ALBANY

RURAL CEMETERY

ASSOCIATION:

ITS RULES, REGULATIONS, &c.

WITH

AN APPENDIX.

ALBANY:

PRINTED BY C. VAN BENTHUYSEN AND CO.

1846.
This, my friends, is an occasion and ceremony of most uncommon and affecting interest. We have sought out a pleasant habitation for the dead; and having chosen our ground, and secured its possession, we come now to dedicate and devote it solemnly to their use forever. With appropriate ceremonies, with religious rites, with consecrating prayer, we come now to set apart this ground to be their separate dwelling-place as long as time shall last. The purchase is ours, the inheritance belongs to them. The living make the acquisition, but only as a sacred trust; the dead shall possess it altogether. By significant legal forms it is already "made sure for the possession of a burying-place;" and now by other forms, more significant and more sacred, in a solemn assembly, by solemn invocation to men and angels as our witnesses, standing on the soil which we thus appropriate, beneath the spreading canopy of the listening Heavens, and in the awful presence of God, we declare and pronounce—in the name and behalf of all, as authorized and required by the part assigned me in this ceremonial, I declare and pronounce—that henceforward, and for all time to come, this ground belongs not to the living, but to the dead!

This, indeed, is, or may be, a dedication to ourselves, as well as to others. Here we expect to bury our friends; and here we expect our friends will bury us. In the impressive business of this day we assist, in some sort, at our own obsequies. We choose, so far as the choice depends on ourselves, this field for our last resting place; and we anticipate the time when we shall make our bed in the dust of this field. We set apart and consecrate here a place for ourselves, along with others; and we seem, in a manner, to come beforehand to anoint our bodies to the burying.' Our language is, 'bury us not in Egypt; we will lie with our kindred;' and we make beforehand a becoming preparation for our repose by the side of graves which, before us or after us, they will occupy. Wherever death may overtake us, in any temporary absence from the chosen city of our abode, if such should be our lot, we anticipate that the last sigh of the sinking spirit will be—"Thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place."

But by whomsoever occupied, by ourselves or others, or by others with ourselves, this ground must be in possession of the dead, and of the dead alone. The living cannot occupy the earth exclusively—space must be yielded for the dead. As fast as we can count men die, and their bodies must rest somewhere in the ground—such, at least, as are not consumed by fire, or swallowed up in the sea. Wherever the custom of inhumation prevails, as it does amongst Christians, and very extensively elsewhere, land must be appropriated for their use and occupation. Where it is not thus appropriated, and appropriated liberally, the dead are defrauded. They are entitled to their share of the earth, by what seems an original and authoritative designation of the uses to which it should be subject. 'Thou shalt return unto the ground; for
out of it wast thou taken.' The living must possess and subdue the earth; but a fair portion of it is the true inheritance of the dead.

From various causes they have not always had their just share of the land. Sometimes they have been sunk in deep waters. Sometimes they have been reduced to ashes by fire, that the reliques might be kept without the necessity of assigning to them much space for their preservation. This was the custom of the Romans in some periods of their history, and was a very ancient practice among the Greeks. Sometimes they have been huddled together in barrows and cairns, or in grothoes and catacombs. The subterranean quarries of Paris, have been made the receptacle of the remains of three millions of human beings, and the eternal tramp of the thronged city is above them. In Naples, at this day, the dead, out of number, are thrown in undistinguished heaps into vast charnel-pits. Oftentimes, where the practice of interments has prevailed, there has been a revolting haste in terminating the tenancy of the body in the narrow strip of ground which it has been allowed to occupy. It is often covered with consuming substances. And, without any fictitious aids to hasten decay and decomposition, in the cemetry of Pere la Chaise at Paris, by far the larger number of graves are held for the term of five and six years only. At the end of this brief period, new tenants come into possession. It is difficult to say where the dead have received the greatest wrong; whether in practices of this sort, or in some customs of an opposite tendency. The superstitions of the ancient Egyptians led to an attempt to preserve the bodies of the dead from decay; and the state of the arts enabled them to succeed. The dead of three thousand years ago are seen in our day. In another way the dead have been deprived of sepulture, by a practice the most absurd and revolting. In our own times, cadaveries may be seen, sometimes comprising many hundreds of desicated bodies, sitting in ghastly mockery of life, dressed in gay attire, and tricked off with glittering ornaments, or bearing the symbols of earthly rank, authority, or command!

In all these cases, and many more like them that might be adverted to, it seems to me, a great wrong has been done—a wrong both to the dead and the living. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." This is the decree, and is it not at once a doom and a promise?" 'Bury me'—that is the natural request of the dying, breathed with the last breath. 'The earth is the mother of us all—and now that I must die, let me go back to my mother. I would not be burned. I would not, if it can be avoided, be cast into the sea. Above all, do not attempt, by any process, or for any object, to keep me long above ground, or accessible to the living, after I am dead. But bury me—lay me in the earth—if possible, on some retired and pleasant spot, and near to those whom I have loved in life—at any rate, bury me, and let me thus return to the dust, out of which I was taken.' This I say is natural. This is what men feel while in life, and especially when they come to die. It is sentiment, if you will; but, to my mind, it is better than a conclusion found by reasoning on the matter. Sentiment, gushing warm from the heart, is often better and wiser than the cold deductions of our
reason. Sentiment makes a part of us, just as the conscience does, and we should be wretched creatures enough without it. And, on this subject particularly, mere argumentation would be sadly out of place. In truth, there is nothing in it to argue about, and every attempt of the sort has ended, and will always end, in nothing better than crude speculation. When the heart is appealed to and not the understanding, on matters in which sentiment and the feelings decide—like those in which the conscience decides—there is little difference between the wisdom of one man and the wisdom of another. Here men are brought very near the same level, as they are in the grave. All the sneers of the Cynics, and all the speculations of philosophers of all schools, have not been able to weaken the sentiment which the mass of mankind entertain and cherish, that the bosom of the genial earth is the just and proper place for the last repose of their decaying bodies, and that it is not unbecoming or unwise in them, to take some thought and feel some anxiety about it. Plato and Pliny, Socrates and Solon, are no authority for them on such a matter—and least of all is Diogenes. What we know is, that this feeling, which prompts the common desire of the fainting heart, that our lifeless bodies may be laid away in the earth, in some quiet and secure place of sepulture, with respectful observances—that this feeling, if it be not reason, or the result of reason, is at least consonant with reason, and not opposed by any thing which reason or conscience, truth, religion or duty can suggest. And this is enough—enough for mortal men, who ought to be touched with a feeling of becoming humility when dealing with a subject which the great God and Father of us all has much more to do with than we have, or can have. He has said that we shall return unto the ground; and that may well be our humble desire, when we have done with life.

No mode of disposing of the dead has ever prevailed, at any period of time, or in any quarter of the world, with any thing like the common feeling of satisfaction which has attended the mode of burial in the earth. And there has been no quarter of the world, perhaps, where this mode has not sooner or later prevailed. It seems certain enough that this was the primitive mode. Abel was the first person that died, and the voice of his blood cried unto the Lord “from the ground.” The first authentic account we have of the disposition of the dead, is an account of their burial; and nations the most rude and savage, as well as those the most civilized and refined, have followed this custom. The ancient Germans; the ancient Britons; the Aboriginal tribes of North and South America; the Egyptians; and the Greeks and Romans, in the best periods of their history; the Jews; the Chinese, the Turks and the Arabs; the Africans; and nearly all the nations and tribes now existing on the earth, with singular and partial exceptions, have followed, and do follow, this practice of committing the bodies of their dead to the ground. They have not always, as I have intimated, and as I shall shortly have occasion to repeat and to remark upon more particularly, they have not always given to the dead, and they do not now give them, their just and fair share of eligible land for their inheritance, and for undisturbed repose. But still, the mode of disposition in
common use is by burial. And even where practices have prevailed, to some of which I have adverted, which violate or evade the common right of the dead to sepulture, the right itself seems to be recognized and acknowledged.

Among Christian nations — among all nations which have had the Bible in hand — there can be no doubt that a strong feeling has commonly prevailed in behalf of this custom, and for the quiet and undisturbed rest and repose of the remains of the dead. It was a strong religious sentiment among the Hebrews. To be deprived of burial was deemed the greatest dishonor, and the greatest calamity that could befall any man. Even enemies, and criminals and suicides were not denied burial. The Preacher sets forth in strong terms his sense of the utter misery of a man if "he have no burial." And a prophet denounces as the severest curse that could light on the head of the kings and priests of Judah who had practised idolatry, that their bones should be cast out of their graves, and that they should not afterwards be gathered, nor be buried.

It would seem impossible that Christians, with the Bible in their hands, could ever have any other thought than that the dead ought to be permitted to rest in their proper graves. I have already referred to the significant language of the Bible, upon the happening of that event which brought death into the world: "Till thou return unto the ground." There was labor to be endured, and labor with trials, and difficulties and sorrows, but the end would come by and by. That death which had been denounced as the certain penalty of disobedience, would overtake

the patient and stricken laborer at last, and then there would be the blessing of a "return unto the ground." In the grave, at least, he should rest. I cannot help thinking that there was designed to be something of promise, and hope and comfort in this language. I cannot help thinking that in this language is found a sufficient warrant and authority to the dead for an indefeasible right of sepulture, which the living cannot withhold without grievous wrong. It seems to me that every living human creature is entitled when he dies, under this great charter, to land enough for an ample grave, with quiet possession, and ample security against intrusion or disturbance.

To the Christian, moreover, there is a higher and a more sacred interest in sepulture, and in graves, than Jews and Gentiles have ever felt, or could ever feel. The blessed Savior of the world slept three days in a grave. This imports much, very much to the Christian. He who follows this adorable Being in his life, is quite willing to follow him in his death and in his burial. The path to the grave, and the grave itself, have been illuminated by this event, and its natural gloom has been dissipated. Christians can see their way plain enough to the grave, and plain enough through it. The light from another world streams into it, and at once, the way out of it, and the glories beyond it, are revealed. On the third day the Savior rose, and, with the glorified body which he brought with him from the ground, ascended into Heaven. The body with which he had descended into the earth was human, like our own. It was subject to death; and it was through death, and the grave, that it put on immortality. In this event, we
read, and we think we understand something of the mysteries of immortal life, through mortal dissolution, and rest in the grave. We now know, better certainly than we could, ever have known without it, what it means to "return unto the ground." It is, indeed, a rest from labor—a repose after a long and difficult journey; but it is more than this. The worn and weary body is laid away in the earth, to undergo that great and mystic change which must fit it for the resurrection. "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." And with those who have this faith, what an unspeakable interest attaches to the inanimate human body, beyond every thing which untaught nature, with all its tenderness and all its sensibilities, could ever suggest or feel. What new value is imparted to it—I had almost said what sacredness—from the consideration of the bright and ineffable change which its substance is capable of, and the high and holy uses to which it is destined!

And we are taught, I think, that the grave, the bosom of the quickening earth, is the true and proper place where the body should wait for this expected change. We seem to find this in the original declaration made to the first man; 'Thou shalt return unto the ground.' And we find it in the memorable case and example of Jesus Christ. The gate of immortality has been opened through the grave. Flesh and blood cannot inherit immortal life; it is through death and the dissolving of these physical elements, that a body is obtained which may live forever. "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." And the grave is the selected and appointed place where the gross elements of physical being are to be dissolved, and the quickening to a new and enduring life of the body begun. Men cannot, indeed, be cheated of immortality by any neglect, or any indignity, or any casualty, to which their bodies may be subjected. Oceans cannot quench, fires cannot consume, the essential principle of life which God may draw from the dissolving elements of our mortal frames. Christians believe themselves safe enough anywhere, and every where, in his hands. But, then, it is better both to go through life, and to walk through the shadowy valley, in what seems to be at once the natural and the appointed way. And whatever philosophers have thought, and whatever Christians who call themselves philosophers may think, after all that nature, and our own hearts and sensibilities teach us on this subject, and after the instructions which religion and the Bible impart to us, there are few amongst us, I think, of whatever faith, who do not feel a strong and unconquerable desire and hope that when they die, their bodies will rest in quiet graves, undisturbed at least, if undistinguished, and there await events which sooner or later must come in the revelations of God and eternity.

In the observations which I have thus far made, after the desultory manner in which I have indulged, it has been my object to give you my impressions of the general right of sepulture, and of undisturbed repose in the grave, which belongs to us all, and of the common obligation which rests on the living to make proper and ample provision for the becoming interment and rest of the dead. What I have intended to say, in brief, is this: That the living have no right to claim the earth exclusively as their inheritance. A
fair portion of it belongs to the dead. We have no just right to stint or limit unfairly the portion which may be assigned to them; or to make the term of their occupancy too short for their proper repose. There is room enough for them, and for us too. Burial seems to be the natural mode of disposing of the dead—the best for them, and the best for all. It seems, also, to be the natural, certainly it is the common, and all but universal desire and feeling of the human heart, that after death, we should receive burial. It has been the mode almost universally adopted. No law of nature that we know of, no law of propriety or convenience, no law of God, fords it, or disapproves it. No discovery of science or of philosophy condemns it. On the contrary, without violent or strained constructions, it may be thought to have been the mode originally prescribed by the great Author of nature himself, from the hour when death entered into our world; and, at any rate, it is a mode and practice which commends itself strongly and irresistibly to the judgment and heart of all Christians, as sanctioned by all that is most sacred, most mystical and sublime, and most tender and endearing, in the holy faith to which they are devoted.

If I am correct in these views, then it follows that a serious obligation and duty rest on the living in reference to this subject. It is not their own convenience merely that they are to consult in regard to the proper disposal of the dead. There is a duty to the dead to be considered, and the interests of humanity, the interests of religion, and the interests of immortality seem to be involved in it. We cannot say, that this matter has always attracted, or that it does now generally attract, as much attention as it deserves, even in Christian countries, our own included. Indeed, I am not sure that other countries have not set us examples in this regard which would shame our Christian practices. The Chinese, notwithstanding their swarming and crowded population, seldom inter in a grave that has been previously occupied, and never while any traces of a former body remain. Their cemeteries spread over very extensive grounds, and these, perhaps, as beautiful and valuable as any. This is not, certainly, after the teaching of Plato, who would have none but the most barren ground set apart for sepulture.

It is not to be denied, or doubted, that nearly all over Christendom, in modern times, especially, perhaps, in the large cities and towns, very insufficient and very slovenly provision has been made for interments—oftentimes leading to very unfeeling and unseemly practices. I have already named some examples, and I will not repeat them. In the spread and growth of cities, it has happened quite commonly that the living population have crowded back the dead from their resting places, not unfrequently by several removals, in the successive stages of municipal extension and improvement. In our country, particularly, the march of improvement has been rapid—in cities, as every where else—and changes are sudden and striking, and sometimes ruthless. Nobody can tell, in an American city, how long the dead in the vaults of churches, in private vaults, and in churchyard graves, may be allowed to occupy their position, or how soon, rather, their places will be demanded as sites and marts of business or trade. We know how
unsafe they are even in grounds which seemed at first quite remote from the centres of settlement and population. It is not too much to say, perhaps, that not a considerable city, or large town, could be named in the United States where, from its foundation, provision has been made for interments at all adequate to secure the dead from untimely and unhallowed intrusion and disturbance. There has been, altogether, until a very recent period, a sad and discreditable neglect in regard to this matter, and in our own country, quite as much as elsewhere. We, Christians, have not cared for the dead as the ancients cared for them. The works which they constructed in memory of the dead, some of them elaborate and ponderous, and others of exquisite beauty and finish, exist in our day. The highest efforts in architecture, sculpture and painting had their origin in this pious object. The vast cavernous temples of India hewn out of solid mountains of rock; the mighty pyramids of Egypt; the grottoes at Thebes carried by excavation into the mountain side, with their galleries, and colonnades, their long subterranean alleys, and spacious chambers adorned with paintings and bas-reliefs; the sepulchres of Telmessus cut in the face of lofty perpendicular rocks, apparently almost inaccessible, and wrought, with marvellous art, into Ionic porticoes with gates and doors beautifully carved and embossed; these remarkable works and others like them remain to impress us with the zealous concern — mistaken it might be sometimes in its object — superstitious it might be oftentimes — which the ancients displayed for the repose and for the honor of the dead. The exquisite taste and genius of the Greeks were tasked to the utmost to furnish and adorn the dwellings and monuments of the dead. The Romans in this as in other things imitated the Greeks.

Now, I know of no reason why Christians — those who dwell in the light of the true religion and of modern civilization — should not, in their own rational and becoming way, make at least some sort of suitable provision for the accommodation of the dead, in ample and secure graves, and with such reference to location, position and embellishment as may accord with a just taste, and with those sensibilities of our nature which cannot be less refined and worthy because touched and chastened by the influences of a holy faith. I know, indeed, of no excuse for the neglect of such a duty. And it affords me particular gratification to be able to say that a new interest has been awakened of late in our country on this subject, which has taken thus far exactly the right direction, which is spreading in every quarter, and promises results the most satisfactory and the most creditable.

Rural cemeteries have already been established in various parts of the country, beginning with that of Mount Auburn, near Boston, which was consecrated in September 1831. There are now several others in Massachusetts. Baltimore has one; Philadelphia has one; New York has one; Rochester in this State has one. It is after the examples thus set us by our sister cities, that the ground on which we now stand has been procured for a rural cemetery for the city of Albany.

This manner of preparing pleasant habitations for the dead, apart from the bustle and throng of busy dwelling-places, in grounds selected for the beauty of
their position and outline; and susceptible of every kind of sylvan embellishment, is not new. In this matter we can only follow the example which the Egyptian, the German, the Hebrew, the Asiatic, the Greek, of the old time, have set us. They went without their cities, and made their cemeteries in shady groves, and laid down their dead beneath waving trees, amid embowering shrubbery, and near to bubbling fountains, murmuring streams, and placid lakes. There is one of the most beautiful cemeteries of this sort in the world in the environs of Constantinople. It is guarded by the Moslem with religious care. The communities of Moravian brothers have long been accustomed to form their burial-places into ornamental gardens. Need I tell you that the tomb in which the body of the Redeemer was laid was in a garden?

The grounds where we are now assembled have been selected for a cemetery, as in the examples to which I have referred, with a special view to their natural beauty, and their capability of improvement after the manner of landscape gardening. No one, after looking at them, can doubt, I think, that they have been most happily chosen. We see and know what they are, but we can scarcely know what they will be — how full of inexorable beauty — when the forming hand of taste shall once have been laid upon them. I shall not attempt to describe them. Here they are to answer for themselves to every eye. What pleasant hills and knolls — what gentle slopes — what abrupt declivities — what bushy dell — what trees and groves — what silvery, soft-toned, gentle, living waters, are here — and what expressive silence

— what religious repose! Think of all this sylvan beauty at once fully brought out and softened by the hand of art — at once heightened, yet subdued by the civilizing and humanizing processes to which it may be subjected — and then think of it inhabited only by the dead! here and there a grave, or a group of graves; some in one lovely spot, some in another, as the dying themselves may choose; or as kind surviving friends may select, and marked by every variety of modest memorial which affection can suggest. What scene in nature could be more beautiful, more attractive, more impressive, more improving!

These grounds, under becoming regulations, will be open to all — to every class; and every complexion in society; and to every sect in religion. The poor will have a place here as well as the rich: and wherever the dead are laid in these grounds, there will they remain. There will be no crowding of grave upon grave, or heaping of bodies one upon another. This will be a common burial-place where all shall meet on terms of common fellowship and brotherhood. Every dear relation in life, severed by death, shall be found restored again in these grounds — husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, shall be re-united here. Friend shall meet friend here; and enemies, too, shall meet, their enmities all forgotten. Yonder city, where, as every where in life, the harmonies of society are apt to be broken by petty feuds, by ungentle rivalries, by disturbing jealousies, by party animosities, by religious dissensions, shall, one after another, as death singles them out, send up her multitudinous population to these grounds, and here they shall take their respective places, in
amiable. proximity to each other, peaceful, harmonious, undisturbed and undisturbing, the same shadows deepening on them, the same sun-light over them, resting in the same hope, and waiting for the same change and the same resurrection. It is a place appointed for the final composition and adjustment of all their difficulties and differences. And what weights of sorrow, too, and pain, trouble and affliction, shall the inhabitants of that city, first and last, lay down in this place. What a refuge shall it be, from shivering misery, and squalid want, from secret griefs, from penury, oppression, injustice — in short, from the world. The young, the innocent, the beautiful, the happy, must make their bed, also, in this hallowed earth, as well as others; and what an exquisite tenderness of interest shall their presence lend to the place, and the scene. The graves here, like trees in the tropics, shall bear at one and the same time, the fresh bud, the opening flower, the unripe fruit, and that which is yellow to the harvest. The aged, and the honored, the wise, the brave, the learned, the skilful, the eloquent, shall lie down here to their last sleep, and with them, the undistinguished, the humble, and the lowly in heart and life. What a congregation will be gathered here — how vast, and varied — and in how short a space of time! And in the process of filling up these grounds from the tide of death which shall be turned in upon them from the living city, oh, who can tell what anguish of spirit, what agony, what despair, must here be felt and suffered!

Doubtless the sting of Death — the barbed arrow shot from his Parthian bow — is in the heart of the living, of the wretched survivors of the loved dead. How many are there who go mourning all their days! We hope and believe that in the use of this ground as a cemetery, there may be found something to aid in assuaging the bitterness of the mourner's grief. Here the dead will possess quiet graves, which friends may watch over and beautify at pleasure. Here Nature will put on all her loveliness to tempt the mourner forth to frequent communion with her, with the spirits of the departed, and with God, the Author of all. The habit of coming abroad into her presence, in places where she clothes herself in aspects and garments of inexpressible beauty, when the heart, melted with grief, has acquired a lively sensibility to her attractions and power, cannot fail to bring soothing and comfort to the wounded spirit. The gloom which usually surrounds and settles over the grave will here be dissipated, and the sacred spot where the remains of the loved and lost are deposited, will be associated only with objects and accompaniments the most attractive and beautiful.

We hope and believe, too, that the custom of visiting these grounds, which cannot fail to become general, when once they shall be brought into arrangement and order, subdued and embellished, and made accessible at every point by easy avenues and graceful walks, will conduce to other eminent benefits and blessings. It can hardly be otherwise. We may expect this place to become a great moral Teacher; and many valuable lessons there are, that may be learned here — lessons of humility, of moderation, of charity, of contentment, of mercy, of peace — lessons touching nearly all that concerns life, touching death,
ALBANY CEMETERY.

and touching immortality. In the ceremonies of this day, we open wide the ample volume where these lessons are to be read; we point to its recorded page; we invite to a frequent and diligent perusal. We think there is wisdom in it above the wisdom of men, and profit, unspokenable profit, both for the life that now is, and for that which is to come.

A dirge—performed by the Lothian Band, in a most effective style—followed, when

The following Doxology, having been read by the Rev. Dr. Kennedy, was sung by the choir, to the tune of Old Hundred:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him all creatures here below,
Praise him above ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The Benediction was then pronounced by the Rev. Dr. Potter, and the company dispersed.

The weather was not all that could have been desired—the sky being overcast and threatening rain. The grounds in consequence did not appear in all their beauty—but none who visited them could fail to be impressed with the adaptation of the place to the purposes to which it is to be sacredly devoted. Many, we presume, visited it for the first time yesterday—but few, we presume, will now omit an opportunity to revisit it. We hope soon to see the walks and carriage-ways laid out, and a beginning made towards converting this retired and inviting spot into a general place of burial.

ALBANY RURAL CEMETERY.

These grounds are situated about three miles from the city, on the macadam road to Troy, and embrace one hundred acres; and for varied and beautiful scenery, it is believed they may vie with the most celebrated grounds of the kind in this country. The Trustees acknowledge their great indebtedness to Major D. B. Duerck, for the admirable development of the natural advantages and capabilities of the grounds, which are now open for the inspection of the living and the repose of the dead.

The rules, regulations, and suggestions which follow, and which have been adopted by this institution, are copied—almost verbatim—those of Mount Auburn, Laurel Hill, and Greenwood.

RULES AND REGULATIONS.

I. All lots shall be held in pursuance of "An act to incorporate the Albany Cemetery Association," passed April 20, 1841; and "An act to alter and amend the same," passed May 13, 1845, and shall not be used for any other purpose than as a place of burial for the dead.

II. The proprietor of each lot shall have the right to erect any proper stones, monuments, or sepulchral
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PRINTED BY C. VAN BENTHUYSEN AND CO.

1846.
ADDRESS,

BY THE

HON. D. D. BARNARD,

Delivered October 7, 1844.

This, my friends, is an occasion and ceremony of most uncommon and affecting interest. We have sought out a pleasant habitation for the dead; and having chosen our ground, and secured its possession, we come now to dedicate and devote it solemnly to their use forever. With appropriate ceremonies, with religious rites, with consecrating prayer, we come now to set apart this ground to be their separate dwelling-place as long as time shall last. The purchase is ours, the inheritance belongs to them. The living make the acquisition, but only as a sacred trust; the dead shall possess it altogether. By significant legal forms it is already "made sure for the possession of a burying-place;" and now by other forms, more significant and more sacred, in a solemn assembly, by solemn invocation to men and angels as our witnesses, standing on the soil which we thus appropriate, beneath the spreading canopy of the listening Heavens, and in the awful presence of God, we declare and pronounce—in the name and behalf of all, as authorized and required by the part assigned me in this ceremonial, I declare and pronounce—that henceforward, and for all time to come, this ground belongs not to the living, but to the dead!

This, indeed, is, or may be, a dedication to ourselves, as well as to others. Here we expect to bury our friends; and here we expect our friends will bury us. In the impressive business of this day we assist, in some sort, at our own obsequies. We choose, so far as the choice depends on ourselves, this field for our last resting place; and we anticipate the time when we shall make our bed in the dust of this field. We set apart and consecrate here a place for ourselves, along with others; and we seem, in a manner, to "come aforehand to anoint our bodies to the burying." Our language is, "bury us not in Egypt; we will lie with our kindred;" and we make beforehand a becoming preparation for our repose by the side of graves which, before us or after us, they will occupy. Wherever death may overtake us, in any temporary absence from the chosen city of our abode, if such should be our lot, we anticipate that the last sigh of the sinking spirit will be—"Thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place."

But by whomsoever occupied, by ourselves or others, or by others with ourselves, this ground must be in possession of the dead, and of the dead alone. The living cannot occupy the earth exclusively—space must be yielded for the dead. As fast as we can count men die, and their bodies must rest somewhere in the ground—such, at least, as are not consumed by fire, or swallowed up in the sea. Wherever the custom of inhumation prevails, as it does amongst Christians, and very extensively elsewhere, land must be appropriated for their use and occupation. Where it is not thus appropriated, and appropriated liberally, the dead are defrauded. They are entitled to their share of the earth, by what seems an original and authoritative designation of the uses to which it should be subject. "Thou shalt return unto the ground; for
out of it wast thou taken.' The living must possess and subdue the earth; but a fair portion of it is the true inheritance of the dead.

From various causes they have not always had their just share of the land. Sometimes they have been sunk in deep waters. Sometimes they have been reduced to ashes by fire, that the reliques might be kept without the necessity of assigning to them much space for their preservation. This was the custom of the Romans in some periods of their history, and was a very ancient practice among the Greeks. Sometimes they have been huddled together in barrows and cairns, or in grottoes and catacombs. The subterranean quarries of Paris, have been made the receptacle of the remains of three millions of human beings, and the eternal tramp of the thronged city is above them. In Naples, at this day, the dead, out of number, are thrown in undistinguished heaps into vast charnel-pits. Oftentimes, where the practice of interments has prevailed, there has been a revolting haste in terminating the tenancy of the body in the narrow strip of ground which it has been allowed to occupy. It is often covered with consuming substances. And, without any factitious aids to hasten decay and decomposition, in the cemetery of Pére la Chaise at Paris, by far the larger number of graves are held for the term of five and six years only. At the end of this brief period, new tenants come into possession. It is difficult to say where the dead have received the greatest wrong; whether in practices of this sort, or in some customs of an opposite tendency. The superstitions of the ancient Egyptians led to an attempt to preserve the bodies of the dead from de-
reason. Sentiment makes a part of us, just as the conscience does, and we should be wretched creatures enough without it. And, on this subject particularly, mere argumentation would be sadly out of place. In truth, there is nothing in it to argue about, and every attempt of the sort has ended, and will always end, in nothing better than crude speculation. When the heart is appealed to and not the understanding, on matters in which sentiment and the feelings decide—like those in which the conscience decides—there is little difference between the wisdom of one man and the wisdom of another. Here men are brought very near the same level, as they are in the grave. All the sneers of the Cynics, and all the speculations of philosophers of all schools, have not been able to weaken the sentiment which the mass of mankind entertain and cherish, that the bosom of the genial earth is the just and proper place for the last repose of their decaying bodies, and that it is not unbecoming or unwise in them, to take some thought and feel some anxiety about it. Plato and Pliny, Socrates and Solon, are no authority for them on such a matter—and least of all is Diogenes. What we know is, that this feeling, which prompts the common desire of the fainting heart, that our lifeless bodies may be laid away in the earth, in some quiet and secure place of sepulture, with respectful observances—that this feeling, if it be not reason, or the result of reason, is at least consonant with reason, and not opposed by any thing which reason or conscience, truth, religion or duty can suggest. And this is enough—enough for mortal men, who ought to be touched with a feeling of becoming humility when dealing with a subject which the great God and Father of us all has much more to do with than we have, or can have. He has said that we shall return unto the ground; and that may well be our humble desire, when we have done with life.

No mode of disposing of the dead has ever prevailed, at any period of time, or in any quarter of the world, with any thing like the common feeling of satisfaction which has attended the mode of burial in the earth. And there has been no quarter of the world, perhaps, where this mode has not sooner or later prevailed. It seems certain enough that this was the primitive mode. Abel was the first person that died, and the voice of his blood cried unto the Lord “from the ground.” The first authentic account we have of the disposition of the dead, is an account of their burial; and nations the most rude and savage, as well as those the most civilized and refined, have followed this custom. The ancient Germans; the ancient Britons; the Aboriginal tribes of North and South America; the Egyptians; and the Greeks and Romans, in the best periods of their history; the Jews; the Chinese, the Turks and the Arabs; the Africans; and nearly all the nations and tribes now existing on the earth, with singular and partial exceptions, have followed, and do follow, this practice of committing the bodies of their dead to the ground. They have not always, as I have intimated, and as I shall shortly have occasion to repeat and to remark upon more particularly, they have not always given to the dead, and they do not now give them, their just and fair share of eligible land for their inheritance, and for undisturbed repose. But still, the mode of disposition in
common use is by burial. And even where practices have prevailed, to some of which I have adverted, which violate or evade the common right of the dead to sepulture, the right itself seems to be recognized and acknowledged.

Among Christian nations—among all nations which have had the Bible in hand—there can be no doubt that a strong feeling has commonly prevailed in behalf of this custom, and for the quiet and undisturbed rest and repose of the remains of the dead. It was a strong religious sentiment among the Hebrews. To be deprived of burial was deemed the greatest dishonor, and the greatest calamity that could befall any man. Even enemies, and criminals and suicides were not denied burial. The Preacher sets forth in strong terms his sense of the utter misery of a man if “he have no burial.” And a prophet denounces as the severest curse that could light on the head of the kings and priests of Judah who had practised idolatry, that their bones should be cast out of their graves, and that they should not afterwards be gathered, nor be buried.

It would seem impossible that Christians, with the Bible in their hands, could ever have any other thought than that the dead ought to be permitted to rest in their proper graves. I have already referred to the significant language of the Bible, upon the happening of that event which brought death into the world: “Till thou return unto the ground.” There was labor to be endured, and labor with trials, and difficulties and sorrows, but the end would come by and by. That death which had been denounced as the certain penalty of disobedience, would overtake

the patient and stricken laborer at last, and then there would be the blessing of a return unto the ground.” In the grave, at least, he should rest. I cannot help thinking that there was designed to be something of promise, and hope and comfort in this language. I cannot help thinking that in this language is found a sufficient warrant and authority to the dead for an indefeasible right of sepulture, which the living cannot withhold without grievous wrong. It seems to me that every living human creature is entitled when he dies, under this great charter, to land enough for an ample grave, with quiet possession, and ample security against intrusion or disturbance.

To the Christian, moreover, there is a higher and a more sacred interest in sepulture, and in graves, than Jews and Gentiles have ever felt, or could ever feel. The blessed Savior of the world slept three days in a grave. This imports much, very much to the Christian. He who follows this adorable Being in his life, is quite willing to follow him in his death and in his burial. The path to the grave, and the grave itself, have been illuminated by this event, and its natural gloom has been dissipated. Christians can see their way plain enough to the grave, and plain enough through it. The light from another world streams into it, and at once, the way out of it, and the glories beyond it, are revealed. On the third day the Savior rose, and, with the glorified body which he brought with him from the ground, ascended into Heaven. The body with which he had descended into the earth was human, like our own. It was subject to death; and it was through death, and the grave, that it put on immortality. In this event, we
read, and we think we understand something of the mysteries of immortal life, through mortal dissolution, and rest in the grave. We now know, better certainly than we could, ever have known without it, what it means to "return unto the ground." It is, indeed, a rest from labor—a repose after a long and difficult journey; but it is more than this. The worn and wearied body is laid away in the earth, to undergo that great and mystic change which must fit it for the resurrection. "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." And with those who have this faith, what an unspeakable interest attaches to the inanimate human body, beyond everything which untaught nature, with all its tenderness and all its sensibilities, could ever suggest or feel. What new value is imparted to it—I had almost said what sacredness—from the consideration of the bright and ineffable change which its substance is capable of, and the high and holy uses to which it is destined!

And we are taught, I think, that the grave, the bosom of the quickening earth, is the true and proper place where the body should wait for this expected change. We seem to find this in the original declaration made to the first man; 'Thou shalt return unto the ground.' And we find it in the memorable case and example of Jesus Christ. The gate of immortality has been opened through the grave. Flesh and blood cannot inherit immortal life; it is through death and the dissolving of these physical elements, that a body is obtained which may live forever. "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." And the grave is that select and appointed place where the gross elements of physical being are to be dissolved, and the quickening to a new and enduring life of the body begun. Men cannot, indeed, be cheated of immortality by any neglect, or any indignity, or any casualty, to which their bodies may be subjected. Oceans cannot quench, fires cannot consume, the essential principle of life which God may draw from the dissolving elements of our mortal frames. Christians believe themselves safe enough anywhere, and everywhere, in his hands. But, then, it is better both to go through life, and to walk through the shadowy valley, in what seems to be at once the natural and the appointed way. And whatever philosophers have thought, and whatever Christians who call themselves philosophers may think, after all that nature, and our own hearts and sensibilities teach us on this subject, and after the instructions which religion and the Bible impart to us, there are few amongst us, I think, of whatever faith, who do not feel a strong and unconquerable desire and hope that when they die, their bodies will rest in quiet graves, undisturbed at least, if undistinguished, and there await events which sooner or later must come in the revelations of God and eternity.

In the observations which I have thus far made, after the desultory manner in which I have indulged, it has been my object to give you my impressions of the general right of sepulture, and of undisturbed repose in the grave, which belongs to us all, and of the common obligation which rests on the living to make proper and ample provision for the becoming interment and rest of the dead. What I have intended to say, in brief, is this: That the living have no right to claim the earth exclusively as their inheritance. A
fear portion of it belongs to the dead. We have no just right to stint or limit unfairly the portion which may be assigned to them; or to make the term of their occupancy too short for their proper repose. There is room enough for them, and for us too. Burial seems to be the natural mode of disposing of the dead — the best for them, and the best for all. It seems, also, to be the natural, certainly it is the common, and all but universal desire and feeling of the human heart, that after death, we should receive burial. It has been the mode almost universally adopted. No law of nature that we know of, no law of propriety or convenience, no law of God, forbids it, or disapproves of it. No discovery of science or of philosophy condemns it. On the contrary, without violent or strained constructions, it may be thought to have been the mode originally prescribed by the great Author of nature himself, from the hour when death entered into our world; and, at any rate, it is a mode and practice which commends itself strongly and irresistibly to the judgment and heart of all Christians, as sanctioned by all that is most sacred, most mystical and sublime, and most tender and endearing, in the holy faith to which they are devoted.

If I am correct in these views, then it follows that a serious obligation and duty rest on the living in reference to this subject. It is not their own convenience merely that they are to consult in regard to the proper disposal of the dead. There is a duty to the dead to be considered, and the interests of humanity, the interests of religion, and the interests of immortality seem to be involved in it. We cannot say, that this matter has always attracted, or that it does now generally attract, as much attention as it deserves, even in Christian countries, our own included. Indeed, I am not sure that other countries have not set us examples in this regard which would shame our Christian practices. The Chinese, notwithstanding their swarming and crowded population, seldom inter in a grave that has been previously occupied, and never while any traces of a former body remain. Their cemeteries spread over very extensive grounds, and these, perhaps, as beautiful and valuable as any. This is not, certainly, after the teaching of Plato, who would have none but the most barren ground set apart for sepulture.

It is not to be denied, or doubted, that nearly all over Christendom, in modern times, especially, perhaps, in the large cities and towns, very insufficient and very slovenly provision has been made for interments — oftentimes leading to very unfeeling and unseemly practices. I have already named some examples, and I will not repeat them. In the spread and growth of cities, it has happened quite commonly that the living population have crowded back the dead from their resting places, not unfrequently by several removals, in the successive stages of municipal extension and improvement. In our country, particularly, the march of improvement has been rapid — in cities, as everywhere else — and changes are sudden and striking, and sometimes ruthless. Nobody can tell, in an American city, how long the dead in the vaults of churches, in private vaults, and in churchyard graves, may be allowed to occupy their position, or how soon, rather, their places will be demanded as sites and marts of business or trade. We know how
unsafe they are even in grounds which seemed at first quite remote from the centres of settlement and population. It is not too much to say, perhaps, that not a considerable city, or large town, could be named in the United States where, from its foundation, provision has been made for interments at all adequate to secure the dead from untimely and unhallowed intrusion and disturbance. There has been, altogether, until a very recent period, a sad and discreditiable neglect in regard to this matter, and in our own country, quite as much as elsewhere. We, Christians, have not cared for the dead as the ancients cared for them. The works which they constructed in memory of the dead, some of them elaborate and ponderous, and others of exquisite beauty and finish, exist in our day. The highest efforts in architecture, sculpture and painting had their origin in this pious object. The vast cavernous temples of India hewn out of solid mountains of rock; the mighty pyramids of Egypt; the grottoes of Thebes carried by excavation into the mountain side, with their galleries, and colonades, their long subterranean alleys, and spacious chambers adorned with paintings and bas-reliefs; the sepulchres of Telmessus cut in the face of lofty perpendicular rocks, apparently almost inaccessible, and wrought, with marvellous art, into Ionic porticoes with gates and doors beautifully carved and embossed, these remarkable works and others like them remain to impress us with the zealous concern — mistaken it might be sometimes in its object — superstitious it might be oftentimes — which the ancients displayed for the repose and for the honor of the dead. The exquisite taste and genius of the Greeks were tasked to the utmost to furnish and adorn the dwellings and monuments of the dead. The Romans in this as in other things imitated the Greeks.

Now, I know of no reason why Christians — those who dwell in the light of the true religion and of modern civilization — should not, in their own rational and becoming way, make at least some sort of suitable provision for the accommodation of the dead, in ample and secure graves, and with such reference to location, position and embellishment as may accord with a just taste, and with those sensibilities of our nature which cannot be less refined and worthy because touched and chastened by the influences of a holy faith. I know, indeed, of no excuse for the neglect of such a duty. And it affords me particular gratification to be able to say that a new interest has been awakened of late in our country on this subject, which has taken thus far exactly the right direction, which is spreading in every quarter, and promises results the most satisfactory and the most creditable.

Rural cemeteries have already been established in various parts of the country, beginning with that of Mount Auburn, near Boston, which was consecrated in September 1831. There are now several others in Massachusetts. Baltimore has one; Philadelphia has one; New York has one; Rochester in this State has one. It is after the examples thus set by us our sister cities, that the ground on which we now stand has been procured for a rural cemetery for the city of Albany.

This manner of preparing pleasant habitations for the dead, apart from the bustle and throng of busy dwelling-places, in grounds selected for the beauty of
their position and outline, and susceptible of every kind of sylvan embellishment, is not new. In this matter we can only follow the example which the Egyptian, the German, the Hebrew, the Asiatic, the Greek, of the old time, have set us. They went without their cities, and made their cemeteries in shady groves, and laid down their dead beneath waving trees, amid embowering shrubbery, and near to bubbling fountains, murmuring streams, and placid lakes. There is one of the most beautiful cemeteries of this sort in the world in the environs of Constantinople. It is guarded by the Moslem with religious care. The communities of Moravian brothers have long been accustomed to form their burial-places into ornamental gardens. Need I tell you that the tomb in which the body of the Redeemer was laid was in a garden?

The grounds where we are now assembled have been selected for a cemetery, as in the examples to which I have referred, with a special view to their natural beauty, and their capability of improvement after the manner of landscape gardening. No one, after looking at them, can doubt, I think, that they have been most happily chosen. We see and know what they are, but we can scarcely know what they will be — how full of inexpressible beauty — when the forming hand of taste shall once have been laid upon them. I shall not attempt to describe them. Here they are to answer for themselves to every eye. What pleasant hills and knolls — what gentle slopes — what abrupt declivities — what bushy dells — what trees and groves — what silvery, soft-toned, gentle, living waters, are here — and what expressive silence

— what religious repose! Think of all this natural beauty at once fully brought out and softened by the hand of art — at once heightened, yet subdued by the civilizing and humanizing processes to which it may be subjected — and then think of it inhabited only by the dead; here and there a grave, or a group of graves; some in one lovely spot, some in another, as the dying themselves may choose; or as kind surviving friends may select, and marked by every variety of modest memorial which affection can suggest. What scene in nature could be more beautiful, more attractive, more impressive, more improving!

These grounds, under becoming regulations, will be open to all — to every class, and every complexion in society, and to every sect in religion. The poor will have a place here as well as the rich: and wherever the dead are laid in these grounds, there will they remain. There will be no crowding of graves upon grave, or heaping of bodies one upon another. This will be a common burial-place where all shall meet on terms of common fellowship and brotherhood. Every dear relation in life, severed by death, shall be found restored again in these grounds — husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, shall be re-united here. Friend shall meet friend here; and enemies, too, shall meet, their enmities all forgotten. Yonder city, where, as every where in life, the harmonies of society are apt to be broken by petty feuds, by ungentle rivalries, by disturbing jealousies, by party animosities, by religious dissensions, shall, one after another, as death singles them out, send up her multitudinous population to these grounds, and here they shall take their respective places, in
ambiable. proximity to each other, peaceful, harmonious, undisturbed and undisturbing, the same shadows deepening on them, the same sun-light over them, resting in the same hope, and waiting for the same change and the same resurrection. It is a place appointed for the final composition and adjustment of all their difficulties and differences. And what weights of sorrow, too, and pain, trouble and affliction, shall the inhabitants of that city, first and last, lay down in this place. What a refuge shall it be, from shivering misery, and squalid want, from secret griefs, from penury, oppression, injustice — in short, from the world. The young, the innocent, the beautiful, the happy, must make their bed, also, in this hallowed earth, as well as others; and what an exquisite tenderness of interest shall their presence lend to the place, and the scene. The graves here, like trees in the tropics, shall bear at one and the same time, the fresh bud, the opening flower, the unripe fruit, and that which is yellow to the harvest. The aged, and the honored, the wise, the brave, the learned, the skilful, the eloquent, shall lie down here to their last sleep, and with them, the undistinguished, the humble, and the lowly in heart and life. What a congre- gation will be gathered here — how vast, and varied — and in how short a space of time! And in the process of filling up these grounds from the tide of death which shall be turned in upon them from the living city, oh, who can tell what anguish of spirit, what agony, what despair, must here be felt and suffered!

Doubtless the sting of Death — the barbed arrow shot from his Parthian bow — is in the heart of the living, of the wretched survivors of the loved dead. How many are there who go mourning all their days! We hope and believe that in the use of this ground as a cemetery, there may be found something to aid in assuaging the bitterness of the mourner's grief. Here the dead will possess quiet graves, which friends may watch over and beautify at pleasure. Here Nature will put on all her loveliness to tempt the mourner forth to frequent communion with her, with the spirits of the departed, and with God, the Author of all. The habit of coming abroad into her presence, in places where she clothes herself in aspects and garments of inexpressible beauty, when the heart, melted with grief, has acquired a lively sensibility to her attractions and power, cannot fail to bring soothing and comfort to the wounded spirit. The gloom which usually surrounds and settles over the grave will here be dissipated, and the sacred spot where the remains of the loved and lost are deposited, will be associated only with objects and accompaniments the most attractive and beautiful.

We hope and believe, too, that the custom of visiting these grounds, which cannot fail to become general, when once they shall be brought into arrangement and order, subdued and embellished, and made accessible at every point by easy avenues and graceful walks, will conduce to other eminent benefits and blessings. It can hardly be otherwise. We may expect this place to become a great moral Teacher; and many valuable lessons there are, that may be learned here — lessons of humility, of moderation, of charity, of contentment, of mercy, of peace — lessons touching nearly all that concerns life, touching death,
and touching immortality. In the ceremonies of this day, we open wide the ample volume where these lessons are to be read; we point to its recorded page; we invite to a frequent and diligent perusal. We think there is wisdom in it above the wisdom of men, and profit, unspeakable profit, both for the life that now is, and for that which is to come.

A dirge—performed by the Lothian Band, in a most effective style—followed, when

The following Doxology, having been read by the Rev. Dr. Kennedy, was sung by the choir, to the tune of Old Hundred:—

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him all creatures here below,
Praise him above ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The Benediction was then pronounced by the Rev. Dr. Potter, and the company dispersed.

The weather was not all that could have been desired—the sky being overcast and threatening rain. The grounds in consequence did not appear in all their beauty—but none who visited them could fail to be impressed with the adaptation of the place to the purposes to which it is to be sacredly devoted. Many, we presume, visited it for the first time yesterday—but few, we presume, will now omit an opportunity to re-visit it. We hope soon to see the walks and carriage-ways laid out, and a beginning made towards converting this retired and inviting spot into a general place of burial.

ALBANY CEMETERY.

ALBANY RURAL CEMETERY.

These grounds are situated about three miles from the city, on the macadam road to Troy, and embrace one hundred acres; and for varied and beautiful scenery, it is believed, they may vie with the most celebrated grounds of the kind in this country. The Trustees acknowledge their great indebtedness to Major D. B. Dewees, for the admirable development of the natural advantages and capabilities of the grounds, which are now open for the inspection of the living and the repose of the dead.

The rules, regulations, and suggestions which follow, and which have been adopted by this institution, are copied almost verbatim from those of Mount-Auburn, Laurel Hill and Greenwood.

RULES AND REGULATIONS.

I. All lots shall be held in pursuance of "An act to incorporate the Albany Cemetery Association," passed April 20, 1841, and "An act to alter and amend the same," passed May 13, 1845, and shall not be used for any other purpose than as a place of burial for the dead.

II. The proprietor of each lot shall have the right to erect any proper stones, monuments, or sepulchral
RULES CONCERNING VISITORS.

[A map is in course of preparation. By attention to the guard-boards, visitors will find no difficulty in passing through the grounds.]

Each proprietor of a lot will be entitled to a ticket of admission into the Cemetery with a vehicle, under the following regulations, the violation of which, or a loan of the ticket, involves a forfeiture of the privilege:

I. No vehicle will be admitted unless accompanied by a proprietor, or member of his or her household, with his or her ticket, or unless presenting a special ticket of admission obtained at the office of the Cemetery, or of a trustee.

II. On Sundays and Holidays the gates will be closed. Proprietors of lots, however, will be admitted on foot, by applying to the keeper at the lodge.

III. No person will be admitted on horseback, without obtaining a special ticket of admission.

IV. No vehicle will be allowed to pass through the grounds at a rate exceeding three miles the hour.

V. No person or party having refreshments, will be permitted to come within the grounds, nor will any smoking be allowed.

VI. No horse may be left by the driver in the grounds unfastened.

VII. All persons are prohibited from picking any flowers, either wild or cultivated, or breaking any tree, shrub or plant.

VIII. All persons are prohibited from writing upon, defacing, or injuring any monument, fence, or other structure in or belonging to the Cemetery.