

Wilmington Advertiser

F. C. HILL, Editor and Proprietor.

BE JUST AND FEAR NOT

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WHOLE NO. 231.

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Select for the Advertiser. RURAL FUNERALS.

There's a few flowers; but about midnight, the herbs that have on them cold dew of the night.

Among the beautiful and simple hearted customs of rural life which still linger in some parts of England, are those of strewing flowers before the funerals, and planting them at the graves of departed friends.

In Glamorganshire, we are told, the bed whereon the corpse lies, is covered with flowers, a custom alluded to in one of the wild and plaintive ditties of Ophelia.

White his shroud as the mountain now Larded all with sweet flowers;

There is also a most delicate and beautiful rite observed in some of the most remote villages in the south, at the funeral of a female who has died young and unmarried.

In some parts of the country, the dead are carried to the grave with the singing of psalms and hymns: a kind of triumph, as it were, says Burns, that they have conquered.

The natural effect of sorrow over the dead is to refine and elevate the mind, and we have a proof of it in the elevation of sentiment that pervades the whole of these funeral observances.

With first flowers, Whilst summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele, I'll sweeten thy sad grave; though that next lack The flower that's like thy face, pale printos;

I might crowd my pages with extracts from the older British poets, who wrote when these rites were more prevalent, and delighted frequently to allude to them.

When she sees a bank Stuck full of flowers, she, with a sigh will tell Her's events with a pretty piece it were To bury lovers in; and make her in idles Pluck 'em, and strow her over like a corse.

The custom of decorating graves was once universally prevalent: osiers were carefully beat over them to keep the turf unharmed, and evergreens and flowers were planted about them.

There was a melancholy fancy in the arrangement of these rustic offerings, that had something in it exquisitely poetical. The nature and color of the flowers, and of the ribbands with which they were tied, were emblematical of the qualities or story of the deceased, or the feelings of the mourner.

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A Garland shall be framed By art in nature's skull, Of many-colored flowers, In token of good will.

And sun-like-colored ribbands, On it I will bestow; But chiefly black and yellow, With aec to grave shall go.

I'll deck her tomb with flowers, The fairest ever seen; And with my tears as showers, I'll keep them fresh and green.

The white rose, we are told was planted at the grave of a virgin; her chapel was tied with white ribbands, in token of her spotless innocence, though sometimes black ribbands were intermingled to bespeak the grief of the survivors.

Yet strew Upon my dismal grave Such offerings as you have, Forsake n' eypress and sordid yew For kinder flowers, can't the no birds O: growth from such unhappy earth.

In the "Maid's Taggely," also, is introduced a pathetic little air, illustrative of the mode of decorating the funerals of females who had been disappointed in love:

Lie a garden on my hearth, Of the daisied yew, Maiden's wit low branches wear, Say I died true.

My love was false, but I was firm From my hour of birth, Upon my out-died body lie Lightly, gentle earth.

The natural effect of sorrow over the dead is to refine and elevate the mind, and we have a proof of it in the elevation of sentiment that pervades the whole of these funeral observances.

And from her firs and unpolluted flesh My violets spring.

The sorrow for the dead is only sorrow from which we refuse to be divorced. Every other world we seek to heat—every other affection to forget; but this wound we consider it a duty to keep open—this affliction we cherish and brood over in solitude.

The anned hurebell like thy veins; no, nor The leaf of eglantine; whom not to sander, Outsweetened not thy breath.

This is certainly something more affecting in these prompt and spontaneous offerings of nature, than in the most costly monuments of art; the hand strews the flower while the heart is warm, and the tear falls on the grave as affection is binding the osier round the so; but pathos expires under the slow labour of the chisel, and is chilled among the cold conceits of sculptured marble.

It is greatly to be regretted, that a custom so truly elegant and touching should have disappeared from general use, and exist only in the most remote and insignificant cast villages. But it seems as if posical custom always shuns the walks of cultivated society. In proportion as people grow polite they cease to be poetical.

They talk of poetry, but they have learnt to check its free impulses, to distrust its salivating emotions, and to supply its most affecting and picturesque usages, by studied form and pompous ceremonial. Few pa-geants can be more stately and frigid than

An English funeral in town. It is made up of show and gloomy parade; mourning carriages, mourning horses, mourning planists, and hireling mourners, who make a mockery of grief.

The white rose, we are told was planted at the grave of a virgin; her chapel was tied with white ribbands, in token of her spotless innocence, though sometimes black ribbands were intermingled to bespeak the grief of the survivors.

The fixed and unchanging features of the country also perpetuate the memory of the friend with whom we once enjoyed them, who was the companion of our most retired walks, and gave animation to every lonely scene.

Each lonely place shall him restore, For him the star be duly shed, Believed to life, in a career no more.

And in North Wales, the peasantry kneel and pray over the graves of their deceased friends for several Sundays after the interment; and where the tender rite of strewing and planting flowers is still practised, it is always renewed on Easter.

I have dwelt upon this beautiful rural custom, because, as it is one of the last, so is it one of the holiest offices of love.—The grave is the ordeal of affection.—It is there that the divine passion of the soul manifests its superiority to the instinctive impulse of more animal attachment.

The latter must be continually refreshed, and kept alive by the presence of its loved one, but the love that is seated in the soul can live on long remembrance.—The mere indications of sense languish and decay with the charms which excited them; and turn with shuddering and disgust from the dismal precincts of the tomb; but it is thence that truly spiritual affection rises purified from every sensual desire, and returns, like a holy flame, to illumine and sanctify the heart of the survivor.

The sorrow for the dead is only sorrow from which we refuse to be divorced. Every other world we seek to heat—every other affection to forget; but this wound we consider it a duty to keep open—this affliction we cherish and brood over in solitude.

"I have lost my whole," said a merchant as he returned an evening to his home, "we can no longer keep our carriage.—We must leave this large house. The children can no longer go to expensive schools. Yesterday I was a rich man.—To-day there is nothing I can call my own."

"Dear husband," said the wife, "we are still rich in each other and our children. Money may pass away, but God has given us a better treasure in these affectionate hands and loving hearts."

"Dear father," said the children "do not look so sober. We will help you to get a living."

"What can you do, poor things?" said he.

"I shall see," answered several cheerful voices. "It is a pity if we have been to school for nothing.—How can the father of eight children be poor. We shall work and make you rich again."

"I shall help," said the youngest girl, hardly four years old. "I will not have any new things bought and I shall sell my great doll."

He left his stately house. The servants were dismissed. Pictures and plate, rich carpet and furniture were sold, and she who has so long been the mistress of the mansion sued to tears. "Pay every debt," said she, "let no one suffer through us, and we may yet be happy."

He rented a neat cottage and a small piece of ground, a few miles from the city. With the aid of his sons he cultivated vegetables for the market. He viewed, with delight and astonishment the economy of his wife, nurtured as she had been in wealth and the efficiency which his daughters soon acquired under her training.

The eldest one assisted her in the work of the household and also assisted the younger children. Besides, they executed various works, which they had learned as accomplishments, but which they found could be disposed of to advantage. They embroidered with taste some of the ornamental parts of female apparel, which were readily sold by a merchant in the city.

They cultivated flowers and sent bouquets to market, in the cart that conveyed vegetables: they planted straw, they painted maps, they executed plain needle work. Every one was at her post busy and cheerful. "The cottage was like a bee hive."

"I never enjoyed such health before," said the father.

"And I never was as happy before," said the mother.

"We never knew how many things we could do, when we lived in the great house," said the children, "and we love each other a great deal better here. You call us your little bees."

"Yes," replied the father, "and you make just such honey as the heart loves to feed on."

Economy as well as industry was strictly observed—nothing was wasted. Nothing unnecessary was purchased. The eldest daughter became assistant teacher in a distinguished female seminary, and the second took her place, as instructress to the family.

The little dwelling which had always been kept neat, they were soon able to beautify. Its construction was improved and the vines and flowering trees were replanted around it. The merchant was forgotten under his straw covered porch in a Summer's evening, than he had been in his showy drawing room.

"We are now thriving and prosperous," said he, "shall we now return to the city?"

"Oh, no, no, no," was the unanimous reply.

"Let us remain," said the wife, "where we have found health and contentment."

"Father," said the youngest, "all we children hope you are not going to be rich again; for then," she added, "my little ones were shut up in the nursery, and did not see much of you or mother. Now we all live together, and sister who loves us, teaches us, and we learn to be industrious and useful. We were none of us happy when we were rich, and did not work.—So, father please not be a rich man any more."—Mrs. Sigourney.

A Noble Sentiment.—Pym, a celebrated English statesman in the time of Charles II. and the man who preferred the charge of high treason against Stafford and brought the unfortunate Earl to the scaffold, said that he had rather suffer for speaking the truth, than that the truth should suffer for want of his speaking."

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