

**THE YALE LITERARY
MAGAZINE, VOL.
XXI, NO. II, PP.
45-81, NOVEMBER, 1855**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649166428

The Yale literary magazine, Vol. XXI, No. II, pp. 45-81, November, 1855 by Various

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VARIOUS

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THE
YALE LITERARY MAGAZINE.

Vol. XXI.

NOVEMBER, 1855.

No. II.

EDITORS FOR THE CLASS OF '56.

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W. H. W. CAMPBELL,

J. M. BROWN,

H. DU BOIS,

L. O. FISCHER.

Ornamental Cemeteries.

THE custom of moving the dead from the sight of the living is an instinct of our nature. No race of beings has ever been found so cold and dead to human feeling as utterly to neglect it; and so universally is this regard for the departed esteemed and admired, that the decoration of Cemeteries has come to be a true criterion of national taste and refinement. In our own country, until within a few years, a just reproach has been cast upon cemeteries and burial places. The American mind has not, until lately, been turned into channels for the improvement of taste, being absorbed in the attainment of more sordid and parsimonious ends. Boston was the first to discern this want of refinement; afterward New York, and the "City of Penn;" and now it has come, that almost every village and church in the older districts has caught the spirit of progress, and has lain out places of sepulture, suitable to perpetuate the memory of the departed, and to convey instructive lessons to the living.

It is with pleasure we witness these tokens of improvement, for to us the graveyard has ever been replete with pleasing, though melancholy

reflections. We turn instinctively to the grave as an appropriate spot to worship the God of the living and the dead. It was in probing for this inexplicable law of our nature, that one of the earliest of Grecian poets inquired,

"Why do we precious ointments shower,
Noble wines why do we pour?
Beauteous flowers why do we spread
Upon the monuments of the dead?"

This sentiment has still a living and growing existence in the hearts of all. Human feeling still delights to linger at the grave of a dear departed friend, to enwreath the rising mound with the emblem buds of affection, and to implant the cypress and the cedar, memorials that "the wintry blast of death kills not the buds of virtue." And this employment, while it affords a panacea for wounded affection, fits for a more successful battle with the adversities of life.

We have said it is an instinct of our nature to bury the dead out of our sight. Accordingly we find, even among the relics of barbarism, traces of sepulchral rites conjoined with sacred rituals. The first manifestations of art, the first outward expression of feeling, are found among these memorials of the departed. The rudest primeval tribes displayed their taste in selecting as burial-spots, places adorned by the handiwork of nature, quiet groves, the banks of meandering streams, caverns, and grottos of the earth. In the wilds of America, where do we look for the cairn of the homeless Indian, more than in these spots, which the hand of art loves to desolate?

We notice, as the first mark of progressive refinement in burials, the introduction of the *spirit of association*. We can imagine no nation more crude or degenerate than that which leaves scattered broadcast over the land, the remains of its ancestry. The rudest antediluvian tribes were seldom guilty of so gross a violation of decency: and the custom still exists only among the Nomadic tribes of middle and southern Africa. On the contrary, we early find, especially where Christianity sheds its light, a desire for united *family* burial-places. The patriarch Jacob first embodied this sentiment in these words of Scriptural elegance and beauty. "Bury me not, I pray thee, bury me not in Egypt: but I will lie with my fathers. And thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place." Though

"Neighbors in the grave,
Lie urn by urn, and touch but in their names,"

who would not prefer being gathered with his fathers to a final home on the desert or beneath the ocean! We can think of no more suggestive theme than a country family burial-spot, in some remote and secluded corner. There stands the aged patriarch's monument, towering far above the rest—his descendants, to their children's children, are gathered about him—they all bear the same name—there is no intruding grave, which the mourners may not recognize.

As patriarchal government gave way, and the church enlarged her influence and domain there arose naturally enough, a disposition to inter beneath, and more lately, in the vicinity of *places of worship*. And, I confess, there seems no little propriety, in those of the same faith and creed together abiding a hopeful resurrection, in the same churchyard. It smacks, undoubtedly, somewhat of sectarianism—too much perhaps, for the charity of these later times, which much prefers the more philanthropic custom of *common* burying-places or *Cemeteries*.

Perhaps the distinguishing feature of our own New Haven Cemetery is its simplicity. It has been a matter of surprise to us, that this cardinal ornament should have been so little regarded in graveyard decoration. In this, as in other arts, we copy too much the ancients. Their elysiums were earthly paradises,—what wonder they mimicked then in their sainted abodes? But the purity and simplicity of the Christian religion discards such pomp and tinsel. How repulsive to every refined feeling is the idea that vainglory or ostentation should receive gratification from these memorials of bereaved affection! None will deny that natural scenery and beauty, as well as artificial decoration, should tend *only to deepen the appropriate sacredness and solemnity of the chambers of death*. But how little has this universal rule been regarded. Elegant Pere la Chaise, of Paris, has been decked with the fantasy peculiar to the French,—more appropriate for a ball room, or theatre, than a place of graves. Venerable Westminster, Laurel Hill, Mount Auburn, and the new but glittering Greenwood, are all ornamented, we fear, more by pride or fashion, or ambition, than with any just taste and sense of propriety.

Sadly is this deficiency seen in the selection of localities. An eminence is chosen—overlooking landscapes, water-scenes, and the turmoil of city life. As though the fancy of the dead could yet be gratified, or affection there *seclude* her haunt and shed her tears in *solitude*. Their decoration, too, shows but little improvement. What religious impression the artificial lakes with romantic names, which Greenwood glories

in, or its showy flower-beds, with pinks and dandelions, can produce, is far beyond our discernment. Nor would we pass unnoticed its entrance or enclosure, for they seem to us singularly suggestive. The former,—built in pseudo-Gothic style, with a cottage on either side, resembles more a porter's lodge to the grounds and mansion of some grand old English baron, or a toll-gate on some eastern turnpike, where from its situation, we might expect St. Peter, with his rusty keys, to appear,—than an appropriate introduction into the "city of the dead." Its enclosure is in a sad state of reparation, affording numerous loopholes for street nuisances to creep through, and destroy its finery. Vaults were long ago scouted by all people of good breeding and sensibility;—yet we think we are safe in saying, that one half the dead of Greenwood are now mouldering in these modern Charnel-houses. Grates are used as ventilators!—much to the annoyance of the neighborhood.

New Haven, on the contrary, has been so choise of the appropriate sacredness and seclusion, that she has surrounded her cemetery with a massive wall and iron paling; and directly within the entrance, has located a clump of evergreens:—to exclude effectually the vulgar gaze. Its entrance, certainly, needs no encomium of ours;—none ever passed its sacred threshold, without feeling deeply his own mortality and insignificance. We do not, however, vaunt our own as a perfect model—nor would we, in the least, extenuate its defects, which cannot escape a critical eye. Its unshorn grass, and a general appearance of neglect, illy detract from the air of sanctitude and reverence, which would otherwise pervade its sacred grounds. It abounds, too, in high iron fences, which surround, at exclusive distances, some of its most worthy monuments; this, to us, seems uncalled for and repulsive. An appearance of nakedness, and the stiffness and angularity of its walks might, with propriety, have been avoided.

Nor would we be understood as desiring to exclude all ornamental shrubbery and coppice. The rose, the ivy, and the eglantine,

"Those token flowers that tell
What words could never speak so well,"

meek mementos of man's frailty and dependence, should never be wanting. All flowering shrubs should, if possible, be hardy climbers; if not let them be spontaneous, and of perennial growth. We know, there is a seeming propriety in vines and shrubbery, symbolizing by their yearly decay and renovation, death and the resurrection;—but all nature is

an emblem of this,—and it illy recompenses for the dwarfed and stunted appearance it must give. Who desires, either, to see a cemetery made over every spring, as a nursery, or flower garden! The principle we have proposed, perfected by time, is what gives to the sacred grounds of England, their venerable appearance. And unless American Cemeteries are decorated by some such rule, time will never wreath them such a coronet, though he grow grey-headed in the attempt.

Trees too, shut out the barrenness and nakedness natural to such a place;—but let the selections be few, and the variety choice—such as by their dark foliage and gloomy appearance, or as suggestive emblems, throw the mind into a serious and meditative state. For all must object to converting a cemetery into a flora or arboratum. The yew, the cypress, and the weeping-willow have ever been considered most appropriate. And the elm, of Grecian song, so indigenous to our climate, would be a crowning ornament to our cemetery, as it is to our city. Were I to mention evergreens,—’twould but lengthen the encomium of our own, and the sad story of Greenwood. Surely the decorators of the latter have forgotten, that

“The trees of God, without the care
Or art of man, with sap are fed;
The mountain cedar looks as fair,
As those in royal gardens bred.”

Monuments, by their purity and whiteness, and the suggestive nature of their epitaphs, constitute almost the sum total of grave-yard solemnity;—they have indeed a much holier purpose, and as expressions of individual affection and mementos of departed worth should be criticised with delicacy. The rules we have proposed for general decoration, apply here, if possible, with still greater force. But *variety* should be preserved—for monotony here, would be a sad comment on the resources of art, as well as a proof of the absence of taste and feeling. Let, however, artificialness and studied expression both in tombstones and epitaphs be carefully avoided, for the representation of genuine affection are simple and natural. *Let not attention be unduly excited by boastful monuments of the unknown,—and let the great and good be commemorated by appropriate testimonials of their worth.*

Nor do we join in the violent tirade of modern essayists against complimentary epitaphs. If the deceased was not possessed of *one* memorable virtue—let blank silence be preserved; or let a solemn warning be inscribed for the passer by. Who desires to see human failings perpet-

uated over the grave of their possessor! "*Man wars not with the dead!*" It is a trait of human nature, for which I love it." Here, as elsewhere, let a discriminating taste and a becoming modesty, associated with a correct idea of the proprieties of the place and the occasion, be the guides.

The moral effect of a cemetery, thus laid out and ornamented, especially in the vicinity of a mammoth-serving and tumultuous city, cannot well be overrated. Its solemn aisles are frequented by many who never seek elsewhere the temple of God. And though the giddy may prattle, and the sentimental pluck rose-buds for their fair ones—the white monument will still stand by their side, and death be their constant companion. As one enters such a place, a feeling steals over him, not unlike that which the traveler experiences as he gazes upon the mouldering shrines and cathedrals of some city of the past, whose memory is almost obliterated;—the impression indeed is deeper, and the suggestions more personal. At the close of day, or during the quiet hours of the Sabbath, I delight to wander among its ghostly mausoleums, to view the unsleeping green of nature, standing in solemn vigil over the last resting place of the immortal soul. As I gaze upon the obelisks of the wealthy, I reflect with sorrow upon the vanity and littleness of man,—as I walk by the monuments of the honored and loved, I am convinced that nothing can perpetuate our memories, but deeds of goodness and virtue; the quiet tombs of youthful beauty and loveliness remind me of the soul's immortality,—and the faded cenotaphs that commemorate the scattered dust of our ancestry, cause me to remember that the time is not far distant, when for us, too, shall "the silver cord be loosed, and the golden bowl broken."

Mr. McCreed's Congregation, and their Neighbors.

"We are glad to learn that the elegant church erected a few months since, by the liberality of our fellow citizen, Mr. McCreed, is now filled with a large and fashionable congregation." — GAZETTE.

LARGE and fashionable congregation! Yes, sir! You can have no adequate idea of the vast strides public piety has made since the erection of the new church. Why, in the mere externals, think a moment of the improvements you, yourself, have witnessed. The society of the

Rev. Mr. Chokes has followed close upon Mr. McCreed, and erected a grand edifice, all of stone, sir, of modest, plain looking stone—none of your gew-gawa of masonry about that church; but everything is simple and substantial—and then they have pointed it off with a glorious sprout of a spire, all of wood, and of a chocolate color. How much better than a dwarf tower of stone, (it is said to be five feet higher than Mr. McCreed's spire,) and what a superior color is chocolate to the white of Dr. Dulcimer's or the yellow of Dr. Sozler's! And then the mullions of the great front windows—who could contrive such mouldings in stone as the ingenious carpenters have whittled out of the delicate pine! All for beauty and effect! And they are going to set up a new organ in Dr. Harmonne's church—a great noisy thing—and Mr. Triad, the well known artiste, is to keep it in practice, by performing the wedding march on it for two hours each day. And you can see another graceful little church among the poplars—very beautiful indeed, except a little heaviness in the appearance of the inevitable wooden mullions.

Large congregation! Sir, the interest which Mr. McCreed takes in its progress—in which he is heartily seconded by the church which has gathered in the new house—is really edifying. Evening services have been established, and it would cause your heart to leap for joy, to see the throngs of young people that assemble to hear Dr. Dulcimer's best sermons. Some of the young men say "he throws himself particularly on these occasions," but this is owing to their lack of polish. They wish to say that he preaches with unusual unction, or that his lips have been touched with an extra incandescent coal. The young men sit in the gallery, long rows of them, and you should see how they drink in every word of the sermon. Why, even the young ladies in the body of the house below, are touched by it, and many a joyful tear is wiped from their faces, by sympathetic handkerchiefs. Oh, sir, it is touching! "Young men and maidens," all interested, and exhibiting such a mutual yearning for each others' well being! Could you behold the benignant glances and smiles of this youthful, happy congregation, your heart would swell within you and you would murmur "truly it is a good thing to go up unto the house of the Lord!"

You may have heard some cynic mutter "flirtations," but he was slanderous, sir; he was more, he was almost impious. Flirtations in the house of God! And you may have heard an apparently irreverent shout from the gallery on a certain occasion, when the gas was suddenly extinguished. Did you know, sir, what that shout was? It was simply