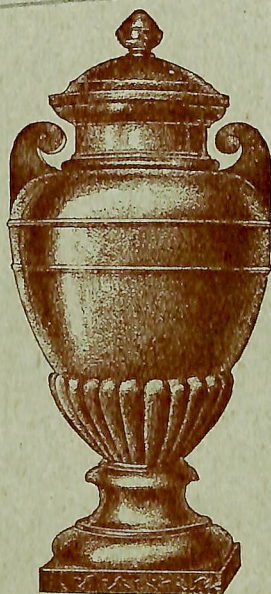


CHURCH,  
WOMAN  
AND  
CREMATION



PUBLISHED BY  
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NEW YORK 1899

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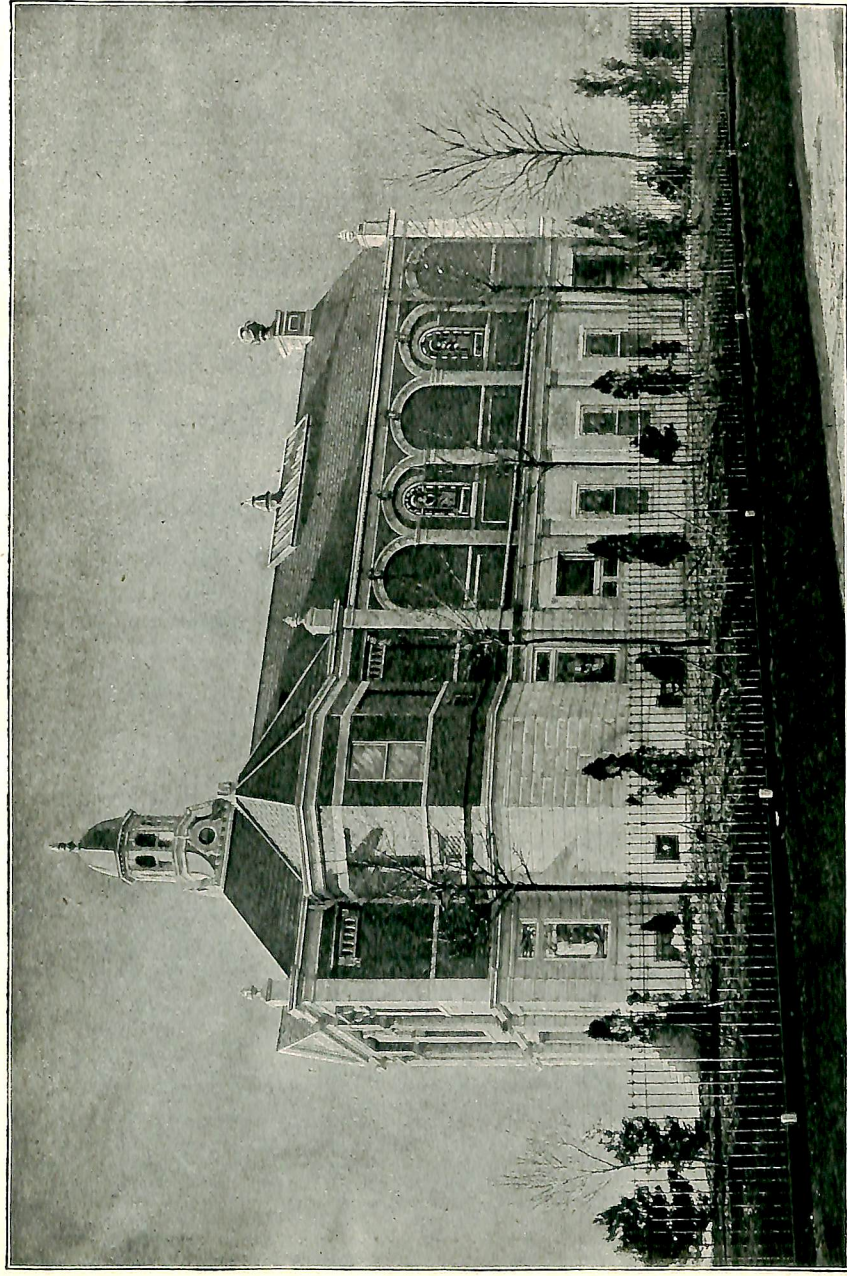
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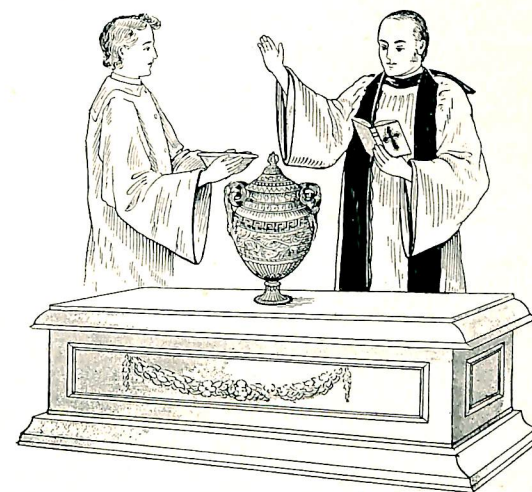






CREMATORY AND COLUMBARIUM AT FRESH POND — NEW YORK





"ASHES TO ASHES."

## CREMATION AND THE CHURCH

BY LOUIS LANGE

Read before the  
MANHATTAN CREMATION AND PROVIDENT SOCIETY  
New York, September 14, 1898



The future belongs to that Church which best comprehends the Spirit of the Age.

\* \* \* \* There is no room for doubt that cremations would increase in number by leaps and bounds, if next Sunday every pulpit in the land would pronounce in favor of our cause. Such unexpected assistance, however acceptable and appreciated, could add nothing to the intrinsic value of cremation. It might elucidate and recommend its merits and advantages, but the result would clearly show that most people, too indifferent to think for themselves, prefer to have their minds made up for them and follow the directions or the lead of recognized authority.

The attitude of the Christian Church in general toward cremation inspires no sudden hopes—it is discouraging; for what shallow reasons will be shown further on. Yet, while we are sorry not to have the whole Church with us, we have friends in every division; prominent among the denominations, and deservedly in the place of honor, our Protestant Episcopalians, whose ministers frequently officiate at the crematory, and among whom Bishop Potter, Bishop Lawrence, Dr. Rainsford, Dean Hodges and many others have shown us marked and gratefully remembered favor. It should therefore be borne in mind, that no criticism or scrutiny in the following pages applies to those ministers, whose broad conception of their priestly duties recognizes no religious distinction between voluntary cremation and burial by accidental fire, in water, earth or ice.

For illustration of this paper may serve as types the Roman Catholic and the Berlin Lutheran or Evangelical Churches. Both place at present many obstacles in our way of progress, but will in time see in cremation, what American and English Protestants have already recognized: a sanitary blessing, not a religious question or a danger to the Church.

While the position of the popes of Rome and Berlin is inimical, their combined influence, even with perfect organizations under whip and spur, is not all-powerful; it is obstructive rather than destructive, and confined by limits of territory and individual preference. There are no crematories in Russia, Spain, Prussia and Turkey. There State and Church sleep in twin cradles. If the pope of Rome could have his way, there would be no crematory in Italy; now there are twenty-seven (one in the holy city), because the king wants what the pope wants not; and above the sounds of discord between temporal and spiritual power the voice of the people is heard: "We are Catholics, but we want to be cremated." Says the State: "So be it." Says the pope: "You go without my blessing." Say the people: "We are not afraid; we shall pay our fare when we cross the Styx; nobody yet came back to tell whether your ticket is good."

The Berlin pope practically controls both Church and State; he is therefore better able to enforce his views than he of the Vatican, but not beyond the Prussian frontier. Disregarding petitions signed by thousands, the king has not so far allowed the erection of a crematory for human bodies in Prussia, and his Evangelical consistory forbids its ministers to officiate at fire funerals. Yet, right across the border, there is Gotha, Hamburg, Heidelberg and Jena ready with crematories and with priests to serve without hindrance.

This diversity of treatment creates serious doubt and conflict among believers. It also reminds one of the "No License" town, where the poor have to stay home, dry, while the man with carfare gets what he wants at some other village.

If the Churches in question read the signs of the times, they must conclude that in spite of their antagonism, cremation is bound to grow. The people want it, and what they want they finally get, be that a shaky throne or a crematory. It is better policy to provide a suitable bed for



a river than to stem its current and cause destructive overflow. Men of the wisdom and adaptability of Leo and William ought to feel that they have to give in, sooner or later; why not do it gracefully now and take the credit?

As a matter of fact the rule of the Roman Church, restricting cremation, is not inflexible. About ten years ago Count Sylva Tarouca died a good Catholic, leaving to the Church some \$25,000, with the express condition that his body be accompanied by a priest to Gotha for cremation; service to be held there, and his ashes preserved in a wall niche at the convent of the Benevolent Friars in Vienna; all of which was religiously done in view of the tempting legacy. Ever since fakir Tetzels time the dollar is in Rome taken at par.

Those Catholics who do not care to part with \$25,000 for such small dispensation, resort to less expensive tactics to carry their point. Here is a recent case. Mother and daughter, Catholics, both refined and women of means, agreed on cremation. The mother, dying, desired cremation but also church funeral services. These were refused for cremation, but performed as soon as a consecrated vault was substituted. After the service the body was first taken to the vault, then, a few days later, to the crematory. A happy and sensible solution of a complicated case.

The Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba can easily tell under what particular dispensation, during the Spanish-American war, many hundreds of dead Catholic Spaniards were cremated in very rough fashion in a consecrated cemetery of that city. Upon inquiry, General Leonard Wood wrote that religious ceremonies were held over these bodies.

Not quite so generous, but still in a way accommodating, has Protestant Berlin shown itself by erecting, with permission of the government, a municipal calcining furnace for parts of human bodies, but—they must be unidentifiable.

So Rome would want you rich to be cremated, Berlin

dismembered and beyond recognition. Between these two evils, Rome is first choice.

As to the reasons for opposing cremation the Protestant Church of Prussia claims that it is a radical departure from the time-honored Christian custom of earth burial, on which bodily resurrection is based. In contradiction may be said, what is at present generally conceded, that the trumpet call which shall rouse the sleepers from their graves will also awaken the martyrs from stake and arena; bone, dust and ashes without distinction or difficulty. As to custom, Christ's rock tomb resembles no more the modern packing process in Christian cemeteries than cremation does. And as for age, and resulting reverence, why, cremation was practised with sacred rites before Christianity was thought of, and mounds and mountains furnish proof of it.

Then they claim that church books, service and hymnals would have to be changed. As if church books were the rock of ages and man were made for them. Protestants should be among the last to object to changes. They owe their very existence to a change from Catholicism, and their name itself implies open resistance to ossified custom or galling yoke. Change the books, by all means; man is just stubborn enough to remain as he is and work out his own salvation without them—and therein lies a hidden danger to his Church. The dislike to change books and rituals finds only lame support in history. Weightier changes have taken place without consent of the Christian Church, even against its protest and intent, and still the world holds well together. Anointed rulers have pushed each other from consecrated thrones; the pope's temporal power has vanished; the holy land is ruled by the Turk, who calls the Christians dogs and unbelievers; ten thousand official prayers have not protected an empress, king or president from the assassin's dagger. The joint communion cup, the road to Canossa, the inquisition, the Salic law and Leviticus, all have been changed to suit new men and new conditions—and books and burial follow the same law.



Finally they claim that cremation is unchristian and against the teachings of the Bible. To this a business proposition is made. You hear forever the jingle of Peter's pence. (They jingle loudest.) Some church or other always needs money. Some kind of raffle or lottery is going most of the time to raise funds "for the welfare of the church," which incidentally involves the "welfare of the pastor." To help along, the sum of one hundred dollars is hereby offered for the first proof to the writer of any passage in the Christian Bible, forbidding cremation or calling it unchristian. If true, it seems easy enough to substantiate the claim and earn a handsome contribution to the church funds.—

Such are in outline the contentions of Prussian Protestants. On behalf of the Church of Rome it is stated that it has been forced into an antagonistic position partly as a matter of self-defense against the attacks of freethinkers (presumably those in Italy), some of whom are prominent freemasons and incidentally leaders in cremation matters there.

Freethinkers, in the general sense, cremationists do not seem to be, as the large number of religious services in cremation cases indicates; whatever else they believe in besides cremation is here of no interest; but freer thinkers the leaders decidedly are, men of force and foresight, who shape present conditions to the future advantage of their race. Their independent thought is the acid which eats the iron rod of mediæval custom, wielded too long by Church or State—whichever had supreme power.

It seems, therefore, as if we were indebted to the freemasons of Italy, pronounced opponents of the Catholic Church, for a good share of its ill will toward cremation in this country. But here the conditions are quite different, and it would require evidence not now apparent to convince an unbiased arbiter of the necessity for open warfare between Church and freemasonry. To hear the priest at church and the grandmaster in masonic service, it strikes

the listener that without abrogation of dignity there is common meeting ground between them. They both invoke the protection of the Most High, one for his Church the other for his lodge, just as at Santiago Yankee chaplain and Spanish bishop prayed to the same impartial Lord of Battles.

To the individual first, then to the State belongs the right to determine the disposition of the human dead; whatever authority the Church assumes in this distinctly non-religious matter is the result of usurpation on one, of long unthinking submission on the other side; an authority, stimulated by a convenient system of revenue from services and graves.

Individual and State, as has just been emphasized, must be consulted at every death, the Church only when its services are requested, and then these should be given unconditionally and impartially. "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not," should find right here its broadest application. To the dogmas of infallibility and immaculate conception should be added that sensible one of modern fire worship, but—we shall not live to witness the event.

A Catholic priest wrote not long ago that his Church—in certain pressing conditions—would be willing to permit cremation. This condition seems to exist whenever a Catholic desires cremation. Moreover, the right to permit implies the right to forbid and punish for disobedience, or else it becomes a mere pretense. Now, Catholics are cremated nearly every day; what penalty can the Church apply? There was a time, now long past, when the Church could, and did, inflict a kind of boycott on refractory members. But to-day it may only deny to the dead and the bereaved family such services, as they believe will open the heavenly gates and insure a welcome in the golden city. And should Christian souls, in quest of such comfort, be turned away, what does the "mene tekell" of empty churches mean? It says plainly that the



Church should attract and not repel; that the number of those is increasing, who are willing to dispense with services which are either refused or given grudgingly and not in the proper Christian spirit; those who are not afraid to join in death without church blessing the millions of great and good men who died in the same way before and after Christ—a spiritual galaxy not to be found on earth to-day.

The so-called Christian earth burial is also the heathen burial of our day. It is not as claimed in imitation of Christ. His body, like that of other Jews of his time, was laid away singly in a rock tomb, not consecrated except by his presence. Consecration is at best a thin veneer; grave worms do not respect it; murderers in churches, lightning and graverobbers defy it; the assassin who embraces religion on the scaffold sleeps no sounder in consecrated ground than the world-weary suicide in the profane corner. Whoever believes consecration a condition to future happiness will find it in our crematory, a place, dedicated by service of ordained priest and grandmaster, to the humanitarian uses not of one sect alone but of the universal brotherhood of man.



## FAVORABLE COMMENT.

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*From the Rt. Rev. HENRY C. POTTER, Bishop of New York.*

January 22, 1889.

\* \* \* I have no prejudice unfavorable to cremation, and indeed, in view of the curiously inadequate and singularly unintelligent arguments, attacks and denunciations which have been employed by those who are hostile to it, I have been rather disposed to sympathize with those who are seeking to introduce it.

But the argument of most effect in its behalf is one which must be made by scientific men, and especially by physicians. I wait to hear more explicitly and more fully from these, for when it can be shown that any such plan best conduces to the health and well-being of large communities, it will be likely to find general acceptance.

September 30, 1899.

\* \* \* I have long been in hearty sympathy with the effort to promote the practice of cremation, which the growth of population, and the growth of cities of the dead in the neighborhood of large communities, makes in my judgment a sanitary precaution of great value; and I heartily agree with the Bishop of Manchester, in his view of the utter irrelevancy of any so-called Christian objections to it, which are usually witnesses to great ignorance or great stupidity.

*From the Rt. Rev. WM. LAWRENCE, Bishop of Massachusetts.*

The condition of many old graveyards, the neglect of tombs and their possible desecration, are a shock to a reverent spirit. All the details of incineration are consistent with reverence.



*From the Rev. DAVID H. GREER, New York.*

\*\*\* I am in sympathy with the object which you have in view, and look with favor upon cremation as a substitute for interment. The objections to it are in my judgment wholly sentimental, and must in time give way to more rational considerations.

*From the BISHOP OF MANCHESTER.*

No intelligent faith can suppose that any Christian doctrine is affected by the manner in which, or the time in which, this mortal body of ours crumbles into dust.

*From the Rev. GEORGE HODGES, Dean of the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge.*

I believe cremation is in accordance with true religion, especially in these two particulars—it agrees with the right idea of the resurrection of the body, and it symbolizes the supremacy of the soul.

\*\*\* There might be a revival of the good old custom of laying the dead away in the churches. Cremation would make that possible. Heaven and earth would thus seem close together. There would be no more removal of the relics of the dead out of our sight.

*From FRANCES E. WILLARD.*

I have the purpose to help forward progressive movements, even in my latest hours, and hence hereby decree that the earthly mantle which I shall drop ere long, when my real self passes onward to the world unseen, shall be swiftly enfolded in the flames and rendered powerless harmfully to affect the health of the living. Let no friend of mine say aught to prevent the cremation of my cast-off body. The fact that the popular mind has not come to this decision renders it all the more my duty, who have seen

the light, to stand for it in death, as I have sincerely meant in life to stand by the great cause of poor, oppressed humanity.

*From Mrs. J. C. CROLY ("Jennie June.")*

I am heartily in sympathy with cremation, considering such disposition of human remains as the wisest, cleanest, most healthful and economical method of disposing of what is no longer of any use, and must in time become a positive source of injury. If graveyards continue to be filled, the cities of the dead will in time become more populous than the cities of the living, and will threaten the existence of populous communities. Justice to the living, and the sentiment we cherish for the dead, seem to me best satisfied by the quick diffusion of the shell they no longer inhabit, and the possession of that in-urned residuum, which like a lock of hair or the remnant of a robe they have worn, we may keep and guard.

*From Mrs. LIPPINCOTT ("Grace Greenwood.")*

I have given a great deal of serious thought to the subject of cremation, and heartily endorse all movements in that direction. The world, even the Christian world, must come to it finally—though it denounce it now ever so sternly as "a heathen custom." The world must come to it, or see the above-ground living poisoned by their underground dead.

For economic as well as sanitary reasons I would advocate cremation. I saw much of the working of the system at Milan; saw that it took a great burden of care and expense from poor families, bereaved and left in straitened circumstances. Surely, it is the simplest, the surest and purest manner of rendering "ashes to ashes"—of giving back our mortal part to the immortal elements.



From KATE FIELD.

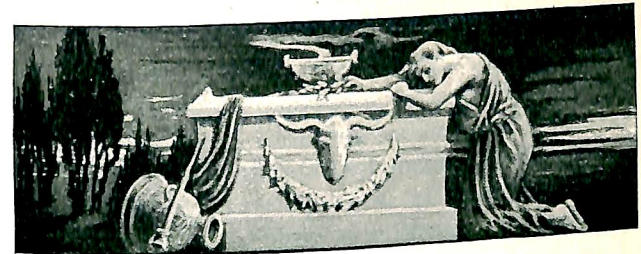
Cremation is not only the healthiest and cleanest, but the most poetical way of disposing of the dead. Whoever prefers loathsome worms to ashes possesses a strange imagination. I have in my will made express provision for the cremation of my body, in such terms as no friend or foe of mine would think of disregarding even after I am dead.

I am a cremationist because earth burial poisons earth, air and water, and consequently breeds disease among the living. Much of what is called malaria is nothing more nor less than the result of cemetery gases generated in the vicinity. Many a New England town is now subject to zymotic diseases because the inhabitants are drinking up their ancestors' remains in the sparkling well water, which is considered healthy merely because it is clear.

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From LUCY STONE BLACKWELL, Boston.

I am decidedly in favor of cremation. On sanitary grounds alone it seems to me to be wholly desirable.



"FAITHFUL BEYOND DEATH."

## WOMAN AND CREMATION

BY LOUIS LANGE

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Read before the  
MANHATTAN CREMATION AND PROVIDENT SOCIETY  
New York, September 13, 1899



That friend alone is staunch and true  
 Who holds truth's mirror up to you ;  
 Not he who tries your faults to hide  
 Till strangers find them out and chide.

\*\*\* The position of woman, always a true barometer of the civilization of a people, was never higher than it is with us to-day. Beyond the natural domestic sphere the modern history of journalism, medicine and education proves this. With conceded freedom of action, property rights and a somewhat masculine training, woman has replaced man to a large extent in society and business, and acquired far reaching influence in public and private affairs. But hand in hand with these new rights goes the duty to exercise them in support of reformatory movements, such as cremation is from a sanitary viewpoint. The question arises: Does our cause receive such assistance? From the majority of women not yet!

From this answer it must not be inferred, however, that we have only a few of the better half on our side. We have a good working minority of them who make up in zeal and devotion for lack of numbers, and to whom sincere thanks are herewith extended, together with a dispensation from any criticism that may follow.

We certainly have reason for congratulation and gratitude, when such eminent women as Frances E. Willard, Kate Field, Grace Greenwood, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Jennie June, Lucy Stone and many of equal prominence have openly espoused our cause, have spoken and written in favor of it. But of the others, how few have heard of them or their work, and, consequently, how restricted has been their influence on their less advanced and less independent sisters? As a matter of fact the attitude of the majority of average women toward cremation is one of indifference in life, of irresolution and timidity at the bier. Less accessible at all times to logical argument than to impression she stands at the moment of supreme

test, the time of death,—possibly weakened in mind and body by ceaseless care for the sick—an easy prey, a willing victim to energetic outside influence, which may be only ignorant or prejudiced, but may also be selfish.

If the decision, whether grave or crematory, is left to her, she may justly exercise that right; but where the departed has especially directed cremation or she gave her promise to him, and then, influenced by adverse persuasion, breaks it, she is guilty of betrayal of a trust beyond death—in its nature the most sacred ever made because based on absolute faith—and the belief in the fulfilment of which may have relieved the last moments of the dying.

Men have often come to me, and men alone: "I am, after careful consideration, in favor of your method but cannot win over my wife. She remains indifferent and shows no desire to investigate or argue. I am afraid that if I die first she will not have me cremated although it is my clearly expressed wish. What shall I do?"

The answer depends on circumstances best known to him; while they both live the man has an even chance; but, then, there are conditions where the gods themselves are helpless!

Women have come to me time and again: "I find no rest; he wanted to be cremated; basely persuaded, with no time to better inform myself, I put him in a grave; but now I shall have him disinterred for cremation."—Such is the way of the transgressor!

For this indecision, this easy yielding to extraneous influence, there seems to be one principal reason. The average woman's sense of fairness and justice is not developed to its full capacity of impartial discernment, a quality of character only acquired from constant contact and friction with the outer world, for which a woman's more limited sphere offers little occasion. So, with only a dim perception of the dividing line and no purpose to wrong any one—according to her idea of it—she finds but little difficulty in believing that in her particular case a



promise may be a promise—but not in itself, as of right, only according to circumstances; and there pernicious influence finds its chance, without meeting with much resistance. The dead cannot object; the survivors, although mistaken, are supreme.

Another reason is, what the neighbors will say, and this has much weight with most women—in the matter of death as well as of fashion. Conservative preference, however, for an old custom, just because of its age, deserves only scant consideration. A conservatism which sanctions a change of hats every season should not deter from a change of burial once in a lifetime.

Finally, grief over the loss by death has its enervating effect on woman, and is one of the causes which leave her powerless to resist improper influence and willing to let others act for her. But grief, men's like women's, is a matter of time, limited somewhat by the provisions of the last will. It is not inconsolable, as the story of the young widow relates, who first ordered designs for a \$10,000 monument for "dear departed George who certainly deserved it," and then by degrees ("George was always economical and hated display, you know,") came down with the advice and assistance of her new friend Charlie to a wooden headboard.—

The reasons above given explain in part but do not justify the attitude of a majority of women toward cremation—and as an offset due credit should be given to those women and men of the middle and working classes who enforce—often through their lodges and unions—prompt compliance in death with what they had convinced themselves in life as being right and proper.

In upper circles it occasionally happens, that people, who have declared their unmistakable preference for cremation, and even members of a cremation society, throw their experience and convictions overboard at the last moment out of sheer deference to the inferior judgment of neighbors or a lot of ill-advised or misinformed relatives. Here

applies, with particular force, what Nordau says in "Conventional Lies," that we do not dare to assert our opinions; that we do not wish to shock any one nor offend any one's prejudices, and we call this "respecting the convictions of others"—those others who in return do not respect our convictions, who ridicule them, who persecute them, and who would like to exterminate them and us at the same time.—

One thing women ought not to do, that is, spread lies about our method, when it is so easy to learn the truth at the cremation office or the crematory. Some prevaricate from lack of information, some simply "to make conversation," others with evident malicious intent. When such stories—and they are by no means rare—reach competent ears, they are, of course, sifted to the bottom and easily refuted; but oftenest the poison is scattered in secret and does its work without remedy. From a number of such cases one recent sample may be cited here, with proof at hand. The persons mentioned are well known, but the real culprit, a woman, remains as usual under cover.

Mr. W., a friend of mine, informed me by letter that a Mr. B. had told him over the lunch table, that the body of a Mrs. Z.—at her recent cremation at Fresh Pond—had been disrobed in presence of the mourners, and then with pitchforks thrust into the retort.

In my reply to Mr. W. I called this story a lie from beginning to end, stating that not even a pin, much less any clothing had been taken from Mrs. Z.'s body, but that she had been, as all bodies are under the strict rules at Fresh Pond, cremated just as she was brought there.

To this Mr. B. answered me as follows:

"Mr. W. handed me your somewhat drastic letter, wherein you severely criticize my remarks on a certain cremation. The fact is that the sister of the deceased related to my family just what I told Mr. W., namely first, that the body was disrobed; second, that it was put into the retort in an inæsthetic manner. Knowing Mr. W.



well, I repeated to him what I had been told, stating, that if cremation worked that way, it would repel favorable sentiment. Of this Mr. W. informed you and elicited your strong letter, which in turn caused me to thoroughly sift the whole matter and to ask one of those present at that cremation for correct particulars. The result of this investigation is, *that the incidents, as originally told me, have not taken place*, and that you are perfectly right in calling the matter untrue—if you care to use that word. I believe the story is the product of the imagination of the women, hysterical from grief, without deserving to be called a lie."

Mr. B.'s charitable belief unfortunately does not retract or wipe out the malicious story, and imagination or hysteresis is a very poor excuse; the mischief is done, our cause discredited to some extent.

My friends, truth is mighty and should prevail; but longlegged lies get there first, without a headlight.—

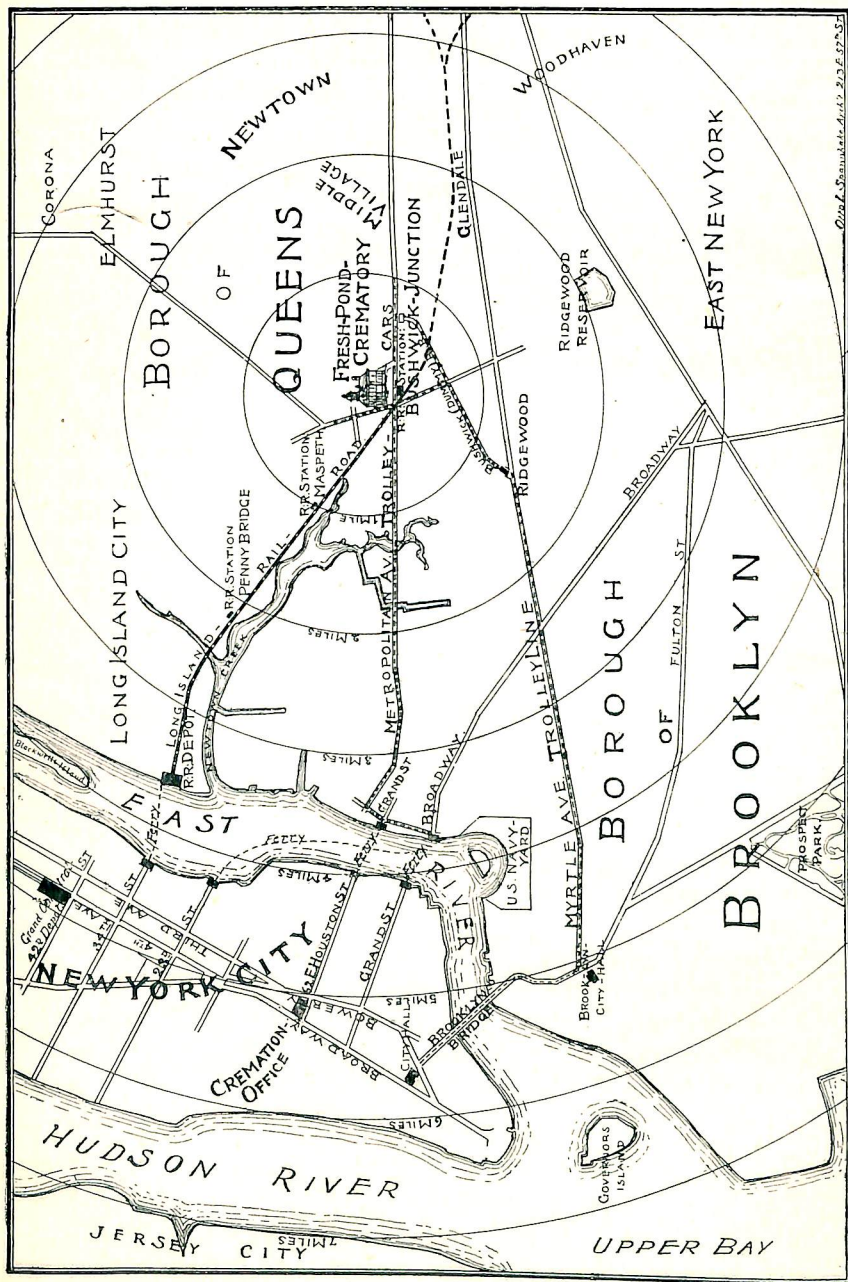
The above statements are not exaggerated; they are based on experience in a thousand cremation cases, where woman was concerned. Honestly intended not to hurt but to help, they apply to the majority of women, to whom the reader need not belong, and whom we can convert only by a gentle but persistent campaign of education.



TABLE OF CREMATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1876 TO 1898

CREMATORIES	1876 1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	Totals
New York-Fresh Pond <i>(U. S. Cremation Co. (L'd))</i>			9	77	67	83	106	160	187	186	232	243	296	330	331	466	2773
Buffalo			1	8	17	16	23	30	38	27	30	31	41	28	44	40	374
Troy								4	10	14	15	42	10	18	14	13	110
Swinburne Island								2		60	28	8	1	1	3	3	106
Waterville											1	1	6	5	4	4	21
St. Louis, Mo.						24	20	42	60	64	72	87	96	86	118	109	778
Philadelphia, Pa.						14	28	31	51	62	68	74	88	85	78	114	693
San Francisco, Cal <i>(Gold Beltones)</i>													66	101	214	260	641
Boston, Mass.											1	87	88	135	160	167	638
Cincinnati, Ohio						21	34	45	43	34	42	38	66	46	71	59	510
San Francisco, Cal <i>(Cypress Lawn)</i>											42	111	88	70	54	65	430
Chicago, Ill.											6	42	66	54	82	130	380
Los Angeles, Cal.					7	5	12	17	29	41	37	38	37	37	34	58	352
Detroit, Mich.					3	10	14	24	21	33	47	22	31	29	44	51	329
Pittsburg, Pa.					14	9	11	9	13	14	13	10	13	14	16	23	167
Baltimore, Md.							3	5	12	16	22	15	11	17	21	14	136
Lancaster, Pa.		3	36	14	13	6	1	3	1	3	5	2	1	1	1	2	92
Davenport, Iowa									6	7	13	8	8	9	23	17	91
Milwaukee, Wis.														21	34	30	85
Washington, D. C.															25	38	63
Pasadena, Cal.													4	14	13	24	55
Washington, Pa.	25	13	1									2			2	11	42
St. Paul, Minn.																	13
Fort Wayne, Ind.															5	1	6
Middletown, Conn.																	
Totals	25	16	47	114	127	190	249	372	471	561	674	831	1017	1101	1391	1699	8885





MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF FRESH POND-NEW YORK CREMATORY  
**THE CREMATORY IS OPEN EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR. VISITORS CORDIALLY INVITED.**

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