

“Curiosities in Epitaphs”

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&

“Some More Curiosities in Epitaphs”

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“Curiosities in Epitaphs”

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“In nearly every community throughout New England is located the old family burying ground. A large number, perhaps the majority of them, were established some time in the last century, and are between one and two hundred years of age. The style of architecture in the old-fashioned tombstone is remarkable for its simplicity as well as its great similarity. The quality of the stone was a coarse limestone or surface rock. The expense in the construction was in many cases vested in the inscription. Having occasion a few days since to visit one of these primitive graveyards, I became very much interested in some of the epitaphs engraved upon these headstones. They can be seen any day in the West Street Cemetery, Fairhaven, Vt. I give them to the readers of *Stone* just as I copied them:

‘In memory of Ezra Hamilton, who died Feb. 25th, 1810, in the 77th year of his age.
Farewell, Farewell vain world
Farewell to thee,
For thou hast nothing
More to do with me.’

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

“Another one has this advice:

‘Frail mortals stop
And drop a tear,
Departed worth
Lies buried here.

This lasting marble shall declare
What sense and worth have ended here,
Where mourning friends will long repair
To ease their anguish with a tear.’

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

“The next one is striking for its originality:

‘Mortals behold as you pass by,
As you are now so once was I,
As I am now so you must be,
Prepare for death and follow me.’

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

“In the family burying ground at West Haven, Vt., are the following epitaphs which I obtained from Sarah’s mother. It might be mentioned that Sarah was accidentally killed by her brother who was playing with the gun and ‘did not know it was loaded.’ Her father, the late Chauncey Benson, was the author of the following epitaphs of his children:

Sarah Harrietta Julia Sophia
Was taken from this world
By a gun’s awful fire;
In the hands of her brother
The gun it was held,
By the sad accident
Poor Sarah she fell.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Sleep on, my son Desitee
Thy parents can’t forget thee.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Laura Augusta Weltha Bertheiar
Is called from her parents to mansions here.

“It will be noticed that a number of names are added to these epitaphs, probably to fill out the lines. DeWitt was named after DeWitt Clinton, but the ‘ee’ was undoubtedly added to his name in order to rhyme with thee.

“In a cemetery in Hampton, N. Y., is a tombstone erected by a Thomas Hopkins, an Irishman, bearing the following inscription:

Here lies two children dear
One in old Ireland the other here.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Here lies me and my two daughters
We died from drinking Cheltenham waters,
If we had stuck to Epsom salts
We need not have been in these here vaults.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

“Pawlett, Vt., has an antiquated stone, containing an epitaph, that leaves the reader of it in doubt who the ‘departed in this life’ refers to:

In memory of Mrs. Perethene Butts, whom he enjoyed only three months, and then departed this life. Date 1790.

“*George H. Harris.*”

“Some More Curiosities in Epitaphs”

In *Stone, An Illustrated Magazine*, Vol. 5, No. 3, August 1892, pp. 278

“Would you go to the graveyard to find wit and humor? Hardly. And yet there are scattered through the graveyards of the world inscriptions which come under this head. Some are evidently meant to be funny, while in others the humor is evidently unintentional. A specimen of the most amazing conceit is found in the epitaph of a Spanish hidalgo, who was musical precentor to the king of Spain. He wrote his own epitaph and it was placed on his tomb in Saragossa, where it is read by travelers to this day. Here it is:

Here lies John Quebecca, precentor to my Lord the King. When he is admitted to the choir of the angels, whose society he will embellish, God shall say: Cease, ye calves, And let me hear John Quebecca, precentor to my Lord the King.

“A New Hampshire epitaph writer makes this bull:

Sacred to the memory
Of three twins of Mrs. Smith.

“A Block Island sea captain who had been engaged in the fishing business, wrote this terse epitaph to be placed on his tombstone:

He’s done a-catching cod,
And gone to meet his God.

“A Mr. Anderson, Provost of Dundee, having shuffled off this mortal coil, it was resolved that an epitaph should be composed by his four surviving colleagues. They decided upon a rhymed stanza of four lines, one to be contributed by each. They put their heads together and with great labor produced the following:

Here lies John Anderson, Provost of Dundee,
Here lies him, here lies He.
Hallelujah, Hallelujah!
A-B-C-D-E-F-G !

“This remarkable joint composition was engraved upon the tombstone of the defunct provost, and the composers received a vote of thanks from their delighted townsmen.

“In a Western churchyard lies the body of the victim of a stage coach accident with this epitaph on the tombstone:

Weep, stranger, for the father spilled
From a stage coach and thereby killed.
His name, J. Sykes, a maker of sassingers,
Slain with three other outside passengers.

“And here is another from the same place:

Listen mother, aunt and me
Were killed. Here we be.
We should have no time to missle
Had they blown the engine’s whistle.

“Boston Post.”