

The Burial Place of Robert Emmet

The Recent Investigations

We have received the following for publication: REPORT ON THE INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE THE BURIAL PLACE OF ROBERT EMMET.

For a year or more previous to the death of Robert Emmet's death the writer was the recipient of a number of communications from widely scattered portions of the world, urging that steps be taken to determine accurately his burial place, and it was held the initiative could only be made by the family.

The writer had already made the attempt, in 1880, to begin such an investigation at Glasnevin, but had met with so discouraging a response from the rector at that time as to render him unwilling to place himself again in a false position. It happened by good fortune the writer was last winter in correspondence with Mr. Francis Joseph Bigger, the editor of the Ulster Archaeological Journal, of Belfast, and other friends in Ireland, and by them it was represented the difficulties claimed to exist were in all probability exaggerated.

In addition, Mr. David A. Quaid, a solicitor of Dublin, presented me at the time with a copy of his admirable work, "Robert Emmet," in which he presents an accumulation of new evidence to show that Emmet's remains were at some time placed in the family vault, St. Peter's Churchyard, Dublin. This new evidence was so in accord with my own investigations that I determined to act. This decision was hastened by the promised assistance of Messrs. Bigger and Quaid. Without further delay a personal application through them was made by me, as the representative of the family, early in the present year, to obtain the necessary permission for beginning the investigation at St. Peter's, and, as I resided in New York and Mr. Bigger in Belfast, the work in detail was placed in Mr. Quaid's hands, who interviewed His Grace the Archbishop (the Most Rev. Dr. Peacocke, His Grace's legal adviser, a distinguished Irish judge), and the other authorities hereafter mentioned.

At the beginning of the investigation it became evident the examination would be confined to three places—the family vault, St. Peter's Churchyard, the unscrubbed grave in St. Michael's Churchyard, which had for years been accepted by a great portion of the Irish people as the hallowed spot, and, finally, to open the unscrubbed grave in the Glasnevin Parish Churchyard.

After some delay all obstacles were removed. Mr. Bigger's help as an authority upon graveyards was most important at the beginning; the indefatigable energy of Mr. Quaid (who regularly corresponded with me, as also Mr. J. F. Fuller) advanced the undertaking in detail; and, finally, success was achieved by the co-operation of Mr. J. F. Fuller, the architect of the Representative Church Body. In fact, I fully realize that without the earnest co-operation of this gentleman difficulties, which were easily overcome by his aid, might otherwise have been almost insurmountable.

right hand of the entrance close to the wall on the south side." If my memory is correct it is stated in the "Sham Squire" that the Emmet burial place was in the southeast corner of the graveyard, which would have been close to the rear of the old guardhouse, and the author of this work probably made the statement from his own knowledge. Dr. Madden further records that the stone covering inscription on it:

"Here lies the remains of ROBERT EMMET, Esq., M.D., Who died the 9th of December, 1802, In the 73rd year of his age."

In 1880, the writer was unable to find either the vault or the covering, bearing the inscription, among the headstones of the different graves, which were at that time laid in piles along the walls of the yard. On inquiry it was ascertained that the completion of the transept to the south had been made a few years previously, and, as all interments had then been prohibited by law, the surface of the ground had been covered in from five to six feet with earth along Whitefriar's street to the level of Augier street. At the present time the tomb and headstones, which the writer examined in 1880, and which were then placed the one on the top of another, are now secured upright against the outer walls of the church and the enclosure, with a few laid on the surface of the ground at random, for there exists no guide to indicate their proper position with any relation to the old graves or tombs. Dr. Madden described the stone which covered the Emmet vault as a large flat one, and, as it was found among those said to be all which had been disturbed, it was thought in 1880 that the tomb had been simply covered in with the earth used for levelling the surface of the graveyard.

After enclosing a portion of the southeast section of St. Peter's Churchyard by a high board fence (facing the street and also at the back) an early hour on Monday morning, July 6th last, in the presence of Messrs. Quaid, Fuller, the Rev. Mr. Robinson, the Assistant Curate of St. Peter's Church; Mr. Robert Emmet, my son; and myself, a wide trench was opened extending along the south wall of the graveyard westward for twenty-eight feet, starting from where the back wall of the demolished old watch-house facing the street would have been.

In this space a vault, eight feet long and eight feet and a half wide, was uncovered, besides two detached graves bricked in as single vaults, which were not opened. The large vault occupied the supposed location of the Emmet burial place in the southeast corner of the yard close to the south wall and about ten feet west from the remains of the foundation of the guardhouse. The excavation was then extended from the uncovered foundation of the guardhouse along the south wall until the line of the west wall of the new portion of the transept had been reached and across nearly to the south wall of the church. This exposed a concrete surface of from eight to twelve inches thick, which had been laid over the original surface of the ground after the head and foot stones, with some of the coverings and of the vaults, had been removed, and on this was placed the earth used to fill in the trench increasing towards the west. This uncovered vault projected above the surface of the concrete, and its top was but a few inches below the present surface of the yard. It was opened at each end, to expedite the examination and to remove the necessity for disturbing the contents, and, in addition, the concrete steps were filling in the original stone steps were reached nearly to the level of the vault floor.

The vault contained four coffins, two of which were in a fair state of preservation; on two of these were coffin plates bearing different names, and from the dates it was thought that these bones were among the last to be buried before the prohibitory law went into operation, and the conclusion was reached that this had been the receiving vault of the church. After a search of five days nothing was found in connection with the Emmet family. The vault was carefully closed; but before filling in the trench where the concrete had been removed in every direction was sounded by means of an iron bar introduced to a depth of several feet. It was the opinion of all if another vault had been below it would certainly have been found by this means, while in no instance were the remains in any grave disturbed or even reached by the iron bar from above. It is proposed to explore either Mr. Quaid, Mr. Fuller, or Mr. Robert Emmet attended and directed the work. The Rev. Mr. Robinson was also very often present.

On the following day, after completing the search first undertaken, Mr. Robert Emmet, thinking an additional exploration might be extended along the south wall of the church to the right of the church entrance, but nothing was found. The only conclusion to be drawn from this investigation is that, from other vaults were formerly situated in this portion of the side walls, tops, with a portion of the side walls, must have been broken down and the vaults then filled in. The broad stone which Dr. Madden described as covering the Emmet vault must have been buried elsewhere after the destruction of the vaults or it certainly would have been found by means of this supposition, and as a proof of this supposition, one large flat stone with the inscription perfect and portions of broken ones were found which had been used to fill in with. The large flat stone so discovered may be seen resting against the south wall of the churchyard near the street. The earnest effort to find the Emmet vault was pursued simply for the purpose of determining the site, however trifling such a result might have been, but in the firm belief that it

ever be found the final resting place of Robert Emmet will be demonstrated. In a work just published by G. P. Putnam and Sons, New York, "Ireland Under English Rule, a Plea for the Plaintiff," I have detailed at some length in the appendix my reasons for believing that Robert Emmet's body was finally placed with the remains of his father, mother, brother, sister, and other relatives in the family burial place, but to enter on any consideration of this subject would be out of place here. At my request Mr. Fuller took charge of my application to make the exploration in St. Michael's Churchyard, and on his report I beg to acknowledge my thanks for the courtesy and promptness with which the necessary permission was again granted by the Representative Church Body, the Rector, Rev. Mr. Long, and the Church-wardens. The charge of this examination was but a just tribute to Mr. Fuller, who had felt justified, on the testimony collected by him, in the belief that this spot was the burial place of Robert Emmet. As a connection, through the Mason family (of Kerry), of Robert Emmet's mother, Mr. Fuller long carried for this grave which had been enclosed and covered with a marble slab bearing only the inscription "September 20, 1803."

After my departure from Dublin this unscrubbed grave was opened on Saturday, August 3rd, 1903, in the presence of Messrs. Fuller, Quaid, two Churchwardens of the church, and others. Before the excavation had been completed Sir Lambert Ormsby, M.D., the President of the Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin, attended, and to him was submitted for examination the remains here found, after they had been photographed by Mr. Geoghegan, of 2 Essex Quay. It was decided here to obtain the services of Professor Alec Fraser in addition, before the examination was made, and, in accord with this agreement, on the following day these gentlemen attended and their conclusion was so readily reached that the remains were soon replaced, the grave refilled, and the original unscrubbed stone was put back in the same place it had occupied so many years; but, by request of Mr. Fuller, with the side containing the inscription underneath.

Mr. Fuller had also discovered in the receiving vault under St. Michael's Church a skull, having a piece of crumpled paper to hide the eye cavities. It had been believed by many, I think, without sufficient grounds, that the elder Petrie had carried Emmet's head away to take a plaster cast, and that Petrie did not return with it until after the coffin containing the body had been removed by the Rev. Mr. Gamble, of St. Michael's Church, from the gate-house at Bull's Acre on the southeast corner of the Acre, with a knowledge of this tradition and that in this vault it was supposed the Rev. Mr. Gamble had deposited for some time Robert Emmet's body, the possibility suggested itself that this might be Emmet's skull which Dr. Madden or someone else knowing its history had placed there. On being submitted, however, to the judgment of the above-mentioned medical gentlemen it was decided at once that the skull could not have been that of Robert Emmet.

Before the reception of the reports of these gentlemen my son, Mr. Robert Emmet, who had a medical training, and I had reached the same conclusion from a careful inspection of the photographs sent us by Mr. Quaid of this skull, and our testimony is offered in corroboration. The following reports I have received from these gentlemen, and I wish to express my sincere thanks, not only for the personal favor, but for the great service rendered by them to the public in determining beyond question that this unscrubbed grave, so long cherished as the hallowed spot, does not contain the body of Robert Emmet.

"Report on the skeleton and other bones submitted to me for inspection in Saint Michael's Churchyard, Dublin, by Mr. J. F. Fuller, F.S.A., Architect, and Mr. David A. Quaid, Solicitor, August 3rd, 1903.

"On Monday, August 3rd, I met by appointment at 4.30 p.m. both the above-mentioned gentlemen, and they submitted to me for my inspection and opinion several human bones taken out of a grave which was alleged to be that of Robert Emmet, who died some time in the year 1803.

"The skull that was submitted to me I immediately stated was the skull belonging to an aged man, and could not have been that of Robert Emmet, who had not reached his 25th year. The lower jaw fitted the skull and, in my opinion, belonged to the same person. In addition to these bones, and which were portions of a partial bone of the skull of a young child, and portions of ribs of same. I stated to the above two gentlemen that I would far prefer before I gave a definite opinion and report in writing to have every bone that could be found in the grave removed, and placed in order on a flat slab, so that I could examine the skeleton as a whole, and then compare accurately each bone separately of the skeleton submitted. Accordingly on Tuesday, August 4th, at the hour of 5 o'clock I again attended at Saint Michael's Churchyard, being accompanied by Professor Alec Fraser, F.R.C.S., Professor of Anatomy, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and in order that he should act with me in this important and far-reaching investigation. We then carefully examined the skull, lower jaw, vertebrae, and long bones of the limbs taken out of the grave and laid out in order as they were, and we had no hesitation in saying that the skeleton before me must have been at least six feet in height, and, therefore, could not possibly have belonged to Robert Emmet, who was a young man of short stature. I am, therefore, of opinion that Robert Emmet could not have been interred in this particular grave in St. Michael's Churchyard. I also said that another skull was submitted to me, which, I was informed, was found in the vault under St. Michael's Church by itself, and for the

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same anatomical reasons already stated I adjudge that the individual to whom it belonged died at an advanced age.

(Signed), LAMBERT H. ORMSBY, M.D. F.R.C.S., Kt., President Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland. August 13th, 1903.

Report of Professor Alec Fraser, Professor of Anatomy, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland: Having been asked by Sir Lambert H. Ormsby, President of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, to inspect and give my opinion upon certain remains in the churchyard of St. Michael's, Dublin, I went there at 5 p.m. on the 4th August, 1903, and in his and in the presence of two other gentlemen was shown:

First—A skull with lower jaw; the latter, though separate, belonged to the same head. From the absorption of the alveolar raches of the upper jaw bones, the partial disappearance of the cranial sutures, and from other characteristics, there was no difficulty in deciding that these belonged to the head of an aged male.

Second—Spread out on a slab were seen the bones of the trunk and of the fore and hind limbs, almost complete. There was no difficulty in determining from the length of the long and the size of the trunk bones, as well as from other features, that these belonged to a man over six feet in height. There were also seen here a few human bones which had belonged to a female skeleton, and also some bones from the skeleton of an animal.

Third—A second skull was examined, and there was little difficulty in concluding that it also was from a male past the meridian of life, although not so aged as the first skull shown. (Signed), ALEC FRASER, Professor of Anatomy, Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland. August 22nd, 1903.

Recently the supposed grave of Robert Emmet in the Glasnevin Parish Churchyard has been built upon by enlarging the chancel to within a foot and a half of the unscrubbed headstone.

Through fear of injury to this building the authorities have been unwilling to grant permission for opening this supposed grave to the full length, as it extended across the pathway nearly to the dormer, east wall of the church, if the unscrubbed stone was placed to indicate the head and direction of the grave.

Mr. Quaid and Mr. Fuller arranged an exploration within the limits permitted by the authorities. Mr. Quaid was present during the excavations, which were of the depth of six feet. No remains whatever were found. I have no faith in the claim that Robert Emmet was buried at Glasnevin, but I regard the restricted exploration as being too incomplete to be accepted of itself as a final settlement of the question. Fortunately, may not be so necessary, as I have in New York an original letter written previous to 1880 by the Rev. Mr. Carroll, the former Rector, to Dr. Madden, in which he states distinctly that during the school year divers from study, has some interesting things to say regarding these matters. A few of his expressions with respect to courting among children are:

"I know that the practice of 'keeping company,' as they call it, among children below 18 promotes immorality and leads to intimacy that should not exist. 'Boys should be by themselves and girls also by themselves during their school days. They will attend to their studies much better.' 'These love affairs disturb the work of the classes and generally have a demoralizing influence.' 'It is seldom that courtship in school results in marriage. The young people soon become tired of each other.' 'All courting ought to be with the end of marriage in view.' 'Just as demoralizing is the custom of school children in attending dances. They ought not to be kept up late hours.'"

Against Idle Courting

A priest who believes that "keeping company" between children under 18 leads to immorality and that dancing during the school year diverts from study, has some interesting things to say regarding these matters. A few of his expressions with respect to courting among children are:

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