

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

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### CEMETERIES OF ROMNEY.

BY HU MAXWELL.

So far as can be ascertained from extant traditions, the first burying place for the dead of Romney was situated on the public square on which the court house was afterwards built, but the graves were between the present court house and the Kellar hotel, on the site and in the rear of the present bank of Romney. It is probable that the first dead of the town were laid to their last rest in that old cemetery. How many sleep there, no one now knows. But there were many; for there is evidence that it was still used as a burying ground after the beginning of the present century. Old people a few years ago could remember when the graves could be distinguished, one from another. But the land was occupied by houses and gardens; and the plow finally obliterated each

“Mouldering heap,  
Where, in his narrow cell forever laid,  
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.”

It is related that, after the ground ceased to be used as a burying place, and was appropriated as a garden, a person in walking through the high grass and rank weeds would sometimes stumble into the deeply sunken graves. No stone now marks the sight of a single tomb, and the name of a single person who was buried there cannot now be ascertained. In their day they no doubt believed they were filling a place in the world of the living which would entitle them to, and secure for them, at least a gravestone to mark their narrow house in the realm of the dead. But,

such has not been the case. No doubt, in that old cemetery lie the men who saved from the tomahawk of the savage many a frontier home in Hampshire; and who, in their lives, were looked upon as the protectors, defenders and saviors of the people and their homes, when the cruel Indian and his no less cruel white ally made wide desolation along the frontiers. But, alas, how soon the children forget the debt of gratitude which their parents owed! How applicable to the dead here are the verses written of the neglected grave of Simon Kenton, the defender of Kentucky in its earliest years:

“Ah, can this be the spot where sleeps  
The bravest of the brave!  
Is this rude slab the only mark  
Of Simon Kenton's grave!  
These broken palings, are they all  
His ingrate country gave  
To one who periled life so oft  
Her hearths and homes to save!”

In the old cemetery in Romney there remain not so much as the “broken palings” or the “rude slab.” All have passed away, and nothing is left but the memory, and that, being the most immaterial and ephemeral of things, will soon pass into nothingness, and the shadow of oblivion will settle down forever.

Archaeologists who dig into the tumuli along the Nile, the Tigris and the Euphrates, discover that very ancient cities often stood upon the ruins of cities more ancient, and these, in their turn, rested their foundations upon cities antedating them by centuries, one ruin upon another, stretching back into the dim antiquity of the infant world until a time is reached when there is not so much as a cuniform inscription or a rude hieroglyph to give an approximation of the date, nor a hint of the name or character of the first city and its inhabitants. History repeats itself, even in the small thing of village graveyards. Romney a hundred years ago abandoned the cemetery in which

it had buried its first people. Perhaps the space was full. A new, larger and more beautifully situated cemetery was chosen, beginning near the southwestern street of the town, and rising toward the hill with a gentle slope. It was no doubt believed that this new field would furnish ample space for burying the village dead for centuries. But no cities increase in population more rapidly than the cities of the dead. All that live must some time make their habitation there. The new cemetery was ample for more than half a century. Then space became circumscribed. One by one the vacant places grew smaller and fewer; and the people who still lived began to interest themselves in securing a less crowded place in which to rest when dead. The graveyard was full. The old church in the cemetery, which was building while British cannon were bombarding Baltimore's protecting fort; while British fire was burning the capitol at Washington; while British troops, which had driven Napoleon from Spain, were breaking against Jackson's fortifications at New Orleans, like waves against immovable rocks—that old church in the cemetery had the dead buried close to its very walls. So crowded had the places become that no other room could be found. The graveyard was full. A new one, a larger, must be found; for Romney still furnished people for "the narrow chambers in the halls of death."

On a high, beautiful terrace, overlooking the valley, Indian Mound cemetery was marked out. It was the burial place of Indians centuries before the white race saw the Blue Ridge, hence its name. Further back, in geological time, it was the channel of the South branch, and the rounded stones of the old flood plane lie in drifts beneath the subsoil. This is the graveyard of today.

The old abandoned and neglected cemetery at the foot of the hill is a melancholy picture. The hand of time has been laid heavily upon it, and its beauty has departed, save that beauty which a pensive fancy can see in ruin and deso-

lation, especially when so intimately associated with the dead. Heavy foundations, covered with grass which hides the wreck of masonry, mark the site of the church, which ceased to be used more than a quarter of a century ago. In this edifice the eminent Dr. Foote preached for nearly thirty years. He and the church have taken their departure.

“Dead the singer; dead the song.”

A clump of locust trees, no doubt planted when the church was new, stands there still, about the only cheerful thing to relieve the monotony of the desolation. A row of posts, some of them broken, and gaps where others are missing, shows where the enclosing fence once was. At present the cemetery is the village pasture ground; and cattle fight for the tufts of grass which flourish in the spaces between the overturned tombstones. Slabs of marble, broken into fragments, strew the ground; and gravestones, leaning at all angles, show how numerous are the graves. Vandalism has done its worst. Evidence is not wanting that many a stone has been broken deliberately, for the dints of blows are visible where one gravestone has been used as a maul to break another. On some of the stones still standing, on others lying flat and half buried, and on the broken fragments of still others, may be read epitaphs and names which suggest much that deserves to be remembered. We do not know how much was once there which cannot now be read. We cannot tell who lie in graves no longer marked. The oldest citizen of Romney has forgotten, if he ever knew, who are the occupants of tombs which, to judge from the heavy pedestals on which gravestones formerly stood, were made for influential and prominent men. The best catalogue that can now be made of the graves is but a mere fragment. We know what we have, but cannot know what we have not. The historian, whose sense of duty impels him to rescue what he can from oblivion, finishes his task with the feeling that, after

all his pains, he can present only a page here and a torn fragment there from this book of the dead. Yet he feels that the fragments, like broken vases from Etruscan ruins, are valuable. What is done must be done quickly, or the dead of this cemetery, like those of the older one, will pass into oblivion and leave not a name.

The land occupied by the cemetery was given by Andrew Wodrow, and was deeded to James Beach, William Inskeep, Adam Hare and John Lawson, as trustees. The church was several years in building. The aisle took up half the interior space. The first elder in the church, William Naylor, was among the first to be buried there. He was a lawyer, and a pillar in the Presbyterian church. Another elder, John McDowell is buried there. He was a son-in-law of Andrew Wodrow. In this old cemetery sleeps Andrew Wodrow, a Scotchman by birth, a gentleman by nature, a scholar above the average of his time. He came from a family of scholars. His father enjoyed, and still has, a national reputation as a historian. His father, the historian of the church of Scotland, was Robert Wodrow. He published his history the year Andrew Wodrow was born, 1752. Lord Macaulay frequently quoted from that book in his history of England, and it was diligently read by Walter Scott and other great men. The Wodrows were related to the family of Dr. McCosh of Princeton college. They were a family of college professors. Two members of the Wodrow family filled, in succession, the chair of theology in the Glasgow university, in Scotland, and another was librarian of the university. Andrew came to America, and late in the eighteenth century took up his home in Romney, and there lived and died. His son, Craig Wodrow, also rests in the cemetery. He, too, was a scholar, but poor health through life prevented his taking part in active business. A large marble slab, whose broken fragments are half buried in the grass, was over the grave of William Sherrard, who died at St. Augustine, Florida,

and who was brought home that he might be buried where friends could visit his grave. Had he been laid to rest under the evergreen palms in the southern land of flowers it would have been as well. The quietude of a Florida forest, where the ground is flecked by sheen and shadow, were preferable to "a marble wilderness."

The wife of J. B. Sherrard and the two wives of David Gibson were buried here; also the wife of John W. Marshall. Here was laid to his last rest that unsatisfied man, Dr. Robert Newman, whose early life was a romance, and whose later years were filled with longings after scientific truths which forever eluded him. He read the great works of Newton on astronomy, and criticized them, but was never able to perfect his own theory. He had been hindered in his early years from acquiring a university education; and for this reason he ever afterwards felt himself handicapped in his pursuit of knowledge. He was the author of a book on medicine. In early life he was a deist; but these views were modified in later life. Elsewhere in this book will be found more extended mention of Dr. Newman.

In this old cemetery was buried Nathaniel Kuykendall, a character which stands out in bold relief. He had known the trials of this life; had known the bitterness of desertion, and in all the vicissitudes of fortune he had been a man in all senses of the word. Here was buried Peter Peters; the aged and venerable Joseph Combs; and Eli Davis, the old jailor who faithfully performed the unpleasant duty of locking doors between unfortunates and freedom, but who himself finally entered the narrow cell whose door will never be unlocked until the graves give up their dead. The old tavern keeper, Steinbeck, known to the early inhabitants of Romney, occupies the six feet of earth set aside for every man. He fares as well in this city of the dead as his neighbors, the scholarly Wodrow and the scientist Dr. Newman. Death levels all. Even the old,

faithful slave, known only by the name of Mammy Betsy, occupies the same place of honor in the silent city, as those who in their lives believed that they were made of better clay. When that bourne is passed, from which no traveler ever returns, all differences soon pass away. "All that live shall share thy destiny."

A willow tree once waved over the graves of Mrs. McGuire, the mother of the second wife of William Naylor, and the mother of Samuel McGuire, clerk of Hampshire county, in 1815, and who was a son-in-law of Andrew Wodrow. The willow tree is gone. No man can now say which is the mother's grave, and which the son's. That page is missing from the records of the dead. Not far distant is the grave of Mary, the wife of William S. Naylor. Old people used to remember her as a beautiful, light hearted girl, daughter of Mrs. Sarah Davis, who is buried beside her. The girl gave her love and her hand to a stranger, and left Romney to make her home with him. In one year he brought her back a corpse, beautiful in death, and here she rests. Miss Charity Johnson, loved by all who knew her, has not been forgotten, although her grave has been neglected. Here is shown the grave of Dr. Dyer, and his story illustrates the irony of fate. He had been buried elsewhere, but was removed to this cemetery to be near friends; and now his grave is hard to find. Friends forget; for the dead cannot remember the dead. Dr. Snyder also was buried here. His skill as a physician was widely known; and he prolonged and saved many a life; but although "he saved others, himself he could not save," and here he lies, almost forgotten. Others have taken his place among the living. Here were buried also, men whose names and the names of their descendants are identified with the history of Hampshire from its early years to the present. They are Jacob Heiskell, Samuel Heiskell, Adam Heiskell, and Elizabeth the daughter of Christopher Heiskell.

The grave of Mrs. Fitzgerald has a pathetic interest. Her two sons went to the war of 1812 and both fell in battle. When the news of their death reached her, she betook herself to her bed, and never left it until carried to her grave. Chichester Tapscott, a young lawyer of promise, but whose delicate health stood in the way of success, is among the dead. Near his is the grave of his sister, Mrs. White. The grave of a stranger, whose only known name was Wood, may be pointed out. He died somewhat suddenly while in Romney, and some one manifested enough interest in him to mark his grave. No one knows whence he came, nor whether he had a family. For years, perhaps, some one waited for his return, and never knew his fate. But, the very fact that he was a stranger caused him to be remembered, while those whose lives were spent in Romney have been forgotten. Another grave has an interest, not from the prominence or worth of its occupant, but because it shows that the greatest are not always the longest remembered, Elizabeth Evans, an outcast, an inebriate, welcomed to nobody's home while living, was given the same welcome to the tomb that all others receive; and her grave is pointed out to this day; but the names of those buried to the right and to the left of her are not known. Mr. and Mrs. David Griffith and Mrs. Catherine Cookus, well remembered by the older people of Romney, were buried here. John Baker White, and wife of John B. White, have graves which have not yet been lost. J. E. Kercheval, grandson of the historian of the valley of Virginia, Samuel Kercheval, is buried here. Adam Heiskell, one of the first of that name to come to Hampshire, lies undisturbed, "waiting the judgment day." Few scenes of danger and hardships he did not look upon; few have shared in greater glory than he, so far as heroic service to one's country can bring glory to the soldier. He was one of Morgan's men, and he fought unflinchingly in the darkest hour of the revolution. He was in the memor-

able march to Quebec. "After life's fitful fever he sleeps well." A grand niece of Lord Fairfax is among the dead who were laid to rest here. The grave of an insane man is said to be in the enclosure, but no mark now remains, nor is his name remembered. But it is related that his grave was dug near a remote corner, removed as far as possible from all the other dead. That was unnecessary. So far as mortal man can learn, there is no difference in the grave, or beyond it, between the philosopher Aristotle and the poorest lunatic. Opinion, creed and hypocrisy put up no bars across the avenues of immortality and eternity; although they erect many barricades this side.

Another occupant whose grave can no longer be pointed out, is Thomas Ragland, a young lawyer of promise, but who succumbed to consumption before he had fairly begun life's work. James Dailey was also buried there, one of the first inhabitants, a banker, and a relative of the Wood family, from whom the county of that name in West Virginia received its name. George Porterfield is interred in the old cemetery. He is said to have been a member of the Porterfield family of the valley of Virginia, and a relative of Colonel George A. Porterfield, who had charge of the first confederate forces that saw active service in northwestern Virginia, and who was defeated by General Kelley at Philippi, June 3, 1861. Neglected, overrun by cattle, uncared for by anybody, is the grave of one of the greatest men Hampshire has produced, William Mulledy. Born in 1796, of poor parents, without an introduction to men in high places, he pushed into the great battle of life, and by the splendor of his mental abilities he compelled recognition, and in his short life of only thirty-five years his name became known on both sides of the Atlantic as an ecclesiastic of the Roman Catholic church, and as an intellectual leader at the head of one of America's best colleges. He is mentioned elsewhere in this book.

When the old cemetery became filled, a few years prior

to the Civil war, the ground for a new one was procured, large enough to meet the requirements of the people of Romney for a few generations. It is on a promontory, naturally sterile and barren, which juts out over the wide, South branch valley. The ground has been improved and beautified, and few more attractive cemeteries are in the state. There is, perhaps, not another one where the natural scenery on all sides is finer. The Indians recognized this when they buried their dead there; although that benighted race had little conception of beauty. Their dull appreciation, however, saw that the mountains were in sight, and the river flowed beneath, and these features of nature they could understand. The mountains south and west are the flanking ranges of the Alleghanies, and in the language of the Indians the name "Alleghany" is their nearest expression of the idea of eternity. They were the eternal mountains, the everlasting range; they went on forever. But, their conception of the idea of eternity partook more of distance than of time. It cannot be stated as a fact of history that the Indians buried their dead on that promontory because of the wide view obtainable from that point, for it is not known when or why they used that burying ground; but it is highly probable that the place was chosen because of its beauty and sublimity. It has never been a prevailing custom of the Indians to bury their dead on prominent highlands; but many instances are known wherein they did so, expressly for the purpose of giving their dead an opportunity of a perpetual view of their favorite haunts while alive; in their simplicity supposing that the dead continued to partake of the sensations of the living and to feel an interest in the affairs of their friends. No matter what was their motive, it is certain that a burying place was there. A large mound, covered with pines, not perhaps a century old, is a prominent feature of the cemetery. This mound may contain the bones of a score of persons, or twice that number. It is built of boulders

and soil. The rocks are waterworn, and it is a common supposition that they were carried up from the river, half a mile away and two hundred feet below. Such may have been the source of supply, but it is not probable; at least it was not necessary to go so far for boulders. The terrace is underlaid with such rocks, with a few feet of earth on top; and where the neighboring ravine cuts the terrace the boulders may be picked up in large numbers within fifty yards of the mound. Indians would not likely carry them from the river when they could obtain them within a few steps. The mound has been opened and numerous fragments of bone were found; but all indications were that the tumulus was old, prehistorical. It was more than an ordinary grave; how much more, must forever remain unknown.