

A COLLECTION OF EPITAPHS.

Most young men have a hobby, which for a time they follow with the greatest zeal and determination. In my youthful days I had no desire to collect bird eggs or butterflies. Collecting coins was by far too expensive for my pockets, and the fashion for stamps had not been thought of. Autographs occupied my time for a few years, and I have a few that many collectors would value; but after possessing them, they afforded me only the selfish pleasure of showing them to my less fortunate friends, for to me there was no enjoyment to be derived from studying the scratches and scribbles of great men and women, when they consisted of only their signature.

But one day, being in a small town in Wiltshire, and having finished my business, I rushed to the station in time to see the train going without me, and upon enquiry found the next would not leave for nearly six hours—in fact, one train in the morning and one in the afternoon was all the accommodation afforded, and I have no doubt quite enough. To pass the time away was my next consideration, and I began to enquire if there was anything to see in the place. Nothing but a nobleman's mansion some eight miles distant, and the parish church. I chose the latter, for upon further enquiry about the mansion I found I could only drive there and back in the time, there being no chance of seeing the interior, as the family was at home.

I have never regretted my visit to the old church. I found the parish clerk inside, dusting, etc., etc., and entering into conversation with him I was entertained and amused for a couple of hours. Near the church was a public house, and we crossed over the churchyard to drink each other's health, and in passing, the old sexton stopped and pointed to a gravestone, saying, "That is a curious thing to put on a gravestone" (He did not say tombstone). It ran thus:—

Gentle Reader, Gentle Reader,
Look on the spot where I do lie.
I was always a good feeder,
But now the worms do feed on I.

After our slight refreshment of a mug of ale and some excellent bread and cheese, I wished my friend good-bye. Some months after I was in another town, and had to wait for a train, so visited the churchyard; and whilst sitting on one of the tombstones I thought of collecting epitaphs. This was some twenty-five years ago, and I have still gone on. From a collection of the many I have, I send a few, if you think them useful or interesting for your paper in which I take much interest.

Yeovil Churchyard, Somersetshire.

A great quantity of West of England cloth was formerly made here.

JOHN WEBB.

Son of John and Mary Webb, * clothiers, who died of the measles May 3rd, 1646, aged 3 years.

How still he lies!

* Cloth wearers.

And clos'd his eyes
That shone as bright as day!
The cruel measles,
'Like clothiers' † teasles,
Have scratched his life away.
Cochineal red from
His lips have fled
Which now are blue and black,
Dear pretty wretch
How thy limbs stretch
Like cloth upon the rack.
Repress thy sighs,
The husband cries,
My dear and not repine,
For ten to one
When God's work done
He'll come off superfine.

Llanfilantwyl Churchyard, North Waters.

Under this stone lies Meredith Morgan
Who blew the bellows of our church organ.
Tobacco he hated, to smoke most unwilling
Yet never so pleased as when pipes he was filling.
No reflection on him for rude speech could be cast.
Tho' he gave our old organist many a blast
No puffer was he
Tho' a capital blower;
He could fill double G
And now lies a note lower.

St. Peter's Church, Oxford.

Here lyeth Dr. Rawlinson's two younger daughters:

ELIZABETH,
who dyed May ye 21, 1624; and
DOROTHY,
who dyed Jan. 10, 1629.

Two little sisters ly under this stone,
Their Mothers were two, their Fathers but one.
At 5 quarters old departed ye younger,
The older lived 9 years 5 days and no longer.
Learn hence, ye yong gallants, to cast away laughter
As soon comes ye lamb as ye sheep to ye slaughter.

Martham Church, Norfolk.

Here lyeth the Body of
CHRIST BURRAWAY,
who departed this Life ye 18 day of October,
Anno Domini 1730, aged 59 years.

And there lyes ~~ed~~
Alice who by his Life
Was my sister, my mistress,
My mother and my wife.
Dyed Feb. ye 12, 1729,
Aged 76 years.

Merton, Oxfordshire.

LADY HARRINGTON, 1675,
Aged 57.

She that now takes her rest within this tomb
Had Rachel's face and Leah's fruitful womb,
Abigail's wisdom, Lideca's faithful heart,
Both Martha's care and Mary's better part.

Watford Magna, Warwickshire.

Here old John Roundall lies, who counting by his sale
Lived 3 score years and 10, such virtue was in ale.
Ale was his meat, ale was his drink, ale did his heart revive,
And could he still have drunk his ale he still had been alive.

† A kind of thistle formerly used for finishing superfine broadcloth.