

9
RESPECT FOR THE REMAINS OF THE DEAD.

AN

ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

CONSECRATION OF OAK HILL CEMETERY,

IN NEWBURYPORT,

JULY 21, 1842.

BY JONATHAN F. STEARNS,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

Published by Request.

NEWBURYPORT:

PUBLISHED BY A. AUGUSTUS CALL.

1842.

BOSTON :
S. N. DICKINSON, PRINTER,
WASHINGTON STREET.

ADDRESS.

RESPECT for the remains of the dead is among the most natural and universal human sentiments. It discovers itself in all countries and climes, among the votaries of all forms of religion, and amidst every degree of knowledge and civilization.

Philosophy, which is too often but another name for the dominion of mere intellect to the degradation of the finer sensibilities, and whose conclusions, founded on a part only of the facts in man's nature, not unfrequently fall short of the truth, may affect to regard it as a weakness, to respect or love the mere remnants of the vestment which the soul used to wear. Human nature, however, speaks the opposite, and will ever do so, till the *heart* ceases to be a part of our constitution, and *cold intellect* makes up the whole sum of humanity.

On recurring to the history of our race, we are at no loss to find facts on this subject. From the massive pyramid, the curious labyrinth, the spacious catacomb, the beautiful mausoleum, and the bulky mound, to the simple flower-border and head-stone, which in some village grave-yard marks the spot where an infant's

dust rests, there are monuments, encompassing the world, which bear witness to the existence of this sentiment. Ancient sepulchres may be found in all ancient countries. They abound throughout Europe and Asia, are crowded thick in some portions of Africa, and are scattered every where over both divisions of the American continent. Some of these are supposed to be older than the pyramids.

Their houses, the ancients sometimes called *inns*, and thought little of durability in their construction; but their sepulchres, they called “eternal habitations,” and constructed these of materials so durable, that it is likely, some of them will remain to be demolished by the great convulsion which is to annihilate the grave.

We see the strength of the principle in question, from the importance which has been attached, in all ages, to a decent and honorable burial. The cave of Machpelah has perished, and the bones of Abraham and Sarah have long ceased to be distinguishable from the common earth with which they have mingled; but the story of that purchased possession, recorded on the most enduring of pages, shows how strongly this sentiment burned in the breast of the noblest of the patriarchs. It was, with Abraham, an object of special solicitude, that he might secure to himself the *possession* of a burying-place.

Among the Egyptians, a tribunal of forty-two judges sat in judgment on the character and life of the deceased, before the body, even though it were that of a king, could be allowed to receive an honorable sepulture. The Greeks and Romans denied sepulchral

honors as a punishment to the worst of criminals, but esteemed it an unpardonable inhumanity to refuse them to a mere personal enemy. It was with them the greatest of all imprecations, that a person might die destitute of burial. No calamity or disgrace was more dreaded.

The existence of a similar dread is discoverable in all parts of the sacred Scriptures. It was the crowning circumstance in the curse of Heaven upon Jezebel: "The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel." The famous giant of Gath and his youthful antagonist, both discover in their encounter the same feeling. "Come unto me," cries the one tauntingly, "and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field;" and the other answers, "I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines to the fowls of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth." It meets us forcibly in the curse upon Jehoiachim: "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass;" "his dead body shall be cast out, in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost." And with still greater sublimity, in the prophetic description of the fall of the tyrant of Babylon: "All the kings of the earth, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house; but thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of them that are slain: — as a carcass trodden under feet."

Nor has the dread of this dishonor yet ceased. The rancor of bigotry has appealed to it, and angry zealots have

"Denied the charity of dust to spread
O'er dust, a charity their dogs enjoy."

Political rancor has appealed to it, and the bones of kings even, and those who had long slept, have been disinterred and scattered to the waters and the winds.

Hence the strong desire, which many have manifested, to secure to themselves an honorable burial. A famous warrior of the middle ages, to protect his remains from violation, is said to have directed his followers to turn aside the current of a river, and deposit his body in its bed. Estates have sometimes been bequeathed with this condition, that the rites of burial should be duly performed by the heir. Even the infidel Voltaire could profess faith, that his bones might be allowed to rest peacefully in consecrated ground. Nor would any of us, however we might reason, regard without horror the idea, that our own remains should be treated with indignity.

The same sentiment is further illustrated by the funeral solemnities of different nations. What nation has not funeral solemnities? Who buries the dead without ceremonies?

To our own ears, the knell has become familiar. The pall, the shroud, the hearse, the dark-robed train of mourners, and the funeral prayer, are with us objects of constant observation. And who would not be considered a barbarian, should he venture to omit these observances? The labored arguments of convenience and economy, in an age distinguished for its devotion to utility, have proved powerless to eradicate even the single custom of wearing mourning garments in the time of bereavement. It is now more than a thousand years since Augustine declared the wearing of black at

funerals a heathenish custom. Yet we wear black; and I doubt not we shall continue to do so, till some other color, equally expressive and distinguishing, shall be thought better adapted to the same purpose. The heart refuses to submit to the claims of interest, or to be governed by the most plausible theories, in a matter so exclusively its own.

The same is true of all periods and countries. It moves our sympathies, at the distance of remote ages, but to read the details of those ceremonies, with which ancient reverence and affection laid to rest the remains of the dead.

Transfer yourselves to classical antiquity. A wailing sound, wild and tumultuous, attracts your attention to some neighboring mansion, and a knot of hair or a cypress branch over the door, with a vase of water standing by its side, apprises you that death is within. The nearest relative has caught with his own lips the expiring breath, and closed with his own hands the eyes of the deceased. They have bathed the body, and anointed it with ointment. They have extended the limbs on a bier, thrown over it a white cloth of linen, woven beforehand perhaps for the express purpose by the hand of affection, and covered all with garlands of flowers. Perhaps their own flowing tresses of hair, cut off as a sign of their grief, are scattered and intertwined with the flowers. The bier itself is covered with flowers. It is laid out in the door-way of its former habitation, and there they watch over it, day after day, wailing bitterly and performing various solemnities. At length they carry it on men's shoulders to the

grave. If a young man, the morning twilight is chosen for this purpose, because the cheerful sun must not look upon an object so sad. It is deposited. And now the parting salutation, thrice repeated, as they cast upon it three handfuls of earth: "Farewell! farewell! farewell! for ever farewell!" "May the earth rest lightly upon thee!" "We ourselves, as the course of nature shall permit, shall all follow thee."

All these offices were performed by near relatives. To have left any of them to strangers, would have been thought an unpardonable indignity or unkindness to the sacred clay. It was a matter of great scandal in a Roman Emperor, that he did not lay out with his own hands the remains of a departed wife. When the body was burned, as at some periods, the ashes, quenched with wine and bathed with tears, were sometimes gathered up into the bosom of a mother, or other very near female relative, to be dried and prepared for the urn.

The ancient Hebrews were a sterner race, and their observances, of course, were less picturesque. But they were by no means less appropriate or expressive. Customs, similar in their import, prevail likewise among the distant and isolated Chinese, among the barbarous inhabitants of Africa, among the islanders of different oceans, and the savage aborigines of America.

Nor are the forms practiced at funerals the only ones, by which the sentiment in question is exhibited. The tomb has always been, with idolaters, an altar, and with others, a place of frequent resort, and the

scene of affecting observances. The Turkish women, it is said, repair regularly before sunrise, on Friday, which is the sacred day with all the Mohammedans, to the graves of their deceased friends, to sprinkle water upon them and adorn them with flowers. The women of Egypt go, at least twice in a week, to pray and weep at the tombs of their friends, scattering palm-leaves and sweet herbs on their monuments. In China, on the fifth day of April, the whole population, says a certain writer, may be seen trooping out in parties to the hills, to adorn and sweep the tombs and make offerings ; leaving behind them long streamers of red and white paper, to mark the fulfilment of their rites. Whole ranges of hills, sprinkled with tombs, may at that season of the year be seen, covered with these testimonies to the departed, fluttering in the wind and sunshine. The Greeks and Romans, at stated seasons of the year, offered sacrifices in honor of the dead, and decked their tombs with garlands. It has been supposed that the annual mourning of the Jewish maids for the daughter of Jephthah was an instance of a similar custom.

It shows the deep hold of the sentiment in question on the human mind, that the performance of due rites to the dead has taken, every where, the high character of an *imperious duty*. With the Chinese, says the writer just referred to, the respect paid to the dead seems to be almost the only thing that approaches the character of a religious sense. “The duties belonging to the dead,” says a writer on Grecian antiquities, “were thought of far greater importance, and the neglect of them a crime of far blacker character than those

required by the living.” Among the Athenians, strict inquiry was made of all candidates for office, whether they had taken due care in celebrating the funerals and adorning the monuments of their relatives. To neglect this duty, even to a stranger accidentally found dead, was thought a crime provoking vengeance from the gods ; and to spare expense in funerals and monuments, was supposed to indicate an unpardonable want of humanity. The ancient Jews viewed the subject in a similar light ; and the ancient Christians placed the duty on a level with the most pious of charities, and even allowed the church plate to be melted down, rather than that the means should fail of defraying the expense.

It is the exaggeration of the sentiment in question, which has given rise to a variety of idolatries. The worship of heroes among pagans, and of the relics of saints among pagan Christians, had its origin unquestionably in this source.

It is the force of this sentiment, likewise, which has given sanctity, in all ages, to the grave. To deface a monument, in ancient times, was a sacrilege, and even now, to disturb a grave, though it be for the high purposes of science, is sufficient to stir public resentment to its lowest and most fearful depths.

It is this which imparts all its interest to the spot where a deceased friend reposes. How we love to have our dear friends buried near us, and how painful is the deprivation of this privilege ! Even the roaming savage loves the graves of his fathers, and is fixed by them to the spot of his nativity. He can quit with

small reluctance his hunting grounds, he can sell to the white man for a trivial recompense his dear native forests and hills ; but his fathers' graves, — these are sacred to him ; he cannot easily exile himself from these. Indeed, the spot where the ashes of a friend lie, never *can* be as common earth to the affectionate heart. It is ever redolent with the memory of that friend.

Nor are any of us regardless of our own future resting place. The sick sailor sometimes dreads, more than a miserable eternity, the prospect of being devoured by the sharks. The sick stranger resigns life far more cheerfully, when assured that his remains shall be conveyed home, to rest side by side with the dust of his kindred. And many a one in the very agonies of dissolution, who perhaps heretofore has thought little of the matter, perhaps despised the whole subject as a weakness, has been constrained like the patriarch Joseph, to “ give commandment concerning his bones.”

Thus the evidence accumulates upon us, that regard for the remains of the dead is among the most natural and universal human sentiments.

II. But is the sentiment in question a worthy one, or does it spring from that diseased state of our nature which develops many tendencies, that require to be suppressed ? I speak at present of the sentiment itself merely, and not at all of those various practices, by means of which we have seen it displayed. Little argument will be required, I think, here.

There are, unquestionably, the strongest associations between the remains and the memory of the dead.

While the form continues fresh and unchanged, we can hardly divest ourselves of the impression, that at least some portion of its consciousness remains. This we own is a mere illusion of the mind. The dead feel nothing, perceive nothing, understand nothing. To the cold clay, it is a matter of indifference, in what way you may choose to dispose of it. But the illusion is inseparable from our nature, and has its origin in a most valuable principle ; and to violate a sacred association, is to violate too the sensibilities involved in it. They who treat with indignity the remains, will not long be likely to respect the memory of a friend; and the sacredness of their respect for living friends will be likely to be proportionably impaired.

Our *religion*, as it seems to me, teaches us to cherish a high regard for the departed. The doctrine of the soul's immortality instructs us to retain them in our affections. They are not lost. They have but passed out of our sight. In another sphere they still live ; — if they died in the faith of the Saviour, a far higher, and holier, and better. It may be, that they still take an interest, perhaps as lively an interest as they ever did, in the affairs of their former abode. Ought we not, therefore, to cherish their memories, perform faithfully as far as may be their requests, sustain to the extent which truth warrants their reputation, and hoping to rejoin them hereafter, give them still a deep place in our hearts?

But the Christian doctrine of a resurrection from the grave, instructs us likewise to respect even the body. True, it may be called now our “vile body.” It is

marred greatly, and must soon put on corruption. Its remains in the process of dissolution are of all objects the most loathsome. But a glorious destiny awaits it. It must share all the destiny of the soul. If it falls asleep in the faith of the Gospel, it is destined, in the progress of events, to put on new and most beautiful forms. By the power of our blessed Redeemer, the reënimated body of his disciple will be "fashioned like unto his own glorious body." True, the care which we take of the ashes will avail nothing towards the promotion of that end. Nor has he who is deposited in the grave by the hand of respect and affection, the least advantage, as far as we can discover, over him who is devoured by wild beasts. Still, it would be a strange violence done to our nature, to treat as a mere object of *offence* what we know has such glories in prospect.

Indeed, the Christian religion, if I mistake not, in a variety of ways, aims to foster our respect for the body. It even tells us that our bodies are temples, and by every such holy consideration, throws around it the most sacred ideas. Our Saviour bestowed strong commendation on her who showed respect for his body, by anointing it before and for the burial. And our feelings, as Christians, must undergo strange transformations, before we shall cease to love and honor Joseph of Arimathea, for the care which he bestowed on that then inanimate form.

No. Philosophy may teach us to despise the body, while it affects to exalt the soul. Stoics may speak of *these vile rags, these mere clogs*. The Gnostic Christians assumed the same strain. True Christianity

speaks just the reverse ; for it teaches us that even “ this *corruptible* shall put on incorruption, and this *mortal* shall put on immortality.” There is a truly Christian sentiment in the words of the very sweetest of all Christian lyrists :

“ The dust and ruins that remain,
Are precious in our eyes ;
These ruins shall be built again,
And all that dust shall rise.”

III. It remains that we consider the question, in what way shall that respect be displayed ? It has doubtless occurred to all present, that the forms and observances referred to as proving the existence of the sentiment, are in many instances unworthy to be imitated. Many of them are, perhaps, to us unintelligible. Many of them seem manifestly absurd. Some are grossly idolatrous and profane. While the sentiment which gave rise to them is a worthy one, the form and manner of its developement are far otherwise.

Christians ought by all means to honor the dead, in a manner comporting with Christianity. Those extravagant expressions of grief, which were practiced by the pagans of antiquity, and which still prevail among some barbarous nations ; — such as rolling themselves in the dust, howling wildly, and tearing their own hair and flesh, are manifestly unworthy of Christians. Even the Hebrews were forbidden by their religion to “ make cuttings in their flesh for the dead.” Christianity, with its salutary lessons, its cheering and ennobling anticipations, its soothing and tranquillizing influences, should preside in all our funeral solemnities. The more sim-

ple, the more orderly, the more quiet, is the form practiced, the better its adaptation to its true end. It should be the most natural expression of a chastened and sanctified sorrow, and the religious element should by all means be most prominent. Religion hallows grief, and by hallowing, transmutes it and relieves its pains. We may *weep* for our departed friends, and we ought to weep. So our Master did, and his example is a standing rebuke to all stoical views of Christianity. Yes,

“ Weep for the dead ! God bids you not restrain,
 What nature claims, affection’s soothing tear,
 But weep like *Christian* mourners ; though the bier
 Bear him away to death’s obscure domain,
 Yet he, with you who still on earth remain,
 The summons of the Archangel’s voice shall hear ;
 And he with you before the Lord appear,
 Soar to the clouds, and meet you there again.”

Weep for your Christian friends, as those who are *not dead*, but *sleeping*. Weep for your own bereavement, as a child that bears a father’s chastisement.

In regard to the remains of deceased friends, all idolatrous demonstrations of respect are, of course, to be discarded by Christians. We have no sensible intercourse with their spirits, we expect no assistance from their mediation, we attach no supernatural virtue to their relics. Of course, we offer no oblations at their shrines. With us, the tomb of a friend is sacred only to memory and devout meditation ; to affectionate regrets for our loss, to self-abasement and confiding resignation before Him who has chastened us for our good, and to the holiest and most exalting anticipations.

There we call to mind the virtues of the departed, to inspire us with a sacred emulation ; and there we meditate on our own frailty and precarious life, and look forward to the destiny that awaits us.

Our arrangements, then, for disposing of the dead, should be such as favor these uses of the tomb. In our methods of burial, we should avoid carefully whatever breaks in upon the sanctity of a becoming sorrow, or diverts the mind from the true object of salutary and religious contemplation. No fictitious terrors, no merely physical apprehensions, should be fostered in connexion with the tomb. It is a gloomy spot, and never can be made otherwise ; because there we bury our fondest earthly hopes and enjoyments. It is a solemn spot, because it stands upon the threshold of time, whence we look forward to a changeless eternity. So let it be. But let us not add to it a gloom not its own, by indulging in repulsive associations, and investing it with imaginary horrors. Let us cherish, rather, by all our arrangements, only those ideas which appropriately belong to it.

The practice of burning the remains, which at some periods has prevailed very extensively, is objectionable in this view of the subject. To the old fire-worshippers it had sacred associations. To us, however, it has none such. And it does violence to the yet undecayed form, while our grief is fresh, and affection clings most closely to the clay.

We may say the same of the practice of embalming. The very process is revolting to our feelings. Hence, among the Egyptians, who practiced it so generally,

the person who, preparatory to the work, made the first incision in the body of the deceased, was accustomed to flee as for his life, as if dreading vengeance from the excited feelings of bereaved friends. It is objectionable too on another ground. If the practice of embalming anticipates, this retards the operations of nature; and preserves the remains of the dead, when they can no longer be a source of satisfaction. The shrivelled mummy is a loathsome object. The idea of a friend thus transformed, is offensive to our best sensibilities. We have no wish to arrest the progress of decay. We are willing that kind Nature should accomplish the task which her divine author has assigned her. All we wish is to protect the sacred relics from abuse, till by natural means they shall cease to be distinguishable. Beyond that we have no care for their destiny, except to look forward to the great resurrection.

Among Christians, the practice of *burying*, either in the earth, or in vaults prepared under its surface, has been almost universally adopted. This accords best with the primitive idea, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." Indeed, it best harmonizes with the whole theory and spirit of Christianity.

In regard to the place and mode of interment, some variety of practice has found place. It is well known that, in some Christian countries, as for instance in our own mother land, the dead are buried from preference in churches. The practice had its origin in superstition. Still the sacred associations of the place, as promotive of the best moral uses of the tomb, afford no inconsiderable argument in its favor. But prudential

considerations are against it. The health and comfort of the living forbid that the dead should be deposited where they congregate. It may be questioned, too, whether religion is not liable to lose something, by being associated, *too exclusively*, with the subject of mortality. Some Christians make the whole of their piety to consist in preparation for the crisis of death. Hence the true influence of religion on life is in part lost.

Respecting burial in tombs or in the earth, there will of course be some difference of opinion. For myself, I should give the preference to the latter. The vault, frequently opened, exposes too often to the vulgar gaze the sacred relics of what once was most dear to us. Besides, the process of dissolution is too appalling. I would have it, if possible, go on and be consummated in the deepest seclusion of nature. Let us never see the loved form of the departed, after death has begun seriously to mar its beauty and expression. Let our last impression, if possible, be a natural one. Then, however reluctantly, let us take a long farewell, and let memory thenceforth be the guardian of a form that can now never be restored. I have also an aversion for the tomb, because it shuts me out, as it were, from the presence of the sacred dust ; I linger at its wall and bolted door, and strive to fix in my imagination its resting-place ; and my feelings are as though I were similarly excluded from the presence of some living object of affection. But at the grave I can seem to find the precise spot. The " little grassy mound " is to me but the *veiled form* of the deceased, and I love it, as if it were his very self. I can sympathize with Wordsworth's " little cottage

girl," who knew for certain, that the dear brother and sister that lay in the churchyard, must be still reckoned as of the family circle ; because she could still visit them there every day, and see with her own loving eyes their green graves. On a tomb, ordinarily, you can write no inscriptions, unless it be for a very few of the inmates. And it gives an interest and reality to the scene, to read at least the names and ages of our friends, and a few facts in their history and character. We reperuse them for the hundredth time with new interest, and the little verse or sentiment on the stone may be made to speak their own language, wanting only the tone.

In some places there are family burying-grounds, set apart, perhaps, by the father of the family, in a small enclosure or corner of his own field. Many things might be said in favor of this arrangement. I shall never forget my impressions during a visit to a venerable old relative. He had carried me through the apartments of his house, and explained to me his arrangement of his property, and the settlements which he had made for his children. I had viewed his large barns and well-stocked farm-yard, wandered over his extensive and rich grounds, climbed the hills, roamed the forests, looked again and again at the broad and beautiful lake, whose clear waters spread their surface near his door, and with many thanks for his generous hospitality, was about giving him the parting salutation. "Stop," said he, "I must show you just one place more ;" and leading on through a small gate, and back around the corner of a shed, he brought me out upon a quiet little nook, where rested the remains of his

dead. "There," said he, "are my children, here my grand-children, there (pointing to a newly-made grave, over which stood the bier, as an indication that the last-arrived rested beneath,) is the newly-buried wife of my son, and here soon I expect to lie down." The associations of the place were most hallowed. It was his own, and his own dead alone rested in its bosom. No stranger foot had a right to intrude ; and I thought hardly any thing could be more soothing and salutary, if we must part with the friends whom we love, than to have, on one's own private premises, such a sweet little garden of graves. But I looked forward a few years, and my views changed. This old man, said I, will soon lay down his dust, and this noble farm will pass away from his family. Strangers, caring nothing for him or for his, will obtain possession, and the rude ploughshare will soon level these mounds.

These reflections will illustrate the importance of a place set apart and secured exclusively to the rest of the dead. Even the public graveyards of our villages and cities have not always been kept sacred to their first object. We wish for something yet more permanent and guarded. Not that any of us can indulge the idea, that our graves will remain for ever unmoved. That were folly. But we wish at least for a spot so protected, that, until our ashes shall cease to be distinguishable, and our memory to be cherished by surviving friends, the repose of our remains may be unbroken. We wish also for some place which we can *appropriate* ; where the dust of whole families, if they choose, may lie together, and where affection may repair often

to weep, and devotion to look forward to eternity. We want no display of magnificence. We want no aristocratic distinctions. Death is, as it has been called, "the great leveller." So let it be. Build costly tombs! Rear stately monuments! It is all mockery. There the fact lies, that the dust of kings is no better than that of peasants. Still a moderate degree of ornament in a cemetery, the display of good taste in its arrangement, is in perfect harmony with its true spirit and design. We wish a spot, then, so arranged and appropriated, that affection may feel free to indulge itself in adorning the repose of the departed; and where the taste of individuals may have scope, and the living be attracted, not repelled.

Such a place is the spot we now occupy. Some might choose one more remote from the peopled town. To others, the *vicinity* of this recommends it. It is near, yet retired; where the noise of business does not disturb, yet where the tired citizen may easily come, when the labors of the day are over, for refreshment, composure, and reflection. In its surface, there is a pleasant variety. The broad level above us, affords a favorable opportunity for the display of taste in the embellishments of art; while the stately oaks, venerable in all ages, and awakening the most venerable associations; the heights and valleys, the steep declivities and gentler slopes, present a pleasing aspect to the lover of nature's irregularities. From the elevation above us, the prospect is varied and delightful. Beneath and around you are the beauties and the hallowed associations of the spot. On the north is our own beautiful town, dear

at all times to the hearts of its sons. On the west, you may catch a few glimpses of the hill, where your venerable sires, with a large portion of their offspring, now slumber. On the south are the broad fields and meadows, extending far away towards the neighboring villages, and bounded by the blue hills and forests. And on the east, you may discern through the trees, the mighty ocean, that common cemetery of the world; whose voice chants a low dirge as the east wind stirs up its waves, at once imparting to this spot a melancholy interest, and seeming to bewail its own dead, gathered out of all ages and climes. The whole scene is in harmony with the object. The taste and judgment already displayed, by those who have laid out these grounds, present before you to-day, in their results, their own highest and best commendation.

Our ambition is not great in this matter, as indeed all ambition were incongruous in connection with a place of rest for the dead. We do not think to vie with Mount Auburn or Harmony Grove. It is enough for us, if we secure to ourselves a quiet, tasteful, hallowed spot, where the dust of our departing friends may be treasured, and where we ourselves may repose by their side, when a few more of these suns shall have set. Such a spot “Oak Hill Cemetery” is — a perfect gem, in its kind; and, although small it is true, in comparison with some others, large enough perhaps for the wants of this place, and admitting readily of future enlargement.

These hills, then, and these valleys and oaks, that flowery plain and these avenues and paths, with all else

that pertains to this spot, we here consecrate to the repose of the dead. For ever sacred to this use may it remain. Let the lust of gain never disturb it. Let the foot of gayety beware of profaning it. Here let Sorrow weep her fill unmolested, and the slow hearse, as it winds up that beautiful avenue, attended by the dark-robed train of the bereaved, meet with nothing to interrupt the solemnity of a place consecrated to such uses as this. Let it ever be, what its name indicates, a *cemetery*, a place of rest, a *lodging-chamber*, where the sleep of the grave may be slept out undisturbed, till the morning of the Resurrection shall break it.

Look round now, respected friends and fellow citizens, look round on the spot you have selected. We have come hither not to honor the dead ; — there are none here, unless perhaps some old chief of past ages, of a race now extirpated and gone, may have laid down his worn body in these mounds. We have come, not to mourn over lost friends, not to meditate on the virtues of the departed, not to lay some new treasure of affection in the dust. We have come rather to survey our own burying-place, and that of those who, with us, now enjoy life. Mark the spot ; — your own burying-ground, your own grave. Come and view it, — ye who now enjoy vigor and health, ye who hitherto have thought little of death, —

“ Ye *living men*, come view the ground
Where you must shortly lie.”

Here the aged man will soon lay his gray hairs ; here the strong man will soon have yielded up his strength ;

here the youthful foot will have ceased from its fleetness, and the sweet flowers of childhood which to-day adorn that green bank, will lie withering beneath the turf on which they now blossom.* Who will be the first tenant of Oak Hill? O who?

I have said, that the dead are not here. Yet they wait even now for admission. Your arrangements have proved even too tardy, for the fell Destroyer who is mowing us down. I said we came not to weep over the departed. Yet we do weep, and we must weep to-day. Very sad is the blow that has smitten us; sad the breach that has been made in our society. One greatly beloved by her intimates, and respected justly by all her acquaintance; the intelligent, the refined, the accomplished; one who took, I have reason to believe, a deep interest in the enterprise which we are here to consummate, waits now for a place for her ashes. And a prominent associate in this enterprise, one who, among the most forward and active, assisted in preparing these grounds, is now lingering beside the cold form of his companion, and waiting only the appointed hour for her burial. Already, ere your preparations are completed, one among you has a wife and a babe ready to become tenants of this spot.†

* Since the above remark was uttered, a melancholy interest has been imparted to it from the fact, that only four days after the consecration, a young lad, then in good health, and among the sprightliest that were present, received the mortal stroke, and now actually lies beneath the turf on the margin of the spot occupied by the assembly.

† Mrs. Sarah Miles Greenwood Lunt, wife of Hon. George Lunt, of this town, died on Wednesday, July 20th, the evening before the consecration, and her infant child a few days previous.

“ O *sad* are the tears *he'll* shed
 And *bitter the griefs he'll pour*,
 As he lays to rest the faithful dead,
 In nature's verdant bower.

“ May every song that falls,
 Each flower that decks the sod,
 And every breathing air recall
His soul to the mourner's God.” *

And thus we live. Thus we die. The whole earth is but a common cemetery. The dead are already innumerable. The living linger a little, then follow them. We are all flying. *Mortals*, certainly, should think much and seriously of *death*.

But let us cast our thoughts forward, for a moment. “ I saw the dead,” said a prophetic voice, “ I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it ; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them : and they were judged, every man according to their works.” More important than the repose of

* The above was altered from two stanzas of one of the hymns sung on the occasion, and composed by the subject of this bereavement. The original is as follows :

“ And sweeter tears we shed,
 And softer thoughts are ours,
 As thus we lay the faithful dead
 In nature's verdant bowers.

“ While every song that falls,
 Each flower that decks the sod,
 And every breathing air recalls
 The soul to nature's God.”

the body is the preparation of the soul for that scene ; more important than a name sculptured in marble, is a name in the Lamb's book of life. May ours, my friends, be a share in that inheritance, which inspiration has pronounced *incorruptible* ; ours a home in those abodes of the ransomed, where eternal truth testifies, "*they cannot die any more.*"

ORDER OF EXERCISES

AT THE

Consecration of the Oak Hill Cemetery,

THURSDAY, JULY 21, 1842.

I. DIRGE.—BY THE BAND.

II. INTRODUCTORY PRAYER.—BY REV. MR. CAMPBELL.

III. SELECTIONS FROM SCRIPTURE.—BY REV. MR. ARNOLD.

IV. ORIGINAL HYMN.—BY HON. GEORGE LUNT.

THE ocean's coral cave,
The green hill's flowery breast,—
What matter where the peaceful grave
That folds our final rest.

We'll sleep the countless dead,
By grove and stream and plain,
Beneath the city's thronging tread,
Or solitary main.

Enough for them that Faith
The shadowy path illumines,
That Hope lights up the hour of death,
And lingers round their tombs.

Yet Abraham bought the cave
By Mamre's ancient shade ;—

The tomb, it was a garden-grave
In which our Lord was laid.

And sweeter tears we shed,
And softer thoughts are ours,
When thus we lay the faithful dead
Mid Nature's verdant bowers :

While every song that falls,
Each flower that decks the sod,
And every breathing air recalls
The soul to Nature's God.

For this, we make the place,
And consecrate its bound ;
For this, may every coming race
Revere and bless the ground !

V. ADDRESS.—BY REV. MR. STEARNS.

VI. PRAYER OF CONSECRATION.—BY REV. DR. DANA.

VII. ORIGINAL HYMN.—BY MISS HANNAH F. GOULD.

MAN passeth soon : his earliest breath
Is but the promise sure of death ;
From being's dawn to darkling age,
The grave his certain heritage.

We sink like drops of summer showers ;
As grass we're mown—we're plucked as
flowers ;
We fall like autumn's faded leaves—
Are garnered in like whitened sheaves.

But Christ hath slumbered in the tomb !
His entering hallowed all its gloom ;
Where he unbarred its rocky doors
The risen Conqueror's glory pours.

And while to earth our dust returns,
As odors rise while incense burns,
The spirit triumphs o'er decay,
Recalled to God, and soars away.

We here appoint, by solemn rite,
On this sequestered, peaceful site
With flowery grass and shadowy tree,
The City of our Dead to be.

Though this now sacred turf must break
Our dearest forms of life to take,
On Nature's calm, maternal breast
'Tis meet her weary children rest.

When Love and Grief their vigils keep
O'er those who in these clods shall sleep,
May Faith hold her unwavering light
'Till death be shown a transient night !

May He who, pitying "touched the bier,"
Console each future mourner here ;
And all the dead, at last, arise
With joy, to meet him in the skies !

VIII. CONCLUDING PRAYER.—BY REV. MR. DIMMICK.

IX. DIRGE.—BY THE BAND.

X. BENEDICTION.

Officers of the Corporation.

TRUSTEES.

JOHN PORTER, PRESIDENT,

CHARLES W. STOREY,

JOHN WOOD,

GEORGE LUNT,

THOS. B. FOX,

ROBERT BAILEY, JR.

JAMES CAREY.

EDWARD S. MOSELEY, TREASURER AND CLERK.

Notice.

¶ PERSONS wishing to purchase lots in the Oak Hill Cemetery, can apply to the President of the Corporation, or either of the Trustees. The lots will be sold at a uniform price of TEN CENTS the square foot. The fee for a choice, until fifty more lots are sold, will be THREE DOLLARS. A plan of the Cemetery may be seen at the Essex Marine Insurance Office, State street, Newburyport.