

and supplication, an acknowledgment of the awful rigors of God's inscrutable Justice, tempered with confidence in the merits of His dolorous passion. So long as the Church is not certain that her children have arrived in Heaven's gate, she has not the heart to rejoice. And therefore it is that flowers—nature's symbols of joy—at modern interments are in flagrant contradiction with the spirit of the liturgy.'

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The custom of decking the death-chamber and the grave with flowers seems to have received considerable impetus in England after the Reformation—perhaps as a substitute for the solemnities of the old Catholic liturgy which were docted by Act of Parliament. Sir THOMAS OVERBURY tells, for instance, of the 'faire and happy milkmaid' that 'all her care is that she may die in the spring-time, to have stoe of flowers stuck upon her winding-sheet.' SHAKESPEARE makes the Queen in 'Hamlet' scatter flowers over the grave of OPHELIA, and ARVIRAGUS and BELARIUS strew with pale primrose and azure hare-bell and leaf of eglantine the tomb of the hapless IMOGEN. HERRICK and others tuned their lyres and canonised the custom in more or less successful verse. But it required a stronger tonic than HERRICK'S 'Dirge of Jephtha' or the sp'ay-foot lines of the lesser rhymsters to keep the custom alive; and when WASHINGTON IRVING wrote his 'Sketch-book'—which appeared in 1820—he said that the custom was 'only to be met with in the most distant and retired parts of the kingdom [England], where fashion and innovation have not been able to throng in and trample out all the curious and interesting traces of the olden time.'

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But fashions in funerals come and go, die and get entombed, like fashions in skirts and head-gear. And it was, in a way, appropriate that the unchristian usage of strewing roses and daffodils and such-like blooms over the disintegrating dead should find favor once more in an age that has retrograded to almost indiscriminate divorce and to godless education and to other ideals of pagan Greece and Rome. The revival sneaked in apologetically at first into what are called the 'upper circles,' that set the fashion in grave-trappings as well as in bonnets and toques. Then it came along with a rush, and spread over the English-speaking world, till masses of more or less tangled blossom came to be deemed almost as indispensable a requisite for a 'respectable funeral' as the corpse itself. The fashion has led, in many instances, to sinful extravagance.

The dead know it not, nor profit gain
It only serves to prove the living vain.

Tidy fortunes have sometimes been expended on funeral wreaths. As much as £500 to £1000 is quite commonly expended in providing a perishable display of blossom for the funeral of a notable person in England and the United States. When Mr AUGUSTIN DALY, the Anglo-American playwright, had 'passed in his checks' and was about to be placed beneath the surface of mother earth, the oppressively odorous funeral wreaths piled in a colored cairn about his coffin represented an outlay of £2,500—one of them, sent by Mrs GEORGE GOULD, cost £400. The wreaths that smothered the coffin of the late Lord LEIGHTON cost over £5000. At the funeral of President CARNOT a sum of over £6000 was spent on flowers. This amount has been exceeded at the interment of several American millionaires, and it is said that £10,000 would not have purchased the 'floral tributes' that figured at the obsequies of the Duke of Clarence. Without counting the cost of flowers, the expenses of the funeral of the late Queen VICTORIA were set down at £35,500, that of the Emperor WILLIAM of Germany £25,000, while it cost over £40,000 to consign Grand Duke NICHOLAS of Russia to the resting-place where he is to await the last sound of the Archangel's trumpet. It takes a good deal of minted coin to get deceased royalty out of sight. But perhaps the costliest contract of this kind that was ever undertaken was the interment of ALEXANDER the Great. Some £100,000 was spent before the hard-hitting conqueror was safely 'planted' in mother earth. 'The body,' says a writer, 'was placed in a coffin of gold, filled with costly aromatics, and a diadem was placed on the head. The funeral car was embellished with ornaments of pure gold, and its weight was so great that it took 84 mules more than a year to convey it from Babylon to Syria.'

The fashion of 'floral tributes' has taken a strong hold upon Australia and New Zealand, and during the past quarter century or thereabouts custom has

brazed it so

That it be proof and bulwark against sense.

A reform is needed, and there are indications that it is coming, even though its feet be leaden and its pace be slow. The Sydney Synod of 1895 strongly urged the discontinuance of the habit. Some four years ago the aged and venerable Bishop MURRAY, of Maitland, said in the course of a sermon on the subject: 'When I die there will be no flowers strewn about me; but I hope there will be plenty of rosaries for me, plenty of prayers and Masses and Holy Communions.' The venerable prelate was, we believe, the first in Australasia to inaugurate a systematic crusade against this revival of a pagan custom. This was in 1898. 'The fashion of flowers at funerals,' said he, 'is a worldly pomp which is growing into a very great abuse, and on and after the first day of January next no flowers will be permitted to enter the church with a coffin, and no priest will assist at funerals where this unbecoming custom of flowers is adopted. The clergy, of course, cannot interfere with people in their own homes. They have, however, authority over the church and over the consecrated ground of God's-acre, and are determined that no flowers shall be permitted to enter either of these places in connection with funerals after the first day of the new year [1900].' Sometimes—but all too rarely—we read at the close of funeral announcements the brief and sensible notice: 'Flowers respectfully declined.' We wish that every Catholic funeral in the Colony were conducted on similar lines, so far as this abuse of flowers is concerned.

Notes

The Elingamite.

Opinions will be very much divided about the inquiry into the wreck of the Elingamite. The Captain has been severely punished, for, as the Court no doubt took into consideration, the consequences will be far more serious to him than the infliction of a monetary penalty of £50, with 12 months' suspension. To lose the vessel under any circumstances is a matter serious enough for a captain, more especially at the outset of his career, but a wreck such as that of the Elingamite, where much life was lost under circumstances exhibiting such an appalling lack of foresight for the ultimate safety of the passengers, is a fatality which must entail the most serious professional consequences. Yet it seems to us that the whole of the blame has unfairly fallen upon the captain. He was undoubtedly to blame for bringing the vessel into such a dangerous position. He drove the steamer at full speed through a fog when he must have known he was near land. He took no soundings, and after the wreck he exhibited grave errors of judgment in several respects. But the Court does not seem to have taken into consideration the fact that the captain was disabled at the time of the wreck. He was picked up out of the water by one of the boats, and could not have been physically able to give directions. Then the captain should not be held more than theoretically responsible for the lack of appliances in the boats and rafts, nor for the dangerous conditions of the engines. Upon this subject the engineers gave what to the Court seemed unsatisfactory evidence. Yet the engineers have been censured only obliquely. The first and second officers have also been censured, but have had their certificates returned to them. According to the usual practice the captain was justified in assuming that his immediate subordinates had provided for the proper equipment of the boats and rafts. The failure to provision the rafts furnished the most ghastly chapter of the story, and those responsible for it should not have escaped with a mere censure. As for the captain, the only plea in mitigation of his sentence that can be advanced is the necessity of running to a time-table, which constitutes one of the greatest dangers to which a captain can be exposed.

The Labor Question In South Africa.

The obvious intention of the South African mine owners to import Chinese Coolie labor for the mines is sure to meet with colonial reprobation, and Mr. Copeland, Agent-General for New South Wales truly says that Mr. Chamberlain's sanction to the proposal will wreck his

RIDE "ANGLO SPECIAL" CYCLES.