

**GLEANINGS IN
GRAVEYARDS: A
COLLECTION OF
CURIOUS EPIGRAPHS**

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Gleanings in graveyards: a collection of curious epigraphs by Horatio Edward Norfolk

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HORATIO EDWARD NORFOLK

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GLEANINGS IN GRAVEYARDS:

A COLLECTION

OF

Curious Epitaphs,

COLLATED, COMPILED, AND EDITED

BY

HORATIO EDWARD NORFOLK.

"Omnibus semel moriendum est."

HORACE.

"Care to our coffin adds a nail no doubt;
And every grin so merry, draws one out."

PETER PINDAR.

THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED.

LONDON:

JOHN RUSSELL SMITH, SOHO SQUARE.

1866.

DATE

MAY 29 1991

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P R E F A C E.

THE favour accorded to previous issues of this Book, has encouraged me to send a *Third* Edition to press. The whole work has been carefully revised, and an introduction prefixed. It is hoped that in its amended form, it will be even more acceptable to the public, and thus repay the care bestowed upon it.

I accept this opportunity of thanking numerous friends for many of the extracts from country churchyards, and I desire to acknowledge the assistance which I have derived (in preparing the Introduction) from Mr. T. J. Pettigrew's "Chronicles of the Tombs," and the Rev. Robert Maguire's Lecture on Epitaphs.

H. E. N.

1, *Emmanuel Villas, Upton, Essex,*
1st June, 1866.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE are few places more pregnant with interest and instruction than "God's Acre." In wandering over that sacred ground, where-under all must sooner or later find their final rest, the mind of even the most careless man should be directed into a train of serious and healthy reflection. We can hardly look upon the gorgeous Monuments soaring high in panegyric of the mighty dead, and then upon the humble inscriptions adorning the tombstones of those less favoured when resident in this world's tabernacle, now made equal by the impartial* hand of Death, and scattered indiscriminately in the common repository of his victims—without believing that there are indeed Sermons that we may gather from Stones. As we picture the pomp of earth† which has followed some to the grave,—the coronet surmounting the coffin of the peer, the sword crossing that of the warrior, the trappings of state emblazoning the bier of the man mighty in political circles, and again on the other hand as we shadow forth in imagination, the

* "Death, with impartial tread, waits at the palace portal, and the coter's humble hut."—*Horace: Carm.*

† "O fading honours of the dead!
O high ambition lowly laid!"

Scott: Lay of the Last Minstrel.

simple show that has witnessed the grave close over others of its own,—we cannot fail to contrast the shadows of life with the reality of death, and to be reminded of the words of Isaiah, “Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols; the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.” (Isaiah xiv. 11.) We may be provoked to ask, with Gray—

“Can storied urn, or animated bust,
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can honour’s voice provoke the silent dust,
Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death?”

As we enter the village churchyard, with its rows of yew trees and green hillocks, its monuments of the dead in serried ranks of all sorts, shapes, and sizes, what associations does it awaken in our minds? How pity for the bereaved, and remembrance of our own dear departed,* are uppermost in our thoughts, and lead us to contemplate an abiding place of rest after the grave shall have been past, where there will be no sorrow, but peace and joy unalloyed. Addison, writing in the *Spectator*, thus moralizes among the Epitaphs of a graveyard:—
“When I look upon the tombs of the great, every emotion of envy dies in me; when I read the epitaphs of the beautiful, every inordinate desire goes out;

* “There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there;
There is no fireside, howsoe’er defended,
But has one vacant chair.”

Longfellow: Resignation.

when I meet with the grief of a parent upon a tombstone, my heart melts with compassion; when I see the tomb of the parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow.* When I see kings lying by those who deposed them, when I consider rival wits placed side by side, or the holy men that divided the world with their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions, and debates of mankind.† When I read the several dates of the tombs, of some that died yesterday, and some six hundred years ago, I consider the great Day when we shall all of us be contemporaries, and make our appearance together."‡ It is not, however, my intention to moralize upon the result of my researches. The object of this book is, firstly, to afford informa-

* "Yes, we must follow soon, will glad obey,
When a few suns have rolled their cares away,
Tired with vain life, will close the willing eye:
'Tis the great birthright of mankind to die."

Thomson's Epitaph on Miss Stanley.

† "A little rule, a little sway,
A sunbeam in a winter's day,
Is all the proud and mighty have,
Between the cradle and the grave."

Dyer: Granger Hill.

‡ "Whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies: and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire."—*The Creed of St. Athanasius.*

tion on monumental inscriptions generally, and then specially to convey to those who have not the opportunity of searching our churchyards for themselves, an idea of the extent to which the practice has been carried of inscribing tombstones with verses remarkable either for their quaintness, or their rude attempts at humour. In ages long gone by, the ancients were accustomed to burn their dead, and by this very summary process to reduce the body to its elementary dust. The ashes were deposited in a funeral urn; and this in the cavity of a rock. Loud and lengthy declamations were then pronounced over the ashes of the dead, lauding the virtues of the deceased, and extolling his praises. These were called the pauegyric of the dead, and being uttered "over the tomb" were called by the name of "Epitaph" (*ἐπι τάφον*.) These laudations of the departed extolled them to the skies. Songs were sung, in which their deeds were extravagantly praised. The eulogy of the dead would indeed have made the deceased blush, could he have heard the too flattering tale. How different this practice to the one now-a-days! where the solemn and pathetic words of the burial service remind the mourner what he really is,* whither† he is hastening,

* "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."—*Gen.* iii. 19.

† "Man shall turn again unto dust."—*Job* xxxiv. 15.

† "That undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns."—*Shakespeare: Hamlet, Act* iii. *Scene* 1.