HEATHEN AND CHRISTIAN BURIAL.

If, from the heights of our boasted civilisation, we take a retrospect of past history, or a survey of other nations—savage nations included—we shall, with humiliation, be forced to acknowledge that in no age and in no country have the dead been disposed of so prejudicially to the living as in Great Britain. Consigning mortal remains to closely-packed burial-grounds in crowded cities; covering—scarcely interring them—so superficially that exposure sometimes shocks the sentiments, while the exhalations of putrefaction always vitiate the air, is a custom which prejudice has preserved the longest to this land. A calculation made by Dr. Playfair, and quoted by the Board of Health in their admirable report on Burials, estimates the amount of noxious gases evolved annually from the metropolitan grave-yards alone at 55,261 cubic feet per acre. The average of corpses packed into each acre is 1117; therefore, as 52,000 interments take place every year, the entire amount of poison-gas emitted per annum to enter the lungs of the Londoners, and hasten their descent to the grave to contribute fresh supplies for their successors, is 2,572,580 cubic feet.

It is our present purpose to see whether such a fact can be paralleled by researches into the past or by a short survey of the manners and customs of existing savage life itself—adding such of the singular or instructive funeral ceremonies of the various people as will prove interesting.

Among the most ancient records are those of the Egyptians. The care of that extraordinary people for their dead, both as to actual preservation and that they should not become noxious to the living, has never been surpassed. This partly arose, it is true, from a superstitious reverence for the material part of man; but that superstition doubtless originated from the wise sanitary regulations of their early sages. The laws of Leviticus—many of them instituted to prevent disease and the depreciation of the species—formed, in like manner, a main part of the religion of the Jews.

The ancient Egyptians believed that the soul would return, after the lapse of ages, to inhabit, in this world, the same body from which it had been separated by death. In this belief commenced the process of embalming by which the bodies of that people have been preserved with wonderful integrity to the present day. To so extraordinary a point had the antiseptic art been brought that, as appears from Diodorus, there was a mode of preservation which ensured the retaining of the eyebrows, eyelashes, and the general external character of the person, who could be recognised by their form and features. 'Whence,' says Dr. Pocock, in Travels through Egypt, 'many of the Egyptians kept the bodies of their ancestors in houses [but]

never near their own residences] adorned at a very great expense, and had the pleasure to see their forefathers, who had been dead many years before they were born, and to observe all their features as well as if they were living.' The painter's art has in modern times superseded these curious picture galleries.

Another peculiarity could not have been due to superstition, but to a more rational care of the living than we at present evince, namely, the distance of their great burial places from their chief cities. The Nile intervened; the Necropolis, including the range of stupendous pyramids, were formed on the western, while the most considerable towns were on the eastern bank of that river. Diodorus gives an interesting account of the ceremonies arising out of this wise arrangement.

'Those who prepare to bury a relative, give notice of the day intended for the ceremony, to the Judges and all the friends of the deceased, informing them that the body will pass over the lake of that district, or that part of the Nile, to which the dead belonged; when, on the Judges
assembling to the number of more than forty, and ranging themselves in a semicircle on the further side of the lake, the vessel provided for this purpose is set afloat. It is guided by a pilot called in the Egyptian language, Charon; and hence they say that Orpheus, travelling in old times into Egypt, and seeing this ceremony, formed the fable of the infernal regions, partly from what he saw, and partly from invention. The vessel being launched on the lake, before the coffin which contains the body is put on board, the law permits all who are so inclined, to bring forward an accusation against it. If any one steps forth, and proves that the deceased had led an evil life, the Judges pronounce sentence, and the body is precluded from burial; but if the accuser is convicted of injustice in his charge, he himself incurs a considerable penalty. When no accuser appears, or when the accusation is proved to be false, the relations present change their expressions of sorrow into praises of the dead. 'The author adds, that many kings had been judicially deprived of the honours of burial by the indignation of their people; and that the dread of such a fate had the most salutary influence on the lives of the Egyptian sovereigns.

Two singular coincidences will occur to the reader on perusing this passage—A post-mortem trial, precisely similar to that described above, forms part of the Roman Catholic ritual of Canonising a Saint. Before the defunct can be inscribed in the Calendar, a person appears to set forth all the involuntary candidate's sins and backslidings during life; and if these be of a venal character he is rejected. This officer is called 'The Devil's advocate.' Secondly, the ancient Egyptian and excellent system of funereal water conveyance is, it would appear, to be revived. In the Report of the Board of Health, dated two thousand years later than that of Diodorus Siculus, the most extensive new burial-place recommended, is to be on the borders of the Thames; and one of the Board's propositions runs thus—

'That, considering the river as a highway passing through the largest extent of densely-peopled districts, the facilities for establishing houses of reception on its banks, the conveniences arising from the shorter distances within the larger portion of the same area for the removal of the bodies to such houses of reception, the advantages of steam boat conveyance over that by railway in respect to tranquillity, and the avoidance of any large number of funerals at any one point, at any one time, and of any interference with common traffic and with the throng of streets; and, lastly, taking into account its great comparative cheapness, it is desirable that the chief metropolitan cemetery should be in some eligible situation accessible by water carriage.'

The case of the Jews is stronger than that of the Egyptians, as showing saner modes of burial than we have so long persisted in. They had no especial regard for the mere body, except as the temple of the soul; hence, a burial-place was, with them, the house of the living; an expression finely implying that death is the parent of immortal life. Their cemeteries were always in sequestered spots. In the 23rd chap. of Genesis we find that Abraham, when his wife Sarah died, desired a family burying-ground from the tribe among whom he lived:—

'And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, 

'I am a stranger and a sojourner with you; give me possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.'

A ready consent was given, and he was offered the choice of their sepulchres. But this did not satisfy him: he wished to obtain the Cave of Machpelah, and the field in which it lay, from Ephron, the son of Zohar. The generous proprietor offered it as a gift, but the Patriarch purchased it. Thus the first transference on record of real property was the acquisition, in perpetuity, by the patriarch Abraham, of a family
burying-ground especially selected for its seclusion.

Nor was the classic heathen of a more western clime less mindful of public health in his modes of disposing of the dead. The Romans, being largely indebted to the Greeks for their science, literature, arts, and habits of life, of course adopted their funeral ceremonies; and one general description may suffice for those of both. By law of the Twelve Tables, burial was prohibited within the city of Rome, and therefore cemeteries were provided without the walls.*

*Hominem Mortuum in urbe ne sepelite neve urito.*

Immediately after the death, the body was washed, anointed with aromatic unguents, and sometimes embalmed. It was shrouded in fine linen; white with the Greeks and black with the Romans. If the departed was a person of rank, he was clothed in his garments of ceremony, kept for seven days during the preparations for the funeral, and lay in state in the vestibule of his house, at the door of which were placed branches of pine or cypress, together with the hair of the deceased, which had been consecrated to the infernal deities. In Rome, between death and burial seven days elapsed. The funeral was attended by the friends and relatives of the deceased, who were bidden by a herald, pronouncing the invitation:—"It is time for whoever wishes, to go to the funeral of N. son of N.; who is now to be borne from home."**

*Exequias N., N. filii, quibus est commodus ire, tempus est: ollus (ille) ex edibus effertur.*

The remains of persons who had done service to the state were honoured by the attendance of public officers, and sometimes the procession was followed by large bodies of the people. According to one of the laws of Solon, the Athenians carried out the bodies of the dead before sunrise, especially the young, in order that the orb of day might not throw his light on so sad a spectacle, or by his heat induce decomposition prematurely. The body was laid on a bier, crowned with flowers, and having the face exposed. The bier was followed by the funeral procession, among whom, at Roman funerals, there was often a mime, or buffoon, wearing the dress of the deceased, and giving satirical imitations of his bearing and manners. At the funeral of the Emperor Vespasian, the lustre of whose many virtues was tarnished by love of money, a celebrated buffoon (as Suetonius tells us) acted the part of the emperor,—mimicking, as was customary, the deportment and language of the deceased. Having asked the managers of the funeral what would be the amount of its expense, and being answered that it would cost a sum equivalent to eighty-thousand pounds, he replied, that if they would give him eight hundred, he would throw himself into the Tiber—for drowning was thought so revolting a death, that bodies rejected by the waves were denied sepulture. The bust of the deceased, his warlike trophies, or decorations of honour, were conspicuously exhibited in the procession. His family followed the bier, walking bareheaded and bare-footed, with dishevelled hair, and mourning dresses of black; and after them came bands of hired mourners, male and female, who rent the air with cries and lamentations. Thus the body was conveyed to the place of sepulture.

The claims to antiquity vaunted by the Chinese next force upon attention their provisions against allowing the dead to interfere with the well-being of the living. As they believe themselves perfect, to alter any one custom is sacrilege punishable with death; hence they observe the same ceremonies now, that their ancestors did several thousand years ago. 'Their tombs and sepulchres,' says Mr. Sirr, 'are always built outside the city walls, and usually upon a hill, which is planted with cypress and pine trees.' In China nothing is so offensive to good breeding as the remotest allusion to death. A number
of amusing periphrases are therefore resorted to when a hint of the subject is unavoidable; a funeral is called from the kind of mourning used: 'A white affair.'

In Persia intramural burials are also forbidden. 'The place of sepulture,' says a Persian sage, 'must be far from dwellings: near it must be no cultivation; nor the business necessarily attending the existence of dwellings; no habitation nor population must be near it.' This is another ancient injunction in remarkable accordance with one of the recommendations of our modern sages, the Board of Health.

The Mahommedans again show much better taste than Christians in their Mausoleums and burial-places—they never bury in their temples or within the walls of a town.

Among the funeral customs of the other inhabitants of the East, that of burning the dead is of very great antiquity. The Jews adopted it only in emergencies. When Saul fell on the fatal field of Gilboa, and his body was left exposed by the enemy, it was burnt by his faithful followers (1 Samuel, chap. xxxi., v. 11—13). From a passage in the book of Amos (chap. vi., v. 10), it appears that the bodies of the dead were burnt in times of pestilence, no doubt on sanitary grounds. For the same reason, incineration has been habitually perpetuated in tropical climates, but has been accompanied unhappily with the most horrible superstitions, particularly in Hindustan, where it is associated with the self-sacrifice of the widow on the funeral pile of her dead husband. The origin of this last custom, as a religious rite, has been the subject of much investigation and discussion among learned Orientalists; but Colebrooke, in his paper on the 'Duties of a Faithful Hindoo Widow,' in the fourth volume of the Asiatic Researches, has shown that this, among other duties of a faithful widow, is prescribed by the ancient Sanscrit books of the Bramins. Bernier, the French traveller, who visited India at the time when this practice of self-immolation was very general, gives striking descriptions of several scenes of this kind which he witnessed. The heroine of one of them was a woman who had been engaged in some love intrigues with a young Mahommedan, her neighbour, who was a tailor, and could play finely on the tabor. This woman, in the hopes of marrying her paramour, poisoned her husband, and then told the tailor that it was time for them to elope together, as they had projected, as, otherwise, she should be obliged to burn herself. The young man, fearing lest he might be entangled in a dangerous affair, flatly refused. The woman, expressing no surprise, went to her relations and informed them of the sudden death of her husband,

protesting that she would not survive him, but would burn herself along with him. Her kin-dred, well satisfied with so generous a resolution and the great honour thereby done to the whole family, presently had a pit made and filled with wood, exposing the corpse upon it, and kindling the fire. All being prepared, the woman went to embrace and take farewell of all her kindred and friends who surrounded the pit, among whom was the tailor, who had been invited to play upon the tabor along with a number of other minstrels, as was usual on such occasions. The woman, having come to the place where the young man stood, made a sign as if she would bid him farewell with the rest; but, instead of gently embracing him, she seized him by the collar with both hands, dragged him with all her strength to the pit, in to which she threw herself and him together, and both instantly perished in the flames.

It was not till a comparatively recent period that the British Government made any attempt to abolish or check this barbarous custom: being unwilling, it would seem, to interfere with the religious rites and usages of the natives. The tardy intervention of the British Government has at length effectually put an end to the
practice; and the natives themselves, instead of resenting this measure as a violation of their religion, have (as might have been expected) universally hailed it as a deliverance from a horrible oppression under which they groaned, but from which they were unable to emancipate themselves.

Throughout the greatest part of the wide region comprehended under the general name of India, this practice of burning the dead prevails, except among those who profess Mahommedanism. In the kingdom of Siam, it is regarded as the most honourable funeral; the bodies of criminals, and of persons disgraced, being buried. In the Birman empire, burning is the established practice.

In colder climates where the necessity for the rapid disposal of mortality is not so great, cremation has not been prevalent. Among the Greeks and Romans, it was confined to the wealthier classes, because of its expensiveness. When the Romans burnt the bodies of the dead, the ashes were gathered and enclosed in a vase or urn, which was sometimes deposited in the burial-place of the family, and sometimes preserved by them in their house. Among the remains of antiquity which have been found in Britain, and which belong to the period when a large portion of this country was a Roman province, there are many sepulchral urns which must have been deposited in the ground, either by the Roman population of this island, or by the British who adopted the Roman usages. Some of these urns are described by Sir Thomas Browne, and later discoveries of a similar kind have been made at different times. They have been found to contain, not only ashes mixed with half-burnt human bones, but the remains of combs, beads, and other articles of dress, and coins, both Roman and British.

Burning the dead has fallen into disuse in many countries where it once prevailed, partly because of the expense—fuel diminishing as population and agriculture increased—and partly, perhaps, because the early Christians may have thought it less congruous than interment with the doctrine of the Resurrection. 'Christians,' says Sir Thomas Browne, in his usual quaint style, 'abhorred this way of obsequies, and, though they stuck not to give their bodies to be burned in their lives, detested that mode after death; affecting rather a disposition than absorption, and properly submitting unto the sentence of God, to return not unto ashes but unto dust again, conformably unto the practice of the Patriarchs; the interment of our Saviour, of Peter, Paul, and the ancient Martyrs.' In every age, and in every country where Christianity has prevailed, the burial of the dead has been the unvarying usage.

Evidence, however, of a desire for another remarkable revival of the practices of antiquity now lies before us. It is no less than the prospectus of an association—bearing the recent date of January, 1850—"for Promoting the Practice of Decomposing the Dead by Fire." Among other advantages, cheapness is promised. We may mention as some criterion on this point, that Mr. Ward, the Indian missionary, who had many opportunities of ascertaining the fact, computed that the smallest quantity of wood necessary to consume a human body, is about three hundred weight.

However averse public feeling may be to this mode of disposing of the remains of deceased relatives; yet anything is better than crowded city churchyards and poisoned air. To these a favourable contrast is offered by even the curious expedients of savage life—of which we now proceed to take a glance.

The Parsees or Gabre—the race of fire-worshippers who still exist in India,—abhor the burning of the dead as a pollution of the Deity whom they adore. This feeling they appear to have inherited from the ancient worshippers of fire, the Chaldeans, and the Magi of Persia; from whom, also, they seem to have derived the custom of exposing the bodies of the dead to
be devoured by dogs, and beasts and birds of prey. A similar usage exists at this day in the kingdom of Tibet. 'According to the custom of Tibet,' says Mr. Turner (Narrative of an Embassy to Tibet), 'instead of that pious attention which is paid to the remains of the dead, in the preservation of their bodies from pollution, by depositing them in the ground, they are here exposed after their decease, like the Parsees of India, in the open air, and left to be devoured by ravens, kites, and other carnivorous birds. In the more populous parts, dogs also come in for their share of the prey, and regularly attend the consummation of the last obsequies.' The same practice anciently existed among the Colchians, and has been remarked by modern travellers among the Illinois of North America, and the savage inhabitants of the Aleutian islands. Even in this revolting custom we trace a desire—savagely indulged, it is true—to ward off the bad effects of putrefaction by a speedy disposal of the air-polluting remains of the dead.

Among the Caffres, Hottentots, and other savage tribes of Southern Africa, adjoining the European settlements, it seems to have customary to expose aged and helpless people in desert places, and leave them to die, because of a superstition against any one expiring in a hut. Intercourse with civilisation is mitigating this and other barbarities.

Of the means used to avert the evils of decay by preservation, none are more singular than those mentioned by Captain Tuckey, as in force upon the river Congo. The people enrobe their corpses in cloth; the smell of putrefaction being only kept in by the quantity of wrappers. These are successively multiplied as they can be procured, or according to the rank of the deceased. The bulk thus attained is only limited by the power of conveyance to the grave; so that the first hut in which the body is deposited becoming too small, a second, a third—even to a sixth—each larger than the former, is placed over it.

The South American savages run no risks from the putrefying remains of their dead. The Orinoco tribes fasten them by a rope to the trunk of a tree on the shore and sink the body in the river. In the course of four and twenty hours the skeleton is picked perfectly clean by the fish. Bones alone are reverenced in this part of the world. The inhabitants of the Pampas and other South American tribes bury only the bones of the dead, the flesh having been first removed from them; an operation performed by the women. While the work of dissection is going on, the men walk round the tent, covered with long mantles, singing a mournful tune, and striking the ground with their spears, to drive away the evil spirits. The bones, being prepared, are packed up in a hide, and conveyed on a favourite horse of the deceased to the family burial-place, sometimes hundreds of miles distant. Being disposed in their natural order and tied together so as to form a skeleton, they are clothed in the deceased's best attire, and ornamented with beads and feathers. The skeleton is placed in a sitting posture, with the carcases of horses, killed—in order that their master may ride them in the next world—in a pit or grave, which is then covered over. Among all the customs of unenlightened mankind, there are few more remarkable than this provision for the material wants of the dead in another state of existence. In all ages, and in most parts of the world, the dead man has been sent to his long home, furnished with servants, horses, dogs, domestic utensils—every article of physical comfort and enjoyment he is supposed to require. Money has been supplied for his journey, and even (as among the Jukati of Siberia) food has been put into his coffin, 'that he may not hunger on his road to the dwelling of souls.' As if,' quaintly remarks an ancient Spanish traveller, 'the infernal regions were a long way off.'
But in every instance the corpse has been so dealt with as to prevent injury to those who still exist.

It is now time to allude to our own burial customs, and to the great reform which happily has at length begun. It appears extraordinary, that amidst the advance which has been made in social and sanitary science, Great Britain should be the last to give up the unwholesome custom of continuing the dead as near neighbours to the quick. The long conservation of this evil has mainly arisen from a sentiment of the superior sanctity of burial-places in and near to sacred edifices. That this is, however, an unqualified superstition, it is not difficult to prove, by tracing it to its root. Joseph Bingham states in his *Origines Ecclesiasticae*, that churchyards owe their origin to respect paid to the remains of saints and martyrs, which was shown first by building churches and chapels over them, and then by a general desire of people to be interred as near to their sacred dust as possible. This privilege was only for a time accorded to Emperors and Kings, but so early as the sixth century the commonalty were allowed places, not only under the church wall, but in the consecrated space of ground surrounding it. Bodies were not deposited within the church till after a long struggle on the part of the heads of the Church.*

* Several canons were issued against this now universal abuse. Among others, the 18th of the Council of Brague (Portugal) in 563. The 72nd of the Council of Meaux (845), the 17th of the Council of Tribur, 895, &c.

So far from burying in churches, corpses were not admitted into parish churches, even for the funeral service to be read over them, except under special circumstances. An interesting canon—the 15th of the Council of Tribur—runs thus, 'The funeral service must only be performed in the church where the bishop resides: that is to say in the cathedral of the diocese. If that church be too distant, it may be celebrated in some other, where there is a community of canons, monks, or religious orders; in order that the deceased may have the benefit of their prayers. Should again that be impossible, the service may be performed where the defunct during life paid tythes: this is in his parish church.' By a previous canon (one of the Council of Meaux) no burial fees could be exacted by the clergy, although the relations were allowed to give alms to the poor. This injunction was but little observed either at or after the time it was laid, in 845.

The unwholesome practice of intra-{Page 48 in the original}ecclesiastical interment became general after the 10th century, when the clergy succumbed to the power of money, and the sale of the indulgence proved too profitable to be abandoned. To show by what frauds the unhealthy custom was kept up, we may cite a legend relating to St. Dunstan. An unbaptised son of Earl Harold having been deposited within the church where the deceased saint rested, St. Dunstan—so the fable runs—appeared twice to the chaplain to complain that he could not rest in his grave for the stench of the young Pagan. Other underground saints were, however, consulted on the matter, and they silenced St. Dunstan by acquiescing in the abuse. It therefore not only continued but gave rise to another evil. Tombs came to be erected, and these became convenient as lurking-places and rendezvous for various immoral and improper purposes. The Council of Winchester, in 1240, forbade the holding of markets, gaming and other iniquities performed among the tombs in churches and cemeteries. But this injunction was of little avail, as we learn from the History of St. Paul's. Duke Humphrey's Tomb in 'Paul's walk' (the middle aisle of the Cathedral), was the occasional resort for ages of the idleness and infamy of London. It was a regular mart and meeting place for huxters, gossips, gamblers, and thieves. In 1554
the Lord Mayor prohibited the church to be used for such 'irreverent' purposes, under pain of fine. Still it was not till the great fire that Duke Humphrey's tomb was utterly deserted.

Meanwhile in every part of the country, families who could afford the expense, were buried inside in preference to outside the various places of worship, and, until the present year, no effective stop has been put to the evil. Our French neighbours were before us in this respect. Interment inside churches was forbidden except in rare cases, by a royal ordinance dated Versailles, 10th March, 1777. We perceive by the excellent report of Dr. Sutherland to the Board of Health on the practice of internments in Germany and France, that cemeteries have been since substituted by law in almost every considerable town in those countries. It has therefore been continued, almost exclusively in this empire.

At last, however, we have good reason to hope that intramural burials, with all their attendant evils, will speedily be themselves buried with the barbarous relics of the past. The comprehensive suggestions of the Board of Health appear to meet every difficulty, and as a strong stream of common sense has, we hope and believe, set in in favour of funereal reform, we trust they will pass into the statute book without much opposition; some they will inevitably encounter, in compliance with the fixed law of English obstinacy.

It may console those in whom lingers, from old association, almost a religious prejudice in favour of churchyards, to be reminded that some of the most eminent Christians, both lay and clerical, have earnestly pleaded for extra-mural cemeteries. Evelyn—the model of a Christian gentleman—regretted that after the Fire of London advantage had not been taken of that calamity to rid the city of its burial-places, and establish a necropolis without the walls. 'I yet cannot but deplore,' says he, in his 'Silva,' 'that when that spacious area was so long a rasa tabula, the churchyards had not been banished to the north walls of the city, where a grated inclosure of competent breadth for a mile in length, might have served for an universal cemetery to all the parishes, distinguished by the like separations, and with ample walks of trees, the walks adorned with monuments, inscriptions, and titles, apt for contemplation and memory of the defunct, and that wise and excellent law of the Twelve Tables renewed.' The pious Sir Thomas Browne says quaintly in his 'Hydroteraphia,' 'To live indeed is to be again ourselves; which being not only a hope but an evidence in noble believers, 'tis all one to lie in St. Innocent's Churchyard, as in the sands of Egypt, ready to be anything in the ecstasy of being ever, and as content with six foot as the moles of Adrianus.'

Would it not then be well to reflect, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty, whether any of the best customs, whether the very worst custom—considering the state of society in which it has obtained—is so degrading as that of burying the dead in the midst of the living, to generate an amount of human destruction, compared with which the slaughter attendant on an African funeral is as a drop of water in an ocean. It should be remembered that, in the barbarous customs we have cited there is always to be traced the perversion of an idea—as that the dead man will want food, passage money, attendants, beasts of burden, something that benighted ignorance is unable to separate from the wants incidental to this earthly state. There is no such poor excuse for the custom into which this civilised age has insensibly lapsed, until its evils have become too great to bear. The affection which endures beyond the grave is surely more fitly associated with a tomb in a beautiful solitude than amidst the clamour and clatter of a city's streets. If, in submission to that moral law of gravitation, which renders it difficult to separate our thoughts of those who have departed from some lingering association with this earth, we desire to find a resting-place...
for our dead which we can visit, and where we may hope to lie when our own time shall come, reason and imagination alike suggest its being in a spot serenely sacred to that last repose of so much of us as is mortal, where natural decay may claim kindred with nature, in her beautiful succession of decay and renovation, undisturbed by the strife of the brief scene that has closed.

Journal: Household Words, Volume I, Magazine No. 2, 6 April 1850, Pages: 43-48

Author(s):

Journalist. Received limited education; must have acquired knowledge of books by wide reading. J. A. Crowe (Reminiscences, p. 71) wrote of him as "well read in Shakespeare and the poets of the last two centuries". According to Vizetelly (Glances Back through Seventy Years, I, 247), was "brought up as a wood-engraver" in office of Vizetelly's father, then "drifted into literature". Contributed to Penny Magazine, Saturday Magazine, and other periodicals. Was on original staff of Punch; sometime dramatic critic for the periodical. In Edinburgh, 1842-1845, was assistant editor of Chambers's. Married Janet Chambers, sister of the Edinburgh publishers. Was on original staff of Daily News. From 1850 to 1869, connected with H.W. and A.Y.R. Author of The Law of the Land, produced at Surrey Theatre, 1837. Brought out an edition of the Sir Roger de Coverley papers, 1850; a selection of his H.W. contributions and a selection of his contributions to Chambers's; an anthology, Poets' Wit and Humour, 1861, in which he included two of his own pieces. According to Tinsley (Random Recollections, II, 290), was one "of the best known men of his time in the London literary world".

Wills sent at least two items to Bentley's Miscellany at the time that Dickens was editor of the periodical; Dickens accepted one, returned the other, and invited further contributions. In the latter months of 1845, Wills served as Dickens's secretary during Dickens's establishment of the Daily News; he was engaged by Dickens as a member of the staff and remained on the staff under Forster's editorship, after Dickens's resignation as editor. It was Forster who suggested to the engagement of Wills as assistant editor of H.W. In the partnership agreement under which H.W. was set up, Wills was, with Dickens, with the publishers Bradbury & Evans, and with Forster, one of the joint proprietors; he held an interest of one-eighth share. He was to serve as sub-editor at a salary of eight pounds a week. On Forster's relinquishing his one-eighth share in 1856, Dickens allotted half of that one-eighth to Wills. In the partnership agreement under which A.Y.R. was set up, Wills was, with Dickens, joint proprietor; he held an interest of one-fourth share. At a salary of £420 a year, he was to serve as sub-editor and also as general manager of "the Commercial Department" (Lehmann, ed., Charles Dickens As Editor, pp. 19, 195-197, 212, 261).

H.W. and A.Y.R. were Dickens's periodicals. Dickens wanted no brother near the editorial throne. Throughout the nineteen years during which Wills was his co-worker, Dickens accorded him no higher title than "subeditor". But in the public mind, Wills was as much a part of the two periodicals as was Dickens. Of H.W. (or at times of H.W. and A.Y.R. jointly), he was variously referred to as "acting editor" (Athenaeum, September 4 1880), "working editor" (Hollingshead, My Lifetime, I, 98), "assistant editor" (Lady Priestley, Story of a Lifetime, p. 95), "co-editor" (Athenaeum, October 29 1892), "editor" (W. J. Linton, Memories, p. 161). Patmore, writing of one of Allingham's poems that had been published at the time that Wills
was Dickens's only editorial assistant, expressed his disgust at the way in which it had been treated "by the Editor (not Dickens) of 'Household Words'" (Champneys, Memoirs ... of Coventry Patmore, II, 175). Harriet Martineau, levelling her attack at "the editors"—"the proprietors"—of H.W. as philosophically and morally inadequate to their function, held Wills equally as responsible for editorial policy as she did Dickens (Autobiography, II, 91-95). Samuel Smiles (Autobiography, p. 261) called Wills "editor of All the Year Round". Commenting on the fact that Dickens's periodicals bore Dickens's name alone as editor, Tinsley wrote (Random Recollections,II, 290-291): "... I take the liberty to think that, when 'Household Words' and Charles Dickens's name is mentioned, the name and good work of William Henry Wills should not be forgotten".

Whatever literary career Wills might at one time have contemplated was put an end to by his acceptance of the sub-editorship. The book that he was writing in the later years of his life remained unfinished at his death. The subeditorship, in Dickens's understanding, was to engross all of Wills's time and energy. When Wills, in 1855, in order to increase his income, contemplated accepting the editorship of the Civil Service Gazette and carrying on the work concurrently with his work on H.W., Dickens flatly informed him that such an arrangement was out of the question. Wills immediately acquiesced in Dickens's decision. He wrote to Dickens that his "whole life" was bound up in H.W. "and in the connexion into which it brings me with you" (Lehmann, p. 166).

Wills's position as H.W. subeditor was a responsible one. He handled the business transactions of the periodical. He had entire charge of the day-to-day management of the editorial office, carrying on correspondence, conferring with the printers and with contributors, delegating some of the assignments. He accepted and rejected contributions, referring to Dickens those that required Dickens's final decision. He kept, in the Office Book, a record of items published in H.W. numbers, with the amounts paid for contributed items—he himself determining (roughly within the set payment scale) what the payment for any contribution should be. He set up—sometimes in consultation with Dickens, as frequently by himself—the numbers of the periodical, deciding on the contents and the order of items, then carried out Dickens's instructions for whatever changes Dickens wanted made. On his own initiative, as also at the direction of Dickens, Wills revised contributed items. (As Dickens's letters and as occasional memoranda in the Office Book indicate, Wills revised or made changes in more items than those of which he listed himself in the Office Book as reviser). He read and corrected proof. From the letters sent in by readers, he contrived "chips"; he did much of the hackwork of writing "chips" to correct typographical errors and misstatements in items that had appeared. Occasionally he accompanied Dickens to places or institutions and collaborated with him on articles based on the excursions. He wrote original material for the periodical (his original material was, until 1855, considered as paid for in his weekly salary). In addition, probably in 1854 on Forster's discontinuing his active participation in H.W. matters, Wills assumed "the labouring oar" in the Household Narrative of Current Events (Lehmann, p. 165).
Wills carried out his duties capably and conscientiously. Dickens could have had no better co-worker. "If there were only another Wills", said Thackeray on undertaking the editorship of *Cornhill*, "my fortune would be made!" (Lady Priestley, *Story of a Lifetime*, p. 143).

Dickens realized Wills's value to him. He mentioned Wills at times as his "fellow-workman", even as his "colleague" but also as his "factotum". In the business management of the periodical and its journalistic routine he relied on Wills completely; the responsibility that he gave him in editorial matters indicates that he thought Wills's literary ability at least competent; his letters indicate that he thought it little more. To Cunningham, he wrote (May 12 1850): "Wills is a capital fellow for his work, but decidedly of the Nutmeg-Grater, or Fancy-Bread-Rasper School you mention"; and to Bulwer Lytton (May 15 1861): "Wills has no genius, and is, in literary matters, sufficiently commonplace to represent a very large proportion of our readers". Representation of "a very large proportion of our readers" may not have seemed to Dickens a quality to be in all ways deplored.

Sending New Year's greetings to Wills on January 2 1862, Dickens mentioned their many years of association. "And I think," he wrote, "we can say that we doubt whether any two men can have gone on more happily and smoothly, or with greater trust and confidence in one another". The statement was true; yet Dickens was not an easy editor to work for, and, but for Wills's good nature, their association would not have been, for the most part, free from misunderstandings and arguments. Wills was obviously expected to exercise his own judgment in editorial matters; yet, when his judgment failed to coincide with Dickens's, it was Wills's judgment that was at fault. Dickens's criticisms were at times, particularly during the early years of *H.W.*, so offensively phrased as to be humiliating to their recipient. Wills's setting up a certain item as a separate article, rather than as a "chip", Dickens termed "ridiculous". Of an article-title that Wills had suggested, Dickens wrote: "I don't think there could be a worse one within the range of the human understanding" (July 30 1854; July 12 1850). On this occasion Wills rose to his defence. He had given, he replied "a 'mild suggestion'" for a title, "for I think it useless to hint what may strike me as a defect without indicating a remedy"; the title might not be the best possible one, "but I am sure it is not the worst one within the range of human understanding". Replying to an objection concerning the manner in which he had handled a passage in another item, Wills sensibly explained his point, adding: "I did not suppose you would wish me to consult you upon so simple a matter of mechanical convenience" (Lehmann, pp. 30-32). In a letter to Dickens, October 17 1851, Wills wrote: "I have my own notions of what such a publication as *Household Words* should be; and, although I have good reason to suppose from the latitude of confidence you give me, that my notions square with your own generally, yet I cannot (less perhaps than many other men) be always right; and it would lift a great weight of responsibility from me if everything which passes into the columns of *Household Words* had the systematic benefit of another judgment before publication" (Lehmann, pp. 74-75). During Dickens's absences from London, much that appeared in *H.W.* did not have the benefit of Dickens's surveillance. The editorial work was Wills's.

Begun as a business relationship, the association of Wills and Dickens developed into friendship. Dickens in his later years, wrote Forster (*Life*, Book VI, sect. iv), "had no more intimate friend" than Wills. Dickens's letters—with their frank comments on friends, on family and personal matters—indicate this intimacy. Wills knew, of course, of the Ellen Ternan affair;
he was acquainted with Miss Terran. Wills was at various times in Dickens's company on social occasions, as was also Mrs. Wills. He was a member of Dickens's amateur company that staged a benefit performance for the actress Frances Kelly, January 3, 1846 (playbill, Dickensian, xxxv, 241). He accompanied Dickens during a part of the theatrical tour undertaken in 1851 for the benefit of the Guild of Literature and Art; he served as secretary to the Guild. Dickens was instrumental in procuring for Wills the appointment as confidential secretary to, and as almoner for, Miss Burdett-Coutts. He proposed Wills for membership in the Garrick Club, and resigned from the Garrick on Wills's being blackballed. In 1864 Wills gave Dickens the present of a brougham. "It will always be dear to me ... ", wrote Dickens (November 30), "as a proof of your ever generous friendship and appreciation, and a memorial of a happy intercourse and a perfect confidence that have never had a break, and that surely never can have any break now (after all these years) but one".

The Athenaeum obituary on Wills (September 1, 1880) stated that no man "left behind him fewer enemies and more friends" than did he. With his editorial assistants, Wills's personal relationship was friendly. The friction that developed between him and Horne resulted from Wills's conviction that Horne was not doing sufficient writing for H.W. to justify his salary; but personally, wrote Wills, he had "a liking for Horne" (Lehmann, p. 36). Morley called Wills "my dear friend" (Early Papers and Some Memories, p. 30); Collins showed his partisanship of Wills by resigning from the Garrick in protest against the Club's blackballing of Wills. Of persons associated with H.W., only Forster disliked Wills—or, rather, came to dislike him, for he must have had a reasonably amicable attitude toward him and some appreciation of his abilities when he suggested him to Dickens as assistant editor of H.W. With contributors, Wills's personal relationship was also friendly, though some writers resented his editorial alteration of their contributions. H.W. contributors who expressed their regard for him by dedicating to him a book were Murray, Payn (joint dedication to Ritchie and Wills), Percy Fitzgerald, Duthie, and Eliza Lynn Linton (joint dedication to Wills and his wife).

Wills wrote twenty-eight full-length items for the first volume of H.W., but increasingly fewer for the following volumes; for some of the later volumes he wrote none. As he explained in 1855, at the time that his accepting the editorship of the Civil Service Gazette was under discussion, he left the writing mainly to others, once a corps of contributors had been established. Since Wills had contemplated the Gazette editorship as a means of increasing his earnings, Dickens, in ruling it out of the question, suggested, instead, that Wills be paid for H.W. articles in the writing of which he had a substantial share. Wills interpreted this to mean articles that he wrote by himself; in the Office Book he recorded payment for seven such articles and one story.

Of the eighteen articles or sections of articles that Wills recorded in the Office Book as jointly by him and Dickens, some were actual collaborations of the two writers. One—the first section of "The Doom of English Wills"—Dickens mentioned in a letter to Wills (September 8, 1850) as "our joint article". Other of the articles Dickens merely revised or added material to. (For suggestion as to the revision and additions, see Stone, ed., Charles Dickens' Uncollected Writings from Household Words.) Reprinting certain of the articles in Old Leaves: Gathered from Household Words—which he dedicated to Dickens Wills wrote that they owed "their brightest tints" to Dickens's "masterly touches". Included in Old Leaves was "A Plated Article", which Dickens had reprinted as his writing. Wills's Office Book ascription of the item to Dickens and
to himself is more authoritative as to its authorship than is Dickens's reprinting.

Dickens suggested the title for Wills's "The Great Bar in the Harbour of London". He thought Wills's "Review of a Popular Publication" and "To Clergymen in Difficulties" very good, as he did Wills's autobiographical article in A.Y.R. (April 8 1865), "Forty Years in London" (to Wills, July 17 1851; July 12 1850; March 9 1851: MS Huntington Library; March 26 1865). In a long letter to Wills, April 13 1855, Dickens analysed one of Wills's stories (not published in H.W.), pointing out what he saw as its defects, but mentioning also its merits.

Of the items reprinted, "Railway Waifs and Strays" and "The Tyrant of Minnigissengen" appeared in Old Leaves without acknowledgment of the joint authorship that Wills had recorded for them in the Office Book. "A Suburban Romance", recorded in the Office Book as by "W.H.W. (suggested by Mrs. Hoare)", with payment to Mrs. Hoare for the suggestion, appeared without acknowledgment of Mrs. Hoare's suggestion. "To Clergymen in Difficulties", recorded in the Office Book as by Wills, with payment to the man (name unclear) "who furnished the idea", appeared with acknowledgment that the facts on which the account was based were "derived from a correspondent".

Nine of Wills's H.W. articles (including "A Plated Article" claimed by both Wills and Dickens) were reprinted in whole or part in Harper's, four of them acknowledged to H.W. (In addition, one of Wills's articles—"The Private History of the Palace of Glass"—may have served in part as the basis of "The Crystal Palace", Harper's, April 1851). Three of Wills's articles were included in the Putnam volumes of selections from H.W.: Home and Social Philosophy, 1st and 2nd series, and The World Here and There. "The Ghost of the Late Mr. James Barber" was included in Choice Stories from Dickens' Household Words, published Auburn, N.Y., 1854. "A Suburban Romance", credited to Dickens, was included by Alice and Phoebe Cary in their Josephine Gallery, 1859. "A Curious Dance round a Curious Tree", credited to Dickens, was twice issued in 1860 as a promotional pamphlet by St. Luke's Hospital for Lunatics (Eckel, First Editions of the Writings of Charles Dickens). Three paragraphs from "Post Office Money-Orders", acknowledged to H.W., were quoted in an anonymous pamphlet, Methods of Employment, 1852 (Stone, ed., Charles Dickens' Uncollected Writings from Household Words).

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• George Hogarth


Hogarth became acquainted with Dickens in 1834, when Dickens began writing for the Morning Chronicle. He took a kindly interest in the young man, gave him introductions that were of value to him, and, in a Morning Chronicle review, praised Sketches by Boz. Dickens liked and respected Hogarth; he became a friend of the Hogarth family; in 1836 he married Hogarth's daughter Catherine. During the years immediately preceding Dickens's separation from his
wife, Hogarth came in for a share of Dickens's increasing dislike of the Hogarths. Hogarth himself, however, "apparently never acted upon, or even shared, the acrimony of his wife and his daughter Helen toward Dickens", and Dickens seems to have retained no permanent rancour toward him (Adrian, Georgina Hogarth and the Dickens Circle, pp. 61-62, 130).

In his first journalistic association with Dickens, Hogarth was Dickens's superior on the two papers for which they both worked. Thereafter, the roles shifted. Dickens, as editor of Bentley's Miscellany, accepted contributions from Hogarth for that periodical; and, as editor of the Daily News, he engaged Hogarth for the staff.

Hogarth's duties in connection with H.W. are not entirely clear. Three weeks before the first number appeared, Dickens wrote to Wills concerning an article (subject not stated): "I should wish Hogarth to see that article before it is used. Will you see him, and set him to work on something else? He has nothing in hand now" (March 6 1850). Later, Dickens asked Wills to have Hogarth look over an article on the Erards—a subject, of course, specifically within Hogarth's province to see that it contained nothing "against his positive knowledge" (September 18 1855). Hogarth was paid for the articles that he wrote for H.W.; that fact indicates that he was not a salaried member of the editorial staff. His main work seems to have been the compiling of news summaries for the Household Narrative of Current Events, a supplementary publication brought out from 1850 to 1855, at first under the direction of Forster, later under that of Wills. Morley referred to "Poor nice old Hogarth", "the good old simple-minded man who ... compounds the news of household narrative out of the papers" (Solly, Life of Henry Morley, p. 200). Sala mentioned the "monthly compendium of news" (which he miscalled the Household Budget) as "edited by Mr. George Hogarth, Dickens's father-in-law" (Life and Adventures, p. 382).

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**Genre(s):**

- **Prose: Report**
  
  A 'more or less detailed description of any event ... intended for publication'; an 'account given ... on some particular matter, esp. after investigation' (OED) involving e.g. fieldwork, first-hand experience, original research.

- **Prose: History**
  
  A 'narration of ... professedly true[] incidents'; a 'continuous methodical record of important or public events, esp. those connected with a particular country, individual, etc.' (OED) (see also Prose: Digest, etc.).

- **Cross-genre**
  
  A cross-genre or hybrid-genre article is one which is deemed to purposefully blend rhetorical and stylistic features and incorporate iconography from more than one pre-existent genres. Depending on the genres crossed, this can also be referred to as: creative non-fiction, witness literature, 'Gonzo' journalism, immersion journalism, narrative non-fiction. The blurring of boundaries is frequently defined as 'New' (hence the slightly puzzling recurrence of the term...
'New Journalism' to describe approaches to periodical writing in the late 19th-century, mid-20th and early 21st centuries, as clearly it was alive and flourishing in Dickens's Wellington Street offices from 1850 onwards).

Subject(s):

- Civilization—Ancient
- Civilization—Classical
- Death; Grief; Mourning; Mourning Customs in Literature; Funeral Rites and Ceremonies; Life Cycle, Human; Old Age; Mortality
- Public Health; Sanitation; Water
- Religion; Religion and Culture
- Religion—Christianity—Catholic Church
- Religion—Christianity—General
- Religion—Islam
- Religion—Judaism
- World—History

Citation (MHRA): Wills, W[illiam] H[enry], and George Hogarth, 'Heathen and Christian Burial', Household Words, I, 6 April 1850, 43-48

N.B. The layout of prose articles exported to PDF follows the two-column format of the original, but does NOT preserve the original line breaks. The layout of poems exported to PDF follows the original line breaks, but does NOT attempt to replicate the original indentation or stanza structure. For all these features please refer to the facsimile pages on DJO.