, and every sort of corruption. The pure Fire-Angel of Cremation stands at the door.





### XLIII.

#### ALONE.

**I**N the evening it cleared up. The events of the last few weeks were beginning to tell upon my mind and body. My appetite was gone, my sleep was gone; I had taken little or no exercise for several days, and a heavy weight seemed to oppress my head and move with me wherever I moved. Had the Morants been in town, I should have gone to them. As it was, there was no one I cared to seek in my then depressed and morbid condition. And yet I could not bear to be alone.

At such a time I found, as so many doubtless have found before me, a sort of strange satisfaction in the London streets.

I sallied forth, and mingled with the crowd in the Strand. The *Echo* boys were shouting out the last burial scandal, and they were selling "Sir Henry Thompson as Cremation," in Vanity Fair.

The noise and bustle of the streets seemed to restore me to myself, and break up the absolute monotony of my thoughts, which for several days had moved in such a narrow and painful circle. I stopped at various shop-windows not yet closed. Almost anything seemed to attract my attention and gave me a kind of relief; in fact, my mind had been overwrought, and had a tendency to work automatically and follow

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its own bent ; and I was content to let my will lie passive from sheer fatigue and a sense of past strain ; and so I walked on and on. I had reached Piccadilly. Presently I entered the Hyde Park on the right, and after nearly crossing it I sat down on a bench. There were still a few children playing about. A little girl ran up to me with, "Please, sir, tell me the time."

I looked at my watch ; it was a quarter past seven.

"Run home," I said, rising myself ; "run home, my dear, or you will be shut in. The park closes at half-past seven."

Those few words, drawn from me by the fresh little face of the child, seemed to do me good, so strange and subtle are the influences that pass unseen between soul



and soul, and shift the emotional atmosphere like the slides of a dissolving view.

It was with a lighter step that I made my way out of the park, and continued my long walk down the Bayswater Road. As I went along I soon fell into a deep meditation, in which the figures of Le Normand and Miss Morant rose vividly before my mind's eye.

How long I thus walked on I do not know, but it had grown dark; and I found myself, on awaking from my reverie, in a strange neighbourhood. I hailed a cab and drove back to my lodgings, quite alive now to the external world, for I was ravenous with hunger.





ÆT.

### AFTERGLOW.

**I** SUPPOSE I must have been in bed about an hour or more, when I fell into a kind of doze. I was aware that my eyes were shut and the room was quite dark, but I seemed to be enveloped in a sort of milky-white cloud. In this soft light I felt myself released from the trammels of my earth-life, and I was conscious of moving about freely in space. The darkness of the bed-chamber, the narrowing walls, the crowded city,—all had vanished. The cloudy silver light grew

brighter and warmer and yellower. I seemed to have been travelling hundreds of miles, as one travels on by rail out of night into morning, but I experienced no sense of fatigue. My journey was made with the gliding speed of light itself.

A great sense of peace and serenity came over me. What a pleasant sound of plashing water at my feet! what summer warmth around me! what a blue sky, tenderly veiled here and there with fleecy clouds! I was sitting idly on the pebbly beach of a little bay I knew full well. The tide was rising, with a gentle heave now and then over the shining pebbles. As they lay, I could see them trembling under the clear water, as through glass, for several feet in the deep shingly basin.

There in the distance stood out the old tower of St. Anselm's church. That, too, trembled through the mirage of hazy heat that flickered all along the coast. The open sea stretched out before me, all over the palest, mistiest blue, and mingled with the sky upon the horizon.

I heard footsteps behind me; a hand was laid upon my shoulder. I turned round; my eyes met those of—Le Normand.

I felt no surprise, but I grasped his hand warmly.

"I dreamed you were dead," I said; "but, thank God, here you are, dear friend."

He laughed out merrily. It was his old sunny look, his pleasant musical voice like rippling waters. I had never seen him so full of life, so buoyant and animated.

“In a few days, dear boy, she will be mine—my Ellen! my treasure! Am I not a happy fellow?” and he laid his arm upon me in the old caressing way of the old affectionate days. I had some strange mis-giving, but it only vented itself in my saying—

“That must be our separation. I fear we cannot be friends quite as we were before.”

“Will you be my enemy, then?” he said, gaily.

“Never, dear Le Normand; but marriage, which breaks some barriers, sets up others.”

“It shall not be so with mine. Ellen loves you; you shall never cease to be our true good friend.”

At this moment a lighter step was heard

upon the shingle. It was Ellen Morant. Le Normand rose, and, advancing to meet her, took her by both of her hands, and half led, half pulled her laughing to where I sat.

She sat down between us, the picture of health and happiness, with a little mischief in her eyes as she said to me—

“How nice it is for us both to have a batchelor friend, for then we never need quarrel, because we can always abuse him. Oh, it would be so stupid if *you* were going to be married.”

“To *you*, you mean,” I replied, quite in my old vein of banter.

She was fairly caught, and burst out laughing.

“Who is hit now?” said Le Normand, throwing a heap of little pebbles into her lap.

"Not I," she answered quickly. "I meant he would be a very stupid person for anyone to marry, of course."

"Not I," I retorted; "for I meant I should have been very stupid to marry you."

"You never had the chance," she said, returning Le Normand his pebbles with interest.

"Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel," I hummed.

At that moment a little pleasure-boat with two white sails drew near, and presently slid its keel upon the shingles at our feet. We had often gone out in this little boat before. It was a favourite pastime; and, on very calm days, Le Normand would strike the mast and sails, and row Ellen

out alone ; but now he turned to me and said—

“Come, let us have a sail.”

I know not why, but I felt a cold shudder pass through me as I mechanically assented ; all my light-heartedness was gone. We all three stepped into the little boat, and then I ceased to be aware of anything. The white silvery cloud shut out *Le Normand* and Ellen ; their voices sounded thin and faint, and soon died away altogether ; and I seemed to be lying again in my bed, but only half conscious, and still enveloped in the white cloud.

\* \* \* \* \*

Presently I experienced the same sensation of travelling on and on. I started. A terrific clap of thunder burst over my head. It seemed to rouse me into sudden and



intense perception of what was now going on around me.

I was in the little open boat out at sea. Ellen, under Le Normand's directions, was pulling frantically at one oar, whilst he was pulling the other, and trying to tear loose the main-sheet that had stuck and was shuddering, but still stretched tightly in the wind. The heavens were black with clouds; the waves were running mountains high. I seized the helm, and tried to keep the prow of our frail craft facing the breakers. I saw that was our only chance. Le Normand was pale as death. Ellen, I could see, was rapidly growing exhausted; but she never gave in, and to the last worked her oar, although I could see it was being knocked about at the waves' wild will.

---

Neither of them seemed to notice me, although I did them the best service I could at the helm. Presently, the sail burst suddenly free, the boat gave a horrible lurch; Le Normand fell forward, seizing at the same time Ellen in his arms. I could see nothing distinctly after this; my eyes were filled with foam and spray. A breaker must have struck the boat and laid her on her beam ends, for just before the white cloud settled over me, I caught a glimpse of the boat floating at some little distance, bottom upwards.

I could see neither Ellen nor Le Normand, but I remembered that Le Normand was a good swimmer.

\* \* \* \*

I was in the chamber of death. There were others standing round her couch, but

they did not seem to be aware of my presence. I did not pause to reflect upon the strangeness of this. I seemed to myself intensely preoccupied. I looked on the silent form with all the rest, only half realising that it was the body of Ellen Morant.

“It is the fourth day,” I heard some one whisper ; “he would not let it go.”

The only thing like Ellen about this changed mass of inanimate matter was the delicate hand, in which some one had placed a fresh tiger lily: even that hand had lost expression, and was of a deadly yellow waxen hue,—not the white mobile hand, delicately veined here and there, warm and rounded. I could not have touched that other hand. That figure grown almost angular in its settled stiffness, that face

without a trace of colour, peaked and sad to look upon, with no sign even of the memory of life about it,—that is not Ellen. I would not retain that form as it is; I would not follow in imagination the daily changes it would now undergo, buried in the earth. Already it is hideous. Can *that* ever remind me of the full, rosy life that a little while ago made it adorable?

Who are these people? What will they do with this lifeless parody of life? Why do they linger around it? It is too dead and ghastly to look upon; yet this *was* once Ellen Morant.

\* \* \* \* \*

I turned and met Le Normand, as pale as death, standing by Ellen's father. I saw, from a certain commotion in the room, that something was about to happen. A slight

bier, apparently of cedar-wood, was brought in by two attendants and placed by the side of the bed; on to this the body was tenderly lifted by the bereaved lover and father,—a white linen cloth covering the face,—and they bore it themselves out of the room, and lifted it into a carriage. I recognised at once the rector's own carriage and pair. There was nothing changed or unusual about it: no trace of mourning.

The rector sat on one side, Le Normand on the other, with their sorrowful burden resting between them.

\* \* \* \* \*

The bells were ringing in the Field of Rest,—for so I perceived they called the Cremation-cemetery,—not the dull monotonous toll of the old graveyard funeral bell, but a musical cadence of bells, such

as floats from the Belgian towers every ten minutes.

As I approached the cemetery—for I seemed to be following the body spell-bound—this sweet cadence of bells kept rising and falling upon the soft warm wind, with weird silences between, courting expectancy. I thought I had never heard anything so lovely. They called me, those bells, with their friendly and melodious voices, to the quiet Field of Rest. I could not choose but follow; and I know not why, but I began repeating those lines,—

“ Oh land, oh land for all the broken-hearted,  
The mildest herald by our fate allotted,  
Beckons, and with inverted torch doth stand,  
To lead us with a gentle hand,  
Into the land of the Great Departed,  
Into the silent land ! ”

There was no stoppage at the cemetery

gate. As we entered on either side the perfume of flowers was wafted to us from the adjacent graves; for there were graves in the Cremation-cemetery, and the more numerous the graves the more bright was the earth with flowers, the more deliciously perfumed the air. I noticed, also, many tall sunflowers waving their golden fringes above slabs of marble, alabaster, or porphyry, whilst sumptuous dahlias bowed their magnificent heads caressingly towards many a sculptured cross.

Many inmates of the Village by the Sea had gathered to the Field of Rest: they joined us. The carriage moved through the whole length of the grounds. We passed on either side two immense and stately pyramids, on the right hand and on the left. Arrived

at a little distance from the mortuary-chapel, at the further end of the grounds the carriage stopped, and Le Normand, the rector, and two persons I did not know, bore upon their shoulders the cedar couch, the whole being covered with a snow-white pall strewn with flowers; and as they advanced towards the chapel-door, the bells rang out a sad sweet cadence, and a venerable clergyman, whom I recognised as one of the rector's oldest friends, came out to meet them, reading in a clear voice, made singularly impressive by restrained emotion,

“I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE, SAITH THE LORD: HE THAT BELIEVETH IN ME, THOUGH HE WERE DEAD, YET SHALL HE LIVE: AND WHOSOEVER LIVETH AND BELIEVETH IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE.”



The body was then carried into the middle of the little gothic chapel and placed on a raised bier; there it apparently remained during the remainder of the service, nor was there any motion or sign of removal beneath, visible in the snowy pall strewn with fresh flowers.

No detail escaped me during this touching ceremony, made more touching by the occasional sobs that broke from the little crowd who had pressed into the chapel, amongst whom were Ellen's Sunday-school teachers and her village children. I followed every inflection and every sentence of the Prayer-book service: not a sentence was altered for this Cremation service; the only difference was, that, with the exception of the verses repeated at the entrance

to the chapel, the whole of the service was read *under cover*, and that, where the words,

“WE THEREFORE COMMIT HER BODY TO THE GROUND,—EARTH TO EARTH, ASHES TO ASHES,”

occur, the clergyman read,

“WE THEREFORE COMMIT HER BODY TO THE ELEMENTS,—EARTH TO EARTH, ASHES TO ASHES.”

It seemed that no other change was needed to adapt the burial service of the Book of Prayer to Cremation.

The service at an end, the whole assembly moved out of the chapel, and, preceded by the near relatives of the deceased, threaded their way through flower-beds, past both of the great pyramids, until they came to a plot where the turf had been removed,

leaving a place very unlike the old inhumation grave. In the centre of this was a graceful urn of alabaster, empty, and uncovered at the top.

I then remembered how Ellen had expressed a desire, when we had discussed the subject with Le Normand, that her ashes might be buried in the layer of earth nearest to the surface, and that seeds of the flowers she loved best might be placed in the urn along with the ashes.

Whilst a hymn was sung by the school-children round the grave, those who had borne the body now lifted the urn and bore it on an ebony stretcher whilst the procession moved back again to the mortuary chapel, still singing the hymn, "SUN OF MY SOUL," in which every one seemed to join.

---

It seemed to me touching and pathetic to a degree ; but there was absolutely nothing whatever gloomy about the ceremony from beginning to end.

Arrived once more at the chapel, those who had loved her best removed the white pall and distributed the flowers that covered it to several friends present. Beneath the pall, in the place of the cedar bier, there were a few white pure ashes ; amongst them might have been a few remaining atoms of the pulverised cedar on which the body had lain, for no hand less tender than the nearest and dearest had touched the mortal remains of Ellen Morant : as the body had been placed on the bier, so it had sunk down and been conveyed by machinery into the centre of the crematory. When I thought

of this, I remembered her own impulsive words,

*“No more long terrible months, with wind and snow and rain above, and the lonely dark prison-house of decay beneath: nothing but fair golden fire for half an hour, and a pure white ash—a symbol at once of earth-life, and heavenly innocence !”*

As they gathered up the ashes and deposited them in the alabaster urn, and scattered the seeds of the flowers she best loved upon them, I felt that her last wishes about herself had been fulfilled, and that, having been lovely in life, her poor mortal envelope had been rendered harmless and innocent in death.

\* \* \* \*

I seemed still standing in the full

splendour of a refulgent summer morning, watching the green turf that was being laid lightly over the low mound above the inurned remains of the beloved, when the sweet bells fell upon my ear, and I awoke suddenly to find the bright morning sun of real life shining into my bedchamber.

---

The visions of the night in which I had realised Le Normand's dream of Cremation in so startling a form were passed.

I woke to the reality. Le Normand, alas ! was indeed no more ; but I felt a sudden rebound of joy at the thought that neither was Ellen Morant dead.

---



## ÆV.

### AN EMPTY GRAVE.

**S**OON after the sad events which I have been narrating, I received an invitation to go down and stay a few weeks with the Morants.

I had not been long in the house before I became aware that the talk of the place was the approaching removal of the invaluable Miss Molesworth from Woodbine Cottage to a permanent home at the Rectory, as the second wife of my good friend, the rector.

No more acceptable arrangement could possibly have been made as regarded the

rector, Miss Molesworth, the parish, and even Ellen, who had from childhood learned to look up to that clever and genial little woman as to a second mother.

As for me, I found in the scenes associated with my late friend my best and sweetest consolations. Ellen made no disguise of the pleasure she now took in my society. In speaking to me, indeed, she spoke to one who more nearly than any living person reflected the mind and the opinions of Le Normand; and as time went on, I got more and more into the habit of looking upon the Rectory as a kind of second home.

I sometimes fancied that Miss Morant had unconsciously begun to regard me with a feeling which might one day be kindled into something even more tender than our

---



dear friendship. With such a thought, to me so full of ineffable sweetness, I hardly dared to trust myself; nor was it until long afterwards, when time had done something to draw the sting from memories consecrated to both of us, that I found my wildest dreams of happiness not beyond my reach.

But as all such personal matters are outside the purpose of my present narrative, I need not trouble the reader with what was then still in the future.


---

I thought of withholding from the public one last incident which has made modern burial for ever detestable in my eyes; but the memory of it is still too vivid, its moral too imperious. I must go back, like one

who painfully, with worn feet, threads again a dangerous and rocky path.

Soon after Le Normand's death I was visited by a publican, whose house of business faced the cemetery. He promised, hoping, doubtless, for a fee, which he duly received, to impart to me certain intelligence of a startling nature relating to my dear friend Le Normand.

It appears that, owing to the crowded state of the cemetery, it had been for some time past a not-unfrequent practice, after a respectable funeral, to shovel the earth lightly over the coffin in the presence of the mourners, and, upon their departure, deliberately to unearth the coffin and convey it to a quarter of the graveyard where only paupers were supposed to be buried, and



there get rid of the remains as best they could.\* Thus grave-room was continually found in a paying situation, and one grave could be sold over and over again. The sorrowing relatives, who came to visit what they believed to be the last resting-places of their dear ones, thus often shed their tears over an empty grave or one crowded with strangers !

The worthy publican, who happened to know something of me, and whose son had been very kindly attended in the hospital by Le Normand, appears to have kept an interested watch over his tomb, and in due time beheld his remains dug up in the early morning and transferred to the motley crowd

\* A fact reported to the author, as seen by an eye-witness, in connection with one of the suburban cemeteries.

of the indistinguishable dead in the pauper ground !

To recover the body was impossible ; but I with some difficulty obtained an order to re-open my friend's grave, and soon satisfied myself that Le Normand's coffin was gone.

It is in the presence of such facts as these that decent public opinion is beginning to turn away sickened from a spectacle of unparalleled corruption and desecration, and to sigh for the pure and simple disinfectant of Fire, the reign of Cremation, and the Field of Rest.



## APPENDIX.

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### REFERENCES.

<sup>1</sup> "Gatherings from Graveyards," by G. A. Walker, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> See a valuable Paper, by W. Eassie, Esq., "On Cremation," in *British Medical Journal*, August 1, 1874.

<sup>3</sup> *The World*, Feb. 22, 1874.

<sup>4</sup> "Gatherings from Graveyards," by G. A. Walker, p. 199.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted as a notorious fact in the current prospectus of the Woking Necropolis Company, 1874.

<sup>8</sup> "The ends are either left open or enclosed with cast-iron ornamental gates."—Superintendent's Description: compare with Act, Victoria 15 and 16, c. 8, s. 44, "Nobody shall be buried in any vault or

walled grave unless the coffin be *separately entombed in an air-tight manner*—that is, by properly cemented stone or brick-work.”

<sup>9</sup> See also “Gatherings from Graveyards,” pp. 198, 194.

Government Reports, 1850, 1851, on Extramural Sepulture, presented to the Houses of Parliament.

“Gatherings from Graveyards,” by G. A. Walker, Surgeon. Longman & Co., 1881, &c., &c.

<sup>10</sup> *The World*, March 29, 1874, New York.

<sup>11</sup> “Gatherings from Graveyards,” p. 211.

<sup>12</sup> *The World*, Feb. 22, 1874.

<sup>13</sup> Murray’s “Handbook for Kent and Sussex,” pp. 269, 270.

<sup>14</sup> W. Eassie, Esq., C.E., “On Cremation,” in *British Medical Journal*, August 1, 1874.

<sup>15</sup> “Cremation des Morts,” p. 9, by Dr. Pietra Santa, Paris.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Also see W. Eassie’s Paper as above.

<sup>17</sup> See “Cremation,” in *Iron*, vol. iii. No. 5.

<sup>18</sup> “Cremation,” p. 18, a Pamphlet by Sir Henry Thompson.

<sup>19</sup> “Cremation des Morts” (Pietra Santa), pp. 45, 46.

<sup>20</sup> Described in "Cremation des Morts," Pietra Santa.

<sup>21</sup> Cineræ Cineribus. "Ossa cinisque jacent memori quos mente requiris."—OVID, *Metam.*

<sup>22</sup> "Cremation des Morts" (Pietra Santa), p. 25.

<sup>23</sup> "Merits of Cremation," *The Trans-Atlantic*, vol. iii. No. 1.

<sup>24</sup> See 26th Section of Burial Act, 1857.

<sup>25</sup> See a vast amount of evidence to this effect collected by G. A. Walker, Surgeon, in "Gatherings from Graveyards."

Etc. etc.

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### THE PYRAMID AND THE WALL.

[Contributed by the Rev. W. G. HENSLow, M.A.]

Let us consider the cemetery to be of a rectangular shape; say, 605 yards in length and 160 yards in breadth, which would include exactly 20 acres. Let there be a wall, 3 feet in thickness, all round it. This wall would be 4,590 feet in its entire length. Then, let there be a space for a cloister 6 feet in width, bounded by an external wall 2 feet thick, and which would be 2,337 feet in length.

The two walls and the intervening cloister would

cover an area of about 1 acre 27 square rods, or  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acre.

Let the walls be 10 feet high. This will give us, for the *two* surfaces of the inner wall, 91,800 square feet; and for the *inner* surface of the outer wall, 23,370 square feet;—that is, in all, a superficial area of 115,170 square feet.

Of course, certain deductions will have to be made for doorways, but they would not materially decrease the area for the reception of urns. No extra surface need be lost if the cloisters be lighted from above.

#### THE DIMENSIONS OF THE PYRAMID.

If we suppose a pyramid to be constructed of blocks, each being 1 cubic foot in size, and the bottom layer to be square and to have ninety-nine such blocks on every side, the next layer ninety-seven on every side, and so on, the number of blocks in the sides of the layers decreasing by *two*, until the apex, consisting of a single block, is reached; then, the number of blocks will be represented by the following series:—

$$1^2 + 3^2 + 5^2 + 7^2 + \dots + 49^2.$$

In which the successive numbers “squared” are the number of blocks in each layer, reckoning from above downwards. And the “sum” of this series to (*n*)



any number of "terms" we may choose to take, is represented by the "formula"—

$$\frac{1}{3}n(4n^2 - 1).$$

Now, by taking  $n$  to be 50, by which we suppose the pyramid to have 50 layers and to be 50 feet high; then the bottom layer will have ninety-nine blocks on every side, and the total number of cubic blocks in the pyramid will be 166,650.

Of course, if we give a higher value to  $n$ , which means that the pyramid will consist of more layers and so cover a larger area, a proportionably larger result will be obtained.

But as 99<sup>2</sup>, or 99 feet square, is rather less than a quarter of an acre, such a pyramid, or perhaps two such, would in all probability answer the purpose better than one of larger dimensions.

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