

converted into carbonic acid, which escapes into the air, or is taken up by the roots of plants, according to the mode of sepulture; our nitrogen combines with some of the hydrogen of decomposition, forming ammonia, which escapes in a similar way; the water which forms about two-thirds of our weight is lost by evaporation. We are resolved, therefore, into gases, and the only dust which remains behind is the four or five pounds of lime salts which constitute our bones and hard parts. Nature provides sufficient animate and inanimate agents for the removal of decaying animal substances in the air, on the ground, or just beneath its surface, and the more speedy in the hot and damp climates where the results of decomposition are the most deleterious, provided man in his folly does not interfere with her processes. Man, by his mode of interring human bodies, contrives to prolong as much as possible the decay of his deceased brethren, thereby increasing to the utmost the possibility of poisoning the air, infecting the earth, and contaminating the water in the neighborhood of living beings. Air and surface burial permit free access to the myriads of minute living creatures whose office it is to convert into their own harmless substance the bodies of dead animals and men.

In the grave of six feet or more in depth, light and air are in a great measure excluded, and there is no access to the insects from whose eggs emerge the grubs or worms, from whose jaws popular belief expects the rapid and total destruction of the body. The truth is that the devouring worm is a myth, as much without foundation as the "dust" into which we are supposed to be resolved, and the results of decomposition are horrible enough in reality without adding any imaginary sensational accessories.

The modern process of cremation is performed as follows: The crematory at Washington, Pa., is a brick structure one story high, thirty feet long, twenty feet wide, divided into two rooms, a reception room twenty feet square, including walls, and a furnace room twenty feet by ten including walls. Cremation is performed in a fire clay retort, such as is used in the manufacture of illuminating gas, but of a somewhat different shape, heated to a red heat before the body is introduced, which work requires about twenty-four hours. The body is placed in an iron crib made in the shape of a coffin, with small round rods with feet three or four inches long to keep it up off the bottom of the retort. These feet are inserted into a flat strip of iron two inches wide and a quarter inch thick, turned up at the ends so that the crib with the body will slide into the retort easily. In addition to the ordinary burial garments, the body is covered with a cloth wet with a saturated solution of sulphate of aluminium (common alum) which, even when burned, retains its form, and prevents any part of the corpse from being seen until the bony skeleton begins to crumble down. During the cremation there is no odor or smoke from the consuming body, as the furnace is a self-consumer of smoke and other vaporable matter. The time required to complete the operation is about two hours, but improvements in the process will doubtless shorten the time. A very small portion of the remains is ashes, but the mass is in the form of calcined bones in small fragments, very white, odorless, deprived of animal matter, and may be preserved any length of time without change.

There are four to seven pounds of these remains from various sized adult bodies; they can be placed, for preservation, in a one-gallon druggist's bottle, with large ground stopper, into which a photograph of the deceased, with appropriate record, can be placed before introducing the remains. This bottle can be placed in the *columbarium* of the crematory, kept among the cherished memorial of the family of the deceased, or placed beside other remains previously buried in cemeteries or graveyards.

This building, with its appliances, cost about \$1,500. A plainer one, equally efficient, could now, at the reduced cost of labor and materials, be built for \$1,000. An impression prevails that this crematory was erected for public accommodation, and that the owner of it follows cremation as a business for fees. This is a mistake. It was built for the use of its present proprietor and friends in the vicinity who concur with him in this reform. No fees have been charged, nor ever will be while in his possession.

A not unimportant item in this process is the great diminution in the expense of funerals. The average expenditure for each body buried is \$100, the average cost by cremation is \$20; the aggregate saving in the United States, from the adoption of this system would annually amount to millions of dollars. The expense of cremation is less than that of an ordinary burial case.

Cremation certainly is not barbarous, for it never entered, nor could it enter into the heads of barbarous people. It is not burning; there is no pile of wood or other combustibles, no visible flame, no sickening odor; it is a process of great scientific skill, the reduction of the body to ashes by the application of intense heat, 1,000° to 2,000° Fahr., by which it is resolved into its chemical elements at once, and without the flame coming into contact with the body.

We are all, more or less, carried away by our emotions and sensibilities, especially in the matter of the treatment of the bodies of our dear ones. As rational beings we must not allow our instincts and emotions to run away with our reason, especially in a matter as important as this.

The history of cremation in the United States is very brief, as the progress of such a radical change in long established customs must, of necessity, be slow. The earliest known instance was of Colonel Henry Laurens, in South Carolina, in 1796. Including that, to the present time not more than eight, or possibly ten, cases have occurred, the last in the current year and three or four in the crematory at Washington, Pa. Among those who left instructions for the disposal of their remains by cremation was Dr. Charles F. Winslow, of California, a former member of the Society of Arts, whose body was cremated about five years ago, in Salt Lake City, in a temporary furnace erected by his command, by the administrators of his estate. The Washington, Pa. crematory has had nearly one hundred applications, which have been declined, as the trustees do not intend to follow it as a business. They will permit only an occasional cremation for the purpose of keeping the subject before the public, and of hastening the disappearance of the prejudice which exists against this mode of disposing of the dead. It is believed by them that similar structures will be built at other places, and they will furnish for such laudable purpose any information which their experience enables them to give.

Leaving out of the question, then, all but sanitary reasons, cremation is far preferable to earth burial: and we cannot but think that by degrees this reform will supplant prejudiced superstition, the pomp and profits of undertakers, and give to the living that immunity from many diseases, arising from foul air, impure water, and poisoned earth, which they are entitled to receive from the progress of sanitary science.—*Proc. Soc. Arts, Boston.*

#### A KING'S OUTFIT.

The orders from the King of Siam for the furnishing of the new royal palace at Bangkok have created a pleasant sensation in Spitalfields, where silk has been specially manufactured to supply the largest demand for any one order since the furnishing of the palace of the late Viceroy of Egypt. The furniture for which this London silk has been required made a pretty show in the establishment of the London manufacturers who were intrusted with the execution of the order, and who show also the plan of the new palace for which the furniture has been designed.

Popular interest seems to center in the wonderful royal bedstead, quite an edifice in itself. It is fourteen feet wide and twenty feet high, and has a dome-like canopy, lined with rose-colored silk. It has the appearance of three European beds joined in one, the center part of the bed being about a foot higher than the sides. The material is walnut, elaborately carved and gilt. The chief decoration of the carver represents the triple-headed elephant, the imperial crown and the State umbrellas, which compose the royal arms. These arms are woven in, imprinted, or carved on the furniture and upholstery of all the different apartments.

For the Queen's drawing-room all the furniture is gilt even to the Erard piano; and chairs and couches are covered with rich fancy silks. For the dining room, the sideboard is of royal dimensions—eighteen feet wide and as many feet high. It is of solid mahogany, and is adorned with fine carving. There are furnishings also for the King's study and newsroom—including a writing desk, which is the envy of those who see it—for the council chamber, the audience chamber, the audience chamber, the aquarium, the smoking room and the various other apartments.

To execute this large order, several of the warerooms were for some months turned into workshops. The important business of packing took some time, and the shipment was at last made in the month of March.