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CREMATION OF HUMAN BODIES

Not a Necessary Sanitary Measure,

BY

FRANK H. HAMILTON, A. M., M. D., LL. D.,

*President New York Society of Medical
Jurisprudence and State Medicine.*

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Cremation of Human Bodies

NOT A NECESSARY SANITARY MEASURE.

Paper read before the "Society of Medical Jurisprudence and State Medicine," March 11, 1886, in reply to a proposition made by a member at the preceding meeting to ask the Legislature of the State of New York to enact a law requiring the cremation of persons who have died of certain infectious diseases, and of those who are buried at the public expense.

By FRANK H. HAMILTON, A.M., M.D., LL.D.,

President of the New York Society of Medical Jurisprudence and State Medicine.

I cannot approve of the proposed legislation, or of any legislation which shall make it obligatory that the body of any person who has died of any disease, or under any circumstances whatever, shall be cremated; and for the following reasons:

First. The danger to health and life from the present mode of burial, when the inhumation has been properly made, has, by the advocates of cremation, been greatly overestimated, if, indeed, it can be said to exist at all.

Second. Cremation removes effectually one of the most important means of detecting certain crimes.

Third. The general sentiment of the community in which we live is opposed to cremation; and, in view of the facts above stated, it would be unnecessary, unwise, and unjust to enforce cremation by legal enactments.

The first of these propositions is, perhaps, the only one which at the present moment requires extended discussion.

Preliminary to this discussion it seems necessary to say that in the following pages I shall be obliged occasionally to use the terms "septic gases" and "septic germs" as synonymous and convertible, for the reason that they cannot always be separated. Moreover, although the theory that most diseases are caused or conveyed by septic germs is to-day very widely accepted, there are not a few scientists and medical men, on both sides of the Atlantic, who dispute the correctness of this theory, among the most notable of whom is M. Peter, a distinguished savant and a member of the Academy of Medicine of Paris, who openly declares his intention to emancipate Science and Medicine from the tyranny of microbes. This necessity on my part to use the

terms interchangeably will not, however, in any way affect the argument, since I propose to deal mostly with facts of common observation and experience, rather than with the results of chemical and microscopical experiments.

All organic structures, whether vegetable or animal, in the process of decay generate gases or give rise to or encourage the development of new organisms which, in most cases, are inimical to life. Indeed, even in the ordinary processes of repair and waste during life, they are constantly eliminating irrespirable and unwholesome gases and excretions, which in a sufficiently concentrated form may cause sickness and death.

The effects of a rank growth of vegetation in contaminating the air with what is known as "vegetable malaria," which emanations become particularly noticeable in certain climates and seasons during the process of decay, is well understood; but the effects of the decay of animal structures in the production of malaria, or of gases and organisms inimical to life, are not so well understood; and for the reason, probably, that the latter, as I shall hereafter have occasion to show, is very much less pernicious in its effects upon human life and health than vegetable matter.

Fifty years ago, in 1836, in answer to enquiries upon this subject by the French government, M. Parent Duchatelet, a member of the "Council of Health" of Paris, made a very elaborate report. In the prosecution of the investigation which constituted the basis of his report, he visited repeatedly all the workshops of the tanners in and around the city of Paris, the manufacturers of animal grease, glue, music strings, Prussian blue, the slaughterhouses, and especially Montfaucon, where annually were brought 10,000 to 13,000 dead or dying or worn out horses, dogs, cats, and other domestic animals, every portion of whose bodies was there worked over and used up for various economic purposes. "Nothing could exceed," says Duchatelet, "the filthiness of this *chautiere d'equarrissage*. The enclosures, and the air of the country for some extent around, are saturated with the most disgusting odors." Yet he found that in all of these establishments the laborers enjoyed as good health as the same class of laborers in any other occupations.

In 1844 I myself visited Montfaucon, situated some distance outside of the walls of the city, and can at least testify to the extreme offensiveness of the place; for, notwithstanding the fact that the dead animals, after being skinned, are thrust into boiling vats, yet the entire enclosure was filled with the most disgusting odors, the odors arising from the putrid bodies, which lay here and there on the pavements, being mingled with the steam from the vats; and so far as a casual survey might enable me to determine—for I had no disposition to prolong my visit—the men, women, and children employed in handling the carcasses, and in picking the flesh from the bones, were in average health.

M. Duchatelet farther states that M. Rousseau, who for thirty-six years had superintended the dissections in the extensive rooms devoted to comparative anatomy, connected with the "Garden of Plants," declared to him that neither he nor any of his assistants had ever suffered from their occupations, even dur-

ing the summer, although the bodies of the animals were often in a highly putrid condition.

In our own city, where large slaughter-houses are scattered here and there along our water fronts, among the poorest hovels and tenement houses, there does not exist, so far as I am informed, any more sickness than is usually found among the same number of poor in all the crowded tenement districts of the city; yet there is not a slaughter-house in New York in which more or less of the blood from the slaughtered animals, with fragments of flesh, etc., do not lie in or about or under the floor, there to undergo putrefaction. The odors from these establishments saturate the neighborhood; and sometimes, when the winds are favorable, they reach Murray Hill. Nevertheless, those who live the nearest do not suffer from any specific form of disease which can be fairly traceable to the odors; and the butchers themselves are, here as elsewhere, proverbially healthy.

The mortuary and general sanitary statistics of Chicago will probably not show that it is any more unhealthy to-day than it was before it became the slaughter-house of the world. Nor has it been said that Cincinnati has suffered in its sanitary reputation by the immense growth of its industry in the slaughter and packing of hogs for home and foreign markets.

Let me not be misunderstood. I have not intended to say that decaying animal matter does not give out noxious gases; and when these are present in the atmosphere in certain quantities and under certain circumstances that they do not cause sickness and death; but only that, in the light of what has now been said, and of what I shall have to say hereafter in reference to the emanations from decaying human and other animal bodies, the dangers from these sources have, in the popular mind, been greatly exaggerated. History has furnished us with a few examples of serious illness among the survivors caused by leaving the bodies of horses and men unburied upon the field after great battles; but these examples have not usually been supplied by modern history. The only example which I can recall is the sickness among the French troops in the vicinity of Sebastopol, when "innumerable" dead horses were left unburied upon the open plain; and in this case the actual source of this sickness admits of doubt. I have myself seen a battle-field where the carcasses of a few dozen horses were, for one reason or another, left unburied several days, and from which the stench was quite offensive to the neighboring encampments, and yet no sickness existed traceable to this cause.

A pool of stagnant water near an encampment has proven more poisonous than the odors from several putrefying horses; and the sewer gases, which may not even be detected by the sense of smell, issuing from a small leak in a water-pipe, are notoriously more poisonous than the odor of a dead cat or rat, whose putrid carcass, hidden within the walls, would compel the tenants to abandon the apartments; illustrating again what every sanitarian knows, that the offensiveness of an odor is no test of its insalubrity.

If this were not so, the reputation of certain springs as health resorts,

around which the atmosphere is at all times charged with sulphuretted hydrogen and other offensive gases, would be seriously impaired.

All odors which are to most people offensive and disgusting are *nuisances*, and should be abated for this reason, if for no other; but hygeists should make a distinction between such nuisances and those which actually cause sickness, to the end that the people should be properly instructed, and not be made to suffer from unnecessary alarm.

Let us now consider the special hygienic effects of the decay of human bodies, as distinguished from other animals; and I may say at once that I think they will be found not to differ materially; indeed, in no respect or degree, perhaps, except in the relative rapidity of their disintegration, and in the consequent relative rapidity of their elimination of noxious gases. Human bodies, as a rule, decompose more rapidly than the bodies of other animals.

Experience teaches that there are two kinds of septic influences resulting from the decay of human bodies, and no doubt also from the decay of the bodies of most other animals; but these latter have been less carefully studied. These septic influences, or entities, differ from each other as to the period and rapidity of their development after death, their duration, and their character. The one, apparently the result of the perverted action of the expiring vital forces, is at its acme immediately after death, and terminates when putrefaction of the body is fairly established; the average period of its duration may therefore be fixed at three or four days. The other septic influence, commencing with the process of decomposition, reaches its climax when the process of putrefaction is complete; the period of its duration is therefore very indefinite. The one gives out no septic gases, or germs, if the term be preferred, and therefore conveys no poison to those who only inhale the surrounding atmosphere, except temporarily, in case the person has died of some infectious malady; but the power of infection from respiration is, even in these latter cases, limited to a few days. The other is constantly eliminating noxious gases, the result of the new chemical combinations of the disintegrating tissues. The one, incapable of communicating disease by respiration (with the exception noted), is capable, however, of communicating disease by inoculation; while the other, capable under certain circumstances, that is when the gases are sufficiently concentrated, of causing disease by respiration, is almost wholly incapable of causing disease by inoculation.

It is owing to the differential distinctions between these two classes of animal poisons that we are accustomed to speak of "autopsy wounds" and "dissecting wounds" as representing entirely distinct and separate classes of wounds. Autopsies are made usually a few hours after death, and the wounds received from the instruments employed in the autopsy often entail serious and occasionally fatal results. For this reason the surgeon generally protects his hands with antiseptic unguents or india-rubber gloves; and if by any accident his fingers are cut or pricked, he makes haste to wash his hands and to withdraw

the virus with which he may have been inoculated, by oral suction, all of which precautions are found unnecessary when wounds are apprehended or have been received in the dissection of bodies which have been dead several days; and it is only after the lapse of several days that bodies are handed over to the anatomist for the purposes of dissection.

Since, therefore, persons who die are not, in most cases, finally removed from the presence of their surviving friends until after the lapse of from two to four days—whether they be disposed of by cremation or burial—the practical question with which we have to deal is, What amount of danger is there to the living from the bodies of those who have been properly laid in the ground?

Having narrowed the question to this point, we shall be aided in our farther enquiry by a more complete study of the effects of human putrefaction upon those who pursue the study of anatomy in the dissecting room.

M. Duchatelet in the prosecution of his enquiries examined this subject in great detail. He first refers to the healthy condition of the great hospital Hotel Dieu in former days, situated upon the island "La Cité," surrounded by the lofty and crowded tenement houses of the poor, and by dissecting rooms, some of which were within the walls of the hospital itself. He then adduces the testimony of a great number of eminent authorities, and first that of M. Lallemand, who had already given an account of the dissecting rooms first established by Dessault; "They were situated on the top story of an old, decayed house. The number of bodies usually on the tables was from fifty to sixty, and the number of pupils 200 or more. The rooms were very seldom cleaned, and even the débris of the bodies was not removed oftener than once a month. Nothing could exceed the abominable stench diffused over the immediate neighborhood;" "and yet," says Lallemand, "we never heard of any diseases which might be fairly attributed to the presence of the dissecting room, either among the students themselves or among the inhabitants of the adjacent houses." Dessault, in referring to the immunity from disease which he himself, and those employed with him, enjoyed, took pleasure in repeating the old saying: "*Morte la be temort le venin* (when the animal dies, the poison dies also)."

Parent Duchatelet next appealed to the testimony of Dubois, Dupuytren, Boyer, and many others who were still living, and who had been or were at that time teachers of anatomy, and who all concurred in the opinion that it was "an error to suppose that the air of a neighborhood is ever contaminated—so as to induce disease—by the emanations from dissecting rooms, or that the students ever suffer from breathing the impure air of those places." Among the other distinguished men who, in reply to the enquiries of Duchatelet, endorsed these opinions, are found the names of Andral, of Paris, Lawrence, of London, and Warren, of Boston.

At the present day dissecting rooms are kept in a more cleanly condition than were the rooms described by Lallemand and Dessault, and the bodies are usually injected with the bichloride of mercury, the chloride of zinc, or some

other disinfecting and preservative fluid, before they are placed on the tables for dissection. But to this now almost universal practice there are occasional exceptions. There is often considerable delay before the injections are made; still more often they are imperfectly made, and when most thoroughly made there are generally portions of the tissues and of the viscera which are not thoroughly penetrated by the disinfecting fluids, and the result is that, in all dissecting rooms, the odor of decaying animal matter is always present, as any person whose sense of smell has not been dulled by familiarity may easily convince himself. If he is not offended or harmed here he certainly is not near any graveyard in which the bodies of the dead have been deposited six feet below the surface of the earth.

In this city there are eight public dissecting rooms, situated mostly in the most crowded portions, where there are annually dissected from 600 to 700 bodies, the dissection being continued through most of the year, and often extending almost into the summer months. Two of the largest of these, the University and the Bellevue College dissecting rooms, are in close proximity to Bellevue Hospital, and the last-mentioned dissecting room is within the walls of the hospital enclosure; and within the same enclosure is the morgue, the coroner's room for post-mortem examinations and inquests, the autopsy room for the hospital, and the dead-house, into which latter are gathered most of the dead from the public eleemosynary institutions of the city. The number there received in 1885 was 5,715. The unrecognized are detained 72 hours, and then, if not recognized, they are buried. Those which are to be distributed to the dissecting rooms, about 700 annually, are by law required to remain in the dead-house 24 hours, but in fact they are usually detained three days. No measures are taken to prevent the putrefaction of any of these bodies thus detained, at any season of the year, and some of them will often be found in advanced stages of putrefaction. When I visited the dead-house a few days since, there was one unrecognized body lying exposed in the coroner's autopsy room which had been dead two months, and there were three upon the tables of the hospital autopsy room. Yet I have never heard of a complaint being made against any one or all these various depots of the unburied dead as being sources of disease, or as foci for the spread of infection, either by the citizens, the hospital authorities, or the Board of Health. Certainly this has not happened during the more than twenty-five years that I have been a resident of the city, and attached to Bellevue Hospital. The present janitor, Mr. White, and his assistant, assure me that they have never suffered from exposure to the atmosphere in these rooms; and O'Bryan, the predecessor of White, whom I knew personally, and who was the janitor during eighteen years, enjoyed, I believe, uninterrupted good health.

I am informed, also, I think authoritatively, that, according to some recent experiments, the air of the autopsy rooms, and of the other rooms attached to the dead-house, contained fewer septic germs than the most favored ward in Bellevue Hospital, namely, the Osborne Ward, which is a new, outlying, one-

story, brick pavilion, and which is considered a model of sanitary construction, arrangement, and police.

To speak more particularly of my own personal experience. From the time that I entered upon the study of medicine, I have been familiar with the dissecting-room. During my period of apprenticeship there were but a few days that I was not occupied in dissection (my preceptor being a teacher of anatomy), and in most of my subsequent life, either as a demonstrator or as a teacher of anatomy or of surgery. My duties have required almost daily exposure to the air of the dissecting-room and to contact with dead bodies; yet I have never suffered in my general health from breathing the atmosphere of these rooms; nor have I—and this is less pertinent to the argument—although often wounded, in dissection, ever but once received a poisonous inoculation, and this was from a body recently dead; nor have I known, in all my experience, a student, a teacher, a janitor, or any other employe, made ill in consequence of breathing the air of a dissecting room. Such things may have happened, and it is quite probable they have in the experience of others, but they have not come under my personal observation, and I am compelled to infer that examples are exceedingly infrequent. We must conclude, indeed, if the modern doctrine that septic influences are conveyed by germs only be correct, that no such germs were often present, either in the bodies of the dead, or in the surrounding atmosphere, or in the water used in such places for drinking purposes. The facts of experience render this conclusion inevitable.

Having considered the question to what extent health and life are endangered by the exposure to the emanations from decaying and unburied animal matter, it now remains only to consider in what manner or degree these relations are changed by burial beneath the surface of the earth.

The period occupied in the complete disintegration of bodies thus buried will depend chiefly upon the condition of the body when buried and upon the nature of the soil in which it is deposited; but it may be said that this period, or the period of the evolution of gases, whether poisonous or otherwise, does not generally exceed a few months. If not imprisoned by the peculiar nature of the soil, as by a clay soil for example, or by artificial means, such as a vault or a metallic coffin, they escape as rapidly as they are formed into the surrounding soil. These gases are chiefly carbonic acid gas, ammonia, sulphuretted and carburetted hydrogen. In this country, in most cases, bodies are buried to the depth of from four to six feet, most often six feet; and through the superincumbent soil the gases have to penetrate before they reach the surface, if, indeed, in their original condition they ever reach the surface.

Chemistry and experience have alike demonstrated that these and most other gases, and the fluid or solid organic matters which sometimes find exit with them, rapidly undergo changes by entering into new combinations when brought into contact with the earth. This is illustrated in the familiar experience with the so-called "earth closet," and is to the scientist a well-known fact. The same thing occurs, also, when these gases or organic matters are deposited

in moving water. They are said to become oxidized; but, whatever the change may be, their original identity is soon lost, and with it their power of doing harm. If this were not so, no water could ever become potable, since there is no water into which these gases and foul organic substances do not find admission.

If many bodies were deposited at the same time in a great vault, or in superficial trenches, it is easy to understand how the gases and organic matter might, for a time, penetrate the soil unchanged, and in a sufficient amount to render the surrounding atmosphere and the adjacent water unwholesome; although after the great battles of modern times, where many thousands have been thus buried in a single day, no accounts have reached us of sickness or of pestilence thereby induced.

In the case, however, of our civic and rural burial grounds, within which bodies are deposited one by one, at considerable intervals of time and at great depth, it would seem impossible, in the light of the accumulated testimony now presented, that any harm should come to the living; and I would seem justified in dismissing the subject at this point with the aphorism, *non credo quia impossibile est*, without attempting to rebut the specific testimony by which the advocates of cremation as a sanitary measure attempt to sustain their position. But I prefer to give to their evidence such consideration as its nature, and my own opportunities of investigating its merits, seem to entitle it to. I must candidly admit, however, that my means of estimating the value of the testimony presented by the cremationists are limited; since nearly all of the testimony, if not all of it, is drawn from the assumed noxious emanations from certain burial grounds in Europe or Asia, and which are thus placed beyond the reach of a critical investigation. It is, in fact, a just ground of complaint that the American advocates of cremation as a hygienic measure do not draw their illustrations from examples supplied by their own country. Our own city, the largest in the Union, ought to have furnished the most striking examples, but I am not informed that it has done so. It must be understood, however, that the American advocate of cremation is equally embarrassed in his efforts to decide upon the validity of these foreign examples.

In order that my position may be fairly understood, it may be necessary for me to say that I am defending the mode of burial usually practiced in this country, namely, from four to six feet below the surface of the earth, as in itself a complete sanitary measure, and as rendering cremation unnecessary. New Orleans, and all other cities where the dead cannot be buried to a sufficient depth beneath the surface, might do well to consider the alternative of cremation; but this admission supplies no argument against inhumation when it can be properly done.

Upon Sir Henry Thompson's suggestion that the incinerated remains of human bodies might be used to fertilize the earth, and perhaps for other economic purposes, I need not dwell.

The advocates of cremation refer us to the fact that persons have been asphyxiated, or rendered seriously ill with some form of low or typhoid fever,

by entering vaults containing dead bodies, or in the exhumation of bodies buried beneath the earth.

These examples, which are by no means numerous, find an explanation in the imprisonment of the gases, as already explained, and in no way affect the conclusions which have been drawn from our argument; nor would they if much more numerous than the published instances have shown them to be.

We are assured, upon the authority of a considerable number of persons, that sickness in various forms, such as diarrhoea, dysentery, throat diseases, low forms of fever, and Asiatic cholera, have been known to prevail in the vicinity of certain burial grounds (*per contra*, Duchatelet refers to the complete immunity enjoyed by the laborers at Montfaucon during all the preceding epidemics of Asiatic cholera). We are also assured, upon the same authority, that the lives of grave-diggers are in a marked degree shortened.

Those who have been accustomed to search for the sources of maladies which have a temporary or even permanent existence in certain localities know how difficult it is, in most cases, to ascertain their true source, and not one of the examples which I have seen recorded is accompanied with any evidence that the proper care had been taken to exclude all other sources of contamination and of causation. This may be said to amount only to a general denial; but this is all that seems to be required, as against the positive and undisputed facts which I have presented in the preceding pages, unless more reliable testimony be supplied in reference to the matter of causation in the specific examples last referred to.

Analyses of the air and of the water surrounding and adjacent to certain graveyards have shown, in two or three instances, that they contained an excess of carbonic acid gas, and of other noxious gases, and of organic matters; but I am permitted to doubt whether the chemists who made these analyses were able to affirm that similar differences in the proportion of these elements might not be found in many other places than over and near burial grounds, and that in all cases it might not be due to a rank vegetation or to other causes rather than to the presence of the dead. To speak of two of the most abundant and noxious gases usually enumerated as emanating from decaying animal matter, carbonic acid gas and ammonia, the first must abound in the atmosphere adjoining all sparkling mineral springs, and the latter is inhaled almost constantly by those of our citizens who live in the neighborhood of public and private stables; but no suspicion attaches to either of these as the source of disease. Most certainly if these gases, said to have been found in small excess in the vicinity of certain graveyards, did originate from the dead bodies, and were actually detrimental or poisonous to those who habitually breathe the atmosphere which contained them, those who habitually breathe the air of dissecting rooms and drink from open pitchers ought to suffer far more, but, as has been shown, they do not.

There is one observation to which the advocates of cremation especially

refer as furnishing conclusive testimony as to its importance and necessity. A cow which had died of charbon was buried in a field in the Jura, nearly seven feet below the surface. Two years later Pasteur found in the overlying earth germs which, being inoculated into a guinea pig, caused charbon and death; in explanation of which observation it was assumed that, prior to the completion of the process of putrefaction, the germs had been carried to the surface in the alimentary canals of earth-worms, and there deposited, with their excrement. T. Spencer Wells, in referring to this case, says: "The parasitic organism, or bacteridium, which, inoculated from a diseased to a healthy animal, propagates the specific disease *may be destroyed by putrefaction after burial*. But before this process has been completed, germs or spores have been formed which will resist the putrefactive processes for many years and lie in a condition of latent life, like a grain of corn, or any flower seed, ready to germinate and communicate the specific disease."

Whether this observation of Pasteur is to be considered as reliable or not is, in this connection, of no importance, since it in no way affects my argument, unless it be favorably. The animal which died of charbon was sick, no doubt, many days, while continuing to graze in the fields. During this period, and while lying dead and uncovered upon the ground, periods including what is known to be those in which the evolution of specific germs is most abundant and active, they must have been scattered far and wide to infect the air and the soil. It is quite apparent, therefore, that cremation would not have furnished an adequate remedy for the spread of the infection.

We are assured, and it is not my intention to deny the assumption, that many of these specific germs and spores not only resist, as in the case just quoted, the heats of summer and the frosts of winter, but that some of them are almost absolutely indestructible. The air, earth, and water teem with these invisible enemies to human life, including not only those germs of a septic character, which have not, as yet, been classified, but also the germs of specific disease, such as diphtheria, typhoid fever, and probably all other epidemic, infectious, and contagious diseases, which germs only need to be brought into favorable circumstances to be awakened into activity.

How feeble and inefficient will then our efforts appear to be, in contending with these parasites, if we limit our labors to the cremation of human bodies. In this war for existence, nothing short of the cremation of all animals, human and brute, at the earliest accession of certain specific and infectious diseases, will avail anything; or, if they are permitted to die a natural death, they must at least be cremated as speedily as possible after death. Indeed, nothing less than the cremation of the whole world, including its atmosphere, would seem to offer a fully adequate remedy.

I am not responsible for the startling alternatives and conclusions to which the revelations of modern science have inevitably brought us.

In reference to my second objection to enforced cremation, and which applies equally to voluntary cremation, namely, that it must remove, effectually,

one of the most important means of detecting crimes, it is not necessary to say more than to call attention to the indisputable fact.

The last objection to enforced cremation made in my prefatory statement was, in effect, that in this country there exists a strong public feeling opposed to even voluntary cremation. The same is true of civilized nations in all portions of the world at the present day, and especially among those calling themselves Christians.

This wide-spread prejudice has no pretended foundation in science or logic. It is only a sentiment; and if analyzed it will be found to have its source either in that undefined and inexplicable feeling which refuses to recognize that the dead are incapable of physical suffering, or in some obscure and wholly mystical relation between the final disposition of the body on earth and its resurrection, or actual corporeal existence, or rehabilitation in a future life.

No one, whether he be civilized or savage, is so untutored as not to know that these bodies, when deposited in the earth, undergo decomposition and are eventually converted into dust and returned to their original elements as completely as if they had been cremated.

We all know perfectly well that it is an error when we speak of our friends long dead, as lying beneath the elevated sod which marks the place of their burial; yet we tread lightly and speak low when approaching the sacred ground, as if we believed ourselves in their actual presence and were unwilling to disturb their rest; but the fact that they have been buried in a manner essentially like that in which the body of Him who, being buried, arose from the dead, and afterward showed himself to His disciples in order that He might quicken their faith—the fact, I repeat, that his friends have received a similar burial does often, no doubt, enable the Christian believer, who only waits for the not-far-off reunion, when he shall again see their faces and forms as they were seen when the lids of their coffins were closed upon them—to perceive more clearly, and without the interposition of a veil, the comforting vision. Certainly no true friend of the human race, Christian or infidel, would interrupt this vision wantonly.

Assuming that my explanation of the general public sentiment in Christian, and most other civilized communities adverse to cremation, be correct, and that this sentiment is harmless, it is entitled to respectful consideration.

Finally, if any one does not entertain this sentiment, or desires to be cremated, there exists no valid reason why he should not be. I have only argued that it is unnecessary for sanitary purposes, and that, therefore, there is no need that it should be enforced by legal enactment, or that it should be even urged upon a reluctant public.

