

and the penalty was death or transportation. This severity continued under Christian Kings and Emperors, because of the temptation which the cemeteries offered to the covetous and superstitious: the former were eager to possess themselves of the splendid ornaments deposited with the bodies of the rich; the latter to obtain relics, which were considered, by the weak and ignorant, of infinite value.

5. In regard to the consecration of burial-grounds, much misconception appears to exist, in the minds of great numbers of well-disposed and intelligent persons. We have seen that many ages elapsed before burial-grounds were established around churches, as they are at present; and, consequently, the custom of consecrating them is not of ancient date. Christian churches were indeed devoted to God, and consecrated for holy purposes, from the beginning, because authorised by Scripture, but not churchyards, which have not Scriptural but only Ecclesiastical warrant; nor are there any instances of the consecration of burial-grounds or churchyards till long after they had been made the depositories of the dead,—and then consecration was gradually adopted, and more especially because it began to be believed that they would derive a more perfect security by setting them apart with a holy service, than they had hitherto possessed from the civil and canon law.

6. Consecration adds the sanction and influence of religion to the penalty of the law, in separating by a visible and holy Service a portion of ground around the church of every parish, for ever, in which to inter the bodies of the congregation. This is done by the bishop, so far as in him lies, and by law he can. He separates the assigned portion of land by holy prayer and benediction from all common and profane uses whatsoever, and dedicates and consecrates the same for a burial-ground, or place of sepulchre, for the interment of the dead; and that the same ought so to remain by this his definite sentence and final decree.

7. Such is the purport of the sentence of consecration, in regard to churchyards; and it is subject to three important limitations. First: the civil law of the land, which may forbid, as the authorities of this city have lately forbidden (on account of the health of the inhabitants) any further