

“The Monumental Cemetery of Milan” Italy

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The Monumental Cemetery of Milan.

It is only something over eighty years ago that a writer drew attention to the dilapidated condition of the cemeteries of Milan. Words could hardly describe the wretched and lugubrious pass to which cemetery matters had come, if the language of this writer is to be relied on. Utter carelessness and disregard of the commonest decencies attending the care and disposition of the dead seemed to rule society.

Then a reaction set in and from the one extreme of poverty, popular sentiment clamored for the other of ostentatious monumental display, regardless of all proper associations connected with the cemetery and its object. For a number of years the discussion of the cemetery project was carried on, but the first real work in the matter dates from 1837, and from that year until 1863 the time was occupied in discussion and debate between opposing factions. During the period many designs were submitted and examined, sites selected, questions of public health considered and the whole question overhauled throughout.

Finally, on November 2, 1866, the religious dedication took place and the Monumental Cemetery waited its future.

The illustration of the entrance to this cemetery, shows a modified Byzantine in style and it is constructed of native stone of various colors, the whole structure costing some \$600,000. In the centre is the "Famedio," it might be called Pantheon, in which grand mass is held once a year for the souls of the departed. The area of the buildings about the entrance amounts to 5000 square metres. In plan the entrance extends across the entire width of the grounds, and on one side returns for a considerable distance. The several buildings included are connected by colonades, and the monumental idea is

carried out in all particulars to a degree which must be seen to be appreciated.

About the central building are grouped the offices and other accommodations.

In front of each corner of the entrance, in recesses formed by the plan, so as to be distinctly separated from the cemetery interior, is the area devoted to Non-Catholics on the left and to the Jews on the right, with their appropriate buildings.

In various niches in the interior and about the colonnades connected with these buildings are placed many fine examples of mortuary statuary and monumental work. Here is also to be found the Columbarium proper, besides systematically arranged depositories for the ashes of the departed.

The cemetery, comprising some 50 acres, is arranged on a plan not by any means conducive to harmonious effect. For instance, certain contiguous sections are devoted to perpetual burial, and are consequently crowded with statuary and memorials, as will be seen by the illustration. All idea of the sanctity of the cemetery is destroyed by this grand array of the sculptor's art, and as no two monuments are allowed to be erected on the same design, while originality will be a constant attraction, after all it is the display of sculpture which will always be the loadstone to draw the visitor.

Another section is devoted to ten year burial; another to twenty year burial and another to thirty year burial. In the latter section no monument is allowed over about two feet in height and a monotony is the result hard to describe, notwithstanding the rule against duplicating. At the expiration of the limit of time burial the remains are collected and deposited in the Ossario.

About 2000 feet from the entrance gates and at the rear of the cemetery stands the crematorium, the



ENTRANCE TO MONUMENTAL CEMETERY, MILAN, ITALY.



VIEW IN MONUMENTAL CEMETERY, MILAN.

gift to the city of Milan of Alberto Keller in 1867. This was ahead of the times and his own cremation had to be postponed. He may be conceded to have been one of the first to help the cause of cremation by adequate means. This building is classic in design, and has the appearance of quiet elegance, which with many additions to the decoration in the way of pedestals and urns, and its surrounding garden plots containing numerous memorials of the same general character, makes its purpose unmistakable.

At a little over half the distance from the entrance gates to the crematory stands a building called the "Ossario," of a style of architecture to harmonize with the general scheme, which has large subterranean vaults and crypts for the deposit of the bones of the departed, and which also contains spaces for inscriptions of deceased from other cemeteries.

The cemetery, which is quite level, is as is usual in some foreign cemeteries, enclosed by a high wall which renders its seclusion positive. In general it is laid out in the Italian garden style, rectangular with an occasional circle. A main avenue passes from the entrance through the Ossario to the crematory at the extreme end. Between the "Ossario" and the crematory is a portion which in relation to the other part is laid out on a diamond plan, and this part bears the title of the Necropolis. This section of the cemetery is remarkable for its mausoleums,

and such architectural memorials, which in number and variety afford an excellent field for studies in design and arrangement.

It would be impossible in a limited way to describe in detail the statuary which in profusion memorializes the dead in the Monumental Cemetery of Milan. The greatest sculptors of Italy have contributed to the display, and they have had, moreover, some of Italy's greatest sons for whom to create memorials. As was previously mentioned no duplicates are permitted and sketches and photographs are prohibited under penalty, so that the illustrations will show how great must be the variety in design and what latitude has been allowed the artist. Some of the work is *par excellence* great, and attracts attention. Mortuary statuary in Italy has a spirit of its own. The national characteristic temperament infuses into the Italian sculptor's work a spirit not to be met with in other cemeteries.

Returning to the Crematory, which externally is a beautiful structure, in its interior arrangements it is bare and comfortless to a great degree, but this condition of contrast in the Latin countries is frequently met with in other than cemetery matters. The waiting-room is cell-like with a few chairs standing round for mourners, who may be of all creeds or classes. At the end of this room is the furnace. In another room are vases for the recep-

tion of the ashes, while in still another are the little wooden boxes for ashes of the pauper dead. Cremation of the poor is not compulsory, but it is carried out if requested, and without charge.

There are two systems used, one is that of Paolo Garini which takes two hours to complete and which costs including a mural tablet about \$19.00. The other method is the Varini gas process, by which the corpse is reduced in something like 45 minutes and for which a charge of \$10 is made. A sepulchre for the urn in perpetuity costs some \$8.00. Compared with similar charges in our own United States, these figures are astonishingly low, and should serve as an argument in favor of this disposition of the dead, although the Roman Catholic Church expressly forbids it.

Considering its comparatively small area the Monumental Cemetery of Milan contains a fund of interesting material connected with the disposition of the dead and their commemoration.

The increase in the population of Milan has been such that the cemetery question has again come up, and with it what may be the ultimate destiny of the cemetery herein described. This is an interesting matter and is attracting considerable attention on account of its proximity to the city.*



FROM A MONUMENT IN MONUMENTAL CEMETERY, MILAN.

*In the preparation of this article the use of photographs and notes from Mr. E. Bitozero, of West Quincy, Mass., is hereby acknowledged with thanks.



MONUMENT IN THE MONUMENTAL CEMETERY, MILAN.

Marble.

The interior decoration of the Chicago Public Library promises to be especially good. The general scheme will be of the Italian Renaissance order. The walls, stairway, balustrades, and panels of the main entrance will be in Italian statuary marble, inlaid with Tiffany-Favril glass, mother of pearl, and semi-precious stones, which will also be used in connection with the marbles elsewhere in the building. The ceiling will be in marble hexagon panels, of alternating plain Italian statuary and delicate inlay of green and gold, separated by borders of green and gold inlay. The floor in Roman mosaic will be composed of Sienna, statuary, Numidian, and royal green marbles. The panels about the stairway are worked out in borders of green and pearl mosaic with a center of royal green, a rare marble from Connemara, Ireland.

The stairway offers a splendid opportunity for the stairway decorator which is to be taken advantage of.

The sides of the delivery-room are of Italian statuary marble and the floor will be in rich mosaic.

The reference room, 140 by 40 feet and 40 feet in height, will be in pure classic Greek. The color scheme of dark sap green, yellow, Pompeian red and gold.

The reading room which is a little larger than the reference room, will be the grandest room. The