

ed. We are informed, that at the death of Constantine the great, there were no less than 150 of these Fossors engaged to superintend his funeral, and the numbers employed on some other occasions are also stated to have been very great.

In modern times many persons object to interments in churches, and sometimes with very good reason, as in large cities, where interments are of frequent occurrence, the effluvia arising from the decomposition of a number of dead bodies, is likely to produce contagion and disease. This was, in particular, observable in the city of Paris, where, as many who now hear me are aware, the churchyards became so full, that to preserve the health of the city, they were forced to disinter the dead who had been buried during several centuries, and to convey their remains to the catacombs beneath Paris, where they were arranged in proper order, and where, beneath the living city, there is now established a city of the dead. It is not, however, my object to enter at any length into this portion of the subject, as I only wish to lay before you the reasons of the church for prescribing the ceremonial for the benediction of cemeteries, which we are assembled here on this day to perform. As I have already told you, the custom in the early ages was to embalm the dead in the first instance. After embalming, lights were placed around the corpse, to denote the light of faith, by which the Christian had been illuminated whilst living. Hymns were also chaunted, and amongst the fervent Christians of those days, the custom was, to bury the body with the most solemn pomp. It was carried in procession, and treated with every possible respect, in consequence of having been at one period the temple of the Holy Ghost—consecrated as such by Baptism, and especially united to Christ in the holy and adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist. Of this fact we find repeated mention in the writings of the holy Fathers. Thus we have St. Cyprian saying to the Christians of his day, “Why do you weep, or allow the Gentiles to behold those signs of sorrow, when you boast to them that you profess a living God? Why do you weep and mourn over the departed, as if they were dead and lost for ever?” Again, another Father tells them to exchange their mourning and lamentations for hymns of joy; and St. Jerom, in describing the funeral of the holy widow Paula, says, that “at her funeral procession there were carried incense and lights;” and from the same sacred source we learn, that at the funerals in his days, lamps were lighted, and torches burned, in the same manner as at the Olympic games among the heathens; for as at those profane festivities, the wrestlers who were victorious in the games were led in procession with lighted torches and rejoicings, so the early Christians, viewing, with holy Job, the life of man as a continual warfare, and believing that it was only on the day when they slept in Christ, after persevering to the end, that the fight could be said to ter-

minate, and that they became illustrious conquerors over sin, and death, and hell, they thought it right to celebrate the triumph of the Christian conqueror at his funeral with lights and torches, as if he had been a living hero, victorious over his mortal enemies.

It is unnecessary for me to describe to you the ceremonials prescribed by the church in our own times, for the funerals of the departed. You are already aware of the great clarity and love of the Catholic church towards her children, and of her solicitude for them from baptism to extreme-unction, from the cradle to the grave. She is ever anxious to extend her favours and her protection to them. And this care and affection on a part extend to them even beyond the grave. By being a partaker of the Holy Eucharist during life, the body of the Christian is raised to an inconceivable dignity by this divine contact, this mysterious union; we become thereby incorporated with the natural body of Christ, as by Baptism we were made members of his mystic body the church. And therefore it is, that the remains of Christians after death are honoured as having been the temples of the Holy Ghost whilst living. When, during high mass for the dead, you behold us reciting the solemn prayers over the coffin of the deceased, and going around, sprinkling it with holy water, and even paying to it the honour of incense, do not regard it as an empty ceremonial, but as an honour prescribed by the church to be paid to that body, that had been at one time the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the residence of the Deity.

“Do not, likewise, be surprised at witnessing the ceremonial of this day, because in every word that will be uttered, there will be conveyed a most eloquent appeal to the heart of man. The language used by the church on this occasion, and the ceremony that she prescribes, are calculated to come home to the heart of every one who witnesses them. You are to-day assembled to behold the sanctification of that mould to which, most probably, many amongst you will one day return, as your kindred dust; and henceforth the people of this wide and populous district will have the happiness of beholding erected amongst them this beautiful temple, worthy of the service of that Almighty Being to whom it is dedicated; and they will also have the consolation of having adjoining it a cemetery, in which the remains of themselves and of their friends will, after death, repose in peace under the very shadow of the sanctuary; and while it is sufficiently remote for all purposes of health, it must create all those moving sensations that cannot fail to be produced by the sight of a cemetery in the vicinity of a church. The Holy Ghost tells us that it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, and we could not hear a more moving ex-