

(Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.)

AFTER MANY YEARS.

Here is the old church. Now I see it all—
The hills, the sea, the bridge, the waterfall.
The dear old sleepy town is still as dead.

II.

There is the school-house; there the lake, the lawn;
And there, just fronting it, the barrack-square;
But of all those I knew not one is there—

III.

Oh! what could wake to life that first sweet flame
That warmed my heart when by the little Bay
On blissful summer evenings I lay

IV.

The mountains gather round thee as of yore.
O holy lake, across whose tranquil breast
Was borne the saint who to the farthest west

V.

It is ebb-tide. The scientific eye
May see slow changes creeping o'er the shore.
I know not whether it be less or more,

VI.

Why in the day-dream of a vain regret
Lap the soul's energies? Why linger near
The place of graves for ever? Every year

JOHN READE.

(Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.)

A CHAPTER ON EPITAPHS AND GRAVES.

"Let us talk of graves, and worms and epitaphs."
SHAKESPEARE.

For the origin of these compositions we are referred to the scholars of Linus, who first bewailed their master in doleful verses, then called Obitum, afterwards Epitaphia; for they were first sung at burials and afterwards engraved upon the sepulchre.

The writer has selected a few which tend to show the manners and feelings of the people in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A great number of them are proverbially offensive; they express, it is true,

"Here lies the great! False marble, where?
Nothing but serf-dust lies here."

YOUNG.

Shakspeare thus expresses himself in relation to false honours:

"Honours best thrive
When rather from our acts we them derive
Than our fingers: the mere world's a slave,
I launch'd on every tomb, on every grave;
A lying trophy, and oft as dumb,
Where dust and oblivion is the tomb
Of honour'd bones: indeed!"

The following lines by Dr. Donne express the qualifications necessary to write an epitaph:

"He that would write an epitaph on thee,
And do it well, must first begin to be
Such as thou wert: for none can truly know
Thy worth, thy life, but he that lived so."

The following curious verses are on the tomb of F. Caldwell in St. Martin's Church, Ludgate, London, date 1590:

Earth goes to Earth } As mould to mould,
Earth treads on Earth } Glittering in gold,
Earth as to Earth } Return ne'er should,
Earth shall be } Go where he would.
Earth upon } Consider may,
Earth goes to Earth } Naked away,
Earth though on Earth } Be stout and gay,
Earth shall form } Peace poore away.

"Be merciful and charitable,
Relieve the poor as thou art able;
A shroud to thy grave
Is all thou shalt have!"

On an old monument in Ste. Ann and Ste. Agnes' Church, London, is the following:

Quos anguis tristi diro cum vulnere stravit,
Hos sanguis Christi miro tum munere lavit.

In this distich the last syllable of each word is the same as of each corresponding word in the last line, and is to be found in the centre. It reads thus:

Quos anguis tristi diro cum vulnere stravit,
Hos sanguis Christi miro tum munere lavit.

Which may thus be translated:

Those who have felt the serpent's venom'd wound,
To Christ's miraculous blood hath healing found.

William Lawes, an eminent musician and composer, who was killed in battle by the Roundheads, is thus immortalized:

Concord is conquer'd! In this urn there lies
The master of great music's mysteries;
And in it is a riddle like the cause,
Will Lawes was slain by men whose wills were laws!

The loyalty and religion of Daniel Blachford, who died in 1681, and was buried in Oxhill Churchyard, Warwickshire, is thus commemorated:

When I was young I ventured life and blood,
Both for my king and for my country's good;
In elder years my care was chief to be
Soldier to Him who shed his blood for me!

What amusement and instruction may be found in a country churchyard, to

Steep o'er the place of graves, and softly say
The sighing herbage by the gleaming stone;
That they who near the churchyard's willows stray,
And listen in the deepening gloom alone,
May think of gentle souls that's passed away,
Like the pure breath into the vast unknown,
Sent forth from heaven among the sons of men,
And come into the boundless heaven again.

The epitaphs on children are oftentimes very expressive and simple; there is a thorough absence of fulsome adulation about them:

Beneath a sleeping infant lies,
'Twas earth to ashes lent;
In time he shall more glorious rise,
But not more innocent.

When the archangel's trumpet sounds,
And souls to bodies join;
Many would wish their lives below,
Had been as short as thine!

Our ancestors entertained great fear of being disturbed after death, probably from their strong hope in the resurrection of the dead; the following, somewhat similar to the expression used on Shakspeare's tomb, is to be found in St. Giles' Church, Shrewsbury, date 1685:

Sur not my bones, which are laid in clay,
For I must rise at resurrection day.

In Friendsbury Churchyard, near Chatham, a gravestone thus speaks to the living in monosyllables:

Time was I stood as thou dost now,
And view'd the dead as thou dost me;
Ere long thou'lt lie as low as I,
And others stand to look on thee!

On an old tombstone in Clonatin Church, Ireland, there is a paraphrase of the 12th verse of the 7th chapter of St. Matthew:

Let all thy thoughts, thy words, and deeds,
Be such unto thy brother,
As thou wouldst his should be to thee,
And let them be none other.

On the tomb of the once beautiful Mary Vigers, 1703, in the Cathedral of Ferns, Ireland, there is written:

Thou dust and clay, tell me, I say,
Where is thy beauty fled?
Was it in vain? or doth it gain
The favour of the dead.

Here is an epitaph written in 1626, taken from the "Notes and Queries" 1865. The gentleman furnishing it asks "Can any reader kindly inform me of the name of the author, and in what collection of poems it is to be found?"

"Birth is a pain; life, labour, care, toil, thrall,
To ill age strength fails; lastly death ends all,
Whilst long life lasts, let virtuous deeds be shown;
Fruits of such trees are hardly seen thereby or known
To have reward with lasting joys for aye,
When virtuous actions fall to ends decay,
Of wealth, of riches, land, money, stock, or store,
In life that will relieve aged, needy, poor,
Good deeds defer not till the funeral rites be past;
In life-time what's done is made more firm, sure, and fast;
Sooner after it shall be known and seen,
That leaf and fruit shall ever spring fresh and green."

An epitaph in South Wales says:

"The village maidens to her grave shall bring,
The fragrant garland each returning spring,
Selected sweets, in emblem of the maid
Who underneath this hallowed turf is laid."

The allusion is to a custom which prevails in Wales, namely: the decoration of graves with flowers. The graves of children have snow-drops, primroses, hazel-blossoms and sallow blossoms on them; while those of older people have tanzy, box and rue. In South Wales no flowers are permitted to be planted on graves but those which are sweet-scented; pinks, carnations, sweet-williams, gillflowers, mignonette, thyme, and rosemary are used. The red rose is appropriated to the graves of good and benevolent persons. There is a kind of pathos and touching tenderness of expression in these sweet and fragrant emblems of affection, which language cannot reach, and which is calculated to perpetuate a kind of soothing sympathy between the living and the dead. They speak of cords of love too strong for even the grave to break asunder. How forcibly do these beautiful emblems speak to the roughness of human nature:

"Here eglantine embalmed the air,
Hawthorn and hazel mingled there;
The primrose pale and violet flower,
Found in each cleft a narrow bowyer;
Fox-glove and night-shade side by side,
Emblems of punishment and pride."

In Easter week most of the graves are newly dressed and covered with fresh earth. In the Whitsuntide holidays they are again dressed, weeded, and, if necessary, replanted. No person ever breaks or disturbs the flowers thus planted; it would be considered a sacrilege.

Leigh Hunt delicately observes: "Nature likes external beauty, and man likes it too; it softens the heart, enriches the imagination, and helps to show that there are other goods in the world besides utility."

In conclusion, we may ask, what can be more appropriate than beautiful flowers to deck the graves of those we loved when on earth and whose memories we revere, although their bodies are beneath the earth.

CORRESPONDENCE.

SOCIAL POLITICS IN 1873.—A FRAGMENT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE Canadian Illustrated News:

DEAR SIR.—Sitting at the breakfast-table a morning or two ago with my friend E—, the conversation turned upon the protection of life from the failures of machinery, and as we sipped our coffee in pleasant chat, E— settled the whole question with the greatest satisfaction to his own mind. In me he had a good listener, for, like a good many other people in these modern days, I dearly delight to get at the rights of everything, and before all things to ascertain how every evil that afflicts the world can be remedied. As soon as I feel well certified of the remedial measures that ought to be employed in any particular case that may have come up for consideration, my mind is wonderfully relieved, and I am not in the habit of taking up the same question again until another disaster arrives. So E— being, with all of us in Canada, (for we are really a warm-hearted people) deeply moved by the late awful "Atlantic" disaster—began his prelections with the subject of the steamships. The piteous argument that soon flowed from his lips was so unusual in its tone, and, as I began to realize as it proceeded, so likely, if only listened to by those awful people who hold the reins of power in the Anglo-Saxon world, to work in the end to good results, that it would have been a pleasure to me to have given it entire, but the disquisition into which he speedily launched, upon the birth of civilization—the simple common sense of the old Greeks—the warm heart and spirit of mutual help of the Civis Romanus—the gradual conversion of the Phœnician Tin Islands into a British Empire, under the heavenly ægis of Christianity—and the astonishing progress of that empire in its agricultural and productive industries, its primitive ships and public highways; with some really æsthetic comments upon the excellent quality of the work turned out by its antique factories and guilds—and with a great deal more of the same sort—until he arrived in due course at that portentous change that came over the fabric of humanity when machinery was born into the world, and when steam commenced to bestow its multitude of precious gifts on man, and to flank them with its abysmal liabilities—terrible giant as it is—all this, I say, was rather too much to think of harlequining our readers with, for I well know they love prolixity no better than I do myself. "A new spirit of valiant defiance," E— went on to remark, "has seized our race. Feeling their superiority to material forces, they treat them with contempt and indifference. It is not a fine spirit. It is not a sensible spirit. It reminds one of the defiance of the worm before it is trodden upon. It makes one think of the cult perire and the prius demerit, when we come to realize that we have not only gone on needlessly exposing our own bodies to the untrammelled rage of these dreadful powers of steam and wind and wave, but that we are equally ready to submit our women and children to a full participation in these frightful contingencies—and that we can discern few signs of a decrease in their amount and intensity, but on the contrary, certain ugly portents of their being vastly increased. When we get all this pictured upon the retina of the mind, we really cannot think without a shudder of the ages immediately to follow in the history of the world. Again and again are heaps and hecatombs of human frames, the abodes of loving hearts—thus miserably mutilated—immolated. The ever-recurring recitals only strike upon the general ear like jangled bells. We join the respectable chorus in a checked gasp and a suppressed groan. Collectively, that is representatively, and according to the most approved forms, we make a faint—for, strictly analyzed, it is nothing else but a faint—of enquiring into causes—immediate and ultimate—and governing principles in matter and in morals, as they have in each case, affected and caused this ever-recurring destruction of our own flesh and blood. We take these fits upon us after each several shameful (as regards the race) calamity by land or sea; and having accomplished so much, with a good deal of satisfied feeling, we bring our busy hands and thoughts back to their daily tasks, and await the approach of the next terrible shock to our sensibilities—but which, be minded, shall startle us a little less than the last—for such is the human constitution in its susceptibility to agitations—so that we may look forward to the next following impression as likely to be feeble still, and to the impulses in their due series, becoming less and less, until they arrive at a vanishing point in the no very distant future—the quite conceivable point at which public feeling shall be as stone dead as the periodical heaps of victims. Alas! my friend, what grinning idol—what hideous Mumbo-Jumbo has to-day seized the control of the will and the passions of this progressive race? How soon may we expect the cure to arrive for that which we know to be almost perfectly curable? Let us think of the watchmaker with his beautiful little piece of perfected mechanism—produced entirely, as he informs us, by a sedulous adaptation of means to ends. Is not he, from his particular and very staid point of view, really ashamed of us all? But of course we ourselves know in our hearts it could all be grappled with—though we need say no word of absolute success. Christianity, that has effected so much for the world, is a match for this enemy also. We call despairingly upon Providence, but is it not rather a special grace, alas, that we chiefly need? Is it not public indifference and hypocritical and white-washing enquiries, especially where corporations are concerned, that we have to overcome in the first instance? Is not the expert almost invariably told to stand aside? and, finally, is not legislation of the practical kind ignored? And yet it is a great common interest that environs us all. The people should not be allowed to perish. There are streams running