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Epitaphs of a Past Age

Epitaphs are perhaps a better index to the common thought and feeling of an age than the more carefully wrought literature. "Most of the loveliest epitaphs in the language," says Mr. J. C. Squire, "are to be found in books not on monuments." "Spoon-River Anthology" is hardly admired for the beauty of its thought or the comfort it administers to bereaved relatives. What Masters did for the little mid-Western hamlet of his imagining we find that our British ancestors really did for themselves. A new anthology, "Epitaphs: Graveyard Humor and Elegy," compiled by W. H. Beale, proves this. A taste of its quality is given us in The Observer (London) by Mr. Squire, who observes that "our ancestors, when speech was freer and acceptance of the social order more general, and candor was less embarrassed by snobbery, hypocrisy, sensitiveness, good taste, and other virtues and vices let themselves go in a manner completely foreign to us." Perhaps nothing brings us nearer the real heart of these ancient peoples or shows us the distance we have traveled from them. Mr. Squire asserts—

"Their frankness achieved sometimes a pathos, sometimes a humor, sometimes even a ferocity completely absent from modern epitaphs, in which discretion has effaced differences. We write 'In loving memory,' and leave it at that. The idea of deliberate vagueness on the tombstone of a dead friend or acquaintance appals us. We don't mind cherishing his memory in conversation by recalling his delightful peculiarities, but we would not dream of putting them on his tombstone. Even a gentle wit we should consider out of place. Here lies Fuller's earth' was put upon the stone of a Dr. Fuller; it would not be now. To our thinking we should at least pretend to be deadly solemn when composing an epitaph, too distracted by grief for a play upon words. Certainly some of our forefathers went so far with their jocularity that they ran the risk of hurting the feelings of relatives. Mr. Beale (I do not know whether he is right) ascribes to Jersey the epitaph on a brewer:—

Here lies poor Burton.
He was both hale and stout;
Death laid him on his bitter bier.
Now in another world he hops about.

He gives no ascription whatever for another, which rings like modern facetiousness:—

Here lies John Bun.
He was killed by a gun.
His name was not Bun, but Wood.
But Wood would not rhyme with gun,
but Bun would.

"But the country is covered with punning epitaphs. Some are touching, as the one at Lillingston on 'Cole':—

Then do not doubt, the Cole's not out,
Though it is ashes lies.
That little spark now in the dark
Will like a Phoenix rise.

Others exhibit a mere delight in ingenuity. Jokes are made either about men's names or about their occupations. Our modern reticence scarcely allows us to mention a man's occupation on his stone unless he was something 'important,' and then the bare fact is recorded. In olden times there was often an attempt to make the 'lapidary inscription' a genuine summary of a man's life. Nothing was out of place. A fox-hunting squire in Devon has an epitaph all about the chase. There is the cele-

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MOIRS' CHRISTMAS BOXES of CHOCOLATES.

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C. P. EAGAN

PHONE NOS.—
123 & 423 Duckworth St. 402 Queen's Road.

brated and frequent epitaph on the landlord of the Lion, whose son 'keeps on the business still.' At St. Mary's, Cheltenham, there is an epitaph on John Higgs, pig-killer, which begins:—

Here lies John Higgs.
A famous man for killing pigs.
For killing pigs was his delight.
Both morning, afternoon, and night.

At St. Michael's, Eastcheap, there is an epitaph on Bob Preston, 1730, drawer at the renowned Boar's Head, which recommends his virtues to other potboys: at Great Walsford, Worcestershire, this:

Here old John Randall lies
Who counting from his tale
Lived three score years and ten.
Such virtue was in Ale.
Ale was his meat.
Ale was his drink.
Ale did his heart revive.
And if he could have drunk his Ale
He still had been alive:
But died January 1699.

At Edwallon, Notts, is a similar but briefer one on a sociable old lady, Rebecca Freeland, 1741:—

She drank good ale, good punch, and wine,
And lived to the age of 99.

The most famous epitaph mentioning liquor may be the one in Winchester Cathedral to the Hampshire Grenadier who died from drinking small beer, the passer-by being recommended to take it strong. On the frontiers of civilization this naive candor persisted later.

Our own land is not entirely overlooked in this collection: "She done her best," is on a child's stone in New York. I doubt the authenticity of the American dentist's epitaph:

Stranger! Approach this spot with gravity!
John Brown is filling his last cavity.

But this from the Far West has the right ring:—

To Lem S. Frame, who during his life shot 39 Indians, whom the Lord delivered into his hands, and who was looking forward to making up his hundred before the end of the year, when he fell asleep in Jesus at his house at Hawk's Ferry, March 27, 1843.

Really offensive epitaphs cause Mr. Squire a measure of astonishment. Those "abusing the dead, or other people, or even the person, exposing faults and satisfying grudges" are not absent from this curious assembly:

"There is a depressing prudence about the remark on John Guley's tomb at Crofton Hackett, 'in expectation of the last day. What sort of man he was that Day will discover.' But there is no prudence about this, at Potterton, Wilts:—

Here lies Mary, the wife of John Ford, who hope here is gone to the Lord. But if for Hell she has changed her life She had better be there than be John Ford's wife.

On some stones hell is even indicated as deceased's destination! There is an epitaph at Bideford which reflects on the lady in the next grave: there is one at Wolverhampton which says that the dead died from over-eating; there is one in Devon which abuses the person for neglecting the deceased in his last illness. As Mr. Beale mildly says, 'Some of the epitaphs are by no means eulogistic, and would, of course, not be tolerated in these times.' It is not only the abusive which would not be 'tolerated' now. At Easingwold there is this really fine, and obviously just, tribute to a woman:—

Anne Harrison, well-known by the name of Nanna Ran Dan, who chaste but no prude; and who free was no harlot. By principle virtuous, by education a Protestant; her freedom made her liable to censure, while her extensive charities made her esteemed. Her tongue she was unable to control, but the rest of her members she kept in subjection. After a life of eighty years thus spent, she died, 1748.

Here is a complimentary candor; the most terrible example of the other kind is to be found at Horsley Down, Cumberland. The woman's brother, who had survived her husband, put it up. He admitted all her virtues, but stated her vices at great length. I can not quote it all. Here are extracts:—

Her husband and child, whom she loved,
Seldom saw her countenance without a disgusting frown.
Whilst she received visitors, whom she despised,
With an endearing smile.

The talents in which she principally excelled
Were difference of opinion, and discovering flaws and imperfections.

He had not, in the whole, enjoyed two years of matrimonial comfort.

This was put up as a warning to wives. Warnings used to be quite common. On one city stone there are instructions about preventing fire, deceased having been burnt to death.

"Mr. Beale does not classify the epitaphs which say something they do not mean; but there are several of them. Quite rightly the most striking is Irish. It is to be found at Monknewton, near Drogheda:—

Erected by Patrick Kelly,
of the town of Drogheda, Mariner,
in memory of his Posterity.

No source is given for this:—

In memory of
Who died of cholera morbus,
Caused by eating green fruit
In the certain hope of a
blessed immortality.
Reader, so thou and do likewise.

But his one is in Woolwich Churchyard:—

Sacred to the memory of Major James Brush, Royal Artillery, who was killed by the accidental discharge of a pistol by his orderly, 14th April, 1821. Well done, good and faithful servant!

False Pretences Case

TWO WITNESSES EXAMINED YESTERDAY.

The adjourned meeting of the false pretence charge, preferred against W. J. Snow, and adding and abiding by Mr. Thomas Griffin, both of Collier's, C.B., was continued in the Magistrate's Court yesterday afternoon before His Honor Judge Morris. The evidence of John Murphy was taken, after which T. A. Hall, Chairman of the Highroads' Commission, was examined by Mr. Cramm, Counsel for the Crown. Further adjournment was taken until Thursday next.

Personal

Mr. Joe Tower has resigned his position with the Royal Bank of Canada, this city, and leaves by S.S. Silvia tomorrow. Mr. Tower, we understand, has been offered a lucrative position in the U.S.A., and his many friends in the city will rejoice with him in his new field of work. He has been a great favorite while residing in this city, being prominent in all social activities, and also the Curling Club. He has been succeeded by Mr. Kipley, of Charlottetown, P.E.I., who just arrived in the city.

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Jan. 15 Feb. 12 Montclair
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Mar. 15—Carnania, Liverpool
Mar. 29—Antonia, Ply. Cher., London
Apr. 12—Alaunia, Liverpool
Apr. 26—Ascania, Ply. Cher., London
FROM NEW YORK
to
Nov. 23—Alaunia, Q'town, Liverpool
Nov. 28—Antonia, Ply. Cher., London
Dec. 2—Aquitania, Cher., Southampton
Dec. 5—Laconia, Q'town, Liverpool
Dec. 8—Carnania, L'derry, Glasgow
Dec. 9—Berengaria, Cher., Southampton
Dec. 12—Samarina, Q'town, Liverpool
Dec. 12—Ascania, Ply. Cher., London
Dec. 15—Mauretania, Ply. Cher., Southampton
Dec. 18—Andania, Ply. Cher., Hamburg
Dec. 19—Aurania, Q'town, Liverpool
Dec. 19—Athenia, L'derry, Glasgow
Dec. 24—Aurania, Ply. Cher., London
*Calls at Halifax Dec. 14

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From Halifax to
Plymouth, Cherbourg & London
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Conducted by Dick K. Whitham.

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Every Blue Suit that we sell guaranteed to hold its color or your money will be refunded.

PUBLIC NOTICE

TO WIT:

Public notice is hereby given to the electors of the City of St. John's, Newfoundland, that the said electors are directed and required to attend the election of the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of St. John's, Newfoundland, on the 27th day of November, 1925, at the City Hall, St. John's, Newfoundland, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, for the purpose of electing the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of St. John's, Newfoundland, for the year 1926. The said electors are directed and required to attend the election of the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of St. John's, Newfoundland, on the 27th day of November, 1925, at the City Hall, St. John's, Newfoundland, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, for the purpose of electing the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of St. John's, Newfoundland, for the year 1926. The said electors are directed and required to attend the election of the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of St. John's, Newfoundland, on the 27th day of November, 1925, at the City Hall, St. John's, Newfoundland, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, for the purpose of electing the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of St. John's, Newfoundland, for the year 1926.

And further notice is hereby given to the electors of the City of St. John's, Newfoundland, that the said electors are directed and required to attend the election of the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of St. John's, Newfoundland, on the 27th day of November, 1925, at the City Hall, St. John's, Newfoundland, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, for the purpose of electing the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of St. John's, Newfoundland, for the year 1926. The said electors are directed and required to attend the election of the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of St. John's, Newfoundland, on the 27th day of November, 1925, at the City Hall, St. John's, Newfoundland, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, for the purpose of electing the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of St. John's, Newfoundland, for the year 1926.

THOMAS J. J.

Ret.

Nov. 21, 27

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