

**THE LIVING AND THE DEAD:  
A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF  
ENGLAND ON THE STATE  
OF THEIR CHURCHYARDS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649380114

The living and the dead: a letter to the people of England on the state of their churchyards by  
Anonymous

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**ANONYMOUS**

**THE LIVING AND THE DEAD:  
A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF  
ENGLAND ON THE STATE  
OF THEIR CHURCHYARDS**



THE  
LIVING AND THE DEAD:  
A LETTER  
TO THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND,  
ON THE  
STATE OF THEIR CHURCHYARDS,  
WITH PRACTICABLE  
SUGGESTIONS FOR THEIR IMPROVEMENT.

BY  
A PHILANTHROPIST.

London:  
WHITTAKER AND CO.; SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO.  
DEARDEN, NOTTINGHAM.

1841.

134.

## MY FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

With your permission, I will engage your attention for a short time, whilst I address a few remarks to you on a subject deeply affecting your interests in many ways, and to an extent of which, I think, but few of you are aware.

You will perhaps think Churchyards very curious things to write upon, and wonder in what manner their condition can possibly affect you; and I wish you may so think and wonder, for the most effectual means of gaining attention is by exciting curiosity. But I will not keep you in the dark as to the object I have in view, and the end I hope to attain, by writing this letter. They are short and simple. The former is to shew you that our present modes of interment are neither safe for the living, nor respectful to the dead: the latter is to induce you to take such steps as are available for effecting a beneficial alteration in them.

Attention has, for some time past, been very considerably attracted to the manner in which the mortal remains of our species are disposed of when the vital principle has ceased to exert its sway, and left its perishable tabernacle to return to the inanimate state whence it sprung, ere the omnipotent Creator instilled into it a purer essence.

Important branches of the daily and weekly press have used their best exertions to awaken the public from the torpor in which they have so long and so unaccountably slumbered, respecting this important subject; and have striven to impress upon them, especially upon the inhabitants of large and thickly populated districts, the danger they are incurring, by allowing the receptacles of the dead to remain in their present revolting and demoralizing state. Individual philanthropists, eminent for their talents and exertions, have likewise lent their influential aid in the same praiseworthy and laudable undertaking. Nor can it be said that these exertions have been altogether unproductive of good. Though they have not succeeded in arousing the public, generally, to a full sense of the danger of allowing the dead to remain in close contact with the living, nor have they as yet had sufficient moral power to compel the executive body, rigidly to enforce the fulfilment of such sanatory regulations for the public weal, as they are now by the existing law enabled; still less have their exertions, and the startling truths they have elicited and proclaimed, had sufficient weight to drive (and driven they must be if anything is to be done) the legislative assemblies to propound any fresh and more stringent enactments than those now in force for the preservation of the public health; yet have they, in many instances, worked considerable good, by inducing people to reflect upon what before

had either entirely escaped their notice, or, if noticed, had been attributed to other causes, entirely innocent of producing the direful results, unjustly and unreasonably attributed to them: and thus, as it were, laying the foundations for a general reformation.

Every thing, whether of great or small importance, must have a commencement; and we know that many great undertakings have sprung from very small beginnings. Let us not despair of accomplishing anything we take in hand, so long as we have right on our side; and let us never be dismayed because we do not, at first, succeed to the full extent we expect, or have a right to anticipate.

When an evil is proved to exist, and a remedy is known to be available, it is almost a solecism to say that it is the imperative duty of those who are intrusted with power, or have a right to apply that remedy, to enforce it in such a manner as to effect the greatest possible good that may lie in their power; yet, at the same time, to do it with as little interference with pre-existing opinions, laws, and institutions, as the exigencies of the case may admit. I am not an advocate for hasty and sweeping alterations—I am most decidedly opposed to the wild and ill-considered measures of too many of our modern lawgivers, who, for the mere sake of change, or to obtain temporary popularity with the vicious and ill-informed, would force into the statute book, measures fraught with palpable and inevitable ruin to those they profess to



benefit : still less would I, unless the most pressing necessity were proved to exist, encourage or countenance any infringement of the time-hallowed institutions or long established customs of my country ; institutions and customs to which many of the best feelings of our nature are inseparably linked, and to sever which, unnecessarily, I should consider as a crime amounting to very little less than sacrilege. But when from causes over which man has no control, or has no right to have control, such, for instance, as the increase of population, it becomes absolutely necessary for the safety and comfort of the community that such alterations should be made, then, I say make them, deliberately and feelingly indeed ; but make them fearlessly and effectually.

That the Graveyards in this country, those hotbeds and nurseries of sickness, misery, and death, as I shall hereafter prove them to be, have so long been allowed to remain in their present unhealthy and unseemly state, may be easily explained ; whilst that their condition has received so little attention from those, whose duty as guardians of the public welfare it undoubtedly is, to take care that nothing is allowed to exist that may have a prejudicial effect upon it, may be attributed to various causes. It would not, I think, be a very difficult task to prove that the administration of existing laws, and the construction of fresh enactments, are placed in the hands of men to whom public utility and public welfare are of

secondary consideration; and I might easily shew that our law administrators and law propounders esteem private aggrandizement and personal interest worthy of far more attention and trouble than the benefit of their fellow-creatures, and that in their eyes an empty victory over a political opponent finds more favor than any measure having solely for its object the happiness and prosperity of those from whom these law administrators and law propounders derive their influence and fancied importance. I could shew that whilst days, weeks, and months are unprofitably wasted by that branch of the Legislature, calling itself, and boasting of being, the representative of "the people," in endeavouring to carry some measure, at the best of chimerical utility, and which, carried in its most favourable form would, as far as "the masses" are concerned, be of as little real benefit as would a critical knowledge of the evolutions of the glorious orbs that deck our nights with brilliancy, or a full persuasion that the Egyptian Pyramids were really erected under the superintendence of the men whose names they bear; yet, if any unfortunate philanthropist should endeavour to draw attention to any crying evil, any abuse calling loudly for legislative interference, to which a party triumph could not by any possibility be tacked, such an individual would have the mortification of addressing himself to comparatively empty benches, if indeed he were fortunate enough, either through his own

personal influence, or the brilliancy of his oratorical powers, to retain a sufficient number of Members in the house to enable him to proceed. That such scenes are continually witnessed, as Members really actuated by a desire to promote the good of their country, or to ameliorate the condition of their fellow creatures, (and there are a few of these even in the present House of Commons,) being overpowered by clamour, whilst bringing forward some real grievance, or proposing some practical remedy for some weighty oppression, I defy the most strenuous supporters of "things as they are" to deny; and whilst such proceedings are not only tolerated, but encouraged by those who possess the power of preventing it, I fear but little is to be expected.

If my object were to endeavour to induce the Government, or their servants, the houses of Parliament, to do some act, or institute some enquiries for the benefit of mankind, or the good of their countrymen, from which they could not either directly or indirectly derive any advantage, either in their public or private capacity, I own I should wellnigh despair, and shrink from the undertaking, purely from the hopelessness of succeeding. But, most fortunately, I am not reduced to such a strait in my present undertaking. I hope to have some hold upon the attention of our rulers, because I shall shew them that they individually have an interest in it. Yes, luckily, I shall be enabled to bring self-interest (that