

“An Historic Epitaph Book Inherited by an English Monument Firm”

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The article begins:

“Mr. Frank Watts, a monument dealer in London, sends us an interesting and unique old book of hand-written epitaphs, that was used several generations ago in the business now conducted by Mr. Watts before epitaphs books began to be printed.

“It is an historic old volume, faded and ragged with age, and contains some of the originals of the quaint old English epitaphs, many of which have been seen in the old cemeteries in this country....”

This article, which begins on the next page,
is presented on the Stone Quarries and Beyond web site.

<http://quarriesandbeyond.org/>

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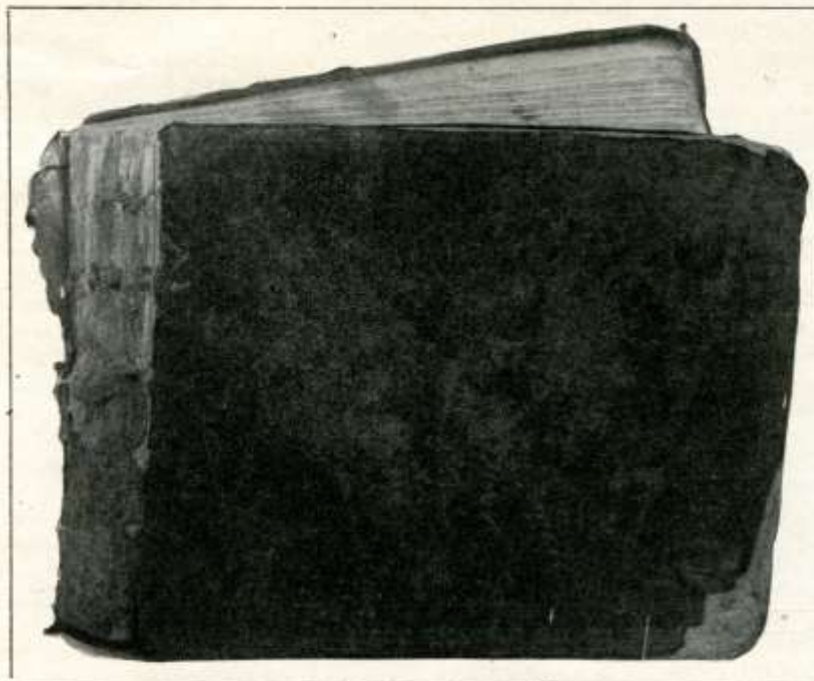
An Historic Epitaph Book Inherited by an English Monument Firm

Mr. Frank Watts, a monument dealer of London, sends us an interesting and unique old book of hand-written epitaphs, that was used several generations ago in the business now conducted by Mr. Watts before epitaph books began to be printed.

It is an historic old volume, faded and ragged with age, and contains some of the originals of the quaint old English epitaphs, many of which have been copied all over the world and may occasionally be seen in the old cemeteries in this country.

One of our illustrations shows a photograph of the book and another a reproduction of one of the time-stained pages. The page shown, which is clearly legible, contains that famous old epitaph which has perhaps been more copied and imitated than any other in the language. A specimen of it may be seen in nearly every old cemetery. It reads:

"Remember man as you pass by,
As you are now, so once was I,
And as I am, so must you be,
Therefore prepare to follow me."



AN EPITAPH BOOK 250 YEARS OLD.

This book came into the possession of Mr. Watts' father in 1860 from a Mr. Lufkin, whose business at that time he took over. It must be at least 250 years old, as some of the dates show. The book was taken over by Mr. Lufkin about 1814 and before that time there was another predecessor, who had also taken this book over, so that it is 225 to 250 years old.

Mr. Watts values the book very highly as an heirloom, and had it insured for \$100 before he would trust it to the mails.

The following epitaphs selected from the book are interesting studies in Epitaphy and, as will be seen, are the originals from which many of our popular epitaphs have been developed:

To this sad Shrine, whoe'er thou art draw near
Here lies the Friend most lov'd, esteemed most dear
Who ne'er knew Joy, but Friendship might divide,
Or gave his Kindred Grief, but when he died.

Some hearty Friend shall drop his tear
On our dry bones and Say
These once were Strong as mine appear
And mine must be as they.

Here rests a Woman good without pretense
Blest with plain reason and with Sober Scense
No Conquests she but o'er herself desir'd
No arts essay'd but not to be admir'd
Passion and pride were to her Soul unknown
Convinc'd that virtue only is her own
So unaffected, so compos'd a mind
So firm yet Soft; So strong, yet So refin'd
Heaven as its purest gold, by tortures try'd
The Saint Sustain'd it, but the woman dy'd.

Ye candid few who tread this Sacred ground
In pensive Meditations awfull round
Regard this Spot, nor check the Starting tear
A youth whose Merits claim'd it well, lies here
One who had scare the joys of manhood try'd
He found them fading, clos'd his eyes, and dy'd.
Ask how he liv'd and thou shalt know thy end,
He Dy'd a Saint to God, and to the poor a Friend.

Be wise ye mortals and attend
The Interests of your latter end;
In these your every Care employ,
Eternal Source of Grief, and Joy,
Nor from yourselves deluded fly
But learn to live, and learn to die.

All you that come my grave to see
Repent in time, be warn'd by me,
Reform this hour; no Time delay,
I in my Prime was Call'd away.

Life's troubled Sea thou hast escap'd,
No Billows round thee roar,
Thy little Bark is safe arrived
Upon the heavenly Shore.

Here lies an honest Man,
Industrious in his Labour,
True to every Friend,
And just to every Neighbour.

The modest front of this Small Floor
Believe me, Reader, can say more
Than many a braver Marble can
Here lies a truly honest Man.

In token of whose virtuous life,
And Constant Sacred love,
And that her memory Should remain
And never hence remove,
Her husband in his time of life
This Monument did leave his wife.

Admir'd, belov'd, lamented Infancy,
Hurry'd away does here untimely lie,
Too good to live, and yet too young to die;
Hard fate that best of things must be
Always the plunder of the Grave and thee
What Grief can vent this loss, or praises tell
How Young, how Good, how beautiful She fell.
Compleat in all, but Days, resign'd her Breath,
Who never disobey'd but in her Death.
Short was my Stay in this vain World

All but a Seeming Laughter;
Therefore mark well thy words and ways
For thou com'st posting after.

To say, an Angel here interr'd doth ly,
May be thought Strange, for Angels never die.

(photo caption) "An Epitaph book 250 years old."

A Sharp disease, it swept me soon away,
 And laid me down in this dark bed of Clay,
 A rapid Cancer formed in my breast,
 And from that hour my life was Comfortless.
 My faults or Merits seek not to Disclose,
 They in the bosom of my God repose,
 He gave the work, the Arrow swiftly flew,
 And I unto my native dust withdrew.
 Soon Shall ye follow to Death's dreary Cell,
 And bid the transient joys of life farewell
 But tyrant Death his conquest shall restore
 And the Just triumph when his pow'rs no more.

When blooming Youth, and Beauty is most brave,
 Death plucks us up and plants us in the Grave,
 Take care Young Folks, your precious Time to spend,
 Your Life is short, and quickly to an End.

Here sleeps, what once was Beauty, once
 was Grace,
 Grace, that with Tenderness, and sense
 combined
 To form that Harmony, and Soul of
 Fare,
 Where Beauty shines the Minor of the
 Mind.
 Such was the Maid, that in the Morn
 of Youth,
 In Virgin Innocence, in Nature's Pride,
 Blest with each Art that owes its
 Charm to Truth,
 Sunk in her Father's fond Embrace, and
 died.
 He weeps! O venerate the holy Tear!
 Faith lends her Aid, to ease Afflictions
 Load,
 The Parent mourns his Child upon the
 Bier,
 The Christian yields an Angel to his
 God.

* * *
 How vain is Flattery on a Tomb,
 Since there's a Judgment yet to come,
 His End, and his alone is blest,
 Whose Life, and Actions stand the
 Test.
 Till direful sickness with its fatal Dart
 Crept through each vein and rankled in
 her Heart.
 But tho' no sculptur'd monumental bust
 Is raised to emulate her mould'ring dust,
 A sure reward awaits beyond the skies
 In Heavenly bliss where virtue never
 dies.

* * *
 Reflect O! Thoughtless Man, how short
 thy Space,
 How few thy Moments, and how quick
 they fly,

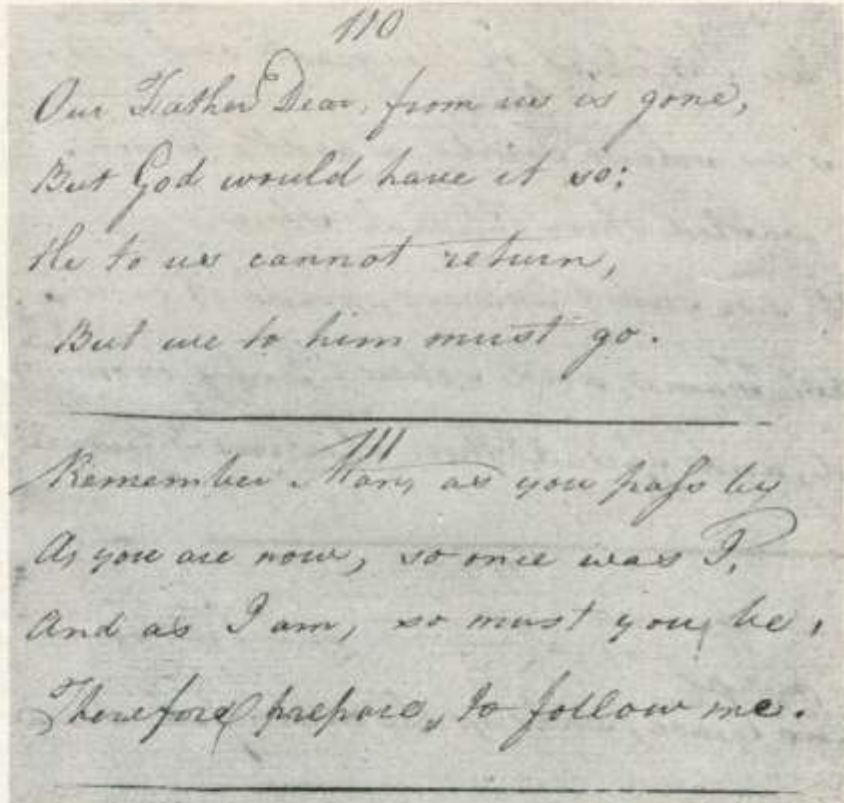
Under the Marble, or under the Sill,
 Or Under this Turf, or e'en what they will;
 Whatever an Heir, or a Friend in his Stead,
 Or any Good Creature Shall lay o'er my Head,
 Lies one who ne'er car'd and Still cares not a pin
 What they said, or may say of the mortal within;
 But who, Living and Dying, Serene Still and free,
 Trusts in God, that as well as he was, he shall be.

* * *
 Indeed some fell, from Heaven to hell,
 Are lost and rise no more;
 This only fell by death to Earth,
 Not lost, but gone before.

* * *
 Beneath a Sleeping Infant lies,
 To Earth whose body lent,
 More Glorious shall hereafter rise,
 And none more Innocent.
 When the Archangels trump shall blow,
 And Souls to bodys join,
 Millions Shall wish their lives below,
 Had been as Short as thine.

My Friends reflect to "die is gain,"
 Life to protract is labour vain
 "The sting of Death is sin;" but then
 Christ has aton'd for sinful men;
 Believe in him, on him depend;
 Christ is in Death our only Friend.

Here lie (the Fullness of his Age, a Span,)
 The Relicts, of a pious, worthy Man:
 What need we more when this by all confest,
 Proclaims him happy in eternal Rest,
 Reader! wouldst thou like him obtain the Prize,
 Is it not written—"Go and do likewise."
 Stop gentle youth and view this Clod
 Beneath it lies a child of God
 Who through the transient scenes of Youth
 Rever'd and lov'd the God of truth
 And when Death struck the fatal blow



FAC-SIMILE OF PAGE IN OLD EPITAPH BOOK.

With joy he left this world below
 And Soaring taught his Friends behind
 Serve God with fear and you Shall find
 That Death itself's a gentle Friend
 And Peace shall be the Christian's End.

* * *
 Like leaves on Trees the race of Man is found,
 Now green in youth, now withering on the ground,
 Another race the following Spring supplies,
 They fall successive, and successive rise,
 So generations in their course decay,
 So flourish these when those are passed away.

* * *
 Beneath this verdant Hillock slumbers here,
 A tender Husband, and a Friend sincere,
 Snatch'd in his Prime! Yet hold complaining
 Tongue,
 'Twas God's Decree, and he can do no Wrong.
 Learn then frail Man, on Youth no more depend,
 Here Youth and Beauty, Age and Sorrow end,
 Here drops the Mask, here shuts the final Scene,
 Nor differs grave three score from gay fifteen.

(photo caption) "Fac-simile of page in old epitaph book."