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Communications solicited on all Medical and Scientific subjects, and also Reports of Cases occurring in practice. Address, DR. J. L. DAVISON, 12 Charles St., Toronto.

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CREMATION.

The disposal of the bodies of the dead in large centres of population, is a matter of no small importance to the living. Cremation, although admittedly the most desirable method, is not making the advance which sanitation demands. Among intelligent and cultivated people, who are above superstition, we might expect a more rapid growth of so important a reform; but sentiment and custom combined, are proverbially tenacious of life. It must be evident to all, that the accumulation of bodies of the dead in contracted spaces in or near towns and cities are sources of contamination, not only to the water-supply, but also to the atmosphere, and clearly deleterious to the health of the inhabitants of the vicinity.

In the profession, sanitary science is rapidly advancing in relative importance, and much has been accomplished thereby, in reducing the rate of mortality in towns and cities. Yet this pregnant source of disease and deaths, largely obtains, notwithstanding the efforts heretofore made to abate it, and the condition of many cemeteries, not only in the older cities of Europe, but also the more modern cities of America, is not much to the credit of our boasted civilization, not to speak of insanitary evils arising therefrom. The accumulation of the remains of human beings in all stages of decay and corruption, in the cemeteries of our ever growing towns and cities, it is evident, must be too rapid for nature's method of purification,

and these vast putrifying and gas-generating masses cannot fail to become centres of disease and death, and largely add to the mortality of their respective localities.

That general cremation would obviate all this, and wholly eradicate this pestilent insanitary evil is self-evident. Many of the nations of the world in former ages burned the bodies of their dead, in fact, most of the Indo-Europeans retained this custom until Christianity began to spread among them. Cremation was opposed by the Christians chiefly on account of their belief in the resurrection of the body. But why the bodies of the dead should be less liable to resurrection after cremation, than after the slower, but not less certain reduction to their original elements, by nature's process, does not appear. However, many of the more modern, and not less intelligent Christians, do not raise that objection, and custom, with unreasoning sentiment are the chief, if not the only obstructions to the rapid growth of cremation. Were the demand for cremation common, the cost would not exceed that of ordinary burial in any case and indeed might be much less, so that in an economical sense, there could be no objections. The only valid objection which we have noticed is the destruction of the evidences of crime, where suspicion of criminality subsequently transpired. In Europe cremation is more frequently adopted than in America. In Italy it has been legal since 1877. In several other places it is occasionally adopted, and considerable agitation in its favor has occurred in Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig and other places. In Paris, last February, the body of a son of Dr. Jacoby, was cremated in the presence of officials and is said to be the first which was incinerated in that city. Much interest has been awakened during the last ten or fifteen years, in Holland, Belgium, France, England, and the United States. Yet the advance of this method of disposing of the dead has been slow, nor can it be said to have obtained the recognition and attention which, as a desirable sanitary measure, it merits.

Were the intelligent lay press to take the matter in hand, and bring it before the people, showing not only its utility, but its necessity, in the interests of the urban inhabitants of the world, something more in this direction would undoubtedly be accomplished, by which the sanitation of many towns and cities would be greatly improved.