

Piattoli (S)

WZ  
290  
P583e  
1824



ANNEX

ARMY MEDICAL LIBRARY

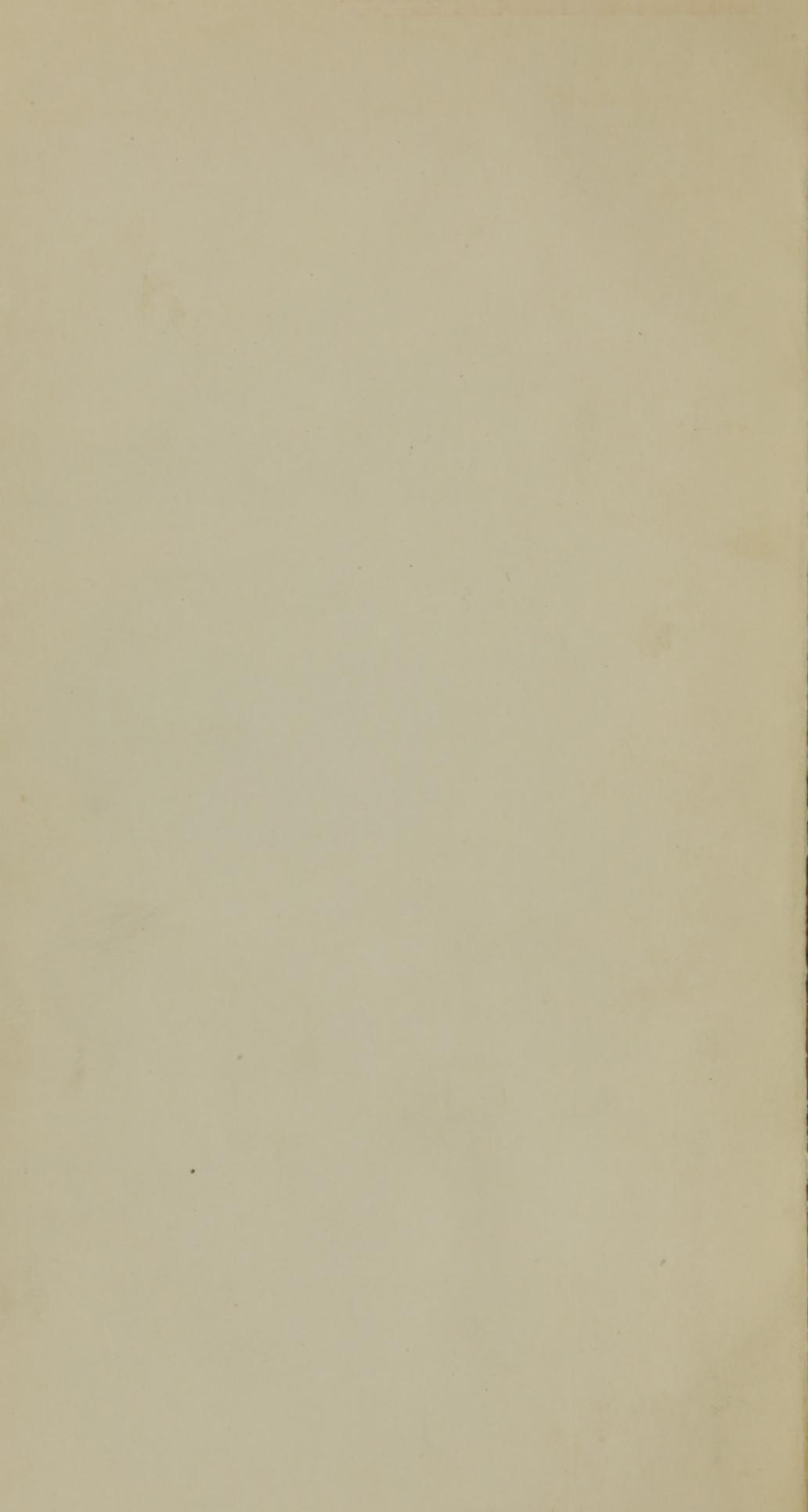
FOUNDED 1836

18/c



WASHINGTON, D.C.





Piattoli, Scipion

Presented to the City Library of  
Washington District of Columbia

AN ESSAY

by *L. Motley*  
ON THE  
1828

**DANGER**

OF

**Interments in Cities,**

TRANSLATED FROM A WORK ENTITLED

“ESSAIS SUR LES LIEUX ET DES SEPULTURES,” &c. &c.

By VICA DAZYR, D. R. de le Faculte de Medicine, de Paris,

&c. &c.

by *L. Motley*



New-York:

WILLIAM GRATTAN, PRINTER,

3 Thames-street.

1824.

ANNEX

Med. Hist.

WZ

290

P583e

1824

Wm. Crayton, Printer

Wm. Crayton, Printer

Wm. Crayton, Printer

1824

# PREFACE.

## ERRATA.

The reader will please correct with his pen the following errors of the press:

Page 5, note, *Lothophagi* instead of *Lolphoagii*.

9       *burned*               "       buried.

12, note, *Plutarch*       "       Phetarch.

28       *seemed*             "       seems.

30, note, *opposed*       "       approved.

32       *stronger*            "       stranger.

44 insert "*it*" 20th line from top, between "*render light*."

53       *the* instead of *than*;—erase the comma at *epidemic*.

55       *not*       "       *but*.

57       *of*       "       at—and *Marathon* instead of *Macathow*.

65       *mingling* instead of *mangling*—and *infecting* instead of *infesting*.

66 erase "*them*" 21 lines from top—and read *profit*, last line but one, instead of *people*.

68 read *De Hanneus* instead of *De Hunrus*.

69 insert *a*, 26th line from top.

72       "       *in a dry and airy situation*, instead of, situated in an open, dry, and spacious place.

76       "       *rise* instead of *rest*.



392702

*Handwritten text, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.*

ANNEX

*Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.*

NEW YORK:

WILLIAM GRAYSON, PRINTER.

1857

1857

## PREFACE.



THE following translation was made at the request of a Committee of the Board of Health. It was considered as possessing very important information on a subject concerning the health of our city. The work from which the present translation is made, is itself a translation from the Italian of Scipion Piattoli, by Vicq D'Azyr, of the Faculty of Medicine of Paris, member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, &c. &c. This performance is highly esteemed in Europe, and is spoken of in the Dictionary "Des Sciences Medicales," printed in 1818 as "an excellent work." The doctrines which it inculcates are enforced by facts and observations in that dictionary, under the title "Inhumation." As the facts detailed are unquestionable, and as the work exhibits an uncommon degree of learning and research in reference to its immediate objects, it cannot be read by the citizens of New-York, but with great interest, and it may lead them to form a correct judgment upon a late police regulation respecting Interments in the City.



392702

# THE REVENUE

←

Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.



# ESSAY

ON THE DANGER OF

## INTERMENTS

WITHIN CITIES.



THE necessity of removing Burial Places from the habitation of man, has been felt at all times and by every people. It is founded upon the danger arising from the emanations from dead bodies. This will be illustrated in the two parts of this discourse.

In the first part will be found a history of the customs adopted by different nations, relative to the interment of the dead; the laws established on this subject by the most ancient law givers—the Canons of the council—the decrees issued from the holy chair, and the opinions of the holy Fathers.

In the second part, the dangers of inhumation in the body of Churches, and in the interior of Cities, will be demonstrated by the test of experience.

### PART FIRST.

*The History of Sepultures among various People.*

It is incredible, although some antients have advanced it, that there have been people, among whom, as among the beasts, the care of interring the dead was totally neglected.

Such Nations knew no law of Society, or the Deserts which they inhabited were so extensive, that they could easily remove to places distant from those, in which they had abandoned their dead; or it is very probable, that the infection of the air caused enormous ravages amongst them.<sup>(1)</sup>

---

(1) CÆL. A. I. I. 18. C. 31. STRAB. I. II. L. G. GIRALD. de Sep. & Rit. Sep. Sic. Tusc. I.

Many philosophers have affected indifference as to their interment. Of this number are Diogenes, Theodore of Cirene, Bion, Demosthenes, Timon, Seneca, and many others. <sup>(2)</sup>

Their aim was without doubt, to correct the extravagant ambition of the rich, and to throw a ridicule over the too anxious solicitude, which certain persons entertain in this respect. <sup>(3)</sup>

If we may credit what historians relate, some people, followed very surprising customs upon this point. Herodotus, Cicero, and Lucian <sup>(4)</sup> speak of certain Indians who devour the limbs of the aged, after having massacred them—they made a delicate mess from the entrails of sick persons, and the limbs of their enemies. We read elsewhere of the same fables of the Massagetes, Dervises, and some other people of Syria and Pontus, but little known.

The Indians, the Parthians, the inhabitants of the borders of the Caspian Sea, and the Bactrians, <sup>(5)</sup> were accustomed to leave the dead bodies scattered about to serve for food to the wild beasts. They even assure us that beasts were kept to render this species of honor to persons in office, and to heroes, and whose bodies they devoured. If these recitals be true, if they have not transformed into customs, some special case, we may be assured that this custom tended to increase the insalubrity of the air. Other nations threw the dead bodies into rivers and ponds; <sup>(6)</sup> miserable resource! and perhaps more dangerous than

(2) AP STOB. SERM. 120, LUCIAN de LUCT LUCAN. VII 723. Cælo tegitur qui caret urna.

(3) Non defunctis, sed nostris oculis parcimus Seneca excerp Op. Vol. 2. Curatio funeris, conditio sepulturæ, pompa exquirarum magis vivorum solatia sunt quam subsidia mortuorum. S. August de Cur agend pro. mort. C. 2.

(4) HEROD 1 3 Cic 1. c. Lucian in Toxar.

(5) Cic. ibid. Alex G D 1 3. c. 2.

(6) According to the opinion of some nations and of certain philosophers, Death by drowning was considered as the most ignoble—the most painful, and susceptible of the greatest number of inconveniences. The Soul, according to them, partaking of the nature of fire, it was very much feared that the watery element would destroy its activity, and cause it to perish with the body. Spondanur's Sacra Cemeteria p 108 & 109.

leaving them in the open air. <sup>(7)</sup> The snows and ice furnished, to the frozen inhabitants of Scythia, profound retreats in which to deposit them. In all parts where the forests were in common, they made use of fire to reduce them to ashes. On the borders of the sea they were swallowed up by the waves; <sup>(8)</sup> but neither ice, nor forests, nor the sea, could serve generally for the sepulture of dead bodies. The earth alone could suffice for that in all places: whence the most antient and most common usage was always to commit them to her bosom; which is therefore called *inhumation*. The history of the formation of man and religious traditions, serve moreover to confirm this usage. It would appear just to restore human bodies to the common mother from whom it was believed they were formed. <sup>(9)</sup>

The rocks and precipices, the vallies, and the deserts, were the first receptacles of dead bodies. These places appeared the most proper to prevent the contagious maladies of which they have often been the unhappy causes. <sup>(10)</sup>

(7) Some Ethiopians followed this usage, as did the Goths also. The inhabitants of Colchos plunged them into ponds, and the Assyrians placed them in marshes. See the Authors above cited.

(8) The Gesmaus, the Gauls, the Lithnuians, many of the Northern nations, and some others, such as the Tyrians, and Phrygians had among them woods and forests, and they used them to burn their dead. The Lolphoagii and inhabitants of Chios threw them into the Sea.

(9) Xenoph. Cyr. ap Cic. 2. de Leg. Stob. Serm 120.

(10) It is difficult to express how much the customs of different people have varied upon the subject of sepulture—as may be seen by the following table, extracted from Spond *Cæmel. Sacra*, p 20, 21. According to the report of this author, the Syrcanians abandoned the dead bodies to the dogs; some Indians left them to the vultures; the Garamantians covered them with sand; and the Celtes with a singular caprice took the boney scalp from them to make cups, which they encircled with gold. Several historians relate that the Essedons, the Massagetes, and the inhabitants of Pontus often made a horrible feast of them, not knowing a better mean to shew their respect to their relations, than to make their own bodies their tombs. The Ethiopians, and the majority of the Ichthyophagi threw them into the water to return to the fish the substance they had derived from them. With almost the same view the inhabitants of Colchis and the Phrygians suspended them on the trees, to offer to the air a part of the ailment which it had furnished. The Egyptians believing the soul immortal,

The difficulties they experienced in digging graves, and erecting catacombs, induced them to give a preference to caverns, dens, and grottoes, in the neighbourhood and even bosom of the mountains. A system so wise was the work of reason ; but it was soon changed by the passions. The horror with which man regards the end of his life, the cutting chagrin of being forgotten forever, and of leaving no remembrance of himself, the desire of resisting the revolutions which destroy all beings, were the sources of this ridiculous medley of funeral ceremonies of which historians coldly offer us the picture, and of which philosophers penetrate the spirit and motives.

In the remotest antiquity there are examples of men strongly excited, who, surmounting the horror that a dead body inspires, supported its presence for a length of time, either hoping to see it restored to life, or that it was almost impossible to detach them from it. <sup>(1)</sup>

---

preciously preserved its dwelling place. After having taken out the intestines, they embalmed the rest of the body, which they often placed in a kind of niche, or in jointed boxes sometimes made of Cedar, of which they took the greatest care, and which they transported to the highest part of their houses, during the overflowing of the Nile. Pliny, Pomponius Mela, and Amianus Marcellinus, speak with admiration of the Pyramids, destined for the sepulture of the kings of Egypt ; and the first of these authors describes one which served for a king of whom Lucian makes mention, lib 9. Herodotus and Strabo inform us that the Persians enveloped the dead bodies with wax ; and the Babylonians, as also the Assyrians, in employing it for the same purpose separated the honey therefrom. The Lacedomians and Scythians followed the same course in regard to their kings. The inhabitants of the isle of Delos transported their dead bodies to the neighbouring islands. The Megarians interred them in the Isle of Salamis. The Greeks and Romans destroyed them by fire, except, however, those of children. The teeth resisted the action of fire : according to them they were the principle of the resurrection ; it is for this reason, says Pliny, that children were deprived of burning ; they dreaded lest the teeth should be consumed. It is thus that many Jewish rabbins still admit into the skeleton a bone named *lux*, which they place in the back bone, and which they consider as indestructible. Diemerbrock gives in this respect details curious enough in his treatise on Anatomy.

(1) In the remotest antiquity they attached so great a value to these precious deposits, that the privation of them was considered as the most

They sought in this manner to indemnify themselves for the loss they had sustained. Enlightened men afterwards appeared, born to extend the limits of the human mind; to trace out law, and to reform customs. They saw in prospect the direful consequences of so fatal a disorder—they saw that if this murderous custom should become more common, it would draw after it the loss of the human race. Immediately interments were carried back to the rocks, and far from the cities. The love of agriculture, and the feeding of flocks, which must be regarded as the first riches of nations, were powerful reasons to choose sterile and uncultivated lands for places of interment. It was the true method not to devastate the fruitful plains, and not to corrupt the nourishing juices of the herbs, and to preserve the cattle from distempers, which might otherwise have been the consequence. Thus this custom was carried back to its true objects; that of hiding the remains of the dead and preserving the health of the living.

The voice of religion unites itself with that of nature and of policy, to induce mankind to hasten the interment of the dead. The Egyptians attached to the tomb a flattering idea of honor—they made it a recompence for virtue and an object of public emulation. The severe examination which followed the death of the citizen—the gloomy lake destined to decide on the character with which each sought to be clothed in the eyes of posterity.<sup>(12)</sup> Such were the motives that interested individuals with respect to their sepulture.

---

dreadful and exemplary punishment. It was thus that Azychis, king of Egypt, wishing to force his subjects to pay the debts they had contracted, ordered them to bring as sureties the urns in which were enclosed the bodies of their ancestors, adding, that those who did not fulfil their engagements should be deprived of the honors of sepulture. Spond. p. 357.

The desire of being buried among their ancestors was carried very far among certain nations. Many of the inhabitants of Neocæsaria, a city of Cappadocia, during a plague that reigned under the reign of Gallus and Volutian, fearing that others might forget to carry them to the tombs of their families, shut themselves up in them, in order to die there, and be there buried, in case of being attacked by the reigning malady. Spond. p. 138.

(12) It is known that the Egyptians underwent, after death, a public judgment upon the banks of the marshes of Acherus, to which they were

Soon after, religion bringing with her the consoling assurance of a future life in which the soul would still preserve some sentiment of the past, inspired respect for the tombs of those who had lived well. It was a crime to trouble the repose of the dead in their asylum: a noble desire to obtain one day funeral honors, sprung up in the heart. Thus the veneration for tombs became a part of religious worship. From that moment it was an obligation to render promptly the last duties to the dead.—Whoever left a dead body upon the public way, without covering it with earth, rendered himself guilty of a monstrous impiety.—To overturn the tombs—to scatter bones once buried was a horrible sacrilege. He who touched a body before it had received the honors of sepulture, was guilty of a profanation from which the lustral waters alone could cleanse him. In some places a person became unclean in simply passing over a place where a body had been buried. According to these ideas, somewhat modified, they carried the precaution even to not constructing houses, raising walls, and above all, not building temples upon grounds which had served for interments; <sup>(13)</sup> a precaution which evidently tended to remove as far as possible the dead from the living, and to fix the cemeteries in retired fields.

It was necessary, however, to distinguish the places destined for them. For this purpose they sometimes collected heaps of

---

transported for that purpose. The bodies of virtuous and respectable citizens were placed by order of the Judges in a bark, in which they were carried to the other side of the marsh, where, in a delightful country, the public tombs were built. Those of whom they judged unfavourably were denied that honor; they, probably, threw those into a filthy ditch, which took the name of Tartarus from the use to which it was applied. It is this which gave rise to the fables of the river Lethe; of the boatman, Charon; of the three Judges of Hell; of the exile of a hundred years, to which it was said they were condemned to pass on the border of the Styx. From thence come the Wandering Ghosts, the Metempsychosis, &c. *DIOD. SIC. li. 7.*

(13) Among some other people—they adopted the custom of building temples near the tombs of the first heroes, who in the end became divinities. Amongst others, these customs were introduced at a later period, that is to say, when superstition had silenced the sentiments of nature and the voice of religion—and no examples are to be found of it but in favor of extraordinary men.

stones; at other times they contented themselves with raising a little the surface of the earth. This manner of interment recalled the usages of ancient sepulchres in the mountains. Thus the laborer, the traveller, and all those who cultivated the earth, were warned to respect that spot. At the same time the cadaverous exhalations could not spread themselves in a great quantity through the atmosphere; and besides, the danger was still more diminished by the distance which separated the habitations from the places allotted for interments.

These principles conduct us easily to the consequences and connexion of the funeral ceremonies practised by the ancients. The Germans who possessed vast forests, buried their dead.<sup>(14)</sup> Homer tells us the same of the Phrygians,<sup>(15)</sup> and Virgil of the Trojans.<sup>(16)</sup> Interment was not forbidden, and we find many instances of it among them. The reverence that the Persians entertained for the sun and for fire, led them to consider it as a crime to burn the dead. It is consequently difficult to conceive how, at the solicitation of Darius, the Carthagenians adopted this custom.

The Assyrians, the Medes, the Parthians, the Tyrians, the Phœnicians, the Ethiopians, the Egyptians themselves, and the Persians, always had, for their dead, caves and places which were particularly allotted to them. The Chinese and Peruvians situated at the two extremities of the earth, followed the same custom in this respect. The tombs of the kings and great men of the most remote antiquity were artificially constructed in the middle of the most solitary mountains. Gyges, King of Lydia, had his sepulchre at the foot of Mount Tmolus—the kings of Persia had theirs upon the Royal mountain, near the city of Persepolis—Silvius Aventinus was buried in the hill that has retained his name, and king Dercennus in the bosom of a high mountain, as attested by Virgil.<sup>(17)</sup>

---

(14) They granted to the Priests the distinction of being buried under columns of six cubits in height (ALEX. G. D. 1. 3, c. 2,) which supposes that their number was not very considerable.

(15) *Iliad*.

(16) *Æneid* 6.

(17) *Æneid*. 1. 11, 850.

The ancient Russians transported the bodies of their Princes to the deep caverns beside the Borysthenes—curious travellers still visit them.<sup>(18)</sup> The Danes raised artificial mountains in which to place the bodies of their Kings.<sup>(19)</sup>

The tombs of which we have spoken above were the remains of this custom. The simple Troglodite forms one with stones, which he throws while laughing upon the remains of his companion. The proud Egyptian raises at great cost, Pyramids and obelisks. Cairo offers us its mausoleums—Greece glories in her prodigies of sculpture, and modern Rome still contains within her bosom the columns of the Antonines and the vast mole of Adrian.<sup>(20)</sup> Thus reason and caprice are ever found in opposition on a subject in which vanity and ambition have always had so great a part.

The loss of a beloved object demands some consolation, it is then that we endeavour to pourtray its figure and preserve its likeness. This desire, although indifferent in itself to the welfare of society, might however be turned to advantage; but man, guided by his passions, is easily transported beyond these bounds of reason. Instead of portraits, busts, and prints—he wishes to keep the body itself. The active grief of a father, a son, a widow, a lover, imagined, that art was not sufficient to give a species of life to inanimate bodies. The Egyptians, from whom all other nations learned all that polishes and softens the manners, invented the art of embalming bodies, of drying them, of salting them, of clothing them with wax, with honey, with the powder of cedar, and other substances capable of preventing the action of the air upon the stagnant humours, of preserving the body from corruption, and of rendering it fit to be kept without danger in the midst of the living. Self-love gave a new

---

(18) GUAIGNER Lithuan.

(19) Annal Sax. 1 3.

(20) In some countries the earth had the property of speedily consuming the bodies that were interred: this has been observed in the Troade, in Lycia and in some other countries of the east. Pliny b. 36. c. 17.

There are two churches at Toulouse, where the bodies are preserved by drying up. I have visited them and am persuaded that the flesh is changed into a contexture, dry, spongy, and brittle.

force to this invention, which was universally adopted and practised. They then thought that the soul remained wandering about the body to which it was previously attached, as long as the body remained whole and unaltered. This opinion gave at first great estimation to the art of embalming; but the consequences soon appeared so dangerous as to induce the depositories of the public authority, to censure and even abolish it.<sup>(21)</sup> It is true that in the origin of the practice, bodies thus embalmed were preserved far from cities, and kept in glass or earthen vessels, made for the purpose. They were then placed in the bottom of some isolated cavity, or under a stone impervious to water. But these first usages degenerated: houses were soon filled with those vases; they were preserved as the most precious deposits of families, and the most sacred pledges of the public faith. This superstitious practice prevailed however, only among the great and rich.<sup>(22)</sup> The people, that is to say the greatest number among all nations, were contented to bury the dead bodies: there were even whole nations among whom inhumation was generally practised, and without any interruption.

Already, more than once, contagious disorders had caused the necessity of removing dead bodies far from the dwellings of the living to be severely felt. The great number of dead after a bloody battle, obliged them to burn the dead, and to content themselves with preserving their ashes. Arguments were

---

(21) Many facts demonstrate to us that people have endeavored to reconcile the ceremonies of funerals with the opinions of philosophy. Heraclitus wished that the bodies could be buried, that they might return more promptly to their constituent principles. Thales, of Miletus, who acknowledged no other principle than that of water, declared for inhumation. According to his system, the bosom of the earth, contained proper dissolvents to restore a body to its first principles. The disciples of Pythagoras, full of mysterious ideas upon the nature of plants and vegetables, surrounded their dead bodies with the leaves of aloe and of poplars. The Cynics and Pyrrhenians appeared indifferent on this point.

(22) Every thing considered impure was banished from this ceremony. Woollen stuffs were rejected and linen only used. There have been found in embalmed bodies small statues of copper, of marble, or of earth, which represented Osiris or Pluto, and Isis or Proserpine; they also frequently enclosed in the tombs considerable sums of money, or very precious pieces of furniture. The Spaniards found in the West Indies, tombs filled with gold and articles of great value. The Jews buried immense treasures

drawn from these examples to check the too extended custom of embalming, and they succeeded so much the better, as they were in no wise contrary to the prevailing opinion. Some time after the whole face of things was changed, and fire filled the tombs and urns with ashes. The custom of burning bodies, spread even among people who had first practised simple inhumation. It was observed that long wars, frequent transmigration, the ruin and re-building of cities, must, in the revolution of time, entirely change the face of a country, and the bones confided many ages to the bosom of the earth, must be then inevitably exposed above ground. The fear of such a profanation produced a general determination to reduce the dead to ashes. From this time their repose was considered better secured.

They went still farther; they wished to exclude from the walls and precincts of the city, these ashes, which, however, they continued to look upon with respect, and the places which had been consecrated to the ordinary interments were destined to receive the urns. The highways had been for a long time bordered with tombs and funeral stones covered with inscriptions. Thus the traveller easily learned the glorious actions of his ancestors, and every one there found examples and subjects of emulation. The remains of great men presented to view, seemed to reproach the passenger with his own weakness. On the other hand they preserved cities from carnage, conflagration, and destruction, for the people were obliged to leave their walls to defend these sacred deposits. It would have been a crime to let them become a prey to the enemy.

Religion introduced new dogmas which favoured this usage. Philosophy adopted different opinions upon the nature of Spirit, and upon the activity of flames. It was believed that bodies were thus promptly restored to their constituent principles; the

---

with their dead. Phetarch relates, as also Strabo, that the kings of Persia and Macedonia ordered that their treasures should be enclosed with them in their tombs. This custom was also very frequent among the Romans; it mounts up to the highest antiquity. The ancient Pagans never forgot to put a piece of money in the mouth of the defunct, which they designated under the name of *Obolum* or of *trientem*. From thence Virgil in speaking of the dead, often calls them *inopem turbam*. SPOND. p. 59, 61, 70 and 111.

soul, said they, quickly disengaged from its prison, purified by fire, and delivered from the burden of a perishable body, is rapidly drawn towards its sphere, and tends to re-unite itself to the soul of the universe. The Egyptians adopted this custom, and their industry discovered a new method to preserve the ashes of their dead in the incombustible *amianthus*. The considerable expense of funeral piles and aromatics, leads us, however, to presume, that the common people never obtained this distinction.

If we take a view of history we shall find that soldiers have been in all ages employed in the construction of roads, and that they always formed subterranean vaults at a distance from cities. It is equally certain that in many countries public funds were assigned for the building of tombs, as also for the supply of funeral piles, which burned almost continually in very populous states. Amidst so many customs which caprice and vanity have produced in different places; nature, the laws and religion, have always agreed in removing to a distance the dead from the living, and the reason for which tombs had been constructed at a distance from cities has never been lost sight of.

It is necessary, however, to cast a rapid glance over three nations, whose history offers the most interesting periods. We find among them the elements of our customs in relation to funeral ceremonies. These people are the Hebrews, the Greeks and the Romans.

#### *Interments among the Hebrews.*

It was among the Jews that the first foundations of Christianity were laid; and the primitive Church was formed of proselytes from Greece and from Latium. The records of Jewish antiquity always preserved pure, conduct us to the earliest periods in which interments were generally practised. A horrible crime gave an entrance to Death in this world. Cain, after having raised his murderous hand against his brother, thought to conceal his crime by covering with earth the body of him whom he had slain.<sup>(1)</sup> After this dreadful example, they continued to inter

---

(1) JOSEPH. Antiq. l. 1. c. 3.

the bodies of those who died in the wilderness and in inhabited places. Some of our historians have adopted the ridiculous traditions of the Rabbies; they have given credit to the fable which pretends that the skull and bones of our first Father were scrupulously preserved by Noah, until the time of the deluge.— Abraham purchased of the children of Seth the cave of Hebron, where he deposited the body of Sarah after her death.— He himself was there buried, and after him Isaac. Rebecca and Leah were there also interred. The tomb of Rachael was placed along the road which leads from Jerusalem to Ephrata. Jacob, in like manner, purchased from the children of Sechem, a piece of land where he built a tomb. He was there interred with great pomp by his son Joseph, who transported his body from Egypt, where he died. Joseph and his Brethren received at the same place the honors of sepulture.<sup>(2)</sup> During the captivity in Egypt the tombs of the Israelites were no doubt in some separate place, agreeably to the custom of that people in whose country they resided. Their long journeyings in the wilderness served still more to confirm that practice. Moses was interred, by the command of God himself, in the valley of Moab, on the side of Beth Peor. Miriam, his sister, at Gades; Aaron at *Or*, and Eleazar, the son of the last, and also Joshua, on the mountains of Ephraim. After the entrance of the Jews into the promised land, and the establishment of religious ceremonies, they acknowledged that the command of God himself forbade the dangerous neighbourhood of the bodies of the dead. According to their laws, the touch of a dead body occasioned a legal impurity, and to efface it, it was necessary to wash their garments. To inter the dead in any house was to pollute it. It was this regulation which caused them carefully to separate corpses from their dwellings. They dreaded all communication with them, so far even as to forbid travellers to walk over the places where the dead were buried, and which were easily known by small co-

---

(2) We believe according to the opinion of the Commentators, that the remains of these illustrious Patriarchs, of whom we have spoken, were re-united in the Cave of Hebron to the bones of Abraham.

lums erected at them. They took great care also to paint with white the surface of their tombs, which they renewed yearly.—It was, however, permitted to have their tombs at their country residence. It was there that the luxury of the great, and of the chiefs of the nation shone with splendor. The nurse of Rebecca and Deborah was interred at the foot of a tree. The unhappy Saul had the same lot!<sup>(3)</sup> Priests were buried in their own grounds, and sometimes in the tombs of Kings.<sup>(4)</sup> Caverns hollowed out in the mountains of Sion, under the foundations of the temples, and in the royal gardens, were appointed for the burial place of the kings of Judah. In a course of years, notwithstanding the various events experienced by that people, no change of any moment was made on that head.

If we were to form an opinion respecting it from passages in the Scriptures, it appears only that they introduced among themselves some foreign customs, such as burning and embalming the body.<sup>(5)</sup> In the Chronicles, and in the book of Jeremiah, the ceremony of burning the body is spoken of as a rite introduced in honor of kings.<sup>(6)</sup>

Perhaps the custom was of short duration, particularly with some of them. The bodies of Saul and Jonathan were reduced to ashes by the people of Jabez Gilead, to screen them from the rage of the Philistines.<sup>(7)</sup> They gave to some the honor of being embalmed. The fœtid odour which exhaled from the body of Lazarus, four days after his death, leaves us to conjecture that the perfumes and liquors which they shed over the bodies, served only to tighten still more the linen clothes with which they were shrouded.

---

(3) He was buried in a forest near Jabez Gilead. 1 Kings, 31. 11.—From thence David carried his remains, or bones reduced to ashes, to the tomb of Cis, father of Saul, in the land of Benjamin. 2 Kings, c. 21. 22.

(4) II. Paralip. 24. 16.

(5) According to Spondanus (Cemet. Sacra) p. 158. The Hebrews burnt perfumes over the corpse—it was that which they called *Combustion*, from whence, according to him, it has been improperly concluded that those people were in the habit of burning the body itself.

(6) A continual fire and sufficient to consume the dead carcasses and other filth of the city, burnt constantly in the deep ditch of Tophit, which formed a part of the Valley of Hennon, Isaiah 30. 33. This tradition has furnished the names and the ideas of what is called Geenna or Gehenna. *Cal-mul's Dict. Bib. Artic. Cedron.*

(7) Necessity at that time made their conduct a law to them.

We see that caverns and places in the fields have been always destined for sepulchres.<sup>(8)</sup> Elijah was buried in a Grot, where other dead bodies had been placed, one of which, according to scripture, revived at the touch of the Prophet. They dug for the young Tobias a grave in the same field where the other unfortunate husbands of Sarah reposed. The monument erected by Simeon, in Midian, in honor of Maccabeus is well known. The son of the afflicted widow of Nain had been carried out of the gate of the city to the family burial-place.— It was there Jesus Christ met it. The fierce demoniack, of whom the Evangelists speak, who, after having broken his chains, fled into the desert, dwelt, it is said, among the tombs.

Lazarus was buried in the environs of Bethany ; and Joseph, of Arimathea, a man of consideration among the Jews, had a tomb hollowed from the middle of a rock, in a garden, near Golgotha, the place of burial of Jesus Christ. Several of the holy personages who came to life at the time of our Saviour's death, had their tombs out of Jerusalem, for it is said in the scriptures, that immediately upon being restored to life they returned to the city.

Each city had out of its wall a public cemetery. Some pretend that the one at Jerusalem was in the valley of Cedron, in the neighbourhood of which the Pharisees purchased the Potter's field, as a burial place for strangers.

A custom so uniform among a people who had received it from God, and who had most faithfully observed it, ought to be regarded as a highly respectable model or example among Christians.

#### *Interments among the Greeks.*

The most antient usage among the Greeks was burial. Pausanias has left us an exact enumeration of the most celebrated tombs in those times, which appears a little fabulous. He informs us that they were situated in the open country, or on the borders of the sea, at the foot or on the tops of mountains.— Afterwards the practice of burning the bodies was introduced a-

---

(8) Calmut's Dict. Bib. Art. Sepulcrum.

mong them.<sup>(1)</sup> They then placed the urns which contained the ashes in houses set apart in the interior of towns, and sometimes even in the temples. These instances were at first rare ; and this distinction was only granted to the heads of the nation, or to generals who had served their country. Interments were always more generally used in Greece than elsewhere, and they observed inviolably the more salutary custom of carrying the dead bodies out of the cities. The Thebans, the people of Sicyon, of Delos, and of Megara—the Macedonians, the inhabitants of Chersonesus, and of Greece, almost wholly pursued the same course in this respect. The most famous legislators<sup>(2)</sup> made it a special provision in their codes. Cecrops, at Athens, directed that the dead should be carried without the walls. Solon adopted and established in full vigor that wise regulation, and at Athens until the latter period of the republic, there was only a small number of persons interred within the walls of the city. That honorable distinction was not allowed but in favor of some Hero. In the same manner they allowed to be erected in the Ceramicus, tombs for those brave citizens who had sacrificed themselves for the safety of their country.

<sup>(3)</sup>Plato in his republic did not even allow interments in fields suitable for culture. He wished to reserve for those purposes grounds which were sandy, and which were of no other use. The same laws were in force in Magna Græcia.

The Carthaginians found out of the walls of Syracuse, tombs raised for the inhabitants of that city. The same thing occurred at Ag-

(1) Some go as far back for the origin of this custom as the time of Hercules, who wished to restore to king Licidius the sad remains of his son Licidius slain in battle. *HOM. Scholiast. Iliad 7*. Most persons think that this usage is to be dated from the siege of Troy, when the great slaughter and the example of the Phrygians determined them to pursue this practice as the most simple. See *Porter in his Archæology, lib. 4. c. 6*.

(2) Lycurgus was the only one who permitted tombs in cities, in temples, and in public places where the people assembled. He wished thus to rouse the youth of Sparta, to feelings of bravery and courage, by familiarizing them with the idea of death. It appears that he might have attained the same end, by following, as regards Interments, the practices adopted by the rest of Greece. See *Polit. Instit. l. 1. c. 1—13*.

(3) Towards the close of the Athenian government, Sophocles was not allowed a tomb in that city, although it was then besieged by the Spartans ; and Sulpitius, in times less remote, could not obtain sepulture for Marcellus.

rigentum, <sup>(4)</sup> Religion among them gave its sanction to the custom. <sup>(5)</sup> The sanctity of tombs, many of which became the temples of certain divinities, <sup>(6)</sup> and were considered as asylums for the unfortunate and the accused, the respect which they bore for the ashes and the memory of their ancestors, the penalties with which the laws of religion menaced the violators of those customs, the curses denounced against them by the Priests; in a word, the whole religious doctrine, and the mythology of the Greeks, had in view the enforcement of the laws for the interment of the dead, at a distance from the habitations of the living.

*Interments among the Romans.*

The Romans conformed to the usages of the nations which peopled Italy; when they could, they observed the custom of burning the dead. It is thought, that at the commencement of their establishment in Italy, they made use of the cellars of their habitations, and that they there placed vases of sufficient size to enclose their bodies; but we may doubt this tradition, and believe on good grounds, that they constructed tombs only at their country residences. <sup>(1)</sup> Numa had his on mount Janiculum,

(4) The Tarentines followed the same usages. Upon some occasions they consulted an oracle, and received a response, "that they would be more happy if they dwelt with many." *Polyh.* 1. 8. The true meaning of the oracle was, that they should devise means to increase their population—What did they? They permitted the dead to be buried within the circuit of their walls, and they supposed they had ascertained the meaning of the oracle. It must be allowed to have been a strange method to people a city.

(5) There never was any nation more solicitous of giving to the dead the honors of sepulture. The Athenians often neglected the advantages of the most brilliant victories to perform this duty. Often indeed, notwithstanding such victories, they sacrificed renowned officers because they were not sufficiently zealous in performing funeral rites to the soldiers slain in action.—Those who violated the tombs were regarded as victims irrevocably given over to the wrath of the Gods. The auguries which they took, the prayers and vows which they made at the tombs, show with what earnestness the precepts of religion had enjoined the duty of sepulture. The Grecian writers, but especially the poets, have left us interesting details on that subject. *Anthol. and Brod. Epigr. gr.* We may add, that the most solemn oaths were as sacred when pronounced on a tomb as upon the altars. It is well known that Alexander before he undertook the war in Asia, sacrificed upon the tomb of Achilles.

(6) Arnob. 1. 6. Non. Marcel. c. 6. n. 92.

(1) No one is ignorant how little this agrees with the passage of Virgil, "*Ædibus ante suis refer hunc.*" (Æneid 6. 152.) The verse 328, of the same book, "*Quam sedibus ossa quierunt,*" is no less obscure. It is thus, that with Amm. Marcellin, l. 22. we read "*ædes*" for "*sedes.*"

(2) which was not then enclosed within the city. The kings who succeeded him had theirs in the field of Mars, situated below the city and the Tiber. According to the testimony of Appian,<sup>(3)</sup> the kings of Rome alone had the privilege of being buried on that mount; and no private individual could be placed there unless he had distinguished himself by some glorious action worthy of public gratitude.

Valerius Publicola and Tudertus obtained that honor. The first had the privilege of transmitting it to his descendents.—Nevertheless we read in history that they did not dare to make use of this privilege, as it was necessary to inform succeeding generations of the services which they had rendered the republic. The Vestals enjoyed the prerogative of being buried within the walls of the city; and those who had broken the vow of chastity to which they were bound, were buried in a field to which that fault had given the name of the *Field of Crime*.<sup>(4)</sup>—Generals had soon a part in that honour. Ambition and pride at last made it common among the great.

The law of the twelve tables, whether it was a collection of laws made for the Greeks, or rather the result of certain enquiries upon the ancient laws of Italy<sup>(5)</sup> only revived the ancient usage (which had suffered some interruptions) when it forbade expressly the burning or burying of dead bodies within the city. By the terms of that law<sup>(6)</sup> it appears clearly that from the fourth century of the Republic they practised indifferently burning and interring the bodies of the dead. Often had they seen the buried bones outraged and exposed in the obstinate wars which the Romans had to support against the barbarians. The horror which the sentiments of religion excited against such profanations, the wisdom of the magistrates, all united in inducing them to practice the burning of the dead.<sup>(7)</sup> It was the means of pre-

(2) AUREL. VICTOR. 2 Orig. G. R. NUMA.

(3) De Bell. civ.

(4) DION. HALICARN. l. 8. 90. OVID. Fast. 6.

(5) Vico, Bonamy, Terreson, &c.

(6) Hominem mortuum in urbe ne sepelito neve urito.

(7) Poreeus thus explains the custom which was introduced among the Romans, of burying the dead within the cities to secure them against the insults of the barbarians. Poree Lett. 2d edition 1745. See J. V. Grav. Orig. Jur. Roman lib. 2. c. 78.

venting those evils which a warlike spirit and the superstition of the people necessarily produced.

Government and religion happily concurred to bring, the Funeral Pile more and more into use. They agreed to bury a small part of the body, a finger for example, so as to unite the observance of all the ceremonies.<sup>(8)</sup> Still it was necessary to secure the city against conflagration, and to preserve it from the exhalations of a great number of bodies exposed to the action of the flames. It was necessary to divert the attention of the inhabitants from the sad spectacles which so many funeral ceremonies constantly presented to them. The law then appointed the open country as the place for funeral rites and inhumations. It scarcely permitted the practice of those ceremonies contiguous to the suburbs of the city. Religion found in the sanctity of its laws, and in the respect due to the divinities which presided over cities, the reasons for a precaution so useful<sup>(9)</sup>. It was ordained that the dead should be respected. Their sanctuary was thus by law rendered inviolable and their sepulture sacred.<sup>(10)</sup> Religious scruples

(8) Some of the most illustrious families of Rome did not adopt that new custom. The Cornelian family for instance continued to bury their dead until the time of Sylla. He was the first of his family who directed that his body should be burnt. Historians observe that he directed through fear, that they should remove his body as they had done that of Marius. Cic. 2. de Leg. 5. Varr. 4. de L. L. ubi Scalig. et Turneb.

(9) It was a principle of religion that any thing which had been consecrated to the divinity was polluted by the touch of a dead body. The Priests made a sort of scruple of assisting at funerals, or of entering into a place where there was a corpse. They considered themselves unfit to perform sacrifices to the gods when they had been defiled by the touch of any thing which had had connection with a dead body. Such prejudices had the same effect as those upon which the respect to sepulchres was founded; these separated the citizens from tombs—those caused the tombs to be separated from the cities. Let us hear what the civilian Paul says in his sentences (L. 1. tit. 21. § 2.) “Corpus, inquit in civitatum inferri non licit, ne funestentur sacra civitatis.” It is not lawful, he says, for a corpse to be brought nor funeral rites performed in a city. The Emperors Dioclesian and Maximin enacted the same prohibition in law xii, upon religious places. “Ne sanctum municipiorum jus polluat,” that the sacred rights of the citizens should not be invaded. Under the Christian Emperors this opinion had the same force; it is to be seen in the laws of the Emperor Theodosius, of which we shall speak hereafter. See Godefroy upon the code Theodosian, l. 9. tit. 17. c. 6. Or if a more ancient authority is wished, we may consult the collection of Greek Epigrams of Brod. l. 1. 2. and Junius in his Political Questions, 109, &c. To motives of religion, were added those of policy and morals, detailed by Varro, in his work on the latin tongue, and referred to by the Emperor Theodosius in the law just cited. They tended equally to the same end.

(10) We cannot doubt of the respect which the Romans entertained for

were on this point carried so far, that not content with a marked respect to the tomb, the Romans chose that the places destined for sepultures should be particularly consecrated. In whatsoever place the dead was interred, all the ground which surrounded it, was withdrawn from the purposes of trade or commerce.— Under the consulship of Duilius, at a time when the treasures of conquered Asia had not yet rendered agriculture an object of contempt to the people, and indifference to the government, the most illustrious houses had each one a family tomb on their own estates, which were each year enlarged. Those estates, however, not producing any thing for want of culture, and the extent of cultivated grounds diminishing greatly, the magistrates conceived it their duty vigorously to oppose the increase of that disorder. Tombs were no longer constructed at the country-seats. Those of the most illustrious families, such as the Metelli, the Claudii, the Scipios, the Valerii, the Servilii, were transported to the highways, where the ornaments with which they were adorned were not without use.

This wise law gave to the great roads the names of the Aurelian, Flaminian, Lucinian, Appian, Lavinian, and Julian *Way*. Many still placed their tombs upon the hills of the gardens, a little above the Champs de Mars. Religion, which on this point had no interest but that of the Commonwealth, adopted as its own this new plan.<sup>(11)</sup> The common people among the Ro-

---

the tombs. The formulas with which those monuments were consecrated to the *Manes*, the penalties denounced against those who should take away any thing from those sacred places, and the strictness with which they were interdicted from satisfying at those places any wants of nature, furnished multiplied proofs of it. In fine, they could not remove to any other places, bodies which were interred without the consent of the Priests, and in the provinces without the license of the magistrates. See HEIN. Ant. Rom. II, Tit. 1. 4. 7. NIEUP. R. R. sect. 6, c. 6, &c.

(11) A short time after the same reason occasioned the renewal of the law of the Twelve Tables, against the custom of interring in cities, which under the pretence of preserving the tombs against all profanation would have infected the places where the people assembled: *Quod iniquum esse putarunt locum publicum privata religione obligari*. CIC. de Leg. 1. 2.

On some occasions policy disarmed by religion, was compelled to acknowledge her empire. Elian relates that this last served as a pretext for the patricians to reject the famous Agrarian law proposed by the Gracchi: it was thought contrary to good order that the place where the ashes of the dead reposed should thus change its owner, and this consideration was an insurmountable objection to the division of lands. ELIAN, var Hist. 1. 11.

mans had also funeral piles, and public tombs.<sup>(12)</sup> Some wealthy citizens, Gemellius Belius among others, purchased the favor of the people, by giving them lands, which would serve for places of interment.<sup>(13)</sup> The Commonwealth was at the expense of tombs and of funeral honors, for great men, and the poor obtained the favour from the liberality of the Pontiffs.<sup>(14)</sup>

There were, however, some exceptions made in favor of certain persons. The Vestals never lost the privilege of being buried within the walls. Generals who had received the honors of a triumph had always the same right. The Priests, and afterwards all the Ministers of public worship, equally enjoyed it.—Such a distinction was flattering to self-love ; from henceforth each one claimed it in his own favor. The Cesars who, after Augustus, were all honored with an Apotheosis could they not enjoy this distinction ? Still we read in history that the bodies of some of them were taken outside of the walls of Rome. It was thus that the body of Domitian was transported to the Latian way, that of Septimius Severus on the Appian, and that of another Emperor, on the Lavinian way.

That privilege soon ceased to be a distinction, either because it was granted too easily, or because it was usurped in those frequent revolutions which the city of Rome experienced. The Emperor Adrian found himself obliged to forbid anew, by a rescript, or if you please a constitution, interments in cities.<sup>(15)</sup>—By chance he only designated the chief cities ; but Antoninus Pius<sup>(16)</sup> to whom is attributed a law passed prohibiting interment in cities, included in the regulations which he made on that sub-

(12) *Hoc mœeræ plebi stabat commune sepulcrum.* HORAT. l. 1. od. 8.

Such were the small wells (*puticuli*) of which there are doubts in history, whether they were deep cavities resembling wells, or that their name came from the dreadful odour which they scatter around their neighbourhood ; those places were hollows or cavities in which they cast the dead bodies of the common people. The places where they burned the bodies of the dead were called *ustrine*, or public Funeral Piles. The small wells were situated on the Esquiline Hill. It was there that Mecenas had his sepulture after the small tombs had been taken away from it. Horace had his own near to him whose friendship he has so warmly celebrated.

(13) REINES. Insc. class. 7. 20.

(14) IDEM. class. 6. 32. 17. 1.

(15) ULP. leg. 3, § 5, D. *de Sep. viol.*

(16) CAPITOLIN. dans la Vie d'Antonin le Pieux, c. 13.

ject, the towns and boroughs of his extensive Empire. <sup>(17)</sup>The custom of burning the bodies of the dead was less common under that Emperor <sup>(18)</sup>; it was less so under his successors, and ceased entirely under Gratian. <sup>(19)</sup> Diocletian and Maximin were also obliged to correct the abuses committed on all sides against that law. <sup>(20)</sup>

*Interments among the First Christians.*

THE three nations who composed the primitive Church found interments established among them by the tenets of their religion, and by the laws of their country. The great and the rich alone adopted the custom of burning the bodies of the dead; and interments out of the city was an obligation equally binding on both. If there were exceptions they were few in number, and were never granted to the common people, nor to those who died without being clothed with some dignity.

A contempt the most unjust, and least merited, having been the first portion of that holy religion, which in its rapid and miraculous progress has since enlightened the world, <sup>(1)</sup> the sepul-

(17) See the Commentaries of Godefroy, upon the Theodosian code, l. 9, tit. 17, c. 6, and in the same place the Controversies of the learned civilians upon the two laws which we have noticed.

(18) It appears that the custom of embalming ceased also to be so much practised at that epoch.

(19) Godefroy in the place cited, thinks that that usage was less practised under the reign of Theodosius. Macrob. l. 7. c. 7. assures us that no monument of his time testifies in its favour: "*licet urendi corpora de functorum usus nostro tempore nullus sit.*" It is that which inclines us to believe that the custom of burning the bodies of the dead did not cease entirely until towards the end of the third century.

(20) Lib. 12. Cod. de Rel. et Sumpt. Funer.

(1) Those who died under punishment for a crime, were by the Roman laws deprived of sepulture. The place where their bodies were thrown, after having been drawn by a hook, was called "*Scala gemonia,*" mournful ladders, and were considered as infamous. L. 48. ff. tit. 24 De Cadav. Punit. The religious and political system of the Greeks also presented the deprivation of the rights of sepulture as the height of misfortune. See Hom. Odys. p. 5—66. To wish that any one should be deprived of sepulture was with them the most terrible imprecation. That privation was also the greatest punishment to the guilty; deserters and those who committed sacrilege were of that number.—Potter's Grec. Antiquities, l. 4. c. 1. Among the Greeks and Romans that duty was held so sacred, that they took care after a battle to bury even the bodies of their enemies; and when Generals wished to encourage their soldiers, they promised to them the honors of sepulture. The respect which the Egyptians always entertained for their Tombs, furnished them with a means of vengeance against their enemies. They knew of no method so outrageous-

tures of the first Christians were of course those of the common people, or of individuals the least distinguished. Afterwards, when they formed a distinct and a well-known body, they had their particular funeral ceremonies, which partook of the usages of the Jews and of the gentiles. Thus interments became established among the Christians. It was the only practice of the Jews, whose laws served them as rules upon all points, excepting those of special sanction or belief. If we add to these considerations their small number, their extreme poverty, their fear of the Jews, and their decided repugnance to every thing that resembled Paganism,<sup>(2)</sup> it will be readily believed that burial among the Christians was the custom of the commonalty of which they formed a part.

Ananias who is spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles, expired at the feet of St. Peter. Some Christians carried away his body and deposited it in the earth; they placed it near the body of his wife Sapphira. The deacon Stephen was carefully buried by the Christians, who shed tears over his tomb. We find the account of these two funeral rites without any mention as to the place where they were performed.<sup>(3)</sup> In the mean time the persecutions which the Christians suffered under the Roman empire, the cruel carnage, of which Nero set an example, and which so often followed, augmented the number of martyrs.—The faithful saw themselves surrounded by great numbers of dead bodies exposed to the contempt and insults of the heathen.

---

ly to insult their memories, as to disinter their bodies, and to cause them to be beaten with rods. Sp. p. 450. The customs of the Jews were different. No crime among them, in the ordinary course of law, deprived him who had committed it, of the honor of a grave. They sometimes inflicted this rigorous punishment upon the *un-circumcised*, irreconcilable enemies of the Jewish people. Joshua threw into the Caves of Makedah five Kings bound together. Joram, Jezabel, and Joachim were by the command of God deprived of sepulture. Kings, 4. 9. 24. It was to them the greatest of punishments, Jer. 8. 2. Eccles. 6. 3. Some authors have said that the Valley of Tophet was among the Jews the same as the "*Scala gemonia*," among the Romans. Jer. 7. 22.

(2) Tertullian has given another reason which has appeared conclusive to some. They believe that the soul after death remains nigh the body which it has lately animated, or that it remains there at least for a period of time; and they therefore feel it a duty to spare those precious remains. "*Propterea nec ignibus funerandum aiunt parcentes superfluo animæ*." De. An. 51.

(3) It is probable, according to the text of St. Luke, that he was interred on the same spot where he was stoned, that is, out of the city.

Gratitude and the tenderest attachments united with the feelings of nature and the voice of religion. The Christians now sought out those bodies, to preserve them from the rage of an incensed people. They at first concealed them in private houses to transport them afterwards to the public cemeteries under the cover of night. The most profound secrecy and the most guarded caution were necessary on these occasions. The catacombs which some have improperly confounded with the *puteoli* of the ancient Romans, appeared favourable to secure the repose of those respected remains.<sup>(4)</sup> The Christians frequently assembled in those gloomy retreats to perform religious rites. The horror of those places, the thick night which reigned there, occasioned St. Jerome to declare, that they brought to his mind the image of the lower regions.<sup>(5)</sup> Every thing contributed to render the places of sepulture and the funeral ceremonies equally impressive in the eyes of the primitive Christians. The dignity of their sacraments, the solemn ceremonials with which the faithful consecrated themselves to their Creator, the participation of the holy sacrament which they there celebrated, a life holy and irreproachable, so common in those ages of devotion and of zeal, all conspired to give to the Christians a well-merited veneration. Besides this, they constantly reserved particular places for the ashes of the martyrs, and of all those who died in the reputation of sanctity. None other than one of the faithful was interred in the same place : they feared to mingle the remains of the one with the other. From hence arose the custom of distinguishing the body of martyrs by some symbol which should designate the kind of death he suffered. It was an object of religion among the Jews to erect their synagogues and oratories near the tombs of

---

(4) Pomponius Festus "de Interprati," speaks of them. The catacombs were subterranean vaults in the vicinity of Rome, to serve, according to some, as sepultures for the Pagans, who afterwards abandoned the use of them.—The word comes from the Greek ; it signifies a place deeply excavated. We should not confound the Catacombs with the Cemeteries, each of these words has a particular signification, and the most celebrated Ecclesiastical writers always distinguish them.

(5) St. Jerome relates that he went every Sunday to visit the Catacombs, "When I found myself," says he, "in that profound darkness I thought I found verified in myself the words of the Psalmist, "Descendit in infernum vivens." Hieron. in Ezek. c. 4. Greg. Turon, l. 1. H. Fr. c. 39.

those who had led a godly life, and to meet together there in common for prayer.<sup>(6)</sup> The Greeks offered prayers near the places destined for sepultures, and it is a well founded opinion that the temples of the fabulous divinities were raised over the tombs of the heroes of antiquity.<sup>(7)</sup> The Romans were accustomed to construct upon their *apogees* halls when they assembled to pay the last duties to the dead, and to celebrate the festivals common on those occasions. They had also chapels and altars on which they sacrificed to their household Gods.

After those examples, the Christians, without doubt, built upon the catacombs those retreats which the lovers of antiquity contemplate with so much veneration. They assembled together in crowds, and celebrated there the mysteries of their religion, and the *agapæ*, or love feasts practised at their funerals. It was thus that altars were raised on the tombs of the martyrs. They sanctioned the ceremonies of the Pagans, and indulged in those feelings which piety and devotion inspired.

This zeal did not hinder the Christians from foreseeing the evils which would result from the collection of so many bodies in the places where they themselves assembled; they took care to fill with earth the empty spaces which they found in different parts of these catacombs.<sup>(8)</sup>

Still the number of the faithful augmented daily, and the fire of persecution was no less ardent. It appeared to grant a truce for a moment, that it might renew the war with the greater fury; the number of martyrs was astonishing, and already the first tombs could not suffice for them.

Some respectable persons in the city having embraced the Christian religion, their wealth and the grounds they possessed supplied places for those uses. Many Patricians and some pious Roman ladies also gave large tracts of land for those purposes.—Such was the origin of cemeteries.<sup>(9)</sup> In the same places they also

(6) BASNAGE, Hist. des Juifs, l. 7, c. 24. NICOLL. de Sulpt. Hebr. l. 4, c. 6.

(7) Vide PRUD. ci-devant cité.

(8) See Boldetti, Arringo, Maraugoni, &c.

(9) They reckon in the suburbs of Ancient Rome more than forty burial places. Ecclesiastical history has preserved to us their names. Vide Baron Ad. An. 226, Panv. Hospin, et Prud. Hymn 11, hath given an elegant descrip-

erected altars and constructed chapels, which served as places of retirement during the funeral ceremonies, and for other assemblies connected with religion.

Already a restless and extravagant ambition had caused the law of the twelve tables to be forgotten, when the Emperor Adrian restored it to its former vigor. The Emperor Antoninus Pius extended it to the whole empire. A new law or one that is re-enacted is always observed with strictness. They then carried the bodies of the dead out of the city ; but they soon departed from it, and a century and a half after Diocletian Maximian was obliged to support it by new edicts.

In the three first ages of the Church, the difficult circumstances in which the Christians found their situation in relation to the government and legislature of the Cæsars, served to support the usage which they had practised from the origin of Christianity.

The Church at last saw a calm and serene day breaking on its horizon. Constantine, by embracing the christian religion established its peace. Soon the temples of the idols lost their importance ; they were no longer thronged, and those edifices, after having been purified, became the sanctuary of the true God. The same altars upon which in the gloom of the catacombs and of cemeteries they had celebrated the holy mysteries of their religion, were brought into the cities.<sup>(8)</sup> For the first time the tombs of the martyrs occupied the place of the profane divinities. It was that revolution which substituted the heroes of the christian faith to the heroes of the age. There were in the churches but one sacrifice and one altar ; one would have been thought defi-

---

tion of them. The Cemeteries are so called from a Greek word, which signifies a place of repose. Mankind have always been struck with the resemblance between sleep and death. Pausanius relates that upon the shrine of Cypselus was engraved a female representing night. She bore in her arms two infants, one white on her right arm asleep ; this represented sleep. On the left another also asleep but black, that represented death. SP. p. 66.

(8) In the second century the christians had Churches. The places where they were situated is known—but their form is not known. In the third age we know of the church of Antioch, which the Empepor Dioclesian demolished. The altars were not then always erected over the remains of the martyrs ; it was not until after peace was restored to the Church, that the tombs were transferred to the cities.

cient in his faith in the duty of religion if he had suffered his attention to be withdrawn from the one holy and apostolic Church.<sup>(9)</sup> They then adorned the cemeteries with great care, and all in the end became temples particularly consecrated.<sup>(10)</sup>—Pope Julius was obliged a short time after to construct three cemeteries along the same road where previously had been seen the tombs of Roman families ; from that time they continued to be erected, and the period of their erection is marked by inscriptions upon them.

The wish to place tombs within cities seems to encrease with the obstacles which are opposed to it. The picture of that primitive fervor presents itself to us in all its force—we view as a lot worthy of envy the advantage of being interred nigh those whose memory is held in veneration : we would wish to be assured that our bodies should occupy after death the same place where the saints had addressed their prayers to God. In fine, we carry our belief so far as to persuade ourselves that the emanations from the bodies of the saints were capable of warming the hearts of the faithful and encouraging in them impressions favourable to zeal and to piety.<sup>(11)</sup>

*The period at which the first change occurred in relation to Interments in Cities and in Churches.*

A new eagerness multiplied the number of tombs among the catacombs. There had not been hitherto any distinction for priests, bishops, princes, nor even for the popes themselves, unless by their piety, their liberality, or their labours in the cause of religion, they had merited that honor. When the Church

---

(9) Ign. ad Philadelph. Euseb. H. E. l. 10. c. 4. Then was the origin of the Basilicks, and the principal Churches on which the others depended, and of which they formed a part. All the Christians of one district acknowledged but one altar and one sacrifice offered by the same Bishop. We know only that they had oratories in the suburbs which depended upon some principal Church.

(10) Temples were often erected on the sites of tombs even among the heathens ; on that account we frequently use as synonymous the words temple, and sepulchre. It is thus Virgil says,

*Præterea fuit in tectis de marmore templum,  
Conjugis antiqui miro quod honore colebat.*

(11) See a little farther, where is noticed the researches made on this subject, by St. Augustine and St. Gregory.

from a motive of gratitude granted the privilege to the Emperor Constantine to be buried in the vestibule of the Basilisk of the holy Apostles, which he himself had built, that concession was considered as a proof of very remarkable honor and distinction. St. John Chrysostom<sup>(1)</sup> expresses himself on this subject so as to make the faithful feel all the importance of such a favour, which the greatest prince of the earth should consider as adding new lustre to his high dignity. The other successors of Constantine afterwards obtained the same honor, who proudly declared themselves the protector of the Church. Sometimes it was granted to benefactors, to whom religion was indebted for great services, who had contributed largely to the ornaments of the altars and to the expences necessary to the august ceremonies of the Church. The resemblance between the imperial dignity and the priesthood, caused the same privileges to be afterwards granted to the bishops. Their sanctity, and their rank, justified that innovation upon the discipline of the Church. The motives which rendered this distinction valuable were too interesting to piety and religion not to make it equally sought after by all the faithful. The priesthood, the monastic life, irreproachable morals, were the first titles to obtain it. The laity, whom no prerogative of distinction would warrant in aspiring to that honor put in a claim to it by offering considerable gifts to the Church, and largely distributing their alms.<sup>(2)</sup> A revolution so rapid was not general. Many Churches showed an attachment to the ancient regulations, and were more opposed to a departure from them.— This change could not but be a consequence of relaxation of discipline, as to an object concerning which the popes and the bishops would have more or less opposition. It is for that reason that Ecclesiastical historians at that period relate instances which

---

(1) *Constantinum Magnum filius ingenti honore se adfecturum existimavit, si eum in Piscatoris vestibulo conderet; quodque imperatoribus sunt in aulis janitores, hoc in sepulcro Piscatoribus sunt imperatores. Atque illi quidem veluti domini interiores loci partes obtinent; hi autem veluti accolæ, et vicini præclare secum agi putant, si ipsis vestibuli janua adsignetur, HOM. 26 in ep. 2. Cor.*

(2) Such also is the opinion of Thomassin. He assigns that as the epoch of the relaxation of discipline in relation to sepulchres. Part 3. l. 1. c. 65 p. 2. et *ibid.* S. Greg. cit.

are contradictory. In some Churches, at certain periods, they had not made those exceptions, while in many others they had been already granted in favor of all Ecclesiastics.<sup>(3)</sup> Soon the more respectable seculars were admitted to that honor. The Bishops having been left entirely masters of those regulations it is not difficult to comprehend that in one Church eminent stations or distinguished piety should be alone the titles to them, while in another they would be more easily obtained.<sup>(4)</sup> Notwithstanding those variations, the place which had been at first established for the public tombs was not changed; and those to whom the honor of sepulture in cities was granted were but few in number.

*Interments introduced into Cities and Churches.*

UNTIL this period they had not dared to penetrate into the interior of Churches; they had not yet concluded to mingle the bodies of the profane with those of the saints and martyrs,<sup>(1)</sup> and

(3) That exception commenced in favour of those whose piety was exemplary. Muratori has shown that this usage was not introduced in the time of St. Gregory, through the superstition or avarice of the Clergy, as Kepper pretends. The most ancient examples which he cites, and which do not go higher than the fourth or fifth century, are all of persons of distinguished piety. More than once a holy humility has induced a bishop to decline a distinction of which he did not think himself worthy. Vide Muratori Anec. t. disq. 17. & t. 2. disq. 3.

(4) In the end, they pushed the abuse so far as to permit Pagans and Christians, the impious and those who had led a life of holiness, to be interred in the interior of the temples. St. Gregory of Nanzien approved himself to this impiety, and St. Hilary (in Matth. c. 8.) speaks of it also with warmth — The Councils and the Holy Fathers, constantly recommended to make in this respect the most scrupulous selection, in order that the distinction might not become too common. From the time of St. Gregory the Great, the disorder began to increase, and Heaven often showed itself the avenger of those disorders, if the examples related by that Holy Pontiff are to be credited. Dial. l. 4. c. 50.

(1) We have seen the proofs above. Here are two other passages which are in support of it. Singulare hoc erat quorundam sanctitatis privilegium: alias enim ecclesias mortuorum cadaveribus pollui non patiebantur. (MARTEN de antiq. Monarch. Rit. l. 5, c. 10, § 97, sequ. 2.) The deacon St. Stephens also testifies to the same thing in an energetic passage: Si quis, *inquit*, fallacibus rationibus ausus fuerit sub altari me conlocare, supernum ac cœleste altare talis nunquam videat; non enim decet, vermem putredine scatentem in templo et sanctuario me poni; sed neque in alio loco templi permittatis reponi. (Test. c. 2. Vid. MARTEN. loc. cit.) Van Espen assures us, *that the Christian Emperors always censured the burial of dead bodies in Cities; they feared contagion.* Imperatores Christiani sanctitatem civitatum violari credebant per corpora mortuorum, quod nimio suo fœtore civitates infecerunt. (T. 2, sec. 4, tit. 7, c. 2.) Non defunctorum causa, sed vivorum inventa est sepultura, ut corpora et visu et odore fœda amoverentur. SENEC. Excerpt. Op. t. 2.

thus to break the close connexion between the altars and the sacrifices. The tombs were ranged along the walls, near to and outside of the Churches. As they resorted thither for the purpose of performing the duties of religion, it soon became necessary to place the faithful in security from the inclemencies of the seasons.<sup>(2)</sup> It was for this purpose that vestibules and porticos were constructed, and it is for this reason that cemeteries are always in the vicinity of parish Churches. We have still remains of this custom of antiquity. We see in some vestibules or porticos small subterranean chambers which ran outside of and along the walls of the temples ; they are known by the name of *exedras* (or chapels). They were found in some Churches when Baluze wrote.<sup>(3)</sup>

It appears then without doubt, that the number of interments had increased exceedingly at Constantinople, and other cities of the empire, so that, in accordance with the Emperors Gratian and Valentinian the second, Theodosius the Great, a prince of exemplary piety, and whose zeal for the welfare of the Church is well known, was obliged to renew the edicts of his predecessors, and to publish the famous Constitution which we find in the Theodosian code.<sup>(4)</sup> His design was to prevent the infection of the

(2) Such was the origin of Chapels. There the faithful retired when they wished to contemplate, to meditate, or to pray among the tombs. At first those small edifices were separated from the Church. Afterwards they were united to it by the means of Porticos and Arcades, which were particularly used in the construction of Basilicks, and they form the basement which mark at this day the importance and antiquity of a Church ; finally they were enclosed on all sides, and made a part of the whole building. The tombs and the chests which were there placed, became altars : and under the pontificate of Gregory the Great, their numbers were considerably increased. Thomassin, l. 3. c. 66. 5. Some verses of St. Paulin, Bishop of Nola, have persuaded Muratori, that they had at that period small chambers or upper halls, and that they formed part of the temple.

(3) We ought to inform our readers, that although cemeteries were separated from Cities, yet they were never so separated but that they were considered as necessarily belonging to the parishes. Besides the proofs we have before mentioned, we might also cite the benediction which is to be found in the Roman ritual—a benediction which the Church has always required for places destined for the burial of Christians. The Clergy have always there exercised their ministerial duties and authority, as in holy and sacred places ; (Thomas. c. 65. 3.) It has been a custom to build Chapels and Oratories in the neighbourhood of Cemeteries. Many of those grounds were without the walls of the Cities, and upon their increase, they were comprehended within their enclosure.

(4) This law is dated A. D. 391 : It is found in the Theodosian code, l. 9, tit. 17, c. 6. These are the words : *Omnia quæ supra terram urnis clausa*

atmosphere, which so many burials would necessarily occasion. He forbade the interment of dead bodies within the cities ; and what was still stranger, he ordered that the bodies, the urns, and the *sarcophagi*, which were in Rome should be transported out of the walls of the city. The Emperor was desirous that in this respect modern Rome should equal the ancient city. This law was soon put in force throughout the whole extent of the empire.<sup>(5)</sup>

If we examine Ecclesiastical history, we find that the custom of interring in Churches was widely extended.—There pious motives had introduced the custom—here, the ground was too confined in the neighbouring cemeteries ; a similar exception had always been justified either by merit or necessity, and had not been allowed until after a strict examination.<sup>(6)</sup> St. Ambrose caused his brother Satyrus to be interred in the basilick of Milan, near to the Martyr St. Victor : He himself wished to be buried

vel sacrofagis corpora detinentur, extra urbem delata ponantur, ut et humanitatis instar exhibeant, et relinquunt incolarum domicilio sanctitatem. He not only ordered that the tombs should be removed out of the Cities, but he designated by name the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople, and the minor edifices which had for some time previously been permitted to be erected within the cities to the honor of the Martyrs. That prudent Emperor did not wish that that example should serve as a pretext to vanity and ambition to evade the law. We cannot possibly adopt the system of some who represent that at that time places constructed in honour of the Martyrs, were excepted in the law of the Emperor. To prove the contrary, it is only necessary to read the text of the law itself. “Ac ne alicujus fallax et arguta solertia ab hujus se præceptis intentione subducat, atque apostolorum vel martyrum sedem humanis corporibus existimet esse sessam, ab his quoque ita ut a reliquo civitatis noverint se atque intelligant esse submotos.” It was from thence that the Emperor Justinian derived the law which he inserted in his new Code. (That law is the 2d law cod. de Sacros. Eccles.) Nemo apostolorum et martyrum sedem humanis (humanis) corporibus existimet esse sessam.

(5) Godefroy in his Commentary upon the law above cited, and Muratori (*tertia disquis.*) think that that ordinance was enacted for Constantinople alone. If we adopt this opinion we must believe that Theodosius had no other intention in that law than to forbid the interments in Cities. It is only necessary to remark that Muratori corrected the terms of the law, since he says “relinquant (*mortuorum corpora*) civitatum domicilio sanitatem.” The text on the contrary says “sanctitatem. Nimirum, *inquit*, ne cadavera pestiferis exhalationibus urbem inficerent, neve cum incolarum viventium salute factor mortuorum corporum conflictaretur. MURAT. *ibid.* disq. 3.

(6) Beda H. l. 2, c. 3, furnishes an example that Sepulchres were not made in the temples but in cases of necessity. St. Augustine, apostle of England, was interred under the portico of the Basilick of which he was Bishop. All those who after him occupied the See of Canterbury, were placed under the same portico, until at last there being no more space left for tombs, they determined to place them in the interior of the Church.

near the remains of St. Gervais and St. Protais, who were interred under the altar ; and Marcellina, his sister, wished to be carried from Rome to Milan, and be placed in the same tomb with her brothers.<sup>(7)</sup>

St. Paulin, bishop of Nola, at the intercession of a lady of quality, permitted to be placed in the Church of St. Felix, near the tomb of the martyrs,<sup>(8)</sup> the bodies of Cenegius and Celsus, two sons of that lady. St. Cesarius, bishop of Arles, was interred in the church which he had built, and where he had moreover prepared tombs for the virgins who should consecrate themselves to God, and for Cesaria, his sister. We read, that at the same time many persons were interred outside of the Church. St. Fulgentius, a bishop, was the first of his Church who obtained the honor of sepulture in it. He was a disciple of St. Augustine, and died sometime after him. They conformed in that Church more than in any of the others to the sacred canons, and the laws of the Emperors.

We are to presume also that the infractions of the laws were very rare ; and if the expressions of ancient historians appear to give an idea that many persons were interred near to the martyrs, we should understand them as meaning, that those interments were made in the neighbourhood of Churches where the relicks of those holy persons reposed.<sup>(9)</sup> The Monks whose regulations were made in times of great zeal, and who have observed them with great exactness, have conducted themselves on this point with the greatest severity. Those who dwelt in caverns and in the deserts, were buried in the forests, and in the bosom of the mountains. The Antonys, the Pauls, and the Pacomins, would have had no other sepulture had not public veneration erected chapels to honor their precious remains. It was one, which Theodore tells us, he himself made, near the tomb of the recluse St. James. The rest who were united in monasteries under known religious rules, evinced themselves for a

(7) BAR. ad. an. 342. SPOND. *ibid.*

(8) AUG. lib. de cur. agend. pro. mort. c. 1.

(9) VIT. l. 1. c. 29, et l. 2. c. ult. FLEUR. ad an. 542.

long time attached to the ancient discipline of the Church.— They used for themselves the public cemeteries situated outside of the walls of the monastery, whither they carried the bodies of the dead in carriages. Saint Benedict himself did not on this head receive any kind of distinction ; it was not until a long time after him, that they first thought of interring any one in the interior of monasteries. Walfred Abbé, of Pallazzolo, in Tuscany, was the first who in the eighth century desired to be interred in his cloister. Soon they went still further, and sepulchres were introduced into churches. At last they were in the choir or more probably in the chapters. We find, however, no vestiges of the like innovation before the ninth century.<sup>(10)</sup>

Customs so opposite, and which infer contrary principles, occasioned the warm discussion of a question which had been raised among the faithful a long time before St. Augustine, viz : How far it was useful to be buried in places destined to the sepulture of the holy martyrs. St. Augustine was consulted on this subject by Paulinus, which gave occasion to his composing his work upon the duties we owe to the dead ; he there developes a doctrine wholly opposed to that introduced in the middle age and in the darkest periods. We see that question renewed in the time of St. Gregory the great. It was again warmly agitated under the pontificate of Nicholas the first, who was consulted on that subject by the Bulgarians. The reply of the Pontiff decided only, that all the advantage resulted from the good conduct of the deceased, and the fervent prayers of the faithful.<sup>(11)</sup>

In the midst of this diversity of usage it is certain that the prohibition of the Emperor Theodosius continued to be respected. It brought back that point of discipline to its first intention.

---

(10) If we may believe some passages of St. Gregory it appears that in his time some of the religious, and especially the Abbots, who had a right to be interred in their Churches, would not through modesty, avail themselves of a privilege which ought not to belong to any one.

(11) See St. Augustine upon the duties we owe the dead, addressed to Paulinus, (c. 1.) St. Greg.) Dialog. l. 4, c. 50, 52, 53.) and St. Nicholas in his reply to the questions of the Bulgarians. St. Maximen, Bishop of Turin, (serm. 55) went very far from this, when he said, “ Ideo hoc a majoribus provisum est, ut sanctorum ossibus nostra corpora sociemus, ut dum illos tartarus metuit, nos pœna non tangat ; dum illos Christus illuminat, nobis tenebrarum caligo dif-fugiat,” And he adds, “ Cum sanctis ergo martyribus quiescentes caligo inferni tenebras eorum propriis meritis attamen consocii sanctitate.

In general it took the part of causing the bodies of the dead to be carried out of the churches, and the honor of being interred outside of the church, and near to the walls, was regarded as a very distinguished privilege.<sup>(12)</sup>

The decree of the Emperor Theodosius was observed for a considerable time, either because they bore a great respect to the memory of so great a Prince, or that his successors used all their efforts in giving to that ordinance a full and entire execution.—According to the writings of St. Gregory the great, it appears that from his time those abuses began to be extended. Large donations from the rich became a title to obtain an honor which merit alone, or the greatest dignitiès ought alone to have procured. But a long time before Gregory the great, the prohibition of Theodosius was disregarded, for that Prince through the advice of the pious and learned Cassiodorus, reinstated it in Italy.<sup>(13)</sup> In truth, it was in Italy that the infraction of the civil and ecclesiastical ordinances on the subject of interments were the most common.

These observations lead us to an important reflection upon the subject concerning which we now treat. Whatever difference there might have been in the opinion between the Pagans and Christians as to the fate which awaits us after our mortal career, whatever variety the different principles laid down in the christian church may have occasioned in their ceremonies and customs, we always see the most enlightened Princes maintaining by their laws in relation to interments, those rules which were most in conformity with the real good of the community. The ancient ecclesiastical constitutions, the letters of the Pontiffs,<sup>(14)</sup> that sacred tradition which they are bound to preserve, all concurred in delivering cities from the infection of dead bo-

(12) The truth of what is advanced is more particularly obvious by a reference to the basilisk of the holy Apostles at Constantinople, as it is attested by various writers. As to what took place in France history informs us, that in the 11th and 12th centuries distinguished Princes demanded to be buried under the portico of the Churches.

(13) CASSIOD. l. 3, 5. sæc. 5 et 6 inc.

(14) We do not speak here of the decree of Pelagius the 2d, anno 530, related by Loaysa not. concil. Bracar. The Popes confined to persons distinguished by their virtues, the honor of sepulture within the churches, and prevented the simony which under that pretence might have been practised

dies : but this abuse far from being destroyed, gained new strength. The innumerable causes for not looking upon the bodies of the dead with disgust, the flattering hopes they entertained of participating in the merits of the just, by partaking of their graves, the distinction which resulted in favor of those who had been deemed worthy of that honor, awakened among some, sentiments of piety, excited among others the feelings of self-love. At length tyrannical custom overcame the law. The prerogative which formerly was reserved to Emperors, was at last the inheritance of the lowest class of citizens, and that which was at first a particular privilege, became at length the common right of all.

*The authorities of Councils against the abuse and danger  
of Interments.*

From the sixth century, in which we have seen that the abuses in relation to interments in cities were greatly extended ; not only synods, but also councils endeavoured to correct them, and to restore, in full force, the ancient discipline of the church.<sup>(15)</sup>

The proceedings of the council of Bracar, held at Prague,<sup>(16)</sup> contain a celebrated canon, which not only forbade the interment in churches, but also proved that cities have the right to prohibit any individual from interring within its walls.

This was the time to renew the privilege which the martyrs in the early age of christianity enjoyed, that of excluding other bodies from the places where they themselves were interred.—

---

(15) The councils and the synods did not confine themselves to separating sepultures from the cities. They made regulations of police relative to interments, as to the prayers which were to be used at the cemeteries, and as to the repasts which should be given at the decease of persons of note. St. Chrysostom always forbade young women to be present ; and the synod of Collioure did not permit married women to assist at the assemblies in cemeteries. "Eo quod sub obtentu orationis scelera latenter committerent (*canon 35.*) Quoniam novit ingeniosus diabolus per bona opera suum virus disseminare.—*Sp. p. 283.*

(16) An. Christi 563, concil. Bracar. can. 18. ib. Firmissimum usque nunc retinent hoc privilegium civitates Galliæ, et nullo modo intra ambitum murorum civitatum cujuslibet defuncti corpus sit humatum.....Placuit..... corpora defunctorum nullo modo intra basilicam S. sepeliantur ; sed si necesse est, deforis circa murum basilicæ asque adeo non abhorret.

The council of Auxerre<sup>(17)</sup> wished to prevent interments in the interior of the Baptisteries, whether by this name was understood the places which were erected in the vicinity of cathedrals, where the sacrament of baptism was administered, or the churches themselves, in whose vestibules they began in that age to erect baptismal fountains. Gregory the great has often expressed himself in his works, in such a manner as to induce a belief, that he did not on this hand think with the vulgar. He recalls to mind, with grief, that donations made to the church were then the only means to obtain sepulchres.<sup>(18)</sup> An age passed. The barriers which had been opposed to that custom, became too feeble—it had struck its root deeply in the West, and was there almost general, while in the East it was scarcely known.

A new era, happy for the church, gave a different direction to the attention of the bishops upon this subject. Charlemagne at the end of the eighth, and the beginning of the ninth century, occupied himself with the re-establishment of the arts and sciences, and to ecclesiastical discipline, so that he restored his empire to its former splendor. It is well known that he held frequent councils in several parts of his kingdom, and that the decisions of those councils formed the capitularies of which such frequent mention is made in history.

Theodolphus, of Italian origin, who was bishop of Orleans, a person well known in his age, and much beloved by Charlemagne, complained that the churches in France, had become almost burial places.<sup>(19)</sup>

---

(17) Anno 585, c. 15. ib. *Non licet in baptisterio corpora sepelire.* At the same council it was forbidden to put one dead body on another, that is to say on a body before it is decayed. FLEUR. ad. h. A.

(18) L. 7, ep. 4 Conf. THOMASSIN, l. c. These are the words of the holy pontiff Gregory. "Si quando aliquem in ecclesia vestra sepeliri concediſſis, siquidem parentes ipsius, proximo, vel hæredes pro luminaribus sponte quid offerre voluerint, accipere non vetamus; pete vero, aut aliquid exigi omnino prohibemus, ne, quod valde irreligiosum est, aut venalis fortasse, quod abfit, dicatur Ecclesia, aut vos de humanis videamini mortibus gratulari, si ex eorum cadaveribus studeatis quærere quolibet modo compendium.

(19) Ann. Dom. 794. It was necessary during that reign scrupulously to observe all the canons, particularly those in relation to interments. (THEODOLPH. cap. ad Par. c. 9.) These are his very words: "Loca divino cultui mancipata et ad offerendas hostias præparata, cæmeteria, sive polyanthria facta sunt; unde volumus ut ab hac re deinceps abſtineatur, et nemo in ecclesia sepeliatur, nisi forte talis sit persona sacerdotis aut cujuslibet justij

He required as a thing of course, that no priest or layman should be interred in a church, unless he had rendered himself conspicuous by the sanctity of his life. As to tombs, he ordered them to be destroyed, and decreed in future, that none should be elevated above the ground; and he added, that if they could not execute the order, that they should displace the altar, remove it to some other situation, and make of the former a burial place only.<sup>(20)</sup> The capitularies of Charlemagne of which we have spoken above, in order to put an end to the disputes which had arisen between Theodolphus and the other prelates of France, deprived the laity of interments within the churches; and in the end forbade it to all persons without discrimination.<sup>(21)</sup> The sixth council of Arles,<sup>(22)</sup> and the council of Magouza,<sup>(23)</sup> did not permit any to be interred within the churches but bishops, abbots, and ecclesiastics, or some of the laity of the highest distinction. Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims, without question, the greatest man of his time, draws from the works of St. Gregory many important facts on this point. Desirous of rooting out this abuse, he wished to administer an oath to the bishops under his control, that they would not henceforth demand any thing for interments.<sup>(24)</sup> The council of Meaux<sup>(25)</sup> explained themselves in the same way. Hincmar further positively says

---

hominis, quæ per vitæ meritum talem vivendo suo corpori defuncto locum adquisivit."

If this law had been strictly followed there would not have been so many occasions occurring for granting the distinction as to have feared any danger from infection; but self-love soon sought to usurp what was in truth due to but a few virtuous persons. This is what will always happen when opinion alone disposes of privileges.

"Corpora vero," *continues Theodolphe*, "quæ antiquitus in ecclesiis sepulta sunt nequaquam projiciantur, sed tumuli qui adparent profundius in terram mittantur, et pavimento desuper facto, nullo tumulorum vestigio adparente, ecclesiæ reverentia conservetur. Ubi vero est tanta cadaverum multitudo, ut hoc facere difficile sit, locus ille pro cæmeterio habeatur, ablato inde altari, et in eo loco constructo ubi religiose et pure Deo sacrificium offerri valeat."

(20) According to St. Chrysostom, the Cemeteries were to be placed outside the gates of the cities.

(21) Ann. 797, l. 1, c. 159, and l. 5, c. 48. Nullus deinceps in ecclesia mortuum sepeliat.

(22) An. 813, can. 21. De sepeliendis in basilicis mortuis constitutio illa servetur quæ antiquis patribus constituta est.

(23) An. eod. conc. Mog. c. 20.

(24) An. 845.

(25) Conc. Meld. an. eod. c. 72.

that they should be extremely cautious in relation to interments in churches.<sup>(26)</sup>

The offerings of the christians were at first voluntary : soon custom made them necessary. Erara, archbishop of Tours, forbade in his diocese their demanding any thing, in whatever place they might grant the interments.<sup>(27)</sup>

The council of Nantes permitted tombs to be reared in the vestibules and porticos, but they in a formal manner interdicted their construction in churches.<sup>(28)</sup>

The council of Tribur<sup>(29)</sup> exhorted the nobles to content themselves with having their sepulchres nigh to the cathedral ; or if they wished it, nigh to the convents and monasteries. As for the rest, the bishops and curates were the sole disposers of these privileges among the Gauls.

It appears by the answer of Nicholas the first to the Bulgarians<sup>(30)</sup> that it was sufficient in Italy not to have lost all character to be in a situation to partake of that honor, while in Gaul it was necessary to be commendable for signal piety.

Custom did not vary in the least on this subject in the East.— Since the verses attributed to St. Gregory of Nanzien, it appears that from the fourth century they adopted the custom of burying in churches. He himself attests to it in the case of his brother Cesarius;<sup>(31)</sup> and St. Gregory of Nice informs us that his sister Macrine was interred near the holy martyrs, in the same church where their mother previously had obtained sepulture.<sup>(32)</sup>

(26) Hincmar forbade and abolished hereditary sepulchres, and left it with the curates to make such regulations on the subject as they might judge proper, "Nemo Christianorum presumat, quasi hereditario jure de sepultura contendere, sed in sacerdotis providentia sit.

(27) This power was common to all the Bishops and Synods, who had the same rule of discipline to govern them.

(28) This occurred at the close of the ninth century, although some place this act more than two centuries prior. The words of that council deserve to be given here, word for word. "Prohibendum est etiam secundum majorum instituta, ut in ecclesia nullatenus sepeliantur, sed in atrio aut in porticis, aut in exedris ecclesiæ. Intra ecclesiam vero et prope altare ubi corpus Domini et sanguis conficiuntur, nullatenus sepeliantur. (LABBE, t. 9. conc.)

All the councils agree in ordering them to follow the tradition of the ancients ; that is to say, to observe scrupulously the prohibition. The council of Arles, above cited, holds the same language.

(29) An. Ch. 895. c. 15.

(30) An. Ch. 886, a little before the two councils already cited.

(31) Orat. 10.

(32) In Vit. B. Macrin.

We see, notwithstanding, that in the interval the Emperors and other great men of the empire, were interred outside of the temples.—The tomb of Theodosius himself, of Arcadius and Honorius, his sons, of Theodosius, the younger, and of Eudoxius and Jovian, were placed in the portico of the basilick of the holy apostles at Constantinople.<sup>(33)</sup>

They were obliged from time to time to put this custom in force, as is clearly to be seen in the letters of Balsamon to Marcus Patriarch, of Alexandria, to whom he says,<sup>(34)</sup> that according to the ancient statutes they could not inter any one in a church which had been consecrated by a bishop, or where the remains of the saints repose. So orders the law, and expresses itself in the following terms, “Nullus in ecclesia mortuus sepeliatur<sup>(35)</sup> and the canon so well known, which expressly says, “Non licet quemquam sepelire in ecclesia, ubi scilicet corpus martyris depositum est.”<sup>(36)</sup>

The Emperor Leo, surnamed the philosopher, who finished the great work commenced by his father Basil, of Macedonia, that is to say, the collection and description of the basilicks, took away by one of his novels (laws) the ancient prohibition to the interment in churches. The terms of his ordinance leave no doubt as to the discredit and disuse into which the prohibition had fallen. He thought it better to dispense with a law which was not observed, than to compromise his authority by a vain endeavour to enforce it, however useful it might be.<sup>(37)</sup>

Happily, this new law of the emperor Leon had no force in the West, and it soon ceased to be executed in the East.<sup>(38)</sup> It

(33) NICEPH. l. 14, c. 53.

(34) Resp. ad interr. 38.

(35) Basilic. l. 5, t. 1, c. 2; l. 6 Cod. Theod. *de Sep. viol.*

(36) If in the facts which we relate respecting interments there are some which appear contradictory, it proves only that there were such laws, and some exceptions to those laws, but the wish of the Church never varied on that subject.

(37) An. Ch. 886, Nov. 53, “Ne igitur ullo modo inter similes leges hæc lex censeatur sancimus; quin potius ut a consuetudine certe contemnitur, sic etiam decreto nostro prorsus reprobatur.” At the same time he gives two reasons for his disapproval. The first is the grief of having the bodies of their relatives so far separated from them—the second is the expense of removing them, which cannot fail to be burdensome to the poor.

(38) MARTINI. *Hist. Jur. Civil.* c. 3, § 19. Gravina writes that those new laws served only to swell out the collection of the civil law. J. V. GRAV. *de ort. and prog. Jur. Civ.* l. 1, c. 136.

was necessary however, in the end, to relax a little. It is equally certain that the church always animated by the same principle, did not cease to enforce, as much as possible, the ancient usages. The councils held from the tenth even to the eighteenth century in various parts of the Catholic world, bear evident testimony to that effect. There was the council of Ravenna, held under Gilbert, and after under Sylvester II, in 995; the 6th of Winchester, in 1076; the famous synod of Toulouse, in 1093,<sup>(39)</sup> where they agreed to make two cemeteries, one for the bishops and great seignors, and the other for the common people; a council at London, held in 1107; one in Cognac, in 1255 and 1260; one at Buda, in 1269; one at Nimes, in 1284; one in Chester, in 1292; one in Avignon, in 1326; one in Narbonne in 1551; one at Toledo, in 1556; one at Malines, in 1570;—we hear, in fine, the meetings of the clergy of France, assembled at Melun, 1579; a synod at Rouen, in 1581; one at Rheims, in 1583; one in Bourdeaux and Tours, in the same year; one at Bourges, in 1584; one at Aix, in 1585; one at Toulouse, in 1590; another in Narbonne, and one in Bordeaux, in 1624.—All give on that point the same directions, and have admitted the same doctrine.<sup>(40)</sup>

I have designedly omitted the first and fourth councils of Milan, held by Charles Boromeo, archbishop of that city, for the edification of the whole christian world.

(39) It appears they have been more guarded at Toulouse upon this subject, than any where else.

(40) It would be too long to relate here the whole of the canons of the council. Some regard directly the subject upon which we treat, others indirectly. Many forbid the sale of sepultures. One canon of the synod of Rouen forbids the interment in churches, and allows no exceptions, but in favour of respectable ecclesiastics, of dignified persons, and of men of eminent virtue, "*Cæteri religiose in cæmeteriis tradantur.*" A canon of the council of Bordeaux admits to sepulture within a church none but bishops, curates, regulars (monks and friars), and patrons, and excludes from it all others, except with the express consent of the bishop. The same regulation is confirmed by the twentieth canon of another council held at Bordeaux in 1624. The following is the canon of Tours: *Laicis omnibus, etiam nobilibus, minime liceat sepulturas in ecclesiis jure proprio sibi vindicare, quum sepultura sit proprie et mere jus spiritale et ecclesiasticum.* In almost all the councils they have appealed to the popes, and others of the fathers, who have always disapproved or forbidden the receiving of any payment whatsoever for interment in a church, and have considered all such exactions as a relaxation of discipline. *Voyez THOMASS, loc. cit.*

In the course of so many ages which have elapsed from the pontificate of Pope Gregory, to the council of Trent, they have been always solicitous to place the church above the suspicion of endeavouring to draw from the permission to inter in churches the smallest revenue. They proscribed exactions—but there were always voluntary offerings which it was not thought proper to refuse. The difficulty of binding the churches to that refusal ever occasioned the greatest perplexity to the bishops zealous for the ancient discipline. Ambition furnished new obstacles to Charles, which hindered him from wholly remedying the abuses of which he had so long complained. If on the one hand he could have destroyed the spirit of interest in the persons attached to the church; if on the other hand, christians had seen nothing in the difference of interments to have interested their self-love, the whole face would have been changed, and the ancient usage respecting cemeteries would have been re-established. The pious bishop of Milan ardently desired it, and we see in the first council the ardent wishes he expressed, that that point of discipline might be fully established.<sup>(41)</sup>

With this view he openly combatted the ambition of the great who supported the abuse. He was not ignorant, that in the beginning piety made choice of sepulchres in the neighbourhood of churches; that afterwards the desire of distinction caused them to penetrate within their temples, and that finally the permission becoming easily procured, and of general extent, ambition could only be gratified by the position of the tomb, and the magnificence of the decorations. The sacred canons had foreseen their dangers, and they always rose up against similar abuses.

That bishop ordered, that they should remove from the places of interments the portraits, pictures, &c. ; all those ornaments invented by vanity, and which so ill accord with the sad and gloomy condition of the dead. He, himself, set the example in his own cathedral. A magnificent tomb erected to the memory of one of his ancestors by the orders of Pius the IVth, bishop of

---

(41) An. Ch. 1565. *Morem restituendum curent (episcopi) in cæmeteriis sepeliendi, c. 61.*

Rome, was not spared. He excepted those things which related to the honor of kings, and the majesty of thrones. In the fourth of his councils, that holy pontiff engaged anew the bishops <sup>(42)</sup> to observe the respectable laws, and the precious usages of former times. That reform was pretty generally adopted, and pope Pius Vth <sup>(43)</sup> forbade by one of his edicts, all ostentatious pomp at the funerals of christians; he permitted only the erection of tombs of marble, provided always, that they did not contain the bodies of those in whose honor they were consecrated.<sup>(44)</sup>

May we not conclude from all these authorities, that the custom of actual interment in churches should be forbidden as contrary to the spirit of our religion?

We shall prove in the second part, that it is no less repugnant to the principles of sound physics.

## PART SECOND.

FERMENTATION is a movement natural to vegetable and animal substances, which we learn from experience soon generates into putrefaction, unless a principle whose nature is unknown suspends its effects.<sup>[1]</sup>

(42) Thus the Latins called "*Cenotaphium*," an empty tomb raised to the honor of some illustrious dead, deprived from some circumstance of burial. Then after having performed the ceremonies which were in use, they called the dead three times. Thus Æneas says in Virgil:

*Tunc egomet tumulum Rhæteo in litore inanem  
Constitui, et magna manes ter voce vocavi.*

There was also another species of *Cenotaphium* which they erected in memory of some brilliant exploit, and to the honor of one to whom the country owed obligation.

(43) 1576.

(44) Const. incip. *Cum primum apostolatus*, § 8

(1) The putrefaction of bodies presents different phenomena in different climates. Ammien Marcellinus states that dead bodies are preserved longer in Persia than in Rome, or any other part of Europe. Chardin, however says that the dead bodies of the Persians putrify very quickly; Calmet maintains that the Israelites taught the Persians not to delay the interment of the

In proportion as fermentation proceeds, the elementary air disengages itself; its free communication with the atmospheric air restores to it all its qualities. In extricating and rarefying itself it diminishes the coherence of the parts of the body in which it operates, and thus disengaging itself, it draws with it the most subtle particles of matter, whether oily or inflammable, which then remain suspended in the atmosphere.<sup>[2]</sup>

It is well known that the different modifications of air have an influence upon the animal economy, and upon the health of man. That element continually surrounds us within and without; its operation incessantly counteracts the tendency of the fluids which produce rarefaction and decomposition. It encreases the resistance of the solids; it insinuates itself into our humours, whether in mixing with our aliments or in penetrating through the pores of the membrane which covers internally the lungs, after having mingled with the humor of the bronchia.

It is equally certain that the qualities of the atmosphere depend upon a prodigious number of causes which concur more or less in preserving to it its natural properties, or in giving to it factitious ones, to render light or dense, pure or charged with heterogeneous principles, elastic or without power of expansion. The smallest of insects, as well as the worlds which are suspended over our heads, meteors, the seasons, the temperature of different climates, the number of inhabitants of any country, the practice of the arts, the operations of commerce, all are influenced by the air, and occasion changes therein.

Among the various modifications of that fluid there are some more nearly interesting to the natural constitution of man, both because of their immediate effect upon respiration, and the emanations from the body, as also because they render the organs more susceptible of deleterious impressions, from pernicious causes, whose effects though not always immediate, are no less

---

dead. (Diss. de Fun. Heb.) Ortelius (See son Theatr. Orb.) speaks of certain islands in which dead bodies are secure from putrefaction.

(2) HALES, Stat. Anim.

fatal.<sup>(3)</sup> The atmosphere when it is heated and rarified, loses necessarily a part of its elasticity ; comparatively less weighty than the atmospheric air, it is still grosser or heavier, on account of the heterogeneous particles with which it is surcharged, and is therefore less respirable. If humidity is joined to the other bad qualities of the air, it becomes more and more septic.

The action of the air not being sufficiently powerful upon the solids, the fibres are relaxed, their resistance diminished, their more volatile particles dissipated, and the internal movement accelerated. The internal power is increased in proportion to the diminution of the external power, and fermentation, which tends speedily to putrefaction, is a necessary consequence.

When heated air acts upon carcases, that is to say upon bodies which deprived of their natural heat, undergoes the action of a foreign heat, it quickly augments its bulk ; the cellular membranes and the vessels are blown up or swelled, and putrefaction is rapid.

Living bodies, on their part, are very susceptible of all the impressions of the air, which the air carries with it. One may even when the heat or the moisture of the atmosphere is great, fear that putrefaction will ensue.

The air charged with putrid emanations, becomes necessarily noxious, unless different exhalations arising from other bodies, correct its impurity, or the wind dissipates the principles of its corruption. Every thing is to be feared, if the infected air is stagnant, if it is seldom renovated, but above all if it has been too long respired. Experience moreover hath often shown, that infected air exposes us to the greatest dangers,<sup>(4)</sup> and that diseases of the most dreadful kind, such as malignant, putrid, and exan-

(3) HYER. DAVID GAUB. *Instit. Patholog.* § 429, and following. See M. MURAT's Memoires upon the custom of interring the dead in churches and towns, printed at Dijon, by Causse, 1773.

(4) "Haud aliud vitium exitius est," says GAMBIVS, in loc. cit. § 438, "quam quod diuturna stagnatione in locis undique oclusis—contrahit aer, cum nulla ventilatione renovatur. Torpore enim veluti putrescens, qui vitæ cibus fuerat, velox fit venenum, vitæ non minus quam flammæ inimicissimum. See also § 439.

thematious, eruptive diseases, measles, small-pox, and fevers are frequently the direful consequence.<sup>(5)</sup>

Enlightened by these principles, we will readily see why subterraneous, low and marshy places, and places surrounded by mountains and thick forests, are unhealthy; why diseases are so frequent, and almost always malignant in places where the air is impregnated with fetid particles.<sup>(6)</sup> The properties of air thus known, will account for the circumstance that some trades which people follow, give their countenances a pallid hue, and render them weak and feeble.<sup>(7)</sup> We see in fine, why fevers which originate in armies, in hospitals, and in prisons, make such terrible ravages.

“*Lancisi*,” makes many reflections analogous to the subject of which we treat, in his work upon the dangers to which a residence in the neighbourhood of marshes is exposed.<sup>(8)</sup> “*Ramazzini*” assures us that those who dig graves, designed for sepulture, do not live long, the vapours which they breathe soon destroying them. The same author in a work, well known, upon the diseases of artizans, traces to that source, distempers which generally attack those who empty privies and sewers.<sup>(9)</sup> *Paré* saw at Paris fine young and robust men drop dead in a ditch, which they were cleansing in the Fauxburg of St. Honore.<sup>(10)</sup> *George Hanneas* relates a very similar fact, which occurred at Rendsbourg, in the Dutchy of Holstein; four persons died in a well, which had been for some time shut up, and whose waters were putrid.<sup>(11)</sup> Thus also a young child was stifled at Florence,

(5) Mons. L'abbe Rozier relates in his *Observations de Physique, &c.* 1st vol. that a person at Marseilles, having dug a trench for the purpose of planting some trees in a ground, where in the year 1720, during the plague, a number of the dead had been interred, the workmen had scarcely begun their work when three of them were suffocated so as not to be restored to life, and the rest were exceedingly injured.

(6) The Romans confined the work-shops of certain artizans to places outside of the walls of the city, or they were commanded to dwell in the skirts of the towns. ZACCH. *Quæst. Med. leg.* l. 5, t. 4, § 7.

(7) RAMAZZ. de Morb. artif. cap. 17, &c.

(8) De nox. Palaud. effluv. passim.

(9) RAMAZZ. loc. cit.

(10) L. 22, c. 3.

(11) Ephemer. Allem. year 2; Coll. acad. tom. 6, dec. 3, observ. 13.

in a pit filled with manure, into which he had fallen. A person who run to assist him perished in the like manner, and finally a dog, which was thrown into it, was also suffocated.<sup>(12)</sup> “*Sennert*” speaks of a disease called the Hungarian fever, which took its rise in the army of the emperor, and from thence extended throughout Europe as a contagious disorder. Oftentimes those kind of fevers commence in camps, after troops have remained long in an unhealthy situation during the summer.<sup>(13)</sup> *Doctor Pringle* observes, that the same thing occurs in hospitals badly managed, and in prisons too much crowded.<sup>(14)</sup> *Huxham* relates on this subject a fact, whose consequences are very interesting. At Oxford on the day in which the sentences are publicly pronounced in the court against criminals, they experienced the terrible effect arising from mephitic exhalations.<sup>(15)</sup> Several prisoners coming from their cells, communicated to the judges a disease, of which they died, and the infection which they spread through the prison in passing through it, soon depopulated it. This evil was renewed at Taunton in 1730. *Monsieur de Haller* has given in his *Treatise on Physiology*, all that has been written on that subject.<sup>(16)</sup> *Mr. Tissot* in his “*Avis au Peuple*,” has also presented this subject in a very striking point of view, he complains of the dangerous custom of placing tombs in the interior of churches.<sup>(17)</sup>

Every one knows that animal exhalations, particularly those from a putrefying carcase, are very noxious and dangerous.<sup>(18)</sup>

We will offer here some observations drawn from history, which ought to convince the most incredulous. When in a living subject some part tends to putrefaction, because the juices are stagnant, or because they exude from vessels destined to contain them, the putridity is readily extended to the contiguous

(12) *Ibid.* an. 1. Coll. acad. tom. 4, dec. 1, observ. 33.

(13) 1556, 1626, 1656, &c. *SENNERT*, tom. 4, l. 4, c. 14. *RAMAZZ.* de Morb. artif. c. 30. *HENR. SCRETA* de Febr. castr. § 1, c. 5

(14) *Observ.* tom. 1, c. 2, and following.

(15) *HUXHAM* *Observ. de Morb. epidem.*

(16) L. 8, § 3, 12, &c.

(17) Tom. 1, c. 1, § 6.

(18) *HOFFMAN* *Dissert. de Putred. doct.* *HALLER*, c. 1.

parts. The blood of a woman attacked with a malignant fever, exhaled so fetid an odour, that the surgeon and the attendants swooned in consequence of it.<sup>(13)</sup> Ulcers which are old, and cancers when open are not less pernicious.

*Diodorus Siculus* speaks of pestilential diseases, which have been produced by the putrefaction of different substances.<sup>(20)</sup> St. Augustine makes mention of a number of animals, which the sea had cast upon the shore, whose bodies putrefying created a wide extended pestilence.<sup>(12)</sup> Egypt is ravaged almost every year by malignant fevers, and it is from that country that the small-pox is scattered throughout the world. The waters of the Nile, according to some authors, remaining sometime upon the fields, which they inundate, leave there a multitude of aquatic insects, which putrefying exhale pestilential miasma.<sup>(22)</sup> *Forestus*<sup>(73)</sup> and *John Wolf*,<sup>(24)</sup> relate that several dead fishes cast upon the shore, occasioned a dreadful epidemic. Oftentimes the putrefaction of grasshoppers in Ethiopia have occasioned endemic distempers. The coasts of the ocean suffer frequently from the corruption of whales thrown on the shores.<sup>25</sup> *Paré* informs us that in his time the putrefaction of a whale, occasioned a pestilence in Tuscany.<sup>(26)</sup> And *Lancisi* writes, that the exhalations from a putrefying ox, caused the death of a traveller in the environs of Pesara. *Lucian*<sup>(27)</sup> speaks of an epidemic, which made great ravages in the army of Pompey near Durazzo, and which was occasioned by the putrefaction of the horses killed in battle, and left on the field. *Ammius Marcellinus*<sup>28</sup> also mentions a great mortality in the camp of Constantine the Great, by a similar imprudence. How often have numerous carcasses scattered over the field of battle

(19) VANSWIET. ad aphor. 89.

(20) DIOD. SICIL. et CUSP. vit. Henr. I, imp. Vid et CRANTZ, &c.

(21) De Civ. Dei, l. 3, c. 31. et S. HYER, in Joel.

(22) MEAD. de Pest. c. 1.

(23) L. 6, observ. 9.

(24) Rer. mem. vol. 1, cent, 10.

(25) PAOSOR. op. l. 4. et DIEMERBR. de Pest. l. 1, c. 8, probl. 4.

(26) Loc. cit.

(27) De Bovill, Pest. p. 1, c. 8.

(28) L. 6, v. 88, et sequ.

(29) AP. ant. cit.

after a bloody action, occasioned a great mortality. *Aristotle* advised Alexander to retire immediately after the defeat of Darius at Arbela, to avoid the malignant influence of the dead bodies. France has been frequently exposed to terrible plagues, from the tenth even down to the seventeenth century ; and history informs us that she has in the interval, been often ravaged by intestine wars and cruel famines. We see then sometimes the fields uncultivated, and the inhabitants flying in crowds to the cities, where a sudden and too numerous population has not failed to create the most alarming scarcity.<sup>(30)</sup> Almost all long sieges, and where many lives are lost, are attended with fevers and fatal distempers. The war of the Swedes in the last century, occasioned a pestilence which desolated Poland. Cruel and obstinate wars had the same effect in Hungary, Austria, Syria, and in many other kingdoms. We have seen the same thing occurring frequently in Asia. *Paré* relates that in 1572 a pestilential fever, extended itself in a course of about ten leagues in Guienne. It was occasioned by putrid exhalations from a well, into which several carcasses had been cast about two months before.

Emanations of this kind are very penetrating ; they alter the mass of humours, and produce violent maladies, or render dangerous those which have occurred, or to which they are already predisposed. Pains of the head, fits of fever, nervous affections, convulsions, miscarriages even have been occasioned by them. *Ramazzini*<sup>31</sup> relates that a grave-digger having descended into a grave to rob a corpse, which had been lately deposited there, was suffocated and fell instantly dead. At Montpellier three men died in the vault of a church ; a fourth with difficulty saved himself by a speedy flight, and still received so much injury that they feared for his life. His cloaths and his whole person for several days exhaled a putrid smell.<sup>32</sup>

(30) *Vid.* MARET, Mem. cit. § 21, et sequ.

(31) RAMAZZ. *ibid.* *Vid.* before cited.

(32) Mr. Haguénot has given an account of that event in 1746. Mons. Berard relates that the body of a very fat person had been interred at the depth only of about a foot and a half, so that there was but about a foot of earth over her, and a stone of the thickness of seven or eight inches. Soon the vapours which came from it in great abundance com-

At Riom in Auvergne they removed the ground of an ancient cemetery, with the intention to make some improvements in the city. In a short time an epidemic disease appeared, which carried off a great many persons, particularly of the common people; and the mortality was particularly felt in the neighbourhood of the cemetery. A similar occurrence had caused six years before an epidemic in a small town called Ambert in the same province. A like course of facts leaves no doubt that infection may be caused by exhalations from dead bodies.

Air confined, heated and deprived of its elasticity, is dangerous of itself, from whatever body it may emanate, even when it is produced by perspiration, from a person enjoying the most perfect health. If the perspiration of the sick, and the exhalations from the bodies of dead animals, scatter abroad destructive vapours; if each of these properties by themselves produce the most dreadful consequences, to what dangers do not the interments in churches expose us, where the air is made up of all sorts of pernicious matters, and where all the causes of contagion, which are elsewhere divided, are there found combined.<sup>33</sup>

The atmosphere in churches is generally moist and heavy; it acquires those qualities from the emanations of persons who there assemble. The mixture of sepulchral exhalations, which necessarily penetrate through the layers of earth, with which the dead bodies are covered, cannot fail to be destructive in a place where every thing conspires to concentrate the unwholesome vapours. Another cause which augments the putridity of

---

pelled them to disinter the body. Three grave-diggers undertook the work; two of them were attacked with sickness at the stomach and violent vomiting, and they quit. The third, who would finish it, died in ten days after. It is stated in the Journal of Mons. L'abbe Rozier that a grave-digger while working in the grave-yard of Montmorency, struck with his spade upon a corpse that had been buried a year before, and that he was immediately struck down by the vapours that arose from it. *Observ. Phys. T. I.*

(33) Chitelius hath proven in his work *de ant. Fun. Rit. posit. 2. § 5*, that the air shut up in a church, and charged with the vapours which exhale from the graves, contracts very easily pernicious qualities, which is always in proportion to the size of the church, and the number of bodies which have been interred. In addition to this that the earth where dead bodies have been for a long time left to putrify, is so penetrated with fetid matter, that throughout where a grave is opened persons are always exposed to some injury. See KECKERMANN, *Syst. l. 1, c. 3.*

the air in churches, is the necessity they are under of opening the tombs to inter a new corpse, or to take away those which have been interred, when the ground is not sufficiently spacious for further interments. In both cases they are obliged to keep the grave open a considerable time. The atmosphere then becomes charged with exhalations from carcasses not half dissolved, and whose putrefaction is recent.

The sole remedy which can be applied to evils, necessarily resulting from so pernicious a custom, is to change the air. But on the contrary it is almost always stagnant in churches; if sometimes a portion of that fluid experiences some agitation, the entire body of air is never displaced. The form and position of our churches, sufficiently show that it can never be otherwise. The body of the church extends from east to west, and is crossed at right angles from north to south. There is one door at the western extremity of the church which on the other side is closed on a curved line. Two small side doors are at the two extremities of the cross. Frequently these doors are wanting, generally they are kept closed, and they are almost always situated in narrow places or surrounded by edifices. All these circumstances conspire to hinder, in part, the west wind from having a free current. Whatever care may be taken, it is evident in the choir and in the chapels, and in the angles formed by the walls, the air cannot be wholly changed. The elevated arches, the perfumes and incense which is burned, may, it is true, render the sepulchral exhalations less perceptible, and may diminish their activity, but they never can entirely destroy their danger. [35

(34) Here the author ought to cite the work of Mons. Maret, from which his observation is extracted. He should also have cited Mr. Louis, who has feelingly represented the dangers arising from interments in churches. See *Lettres sur la certitude des signes de la Mort*, published in 1751.

(35) The illustrious Bielield admits that with us the perfumes and the incense which are constantly burnt in our churches correct very much the noxious vapours; but it is not less true that the tombs there permit unwholesome exhalations to escape. He demonstrates the correctness of his opinion by what occurs in the protestant churches, where the breath of the living and the exhalations from the bodies of the dead, concur equally to infect the air without any thing to correct or modify it. *Inst. Polit. d. c. 3. § 9.*

The expressions which I have used may, perhaps, appear exaggerated. I may be accused of affecting to avoid an imaginary danger of whose existence there is no proof. To justify myself from this reproach, I will relate some well authenticated facts, the truth of which no one can call in question.

Mr. de Haller informs us that a church was infected by the exhalations of a single dead body twelve years after it had been interred, and that it communicated a very dangerous disease throughout a whole convent.<sup>(36)</sup>

Mr. *Rawlin* relates, that the opening of a dead body at a lecture, occasioned a dreadful epidemic in the country of Armagnac.<sup>(37)</sup> We have frequently seen delicate and nervous persons taken ill and fall into a fainting fit from inhaling the exhalations of dead bodies while walking in a grave yard.<sup>(38)</sup>

They dug out some subterraneous vaults at Paris, under the church of St. Eustace, which made it necessary to remove some dead bodies they met with, and to put them in a vault which had been for a length of time shut up. Children who went there to catechism sickened—the same effects attended many adults. Dr. Ferret, Regent of the Faculty of Paris, was directed to make a report on the subject. He found that the respiration of the sick was difficult—that the brain was disordered—that they had violent palpitations of the heart—and that many were affected with convulsive motions in the arms and legs.

A lot of ground on which had formerly been enclosed a convent for the nuns of Saint Genevieve at Paris, was made use of finally to erect upon it a number of shops. All those who inhabited the ground floor, and particularly the young, were affected with nearly the same complaints, which were attributed, and with reason, to exhalations from the dead bodies that had been interred in that ground.

---

(36) In the work of Pennicher upon embalments, it is stated that the vapour from a tomb gave an unfortunate grave-digger a malignant fever. GÖCKEL. cent. 11. obs. 33. There was a similar occurrence at Breslaw, in 1719.

(37) Ibid. RAULIN, *Observ. de Medec.*

(38) This example and others which we have related are taken from d'Habermann, *Dissert. de optimo sepeliendi Usu. Thes. publ. propug. &c.* Vindob. 1772.

An attentive physician, in making researches respecting the causes of the epidemic at Saulier, and scrupulously adhering to the sources of facts, and to their consequences, hath shown that the contagion proceeded from a number of dead bodies buried in the parish of Saint Saturnine.<sup>(39)</sup> The cathedral of Montpellier was infected by the same imprudence. Monsieur Haguénot and Monsieur Maret have described those terrible occurrences.

But why seek elsewhere for proofs of what is daily passing under our own eyes? were we to collect together here all the observations of those who have gone before us, we should find proofs without number of what we advance; the small number of the learned and of persons capable of transmitting to posterity, accounts of the deadly effects of interments in churches and in towns, or rather the sanctity with which we ourselves have been used to consider the custom of interring in temples, has been often the reason of attributing to other causes than epidemic, diseases which have, from time to time, depopulated our cities. The smallest village retains the remembrance of similar events; and when in several countries they have labored to establish the ancient custom of interring without the cities, they have been led to it by the strongest and most urgent reasons.

It is known that the inhabitants of Rome, with the greatest reluctance attend in the church of Saint Lorenzo in Lucina, in which almost daily the bodies of the dead are interred and where exhumations are frequently made. It is thus also of several large parishes in the city.

There prevailed at Rome, for near twenty years, a small pock epidemic. The number of deaths was so considerable, that both church and state united to prevent any person from being interred in the churches of those parishes. That of St. Mary in Cosmedin, at a distance from the city, became the place for all interments. It was there that all the dead were carried, and after the epidemic had ceased, they laid anew the pavement of the church—they renewed the plaistering to the depth of a foot, and they ceased to perform divine service there until they were

---

(39) A Saulieu en Bourgogne. M. MARFT, Mem. cite,

convinced that the dead bodies were completely decayed. It was not until after all these precautions had been taken, that they recommenced in that church the celebration of the holy mysteries.<sup>(40)</sup>

It would be unjust to say that government should wait for the actual existence of those scourges before recurring to precautions, always wise and necessary. The dangerous effects of putrid vapours show themselves more promptly when they attack individuals predisposed from their constitutions to their developement; but on all occasions the animal economy suffers great injury from them.<sup>(41)</sup> We frequently see malignant and putrid fevers, and periodical diseases prevailing in the most populous cities, without being able to detect the hidden cause. Is it not probable that that hidden cause, and which only discovers itself by its terrible effects, may be no other than interments in cities.<sup>(42)</sup>

We have said enough to shew evidently the indispensable necessity of placing the public cemeteries at a distance from cities, to justify the wise dispositions of government on this head, and wholly to destroy those prejudices which have no other support than public credulity; prejudices which are directly hostile to the interests of those who maintain them, and who would cease to support them were they more enlightened, and could they calculate and foresee how much they thereby injure the health of their fellow-citizens.<sup>(43)</sup>

(40) At Palermo they took the same precautions in the terrible plague of 1625 and 1626. They did so also at Modéna in 1630. We may consult Muratori in his *Traité sur la manière de se préserver de la Peste*.

(41) *Subito necat idem [vapor quem cadaverum putredo generat] says HALLER in his work which has been cited, quando aperto sepulcro, hominem percillit. Nisi necat, morbos excitat periculosos et corpora putrefacit. LABAT, Voyage d'Italie, tome 4. SAUVAGES, Effets de l'Air, &c.* Physicians recommend to their patients not to go into churches in the morning when they have not yet recovered their strength, and when at the beginning of their convalescence. It would be much to be feared, that in respiring they would inhale some noxious particles which are more frequent and more sensibly experienced in churches in the morning. The only way to remedy it is to remove from them their cemeteries.

(42) This also is the conjecture of Mons. Hagenot in his work already cited.

(43) What we have said in relation to Churches will for the same reasons apply to Cemeteries in the midst of cities. We shall but half remedy the evil,

How can we, in fact, place in competition the powerful testimony of the universal usage of all ages, and of the most polished nations, with the momentary complaint of people always prejudiced in favour of the customs of their own age, and who have appeared upon the stage of time always incapable of knowing their own interests, and whom the waves of opinion so constantly agitate as but to leave them the freedom of choosing that which is most useful for them.

It is necessary here to notice two objections which will not fail to produce a great effect upon weak minds, and which may appear to give an air of probability to a contrary opinion.

A piety illy understood will begin to make complaints and to bewail the loss which the faithful will experience for whom now no offerings will be made.

But every enlightened person knows, or ought to know, that provided we make our supplications to God, it matters but little in what place we address our prayers to him.

It may be also added, that cemeteries on the proposed plan will not be so far distant from cities, but that they may be seen by their inhabitants, and they awakened by the sight to good deeds and prayers for the dead.

The remembrance alone of Jerusalem and of the temple awakened among the captive Jews at Babylon, religious sentiments. It is the same feeling which from long custom at this day induces them when they offer up prayers to turn their faces to the east.

In the ages of devotion they did not fail to put up prayers for the dead. The history of the chants for the dead, and of the first excommunications, are a sure warranty of the fact. At Rome they frequently visited the catacombs although they were some miles distant from the city, and concealed very deep under ground.

if, while we cease to inter in the churches we shall establish large Cemeteries in the midst of cities. The height of the houses, that of the churches, the narrowness of the streets, may be however obstructions to the spreading of the noxious particles which will unquestionably arise.

Cemeteries shut up in the midst of cities are always excessively damp: pernicious vapours proceed from them, which insinuate themselves even into the houses, assail us with a disagreeable smell, corrupt the provisions, and even spoil the fountains of water.

In fine, we may satisfy ourselves in replying that during almost six centuries, and when sepulchres were not made in the churches, they put up prayers for the dead with perhaps more fervour than they do at present. The holy bishops, who were desirous of seeing the ancient custom established, were not remiss on this point; they were equally desirous that those prayers should be put up, and it was never their intention to put any hindrance to this usage. Let us then imitate their virtues; let us acquire their knowledge; let us like them cherish the discipline of the church, and then the rights of religion and of nature, which are the same, will be equally respected.<sup>(44)</sup>

But how shall we propose to the great ones of the earth to permit their ashes to repose in a cemetery? The idea alone is enough to create the greatest revolution. What! does the blood of Eacus and Antenor's flow in their noble veins, and shall their bodies be interred without distinction, nigh to that of a vile plebeian, whom death has made equal with him! The thought is not to be admitted without shuddering with horror.

To observations which sound philosophy might make upon this subject, it must be allowed, that among all people, the institutions of society have separated, even in the tomb the nobleman from the peasant, with as much care as nature has taken to place them on an equality.

Birth, rank, and valour, sometimes learning and purity of morals have been distinguished in the most honorable manner, as well in the ceremonies of the funeral as in the choice of the tomb. In preserving such merited distinctions, I still see no reason to prevent the establishment of public cemeteries. If the highways, uncultivated fields, and the borders of the sea, furnished sepulchres to the heroes of antiquity; our mountains, our

---

(44) Let us beware of imitating the Jews, and of submitting ourselves like them to the text of the law. They have the folly to believe that at the resurrection God will reprove them if their mortal remains have not been interred in the promised land. So persuaded have some been of this, that they have at a very advanced age undertaken a journey to the Holy Land. The spirit of christianity is far superior to such puerilities. See St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews, v. 13.

highways, may offer the same asylum to the heroes of our day.<sup>(45)</sup>

Placed in the middle of fields, the tombs of great men will not less receive the homage of posterity ; beholding them, sentiments of heroism and gratitude will not be less awakened in the bosom of us their descendants. The tomb of Achilles, on the Promontory of Sigeum, excited a noble ardour in Alexander, and Cæsar shed, upon the tomb of the young hero, tears which a noble emulation caused to flow.

The Greeks were no less desirous than ourselves of transmitting to posterity the glorious deeds of those who had preceded them. It was not, however, by filling their cities with tombs that they performed that duty. The generals who had served their country ; the soldiers who had sacrificed their lives in her cause, had monuments erected to their memories, on the very field where they had covered themselves with glory. The memory of the three hundred Spartans, who died at Thermopyle, was never forgotten in Greece ; and, the trophies at Miltiades, on the field of Macathow, disturbed the sleep of Themistocles. Lysander, who assured to Spartan the superiority over her rival Athens, obtained the honors of sepulture in a field near Aliates. Aristides, the most just of the Athenians, had his modest tomb in the field of Falerium. Homer, the greatest of epic poets, was buried on the margin of the sea. Pindar, the first Grecian lyric poet, was buried in a hippodrome. And Archimedes, the terror of the Romans, and the defender of Syracuse, had his grave in a field bordering on his beloved country. This tomb was ornamented with symbols and figures, by the aid of which, Cicero, a long time after recognized it. What proves that certain persons were always distinguished, although the tombs were at a distance from the cities is, that the laws were frequently obliged to repress the excess of luxury in relation to tombs among the Greeks and Romans. All history testifies to their

---

(45) It would be very easy to preserve some distinguished place as a public Cemetery

magnificence in this respect, and we have at this day some admirable remains of them.<sup>(46)</sup>

But may we not supply the place of tombs in the interior of cities, by tablets, inscriptions, or a species of cenotaph. The Greeks and Romans had always many monuments of that nature; and among those people, empty tombs were regarded with as much veneration as those which contained the body.<sup>(47)</sup> Establishments of that nature would fulfil at once the views of religion and of policy.<sup>(48)</sup>

Lycurgus forbade making an epitaph or raising a tomb for any other, than a soldier dying on the field of battle, or for a woman dying in giving a citizen to the country. Perhaps this establishment would not be approved of by those who highly praise that legislator for having permitted interments in Lacedemon.

If the Great desire only to live with posterity, let them learn that good actions can alone eternise their names. If they wish only to gratify their ambition, what place more suitable for that purpose than the place set apart for public interments. They

(46) The magnificence of the tombs of the Egyptians do not allow us to suppose that they were situated within the cities. Plato in his laws, l. 12, forbids the erection of tombs which would require the labor of more than five men for five days. Solon wished that the tombs of the Athenians were built within three days by the labor of ten men at most. *Cic. de Leg. 2, c. 26 and c. ult.* The laws provided at the same time in relation to the modesty of the ornaments, and of the inscriptions which should decorate the places destined to sepultures. Demetrius of Phalerus proscribed the luxury of columns; he fixed the size of the tombs, in the Roman law, the law of the Twelve Tables, in ordering that funeral piles and interments should be banished from cities, prevented by wise regulations the luxury which might then have been introduced. *Cic. ibid. c. 23.* Towards the latter times of the republic the expences of interments were excessive. The two Antonins repressed them, as Capitolin informs us, *Vit. Anton. Philos. c. 13.* The same reason determined those two Emperors not to regard the cenotaphs as religious places, l. 7. d. *de divis. Rer. Et. l. 6, de Religios. § 1.* Without these precautions, vanity, which knows no bounds, would quickly have filled the fields in the neighbourhood of Rome with similar monuments, and the public highways would have become almost impassable. See *GODEF. de l. 6. Cod. Théod. de Sep. viol. et Diatrib. de Cœnotaph*

(47) *VIRG. Eneid. 3, v. 303. NOR. de Cæn. pis. 3. 2. seq. BINKERS, obs. l. 5. conf. l. 6, §. ult. d. de divis. Rer.*

(48) Those who have purchased a right to be interred in some church will no doubt cry out, "that their property is invaded." But if they are good citizens, let them but look at the evil which results from it, and they will not hesitate to sacrifice a trifling advantage, and an imaginary property to public good.

may there add at their pleasure trophies of distinction.<sup>(49)</sup> Christian modesty and the rigor of the canons forbid that they should in the temples thus place inscriptions, or trophies on the tombs.<sup>(50)</sup>



## RECAPITULATION.

SUCH are the reflections I have wished to submit to my fellow-citizens. I have thought they would be useful at a moment when every one appears to be occupied with measures for the public good; at a time when each one aspires to the character of a Philosopher, and when all men pique themselves on having established their opinions on principles of reason divested of all prejudice.

Already the examples which many of the princes of Europe have given of establishing the ancient usage of placing cemeteries at a distance from cities, appear to give some hopes.<sup>(51)</sup> But above

(49) The custom of trophies and inscriptions is found not only in ancient history among the Pagans, but also in modern history and among the Christians. In another passage of Bielfield (in the place above cited) he expresses himself in the following manner: We should place out of the cities Cemeteries, which the rich might adorn with mausoleums, tombs, and epitaphs. We should thus repair the loss of family sepultures, for which there has always been so much veneration, and which from the tenth century were frequently situated in the interior of Churches.

(50) See the Councils herein before cited.

(51) In Vienna there are no Cemeteries in the neighbourhood of Churches. The Church of St. Stephen had one; it was destroyed by the order of the Emperor Charles VI. The Empress Maria Theresa, who joined to the sentiments of religion the greatest love for her people, renewed in her states the ordinances of the Emperors, and directed that a public Cemetery should be constructed out of the city. HABBERM. *dis. cit. de opt. sepel. usu.*

In Ireland and Denmark the same interdict has been lately published.

Italy, who boasts of having given to the rest of Europe the example of many useful establishments, and who has always used her efforts to renew with vigor those which had been destroyed in the middle ages, is very far from equalling on this point the enlightened nations of which we have spoken.

The chancellor D'Aguesseau, whose name alone is an eulogy, desired that he might be interred in the Cemetery of Anteuil.

all, previous to charging our project as an innovation, it will be proper first to search into antiquity, and see whether the custom which we wish to destroy hath not been recently introduced, and is not in fact a relaxation of discipline.

To give laws to a nation, is the fruit of policy and of courage ; but to restore to it ancient customs, and which are preferable to those which it has adopted, is the work of profound wisdom sustained by the greatest firmness. In both cases the depositories of public authority ought to close their ears against the cries of interest and of prejudice. Their duty is to do good to their fellow men in spite of their opposition ; above all, they should not seek after light and trifling applause. To deserve well of their country, is the only object they should wish to attain.

The amateurs of epitaphs will remember the two following inscriptions, which are full of wit, and which contain at the same time some wise instruction. They were made for two celebrated Physicians ; one is to be found at Paris, upon the tomb of Simon Pierre, in the Cemetery of St. Stephen of the mountain.—His son was the author of it.

Simon PIETRE, *vir pius et probus,*  
*hic sub dio sepeliri voluit,*  
*ne mortuus cuiquam noceret,*  
*qui vivus omnibus profuerat.*

The other is that of the celebrated anatomist Verheyen, who desired to be buried in the public Cemetery at Louvain.

Philppus VERHEYEN,  
*medicinæ doctor et professor,*  
*partem sui materialem*  
*hic*  
*in cæmeterio condi voluit,*  
*ne templum dehonestaret,*  
*aut nocivis halitibus inficeret.*

REMARKS  
OF THE  
*TRANSLATORS*  
UPON THE  
PRECEDING DISCOURSES.

---

WE place under this title the consideration which Vicq d'Azyr has published under that of the " Preliminary Discourse" to the work of which they are a commentary. We have thought that we ought to abridge the different *Edicts* presented at the end of those remarks, because they are not the work of Vicq d'Azyr, and because at the present period of knowledge it is useless to prove the danger of Interments in Churches, and the lawfulness of the custom, which assigning another place for the sepulchres of the ministers of the altar, and of the great, does not extend privileges and distinctions beyond the tomb.

---

At a time when the power of religion and the authority of the government are united to proscribe an abuse, which is as injurious to the health of the people, as it is repugnant to the Majesty of the temple ; ought not every good citizen to use his efforts to contribute to the success of this enterprise ? It is with these views, and to destroy more and more these injurious prejudices that I have determined to publish the translation of an Italian work, entitled " An Essay upon the Dangers, and upon the Places of Interment,"<sup>(1)</sup> in which is shown by an erudition, solid and profound, that vanity and bad examples alone have introduced the dangerous

---

(1) Saggio in torno al luogo del seppellire, 1774, a *Modene*.

usage of interments in churches and cities. We believe it our duty to show particularly the sources from which the Italian author has drawn his information, and thus render to France a homage which is her due, by proving from works written on that subject, that it is to her is owing the first elements of that reform.

Monsieur Haguenot, Doctor and Professor of Medicine in the University of Montpellier, was the first among the moderns who sat himself strongly in opposition to the customs of interring in churches. Monsieur Maret, Doctor of Medicine and Secretary of the Academy at Dijon, afterwards developed still further those dangers. The useful precepts of those enlightened citizens have been put in practice at Versailles, and their details are related in a small Pamphlet, published in 1774. Finally, Monsieur Navier, Physician at Chalons, and well worthy of the reputation which he enjoys, has shown the pernicious effects arising from precipitate interments. Let us endeavour to present a view of those different researches.

1st. For a long time Monsieur Haguenot had seen<sup>(2)</sup> with extreme concern the custom which prevailed at Montpellier, as well as throughout the rest of France, of interring in the churches. The light of medicine alone would have sufficed to have shown him all its dangers, but the very dreadful examples which were passing under his eyes, left him no doubts on the subjects. The fear of failing of success, in a project so difficult had till then prevented his raising his voice. The following catastrophe determined him at last to break a silence which had it been longer continued would have been culpable. It is in fact, that under such circumstances it becomes those to whom is confided the precious deposite of human knowledge, to make known to their fellow citizens the importance and reciprocity of their duties.

On the 17th of August, 1744, at about six o'clock in the evening, the Sieur Guillaume Boudou, of the Brotherhood of White

---

(2) The principal evils of which Mr. Haguenot makes mention happened in 1774.

Penitents, was interred in one of the public vaults of the parish church in Notre Dame, at Montpellier. Pierre Balsalgette, a porter, who had never served in that church, was employed that day by the Sexton of the Brotherhood of the Penitents. Scarce had he descended into the vault than he was seen to be convulsed, and soon was extended motionless. Then a Brother Penitent, named Joseph Surrau, had the generosity to attempt to draw out the unfortunate man. He gave to a Brother of his Order the end of his sack and cord to hold while he descended. Scarce had he taken hold of the garment of the Porter, till he lost his breath. They drew him out half dead. He soon recovered his senses, but he remained in a state of dizziness and stupefaction, the forerunner of convulsion, and fainting, with which he was a quarter of an hour after seized. He experienced during the night a debility and unusual tremors with palpitations, which yielded to bleeding and the administration of cordials. He was a long time pale and emaciated, and he was ever after called throughout the city, the *resuscitated* man. This sad catastrophe did not prevent John Molinier, a Penitent of the same Brotherhood, to expose himself with the same zeal to save the Porter. But scarce had he entered the vault than feeling himself suffocating, he gave a signal they should draw him out and relieve him. He came out so feeble and weak, that an instant longer delay would have cost him his life. Robert Molinier, his brother, more robust and vigorous than him, confiding without doubt in his strength, thought he might brave the danger and follow the feelings which charity inspired; but he became a victim, and expired almost as soon as he reached the bottom of the vault. This tragic scene was terminated by the death of Charles Baesalgette, the brother of the porter who remained in the vault. As he was obliged to dispose of the body of Robert Molinier, he remained a longer time than he ought to have done, and the feelings he experienced compelled him to leave it and come out. Thinking that by means of a handkerchief dipped in Hungary water, and put between his teeth, that he would secure himself from danger: he descended a second time, but the precaution was in

vain, he was soon seen staggering towards the ladders endeavouring to remount, and at the third round he fell backwards without any sign of life. Every one then knew that it was certain death to enter that vault, and notwithstanding the most pressing exhortations of the priests to those who attended the funeral, there was no one either of the attendants or of those who were spectators, who dared to make another attempt. They drew out the three dead bodies by means of hooks. Their cloaths exhaled a horrible smell, and were covered with a matter, green, yellow, and resembling mildew.

Monsieur Haguenot, took upon himself at the request of Monsieur Le Naire, then Intendant of Languedoc, to examine into the nature of that destructive vapour. To accomplish this object, he attended at various times in the church of Notre Dame, and there made the experiments that had been formerly essayed in the Well of Perols the vapour of which destroys animal life and extinguishes flame.

*First experiments.*—Mr. Haguenot opened the vault, there arose from it an extremely fetid vapour, which impregnated linen, thread, even glass bottle, and clothes, with a cadaverous smell.

*Second experiments.*—The flame of a piece of paper, of a vine branch, and of a lighted wax taper, held at the mouth of the vault, were entirely extinguished, without leaving a vestige of fire. It is the property of mephitic vapours to extinguish burning bodies, which they surround as effectually as if they were plunged into water.

*Third experiments.*—Cats and dogs let down into the vault, expired in convulsions in one or two minutes, and birds in a few seconds; the last are less tenacious of life. The same difference was observed whether they were drowned or exposed under the pneumatic machine.

*Fourth experiment.*—The mephitic vapour from the vault preserved in bottles, and submitted to the same proofs a month and a half after it had been enclosed, was no less destructive.

Four experiments well devised, well executed, and proved in the presence of witnesses worthy of confidence, such as Messrs. Sauvages, Goulard, and Lamoirier, would have been sufficient without doubt to prove the danger of cadaverous vapours, and of course the custom of interring in churches. Monsieur Haguenot has observed, with a view to convince those who might yet hold to those abuses, to add the following considerations.

Air to support animal life ought to possess all its activity. The vapours of fermenting wine, those of a putrifying body, &c. deprive the air of its respirable quality. It was to the emanations from dead bodies, that the malignity of the small pox was attributed, which during that same year made such great ravages at Montpellier. He disapproves of the scandalous and at the same time dangerous custom of carrying the remains of buried bodies, the bones of which are often surrounded with flesh partly decayed, upon the roofs of the churches and other places, which are called "*reservoirs*" to make place for new bodies, and thus make the vaults a source of constant revenue.

Mr. Haguenot then anticipates the objections which may be made to the supposed danger of vaults destined for sepulchre.

1st. They open them, it is said, before the interments are made: but they do not leave them long enough open to dissipate all the exhalations; and those noxious vapors moreover only quit the vault to infect the church. Mr. Haguenot, on recapitulating, observes that those vapours have two effects equally pernicious. 1st. That of destroying in an instant animals exposed to their action.<sup>(3)</sup> 2d. By mangling with and infesting the air, producing

---

(3) We may find in the effects of exhalations an explanation of various phenomena, which some authors have considered as miraculous. Gregory of Tours relates, that a thief having dared to enter into the tomb of St. Helius, that prelate held him fast, and would not permit him to leave it. The same author informs us that a poor man, an inhabitant of Touraine, not having a stone to cover the grave where one of his children had been interred, carried away huts which covered the opening of an ancient tomb, where reposed without doubt, says Gregory of Tours, the ashes of some holy personage. The unhappy father was struck suddenly and at the same time with dumbness, deafness, and blindness. (SPOND. *Cæm. Sacra*, p. 205.) David Niceta gives a catalogue of dreadful accidents, and of the death of an impious man, who had violated the tomb of a saint, and who was struck down. (*Apud* Baron, tom. 10.) Josephus in his Jewish Antiquities remarks, that Herod or-

destructive and pestilential diseases, which are attributable solely to those noxious emanations, and are to be distinguished from diseases contagious in themselves.

2d. It is said they may close the stone exactly, and shut up the openings by which the vapour might escape: but besides that this is very difficult, still when you have accomplished it, you only remove the danger a little further off, or indeed make it greater; for the more vapours are concentrated, and the longer they are kept, the more destructive they are.

3d. It is objected, that vaults in which but a few dead bodies are deposited cannot become so dangerous. We may with truth reply, that one single dead body<sup>(4)</sup> may occasion all the mischief of which we complain. Monsieur Haguenot to this point cites many instances.

He observes afterwards that the embalmings of the Egyptians, the custom of burning the bodies, adopted by the Grecians, the Romans, and some of the inhabitants of India, and that practised by several people in Asia, of exposing the bodies of the dead upon the trunks of trees, and suspending them from elevated branches, preserved them at least from the dreadful accidents which we see occurring under our eyes. He demonstrates them that the civil and ecclesiastical laws have always forbidden the interments in churches; that they chose in the first instance for cemeteries, fields distant from cities; that the custom of interring in church was introduced by degrees, and not without having been frequently abolished; and it was not punished, but because it was wished to render honors, illy understood, to certain princes, and to certain pontiffs, because some of the ambitious laity offered considerable sums of money to enjoy that distinction; and finally, because the clergy chose rather to relax than to sacrifice a people so considerable.

The author, whose memoirs we have analysed, advances to-

dered, that the tomb of King David should be opened, that the riches there enclosed might be taken from them; two guards employed in the work perished.

There are none of these circumstances but what may be attributed to the effects of the mephitic vapours.

(4) See the essay upon the danger of interments above.

wards the end of his work, a proposition sufficiently bold. Perhaps, says he, the mephitic vapours formed by nature, and whose deleterious effects we have abundantly shown, may still have their use ; but he stops there, and confines himself to that conjecture.

May it not be permitted to presume, that in fact, those different gases are so many means which nature has reserved to herself, from which to make new combinations with the wrecks of antiquity, to give to the most fluid substances a certain degree of consistence, and to bodies in general their solidity, and perhaps a part of their taste, and of their *colours* ?

Monsieur Maret,<sup>(5)</sup> a celebrated physician of Dijon, has sat himself in opposition with great zeal to a dangerous abuse, rendered respectable by usage and antiquity. He premises, that as he writes for the many, he ought to commence by establishing facts equally clear and incontestible, which may easily lead to the chemical and medical consequences which he deduces from them. He commences by examining the affinity of every species of exhalations with the *air*, which, after having been the vehicle of it, becomes soon the dissolvent. The first six chapters contain the generalities, set forth with much order and perspicuity. The author shows that the state of the air is much influenced by the quantity of vapours which it absorbs. The agitation of that fluid, its union with fire and with water, occasion still more varieties in that species of intermixture : thus an air hot and moist absorbs less of the vapours, but it renders their effect more deleterious ; a cold and dry air receives more of them, but it diminishes their activity by dividing them more. The winds and the currents of air carry those vapours to a distance, and preserve one country sometimes to infect another.

In the seventeenth paragraph the author shows the evils which may be produced by animal exhalations. He cites a number of pestilential diseases occasioned by the infected vapours of car-

---

(5) Memoir upon the usage of disinterring the dead in Churches, and in the middle of cities.

casses not buried, or but lightly covered with earth. He attributes with Mead the eruptive diseases of Egypt, and the plague of which it is the focus, to the insects and to the fish, which the Nile on its retreat leaves in the fields, and which putrify. Wars and sieges<sup>(6)</sup> also give birth to them, by strewing the earth with dead bodies, by collecting together a great number of men at one place, and by causing agriculture to be neglected. Prisons, camps, and hospitals too much crowded, are also theatres of those calamities. Monsieur Maret supports his assertions by many examples drawn from Pare Ramazzini, and De Hunrus, the Ephimerides d'Allemange, and the Journal de Physiques of Monsieur l'Abbe Rozier. He adds, that the construction of our churches prevents the free circulation of air.<sup>(7)</sup>

Monsieur Maret believes, that it is sometimes dangerous to destroy dead bodies by means of quicklime slackened with water.<sup>(8)</sup> He relates that an attempt of that kind infected the air of the cathedral of Dijon. It diffused a volatile alkali, mixed with a very fetid oil extracted or developed by that medium.—They corrected those alkaline vapours by means of the marine acid disengaged from common salt by vitriolic acid.

Similar emanations are sufficiently active to give oftentimes additional malignity to prevailing diseases. This last assertion is proved by a melancholy event which occurred at Saulien in Burgundy.<sup>(9)</sup> There was prevailing a catarrhal fever quite mild. They had interred in the parochial church of Saint Sturnin, the body of a man extremely corpulent. Twenty-three days after, they opened a grave at the side of that where he had been buried, to inter a woman (after lying-in) dead of the same prevailing disease. A very fetid odour filled the church at the

(6) See the essay upon the danger of interments above.

(7) Those different considerations will be found collected in the second part of the essay upon the dangers of interments, translated from the Italian. They have been extracted from the dissertations of Monsieur Maret. See above essays upon the dangers of interments.

(8) See still further what Monsieur Navier proposes on this subject.

(9) This fact is cited in the Italian work, but too much abridged; it is that which has caused its being here reported in detail. See Saggio in torno al luogo del seppellire, p. 74.

moment, and affected all who entered it. In putting the body of the woman into the earth, a jolt or shock given to the coffin by the slipping of the cord, caused a prurient matter to run out, whose smell struck very sensibly the assistants. Of one hundred and sixty-six persons who entered the church, from the opening of the grave until the interment, one hundred and forty-nine were attacked with a putrid malignant fever, which had some of the character of the prevailing catarrhal fever, but the nature and virulence of the symptoms left no doubt but that its malignity was owing to the infection in the cathedral.

Malignant epidemic fever occasioned by the removal of the ground of the cemetery of the church of St. Peter in the same village, and another disease observed at Riom, and at Ambert in Auvergne, under similar circumstances, <sup>(10)</sup> confirm still more the danger of interments in churches and in cities.

The author, after having detailed these facts, exhibits an account of the customs of the different nations on the subject of interments.

The laws of the Athenians, and of the Romans, expressly forbade the interment or burning of dead bodies in towns. He adds, that the christians have for a long time been buried in the open air, and that St. Gregory forbids not only the interment in churches, but that churches shall not be built in places which have been used as cemeteries. Monsieur Maret makes several other observations, which are in accordance with those of Monsieur Haguénot.<sup>(11)</sup> He adds only to the researches of the latter, a chronological list of the laws relative to inhumations. He observes, that the custom of interring in churches is posterior to the year 509, as it was in that same year that pope Marcellus obtained from the senate permission to establish a cemetery at Rome. The prohibition which Charlemagne made in one of his capitularies to the interment in churches, proves still

---

(10) These events are related more in detail in the "Essay on the danger of interments."

(11) See the essay of Mr. Haguénot, page 35, 36.

further the antiquity of that custom. The same law was in force in the eleventh century, and at the beginning of the twelfth, since the mausoleum of Renauld the first, count of Burgundy, was erected in 1057, in the square of St. Stephen, at Bengancon, and that the body of Eudes the first, duke of Burgundy, was deposited in 1102, under the porch of the abbey of St. Citeaux, which he had founded.

Mons. Maret is persuaded that it is possible to determine to a certain point the extent and action of mephetic emanations, and he reasons upon the subject as follows: The earth, permeable to putrid vapours, arrests them by the body or mass which it opposes to them, from whence it follows, that they are less numerous in proportion to the depth at which bodies are buried. A corpse which is putrefying, he considers as a focus from whence fetid corpuscles proceed in the forms of rays more or less extended, and more or less inclined to the horizon. This consideration led him to other views of the subject, which would be very interesting, if it were possible to have certain data founded upon experience on which calculations might be made. He fixes twenty-four to thirty feet as the extent to which those rays can make themselves felt. Supposing that a stratum of earth of one foot would shorten the rays two or three feet, he finds that a body buried at the depth of seven feet, would not carry its exhalations more than five or six feet above the surface of the earth. It is probable, according to Monsieur Maret, that the shortening of the rays ought to be not only on account of each layer of earth, considered by itself and alone, but also in relation to the number, the re-union, and the depth of each layer; so that three feet of earth for instance ought to produce an effect more than triple of what would be produced by each foot of earth singly.

After having ascertained the first effect of the layers of earth upon dead bodies, Mons. Maret inquires as to the refraction of the rays; it is the greater in proportion to the thickness of the layer which traverses it. Thus, if the layer is seven feet, the rays will approach that perpendicular, and will be almost paral-

lel to each other. If it is only four feet, the rays less refracted, will unite with those of the neighbouring graves, and will augment the density of the vapours. We see what deductions Mons. Maret has drawn from this first consideration ; it has served him to establish consequences in relation to the reciprocal distances of graves from each other. From these principles, therefore, we are led to conclude, that graves which are from four to five feet in depth, ought to be separated from each other, at their sides four feet, and at the head and foot two feet ; and when they are of six or seven feet deep, they ought to be separated from each other two feet, on account of the rarefaction of the rays being much greater on that supposition. So the rays of two graves not intermixing with each other, the density of the vapours will not be so great, and the danger will be less. He supposes by that, that the rays do not extend more than three or four feet : he reduces the horizontal line to two feet, at the extremity of which the perpendicular drawn from the top of the refracted ray will fall. Thus, by putting four feet interval between two graves, the rays will not intermingle. Such are the ingenious considerations, calculations, and results, which Monsieur Maret presents in his work. It is much to be wished, that that naturalist and excellent observer had determined by experiment, what laws govern mephitic emanations, what is their refraction, what is their sphere of activity : that part of his excellent treatise would then have deserved more confidence, and more real advantages would have been drawn from it.

The following reflections are less hypothetical, and appear to us to merit more attention. We think with the author cited, that the extent of cemeteries ought to be determined, 1st, by the period for the complete dissolution of the body ; 2d, by the ground necessary for each corpse.

Three years are sufficient for the dissolution of a corpse, in a grave from four to five feet deep ; but in one of from six to seven feet, that time is not sufficient, because the pressure prevents putrefaction, as is proved by Messrs. Godard and Boissieu, in their dissertations upon antiseptics. We ought then to have a

cemetery capable of containing three times the number of dead in one year, if the graves are of the depth of four to five feet, and at least four times the number, if they are from six to seven feet in depth. An adult requires for a grave a space of thirty-one square feet. By multiplying the number thirty-one, the number of deaths of one year, and by multiplying the first product by three, if the graves are four feet deep, or over four; if the graves have six to seven feet, we shall have the number of feet which a cemetery ought to contain sufficient for all the interments, and to give time to the bodies to decay.

The extent of cemeteries once determined, it is still necessary to make the air which circulates in them as pure as possible, and to give access to the north and east winds. Buildings and trees are there very injurious, as they prevent the free circulation of the air.

It follows from these reflections, that cemeteries ought not to be permitted in cities :

- 1st. Because there is not a sufficiency of ground for them.
- 2d. Because there is not a sufficient circulation of air, nor is the air sufficiently pure. It is then necessary to select a place situated in an open, dry, and spacious place, and opened to the north and east. Laon and Dole<sup>(12)</sup> have already given an example—it remains for the other cities of France to imitate them.—Mons. Maret has no doubt but that the accident which occurred at the cathedral of his diocese at Saulien, will open the eyes of the nation to that abuse; and it is hoped that enlightened ecclesiastics will be the first to sacrifice the profits of interments in churches to the public safety and their own security.
- 3d. The author of a small treatise upon interments, which appeared in 1768, has amused himself with strewing some flowers over a subject of itself sad and gloomy. Convinced of the danger of interments in cities, he is of opinion that they should be carried far from their walls. It would be proper, according to

---

(12) The Irish and the Danes have removed their burying places out of the cities.

his ideas, to select for Paris a spacious place, open to all the winds, and close to the river; there should then be made graves, each of which should be sufficient for six parishes. A space of ground of three thousand toises would serve for the interments of the capital. To carry the dead to the cemetery, each parish, says the author, should have a carriage, or sort of chariot, which should be devoted to that purpose; he adds, that the carriage should be hung with black, and even decorated for those who would wish that kind of distinction. Further, he proposes to establish between the Pont Neuf and the Pont au Change, a funeral barge, constructed with steps, and suitable for the reception of sixty or a hundred coffins; there should be a chamber in it where some ecclesiastics might assemble, and twice a day, at particular hours, they should convey the dead to the cemetery. A house designated for the purpose should serve as an entre-pot during winter, when by the freezing of the river the navigation would be interrupted, and the horses ordinarily used in drawing the barges, should then be employed in drawing the chariot in which the dead from the several parishes were put, and carry them to the public cemetery.

They have made on the subject of cemeteries at Versailles, some very judicious regulations, which ought to serve as a model for the other cities of the kingdom, and which a zealous citizen has collected together in a volume, entitled "Memoires sur les sepultures hors des Villes, or recueil de pieces conservant les cimetieres de la Ville de Versailles 1774," to which is added, reflections on the same subject, taken from the works of Messrs. Olivier and Huberman.

The first memoir contains the reasons given for and against the removal of the cemetery of St. Louis: its small extent, the shallowness of the graves, the great quantity of putrid emanations arising from it, the diseases they have frequently occasioned, and above all, the health of the royal family exposed to all those dangers, were the determining motives for the reform. In vain were some objections made too feeble to be worth relating; ten opponents necessarily yielded to twenty-five suffrages, which the love of public good dictated and united together.

At the end of the memoir, we find some interesting observations as to the precautions to be used in removing any cemetery. He observes, with reason, that it is not sufficient only to desist from interring in such grounds, but they ought to be abandoned, and persons should not be exposed to make disinterments from them which would be dangerous.<sup>(13)</sup> We ought not above all to forget one observation of the author, on the subject of the water of the well, situated below the cemetery of St. Louis, at Versailles. It could not be used on account of its fetidness. This last inconvenience adds still greater force to the objection against interments within the enclosure of a city.<sup>(14)</sup>

They read a discussion on the building of St. Louis, in which it was decreed, (contrary to the opinion of the curate, and of two church-wardens, who had charge of it,) that they would have a new cemetery out of the precinct of Versailles. A decree in council of the 24th February, 1765, had in fact ordered the removal of it. The late Louis XV. made a donation to the building of one hundred and eighty perches of land in the forest of Satori, for its construction; further, he ordered the gate of the ancient cemetery to be walled up. Was not this order as wise as it was useful? A prelude to that, which was since issued by king Louis XVI., in March, 1776.

The author of the memoirs upon the cemeteries of Versailles, concludes by citing two examples which are in support of our opinion. The first is extracted from a letter written by Monsieur Maret to the author of the *Journal Encyclopedique*, in 1773, in which that physician announces that the curate of Arnay le Duc, after having breathed the infected air proceeding from the corpse of one of his parishioners, while he was attending the funeral, was seized with a putrid disease which reduced him to the last extremity. The second is an extract from the *Gazette of Health*,

(13) See the extract of the dissertation which Monsieur Maret has published on this subject.

(14) Since this was written, it has been proposed to place also the cemetery of Notre Dame at Versailles, out of the city; and the city of Lyons is inclined to a happy change of the same kind. It is much to be wished that these examples would be followed in the different provinces, but above all in Paris.

of the 16th February, 1774. The lord of a village, about two leagues from Nantz, having died; in order that they might give his coffin a more distinguished place, they removed several others, and among those was one of a relation of his who had died three months before: an odour of the most fetid kind spread itself through the church. Fifteen of the assistants died a short time after; the four persons who had removed the coffins died first; and the six curates who attended the ceremony hardly escaped with their lives. But those are not the only dangers we have to dread; the necessity there is of frequently removing a body whose putrefaction is not completed, to make room for other bodies, hath frequently occasioned the most dreadful accidents. Monsieur Navier, a celebrated physician of Chalons, has presented a striking picture of it in a work published in 1775.

After having observed with Lancisi,<sup>(15)</sup> that the earth itself, hollowed to a certain depth, emits frequently injurious exhalations, Monsieur Navier cites several instances of evils arising after the opening of the different vaults, and the digging in several grave-yards. He assures us, that the period of four years is not sufficient wholly to destroy a buried corpse, and he reports on that subject what he observed on the remains of three dead bodies; the one had been buried twenty, the other eleven, and the third seven years, yet they were all still putrefying flesh.

Monsieur Navier opposes with reason, the custom of charnel-houses, where they expose the remains of dead bodies and bones still covered with putrid shreds of flesh, whose frightful smell infects churches and cities. We should not have all these dangers to fear, could we destroy that unreasonable and barbarous custom of burying in the midst of the living, thousands of carcasses, which carry with them for the most part the germ of every species of putrid and malignant diseases.

Upon the supposition that we are obliged to dig out and remove a cemetery, the author advises not to do it until six years after any inhumation. It is much to be wished, according to him, that

---

(15) De noxiis paludum effluviis.

the coffin, after it is put in the earth, should be covered with quicklime. This would accelerate putrefaction ; the vapours would be sooner absorbed ; they would have no vehicle, and they would be unable to rest. Agreeably to this idea, Monsieur Navier would wish that they should always take the precaution to surround the dead bodies with powdered lime. This measure would certainly be very proper, to prevent the effects of the mephitic emanations which escape in abundance at the time of their decomposition.

The small expense which would attend the execution of this measure, and its importance, merits the attention of those zealous magistrates who wish to diminish, as far as possible, the dangers of interments.

It would be still very advantageous, when it becomes necessary to remove the earth of a cemetery, to create a current of air, and by lighting fires in suitable places, to give to it its greatest force ; with the same view gunpowder may be exploded. M. Navier is of opinion, that to the concussion of the air produced by the explosion of powder we owe the health of our soldiers, who are more robust than in the period previous to the use of fire-arms. If it might be allowed to us, we would remark, that that fact is by no means demonstrated, and does not agree with the wandering, agitated life of the soldier, who has other employment for the explosion of artillery than the renewing the air which he breathes.

The last abuse which Mons. Navier mentions in his work, and which he desires may be reformed, is the custom of planting trees in cemeteries. Besides that their roots are in the way of the grave-diggers, and oftentimes cause considerable injury to the walls of the church, they are farther injurious, because the branches form a sort of cover which retains the putrid vapours ; the air cannot circulate so freely near to them as when the cemetery is open to the wind, a situation without doubt preferable to all others. It is true, according to Priestley, that vegetation can absorb a quantity of fixed airs ; but admitting that as a fact, may it not be also said, that the renewal of the air is, without doubt,

the most sure, and at the same time the most simple means to render it completely pure? Monsieur Navier agrees in this with Monsieur Maret.

Such is a faithful representation of the most important facts in relation to interments, which are found in modern works on that subject. I considered it necessary to present them together, that I might completely convince those who might still retain some prejudices, and might moreover dispel the doubts which ill-timed piety, unnecessarily alarmed, might suggest. I proposed, above all, to supply the omissions of the Italian author, by giving entire, the extracts and details which he had too much abridged.

The second part of his work is not by any means as complete as his first; the latter contains the historical details concerning sepultures, in a manner that leaves nothing further to be desired. I have also added several notes, which I have not thought it necessary to distinguish, and which are taken principally from the works of Lilius Gregorius Gyraldus, Porcaccius, and above all, from the treatise by Spondanus, entitled "*Cemeteria Sacra.*"—This volume is very rare, and contains some very curious facts which were pointed out to me, and entrusted to me by Monsieur Lassonne, to whose advice and friendship I feel it my duty to acknowledge publicly that I owe the greatest obligation.<sup>(16)</sup>

It follows, from what the most intelligent authors inform us on

(16) The authors who have written the best upon the places and the dangers of interments, are the following. The reader will, perhaps, be well pleased to find here an account of their works.

ALEXANDER ab ALEXANDRO, in *genialibus diebus.*

LUD CÆLIUS, in *Lectionibus antiquis.*

LILIUS GREGORIUS GYRALDUS, de *Sepulcris et vario sepehendi ritu.* Cet ouvrage est beaucoup cité par Ramazzini, dans son traité de *Morbis artificum.*

THOM. PORCACCIIUS, *Dialogues sur les Funérailles de Anciens.*

JOANNES MEURSIUS, de *Funere.*

CLAD. GUICHARD, sur les *Sépultures des Anciens.*

JO. KIRCHMANNUS, de *Funer. Romanorum.*

JACOB GUTHERIUS, de *Jure Manium.*

ONUFRIUS PANVINIUS, de *Ritu sepehendi mortuos apud veteres Christianos, et eorumdem cæmeteriis.*

GUIELL. BERNARD, de *Sepulturis et Exequiis.*

HENRICUS SPONDANUS, *Cæmeteria. sacra.*

JAC. GRETSERUS, de *Fun. Christian.*

ANTON. BOSIUS, de *Roma subterranea.*

This last work, and that of Thomas Porcaccius, are written in Italian.

the subject, that interment in churches is an innovation condemned by the church, whose dangers are shown by sound philosophy. May the re-union of all the authorities prove, that religion, the laws, and philosophy, at this day agree upon the destruction of an abuse which interest and vanity have introduced, and whose proscription the purity of our temples and the health of mankind imperiously demand.

---

That the course which was pursued relative to interments in the city of Paris may be known, an extract of a decree of the court of parliament is here subjoined.

# DECREE

OF THE

## COURT OF PARLIAMENT,

OF THE 21ST MAY, 1765,

*Regulating and directing Burials out of the City of Paris.*

---

THE court having seen a memoir presented by the Solicitor-general of the King, stating, that in the execution of the decree of the court, of the 12th of March, 1763, the different parishes of the city of Paris had twice sent memoirs respecting burials, giving an account of the number of the annual interments—the nature of the soil—the extent and the antiquity of the burial places, and the revenues of certain religious establishments : that the judges of the court had transmitted to him different reports, and had twice given opinions upon the subject : that after an examination of all those pieces, the solicitor-general of the king was enabled to present to the court his reflections, and the reasons of remedying the various inconveniences which appear to result from the practice of interring the bodies of the dead in cities ; a custom which has arisen from the increase of that capital, which, in extending itself, has enclosed the greater part of the burying places within its limits : that moreover, the number of inhabitants in each parish is so greatly increased by the erection of houses, that the places destined for interments are too confined, and have thereby become burdensome to the neighbourhood.— It will be established by a number of facts presented to the court, and by these they will perceive that in the greater part of the parishes, and more especially among those in the centre of the city, that there are constant complaints of infection spreading around the cemeteries, principally when the heat of the summer arouses the exhalations, and then the putridity is such, that provisions cannot be kept in the neighbouring houses a few hours without spoiling ; which prove, that after the soil is too much saturated to consume the bodies, or the ground is not sufficiently extensive for the number of the annual interments, and

they are therefore obliged to recur too often to the same ground for burials : the persons having charge of interments are also not sufficiently careful to avoid opening too often the same grave. The court is deeply impressed with the belief of those injurious consequences : they have seen with pleasure, that many establishments, attentive to the repeated complaints of the parishes, have already determined to suppress their own cemeteries ; and after the first decree, they had made arrangements among themselves to purchase in common, at a distance from the city, a piece of ground suitable for that purpose, and sufficiently extensive for the use of those parishes in relation to the number of their inhabitants. Under these circumstances, the solicitor-general is of opinion, that nothing more is necessary than to extend a plan, so natural, and so easy to be carried into execution : he therefore proposes to the courts, in the first place, to suppress all cemeteries within the city, so that the law being general, its execution may be the easier ; and, secondly, to establish out of the city seven or eight burial places, which shall be in common to several parishes within certain bounds, so as to diminish the number of those places, and to find more easily places suitable for them. It is under this view of public good, which ought always to actuate the minister of the king, that the solicitor-general presents to the court some regulations which he conceives proper to calm the too well-founded fears of a great number of the inhabitants of that city, and consequently to complete the plan which the court proposed by its decree. For these reasons the solicitor-general requests it may please the court to order—

1. That no interments shall take place in future in the cemeteries now existing in that city, under any pretext whatever, and under such penalty as may be provided, to reckon from the first of January next, excepting in those two which will be mentioned in article 19 hereafter.

2. That the cemeteries now existing shall remain in the same situation in which they now are, for the period of five years, counting from the first of January last ; after which, the grounds are to be examined by the officers of police and physicians, and if in

their opinion it is safe, the bodies and bones may be then disinterred, and the ground used or disposed of.

3. That in future no permission shall be given to inter in any church, unless to the curate or superior dying in office, and on payment of 2000 livres to the funds of the church; and as to interments in vaults, none are to be permitted but proprietors, and they enclosing the body in a leaden coffin.

4. That seven or eight different pieces of ground shall be selected, on elevated situations out of the city, and of soil proper to decompose the bodies.

5. That each cemetery shall be enclosed by a wall of ten feet height throughout its whole circumference; that in each close there shall be a chapel and a keeper's house, but no other buildings shall be there erected; nor shall there be any epitaph but on the walls of the enclosure, and not on the burial places.

6. That interments shall be conducted as formerly; but that after the prayers are finished in the church, the body shall be carried to the place of deposit or chapel for the dead, such as will be indicated in article 10, for a certain number of parishes within certain boundaries, but without granting under any pretext an interment, excepting in the public cemetery.

7. That the biers, or funeral palls, shall be marked with a letter of the alphabet, denoting the parish, and with a number, which, on the margin of the mortuary register of each deceased, shall indicate what body is enclosed therein: the body shall, at the time of its being carried to the depository, be accompanied by an ecclesiastic of the parish, and the bodies shall remain there until the next morning.

8. There shall always reside at the said depository one of the ecclesiastics, who may have accompanied the body there until the time the body shall be carried to the common burying place, to say prayers for the dead; and for that purpose chambers shall be built in the depot of each bound for the clergymen, who shall take the service in turns as designated by the curate.

9. Daily, at two o'clock in the morning, from the first of April to the first of October; and, from four o'clock in the morning,

from the first of October to the first of April, they shall go and take up the bodies which have been carried to the said depository, and shall transport them in one or two carriages covered with palls, and drawn by two horses, going always at a slow pace, to the common burial place of the department; the conductor of the carriage shall first go to the burying place which shall be highest on his route, and so successively to the other cemeteries; the carriage shall always be accompanied by one or more ecclesiastics, who shall be chosen alternately from each parochial department, and named by the curate; the carriage shall moreover be kept in the burying places, and the bearers of those shall have charge of the carriage, and aid in case of accidents; they shall be also the grave-diggers of the common burial place.

10. Each depository where bodies shall be placed until removed to the common burial ground, shall be an enclosed place, of the height of at least six feet, the wall furnished on the top with iron railing four feet high around the whole enclosure, and terminated by an open arch on the top.

11. The eleventh section designates the situation of the places of deposite of the several parishes.

12. The twelfth section designates the places where the eight new cemeteries are to be located, and their size.

13. Directs that the expense for the new cemeteries shall be borne by the inhabitants of the several parishes.

14. Directs that the inhabitants of each parish of the department shall be held to contribute, in just proportions, to all expense of ecclesiastics, lighting the chapel, carriages, horses, &c.

15. That for supporting the charges aforesaid, there shall be paid by the heirs or representatives of the deceased, to the funds of each parish, a contribution of six livres for the higher funeral decorations, and three livres for the others.

The above report was approved, and a decree passed in conformity thereto.

THE END.



NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE



NLM 04586886 7