

**GLEANINGS FROM GOD'S  
ACRE: BEING A  
COLLECTION OF EPITAPHS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649455584

Gleanings from God's Acre: Being a Collection of Epitaphs by John Potter Briscoe

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**JOHN POTTER BRISCOE**

**GLEANINGS FROM GOD'S  
ACRE: BEING A  
COLLECTION OF EPITAPHS**



# GLEANINGS FROM GOD'S ACRE:

BEING

## A Collection of Epitaphs.

BY

JOHN POTTER BRISCOE,

F.R.H.S., ETC.,

PRINCIPAL LIBRARIAN OF THE NOTTINGHAM FREE PUBLIC LIBRARIES;  
AUTHOR OF 'CURIOSITIES OF THE BELFRY,' 'STORIES ABOUT THE MIDLANDS,'  
'MIDLAND NOTES,' 'NOTTINGHAMSHIRE FACTS AND FICTIONS,' ETC.; AND EDITOR  
OF 'THE SONNETS AND SONGS OF ROBERT MILLHOUSE,'  
'OLD NOTTINGHAMSHIRE,' ETC.

*WITH AN ESSAY ON EPITAPHS, BY DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON,*

*AND A COPIOUS INDEX.*

EDINBURGH:

OLIPHANT, ANDERSON, & FERRIER.

LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.

1883.

2808. f 1



## P R E F A C E.

*Gleanings from God's Acre* differs from other collections inasmuch as only those epitaphs which actually exist, or have existed, on tombstones and other monuments of the dead, have been admitted to this collection. The epitaphs here given are grouped together, without any arbitrary division into sections. The object of the compiler has been to give a *representative* selection from the literature of the graveyard, rather than to make up a bulky volume; as far as possible, to give dates, places, and various renderings and extensions of the epitaphs; and to give their geographical distribution.

It is hoped that the copious index of persons' names, place names, and of first lines, will greatly facilitate reference to the contents of this little book.

J. POTTER BRISCOE.

153 WOODBOROUGH ROAD, NOTTINGHAM,  
October 13, 1883.



## ESSAY ON EPITAPHS,

BY

DR. S. JOHNSON.

---

**T**HOUGH criticism has been cultivated in every age of learning, by men of great abilities and extensive knowledge, till the rules of writing are become rather burthensome than instructive to the mind ; though almost every species of composition has been the subject of particular treatises, and given birth to definitions, distinctions, precepts, and illustrations ; yet no critic of note, that has fallen within my observation, has hitherto thought *sepulchral inscriptions* worthy of a minute examination, or pointed out, with proper accuracy, their beauties and defects.

The reasons of this neglect it is useless to inquire, and perhaps impossible to discover ; it might be justly expected that this kind of writing would have been the favourite topic of criticism, and that self-love might have

produced some regard for it, in those authors that have crowded libraries with elaborate dissertations upon Homer; since, to afford a subject for heroic poems is the privilege of very few, but every man may expect to be recorded in an epitaph, and therefore finds some interest in providing that his memory may not suffer by an unskilful panegyric.

If our prejudices in favour of antiquity deserve to have any part in the regulation of our studies, epitaphs seem entitled to more than common regard, as they are probably of the same age with the art of writing. The most ancient structures in the world—the Pyramids—are supposed to be sepulchral monuments, which either pride or gratitude erected; and the same passions which incited men to such laborious and expensive methods of preserving their own memory, or that of their benefactors, would doubtless incline them not to neglect any easier means by which the same ends might be obtained. Nature and reason have dictated to every nation, that to preserve good actions from oblivion is both the interest and duty of mankind; and therefore we find no people acquainted with the use of letters that omitted to grace the tombs of their heroes and wise men with panegyric inscriptions.

To examine, therefore, in what the perfection of epitaphs consists, and what rules are to be observed in composing them, will be at least of as much use as other



critical inquiries ; and for assigning a few hours to such disquisitions, great examples, at least, if not strong reasons, may be pleaded.

An epitaph, as the word itself implies, is an *inscription on the tomb*, and in its most extensive import may admit indiscriminately satire or praise. But as malice has seldom produced monuments of defamation, and the tombs hitherto raised have been the work of friendship and benevolence, custom has contracted the original latitude of the word, so that it signifies, in the general acceptance, an *inscription engraven on a tomb in honour of the person deceased*.

As honours are paid to the dead in order to incite others to the imitation of their excellences, the principal intention of epitaphs is to perpetuate the examples of virtue, that the tomb of a good man may supply the want of his presence, and veneration for his memory produce the same effect as the observation of his life. Those epitaphs are, therefore, the most perfect, which set virtue in the strongest light, and are best adapted to exalt the reader's ideas, and rouse his emulation.

To this end it is not always necessary to recount the actions of a hero, or enumerate the writings of a philosopher ; to imagine such informations necessary, is to detract from their characters, or to suppose their works mortal, or their achievements in danger of being forgotten. The bare

name of such men answers every purpose of a long inscription.

Had only the name of Sir Isaac Newton been subjoined to the design upon his monument, instead of a long detail of his discoveries, which no philosopher can want, and which none but a philosopher can understand, those by whose direction it was raised had done more honour both to him and to themselves.

This, indeed, is a commendation which it requires no genius to bestow, but which can never become vulgar or contemptible, if bestowed with judgment; because no single age produces many men of merit superior to panegyric. None but the first names can stand unassisted against the attacks of time; and if men, raised to reputation by accident or caprice, have nothing but their names engraved on their tombs, there is danger lest in a few years the inscription require an interpreter. Thus have their expectations been disappointed, who honoured Picus of Mirandola with this pompous epitaph:—

Hic situs est Picus Mirandola, cætera norunt  
Et Tagus et Ganges, forsân et Antipodes.

His name, then celebrated in the remotest corners of the earth, is now almost forgotten; and his works, then studied, admired, and applauded, are now mouldering in obscurity.

Next in dignity to the bare name is a short character, simple and unadorned, without exaggeration, superlatives,

or rhetoric. Such were the inscriptions in use among the Romans, in which the victories gained by their emperors were commemorated by a single epithet; as Cæsar Germanicus, Cæsar Dacicus, Germanicus, Illyricus. Such would be this epitaph: *Isaacus Newtonus, naturæ legibus investigatis, hic quiescit.*

But, to far the greatest part of mankind, a longer encomium is necessary for the publication of their virtues and the preservation of their memories; and in the composition of these it is that art is principally required, and precepts therefore may be useful.

In writing epitaphs, one circumstance is to be considered, which affects no other composition; the place in which they are now commonly found restrains them to a particular air of solemnity, and debars them from the admission of all lighter or gayer ornaments. In this it is that the style of an Epitaph necessarily differs from that of an Elegy. The custom of burying our dead either in or near our churches, perhaps originally founded on a rational design of fitting the mind for religious exercises, by laying before it the most affecting proof of the uncertainty of life, makes it proper to exclude from our epitaphs all such allusions as are contrary to the doctrines for the propagation of which the churches are erected, and to the end for which those who peruse the monuments must be supposed to come thither. Nothing is, therefore,