

November 9

Glimpses of Long Ago

From Moss-Grown,
Time-Worn Tablets

In The Old Dolsen Burying Ground, Ra'eigh.

A pleasant day in late Indian summer was fast drawing to a close and the red lines of the late autumn sun were showing brightly on the western horizon. All around the foliage was brown and sere and, with the exception of the pines, the trees were nearly all devoid of their summer's dress. Already the grass had lost its greenness and the ground was dry and hard beneath the tread.

Such was the day when Willie and I visited the old Dolsen burying ground down the river. (Willie is nobody and I am just a little more so.)

The old Dolsen burying ground. The very name suggests the past and the days that are gone for the most part. The old Dolsen was a dark, gloomy effect and aroused a realization of the mortality of frail man. No cheering reflections there.

Wandering through the old burying ground, a spot well known to every resident, we examined the old time worn, moss-grown tombstones and thought of days that had been and of people who had been but would never be again.

A rabbit started at the foreign tread of man, scampered away through the orchard that borders one side of the little aged cemetery and we saw its cozy little nest among the vines between the graves. The living and the dead thus brought into close relation.

Although time has marked his changes on the country and the graveyard alike and, the place is now scarce as a resting place for the modern dead, still there were a neatness and a tidiness about the place that spoke much for the attention that the descendants of the long buried dead still pay to the resting place of their ancestors.

Among the names carved on the stones, we read of Dolsens, Holmes, Williams, Harrisons and many others. All old families and the stones gave us but glimpses of the history of the past and awoke a longing for detail.

What could these, the people of long ago, tell us of Tecumseh, the war of 1812, and little dreaming little knowing our desires, they slept on beneath our feet and we bowed our heads in reverence to the honored pioneers of the past.

The old Dolsen burying ground is one of the landmarks of the county. It was near here that Kent County was first settled and it was here that the hardy pioneers struggled for existence and when their time had run its limit and they had departed, they were laid down to sleep through the ages in the little graveyard washed by the waters of the River Thames. One of the Dolsens, of this city, owns the property on which the Dolsen burying ground is, the place where his ancestors are buried.

We had examined all the stones in the graveyard and were resting quietly when the sound of the call of a quail came up from the far side of the orchard. Both Willie and I looked up and a pair of merry laughter followed from the place where we had heard the quail call.

The spell that bound us to the past was broken and a somber gloomy thoughts were dissipated by the merry peals of laughter. Willie is so horribly frivolous. He had caught sight of the bright dresses of young girls who had been the laughter. I suppose they wondered what two old fogies like ourselves were doing wandering amid the graves of people who had died when they were as old as we were.

There were apples in the orchard where the girls were and we decided, after a masterful retreat, that we ought to have some of those apples. We decided to go on and on pretenses of learning more about the graveyard talk to the girls but they fled at our approach like Will of the wisp that lead on still alluring, still eluding.

The apples were excellent and we secured all we wanted and blessed the man who planted the orchard. Then we returned to the city.

We copied many of the epitaphs and we give them. They are interesting. A tablet to the memory of the Rev. Nivian Holmes, the first minister in the settlement, both the following record engraved upon it: "In memory of the Rev. Nivian Holmes, died May 5, 1829, aged 44 years. As a minister of the gospel, his talent was peculiar, in the exercise of which he displayed lively affection and deep concern to promote the happiness of man. Consequently his labors were approved and blessed. This small monument is erected by voluntary subscription of a number of persons who deeply regret the loss of so valuable a minister, desire to perpetuate his memory."

The Rev. Nivian Holmes was the father of A. S. Holmes and the late William Holmes, of this city, and grandfather of Alex. Holmes, of the Fire Department.

Chas. Harrison is the name of another buried in this cemetery. On the authority of Chas. Williams, it is stated that Chas. Harrison was a nephew of General Harrison, the man who defeated Tecumseh and Proctor. Chas. Harrison was a United Empire Loyalist. The other Harrison branch of the family joined the American cause in the Revolution.

Near the grave of Chas. Harrison is that of Mary, his wife, who died June 17, 1817.

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