

**A TRACT UPON TOMB-STONES; OR,
SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CONSIDERATION
OF PERSONS INTENDING TO SET UP THAT
KIND OF MONUMENT TO THE MEMORY
OF DECEASED FRIENDS**

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A tract upon tomb-stones; or, suggestions for the consideration of persons intending to set up that kind of monument to the memory of deceased friends by Francis Edward Paget

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FRANCIS EDWARD PAGET

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TRACT UPON TOMB-STONES;

OR,

SUGGESTIONS



FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF PERSONS

INTENDING TO SET UP THAT KIND OF MONUMENT TO THE
MEMORY OF DECEASED FRIENDS.

By a Member of the Rugeley Society for the encouragement of
Ecclesiastical Architecture.

"DISCRETION IS THE MISTRESS OF ALL GRACES; AND HUMILITY IS THE
GERMANY OF ALL MIRACLES."—*Bishop Taylor.*

RUGELEY:
JOHN THOMAS WALTERS.
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MDCCKLIII.

Advertisement.

THE following suggestions have been thrown together for the benefit of persons who are not likely to fall in with the beautiful volumes of Messrs. Bloxam and Markland, or the recent article in the British Critic.

Of Mr. Markland's book it is impossible to speak too highly. It has done, and is daily doing much good; and the writer of these pages would feel that his purpose would be fully answered, if ever this tract should accomplish that for one rank of life, which Mr. Markland's is effecting for another.

Meanwhile, being anxious to make it as useful as possible, he begs to say that any suggestions for its improvement, will reach him through his Publisher, (Mr. Walters, of Rugeley,) and be carefully attended to.

F. E. P.

Elford Rectory,
Lent, 1843.

TRACT UPON TOMB-STONES.

IT has pleased Him from Whom all our blessings in this world come, to make you a mourner by recalling to Himself the
1. relation or friend, whom He lent you for a while,
introduction. and whom you now have lost. I heartily pray that your present chastening may be received by you in a pious and submissive spirit, and that this and all your other trials may gradually fit you for a portion in that blessed place where trials shall altogether cease, and where they who have sown in tears shall reap in joy.

Meanwhile, you follow the person whom you have lost with deep and affectionate regrets, you treasure up in your memory all the proofs of his love and kindness towards you; and, in the fulness of an overflowing heart, you strive to mark by all the little acts of reverential tenderness which are still in your power, how much you mourn his loss,—how much you desire to preserve his loved remains from being disturbed, and to keep up the remembrance of him in the minds of those who have survived him, and who once were his neighbours, and familiar friends.

With this view, it is your intention to point out the spot where you committed his body to the ground, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, by setting up a Tomb-stone over it.

This act, (supposing that no vanity or selfishness lie at the bottom of it) is an amiable one, though it can in no way benefit the deceased: but it is in your power to make it more than this; you may make it a Christian act, and one that shall benefit the living. And my present purpose is to set before you how you may do this most effectually.

I will say a few words as to the sort of language which we should use with respect to our departed friends, when we come to write their epitaphs; and I will also make a few suggestions about the appearance of the monuments which we erect to their memories, and which, as I think, are capable of very great improvement without any addition of expense.

These suggestions, however, will only bear reference to tomb-stones in the Church-yard, and *not* to tablets, &c., affixed to the inside walls of the Church, these being too expensive for general adoption.

And first as to the choice of an inscription.—

In proportion as you and your deceased friend have realised on earth the blessedness of Christian fellowship,—have felt the endearing bond of union arising from participation in the same ordinances, and promises, and graces,—from being engrafted into the same stock,—the Church,—and so receiving life from the same root,—will it be your comfort to reflect that the links which bound you, bind you still, though no longer visible to the eye of flesh, and that there is still communion between those who are living in Christ's faith and fear on earth, and those who are resting from their labours in the repose of Paradise.

Of the nature of this mystical union, indeed, we know but little; but as a practical matter, it will, among other effects upon us, have this,—it will induce us to act with deep *reverence* towards the departed, and make us scrupulously careful of speaking of them in any manner which could pain them. And therefore, how deep soever our love may be to them, however highly we have thought of them, we shall take care not to put anything which savours of boasting, or exaggeration on their tomb-stones.

It is the natural impulse of strong affection to speak of the Dead, if we speak of them at all, as if they had been almost faultless: we shrink from the contemplation of their failings, and our memory loves to dwell on the good qualities which made them dear to us. But, perhaps, in the deepest state of feeling with respect to those who are gone before, we are altogether silent. The thought of them is too sacred a thing with us, for us to allow a stranger to inter-meddle with it; we would hide them from the gaze of the indifferent and the thoughtless in some secret corner of our hearts, even as the green turf hides their fading forms.

And surely some such delicate and pious reserve would incline us (were it not for the prevalence of an evil custom and fashion) to be equally careful with regard to what is written on their grave-stones. Why, if we are so sensitive in the one case, should we be less so in the other? Why should we say that of them which is likely to provoke unfeeling comments from those who did not love them as we do? why expose their lives and characters to the criticisms of the rude, bad world from which they have now escaped?

In modern times (for of old it was not so) few persons set up a grave-stone without filling it with praise of the deceased. Look round our churchyards, and if the grave-stones tell truth, this can hardly be looked upon as a fallen world,—almost everybody there lying was a miracle of goodness. You may find in one burial-place half-a-dozen inscriptions to as many different people, each declaring on behalf

5.
Evils to be
avoided.

5.
Exaggerated
praise.