

# OUR MONTHLY.

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## A RAMBLE IN GRAYFRIARS.

BY MRS. JULIA M'NAIR WRIGHT.

A TIME for all things, said the Royal Preacher. If ever in the year the time to wander thoughtfully in the place of graves can come, it seems to me to be in November; therefore come with me to Grayfriars. Dull gray the skies bow over the burial sod; the leaves beneath one's feet rustle monitions of our mortality. The frost has cut the flowers off leaf and stalk, but yet the roots live underground; the cold in its season has sharply ripened the seeds, and they have slidden into the covering soil until the hour of their rising shall appear.

Now that frailer blossoms all are gone, the faithful daisy lingers still,

"With virtue filled, and honorable power."

Daisies are in this land so constant to the dwellings of the dead, that Shelley, dying, whispered, "I feel the daisies already growing over me."

In damp and sunless nooks green mosses thrive, and in the sheltered corners of tall tombs long brackens wave; your feet fall noiseless on the soft thick sward which shrouds so many generations of the dead; through the silence ever and anon comes the sound of his step and his tools, who keeps this garden

of the dead; there is a rustle, and a velvet-coated swallow darts up from her hiding at your feet, and flies for refuge to yon old house-top, where among the chimney pots that rook in deepest mourning sits watching for funerals. But hark! there comes to you the echo of exuberant joy, the music of a skylark dropping down a shower of silver notes from his station at the gate of heaven; here, from the shelter of this very grave, this little grave where some household has buried all their joy, the lark has risen into the sunshine.

"Bird of morn, what dost thou here,  
Where the dead are sleeping?  
Bird of joy, thy carol soundeth clear  
In the place of weeping."

But this is no common burial-ground; this is Greyfriars, the churchyard which of all others we Presbyterians must look to lovingly. It is meet that flowers should blow here, and larks should sing exultingly, for here our new-born Church was solemnly baptized in blood; here about its feeble head swords clashed, and tremendous vows were uttered; here was it strengthened and nurtured; here its early professors met often bloody burial;

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here they are laid quietly beside their very oppressors, and calm now breathes around their ashes, because their faith has become an inheritance for a world.

Yes, this is Grayfriars; at the south end of George the IV. bridge, you turn into an opening in the row of ancient low-roofed houses, and passing through a tall iron gate, you are in this place, so silent, so green, with the deep shadows and sudden bursts of sunlight.

The ground rises from the gate; immediately before you stand Old and New Grayfriar's churches, the first dating 1612, the second 1721. Clumsy, gloomy Gothic structures are they, with no adornment save the glory of their history.

Here, a few feet from the Old Church, is an ancient tombstone, a stone than which none is more famous.

On this chill November day, call fancy to your aid; imagine it the first day of March, 1638. The doors and windows of the church are open, the building is crowded, all faces are intent; outside here you are not alone; the churchyard is thronged; look to the earnestness of that sea of faces that fills the gateway and the road, and scatters along the Cowgate; hear the clarion tones that ring from ALEXANDER HENDERSON'S tongue, as he stands there in that high sentry-box pulpit. Crowded about the stairs and aisles, and in the front pews, behold that noble assemblage, the lords and barons of this realm; see on the communion-table beneath the pulpit that parchment, a scroll destined to save a nation, to equip a worn-out world once more with men, to crowd with citizens the golden streets of the Jerusalem above, to create a nation beyond the seas, to be as the very banner of the Lord, leading the vanguard of his hosts against ignorance and superstition, despotism and anarchy, that at which infidels shall scoff, and worldlings shall complain, and Rome shall tremble, **THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT.** But now when Henderson's stirring sermon is concluded, when this notable assemblage has signed this precious scroll, it is carried from the church, and laid on this flat tombstone, near this one by which we are now stand-

ing in 1873, and here the throng of confessors presses closer and closer, and many in very earnestness of purpose, write their names in blood.

In this graveyard, then, so historic in its reminiscences, we take our November stroll. Here we shall find many records of the quaintest, some with their antique carvings and odd conceits to wake a fleeting smile; some to stir the warm heart's blood to a new heat of indignation; some to call the sigh of sympathy, now that for years all need of sympathy has been done away.

We begin then with this burial stone, raised into fame, not because of him who sleeps beneath, but because here lay the mighty parchment whereon Scotland inscribed her covenant to be the Lord's. The original copy of this covenant with the faded blood signatures is to be seen in the Advocates' Library, only a few rods distant from Grayfriars.

Closely connected with this by association, though lying some distance from it, is the monument of that Alexander Henderson who preached the sermon on that most eventful morning. He was Scotland's leading delegate to the Westminster Assembly, and the principal author of the Assembly's Catechism. Here is the date. 1646.—Æ. 63, and on the opposite side this verse,

"Reader bidden thine eyes  
Not for the dust heir lyes  
It quicken shall again,  
And ay in joy remain—  
But for thyself, the Church and States,  
Whoes woes this dust prognosticates."

And was not the prophecy of woe true enough? did not the storm of persecution sweep over the land? In fifteen years after, Argyle's headless body lay on the table which you may yet see in Magdalen Chapel, not far from Grayfriar's wall. Thinking of this beginning of that fearful time, when to do well was to merit death, we lift our eyes, and see not far from us an imposing tomb, built in imitation of the "Lantern of Demosthenes" in Athens, and covered with a dome, in the crevices of which grass is growing, and now, robbed of its summer strength, waves rustling and dead upon

the autumn air. Let us draw near. A gnarled lilac tree holds guard on one side; the tomb has a great wooden door, with a huge lock and iron bar. Here lies **GEORGE MACKENSIE**, King's Advocate, of infamous memory, he who pleaded at the king's bar against the Covenanters, with a cruel, time-serving zeal, which nothing but death could satisfy. Here, said the popular belief, his body could not rest when it was buried, where his victims were lying; he found thorns that pricked even the unconscious nerves of death; bolts and bars could not keep in this distracted corse, and here nightly he walked bewailing. Following this superstition, the urchins of Edinburgh, for several generations, echoing the feelings of their sires, were wont to come, protected by the glare of daylight, and shout defiantly through the keyhole,

"Bluidy Mackensie, come out if ye daur;  
Lift the sneck, and draw the bar!"

And now that we are recalling these days of persecution, and of witness-bearing unto death for the truth, let us turn from these adjacent graves, and seek out a few places especially connected with those troubled times. On the south side of the graveyard is a recess, memorable rather for the imprisonment of the living than for the burial of the dead. After the battle of Bothwell, two hundred prisoners were brought to Edinburgh from Stirling, and on the 24th of June, by order of the Privy Council, these prisoners were "put under guard in the inner Grayfriars churchyard, to remain day and night." Here for five months, almost entirely unsheltered, supported on a most insufficient allowance of bread and water, the people of Edinburgh prohibited from supplying them with meat, money, or clothing, these men awaited their shipment to West Indian slavery, or their execution at home. Where this foul tragedy was enacted, birds sing, flowers bloom, the breezes and the sunbeams come and go, and pilgrims from all parts of the world draw near to gaze, and wonder at the price that was paid for spiritual freedom.

Yet one more memorial of the Mar-

tyrs claims our attention, the famous **MONUMENT**. It is set against the wall in the north-east corner. This tomb was erected in 1706. Between two plain columns with scroll capitals, is a large slab of white marble, bearing a very lengthy inscription; beneath this is an open Bible with texts from Revelation. The most noteworthy part of the inscription runs thus: "From May 27th, 1661, that the most noble Marquis of Argyll was beheaded, to the 17th of February, 1688, that Mr. James Renwick suffered, were one way or other, murdered and destroyed, for the same cause, about eighteen thousand, of whom were executed at Edinburgh about an hundred of noblemen, gentlemen, ministers, and others, noble martyrs for Jesus. The most of them lie here."

But leave we now with this handful of grasses gathered from their graves, the burial-places of these men who have ennobled not only a nation, but a world by the goodly manner of their living, and the brave fashion of their dying. We pass to gather from these tombs built everywhere around us, a few ancient inscriptions.

The monuments of the seventeenth century abound in sculpture. The skull and cross-bones are favorite emblems, also time with an hour-glass, and death represented as a crowned and sceptred skeleton. Above such carvings the archfiend grins as a frightful gargoyle, triumphing in his victory over the human frame; but a little angel of some sort, of mild countenance, and asleep, represents a calm waiting for resurrection triumph. These old sculptors for the dead seemed to have ideas sufficiently poetic, but their fashion of working them into the marble was conventional and hideous to an extreme. But poesy as well as sculpture flourishes among these tombs. Stay and ponder this:

"Stop Passenger, and shed a tear  
For good *James Murray* lyeth here;  
He was of Philiphaugh descended,  
And for his merchandise commended.  
He was a man of a good life  
Married *Bethia Mauld* to's wife;  
He may thank God that ere he got her  
She bore him three sons and a daughter.

The first he was a man of might,  
For which the king made him a knight;  
The second was both wise and wyllie,  
For which the town made him a Baillie;  
The third a factor of renown  
Both in Camphier, and in this town;  
His daughter was both grave and wise,  
And she was married to James Elies."

Were not the bereaved children who set up this tribute to their *father*, a model mutual admiration society?

Here is a beautiful little monument of 1812, set up by admirers of bardic genius, in memory of *Duncan Ban Macintyre*. "The last of all the bards was he." His bow, spear, dagger, pipes and other distinctive treasures piled on his plaided scarf, and bonnet, are carved on the upper part of the tomb, and the inscription is from one of his own Gaelic poems.

It is one of the virtues of Edinburgh that she never fails to recognize and reward genius.

James, sixth Earl of Moreton, foully murdered by royal command, being beheaded by Edinburgh's guillotine, "The Maiden" in 1581, is buried here under a little brown granite stone, marked simply J. E. M. He was dragged on the hangman's hurdles up the Canongate, dishevelled from his imprisonment, gazed defiance on his enemies, and died as a lion at bay.

A favorite line on many tombs is *Hodie mihi, cras tibi*. Latin inscriptions in prose and verse abound.

One of the Writers to the Signet, has this couplet :

"Hic jacent in alta,  
Sed non quiete sempiterna,"

which we transcribe as :

"Here lie they in a deep,  
But not eternal sleep."

John Thatcher, a physician, with a line of seven capital letters indicating his honors, is thus remembered :

"In misery's darkest cavern known  
His useful care was ever nigh;  
Where hopeless anguish poured his groan,  
And lonely want retired to die."

A handsome monument to Sir Alexander

Bannerman, 7th Baronet of Elsick, has its chief interest in the fact that its occupant was descended from that "wondrous wizard, Michael Scot," celebrated in romantic legend, and by Scott, in the "Lay of the Last Minstrel."

Every Presbyterian will feel an interest in the last resting-place of Dr. Thomas McCrie, the biographer of John Knox. Distinguished as a man of letters, and yet more as a faithful minister, his godly life exhibited the beauty of the doctrines he professed; and he vindicated and embalmed in imperishable history, the champions of the faith wherein he lived and died.

The monument of Sir James Oswald is remarkable for an error and a correction at the close of the inscription, thus: "O death, where is thy victory? O grave, where is thy sting? *Note*—the sting should be attributed to death, the victory to the grave."

That which strikes an American as singular, even on the most modern of these tombstones, is the careful statement of the *business* of the deceased. Thus: Alexander Reid, jeweller; John Boyd, silk mercer; James Barclay, brewer; &c.

But we must pass on, and here lie buried near one another, Dr. Robertson, the historian; William Adam, the architect; and Jameson, the first of Scotch painters.

Not far off we pause where John Mylne, famous as an architect, and one of a family remarkable for skill in the art of building, has this verse on his tombstone :

"Reader—John Mylne, who maketh the fourth John,  
And by descent from father unto son,  
Sixth master mason to a royal race  
Of seven successive kings, sleeps in this place."

All about the wall of the old and new churches are tablets, memorials of those buried immediately beneath. One bears merely a name, and this couplet :

"To praise him here time idly spent,  
He did his duty, the best comment."

A very ancient tablet to a physician has nothing legible but a huge skeleton, gracefully festooned with all manner of surgical instruments.

A tailor has here also a suggestive tablet. Conspicuous among its emblems we have the shears four times repeated; also spools, yardstick, goose, and needles; at the bottom something—either a skull or a cabbage, but which we have not yet been able to determine.

Some of the inscriptions attract notice by the oddity of their spelling as: "Heir lyes David Aikenhid, wha dyed Lord Prevost of Edinburg. Blessed are the deid wha die in the Lord—their works doe follow them."

On the south-west corner of the church wall we find the graves of two men famous in the world of letters. Colin Maclaurin, as his epitaph states "*in Acad. Edin. Prof. Electus, ipso Newtono suadente.*"

Next this great mathematician, the friend of Newton, elected a Professor at nineteen years of age, lies a singer whom Scotland holds dear—Allan Ramsay, the author of the "Gentle Shepherd." He died in 1758. Burns furnished the epitaph on this tablet.

"No sculptured marble here, no pompous lay,  
No storied urn, no animated bust;  
This simple stone directs pale Scotia's way,  
To pour her sorrows o'er her poet's dust.

"Though here you're buried, worthy Allan,  
We'll ne'er forget your canty callan;  
For while your soul lives in the sky,  
Your "Gentle Shepherd" cannot die."

We feel that we should not be doing justice to this churchyard, did we fail to quote another of its mortuary poems, probably the production of the bereaved "bed-fellow."

"If thou list that passeth by,  
Know that in this tomb doth ly,  
Thomas Bannatyn, abroad  
And at home who served God.  
Though no children he possesseth,  
Yet the Lord with means him blest.  
He of them did well dispose  
Long ere death his eyes did close.  
For the poore his helping hand,  
And his friends his kyndnes fand;  
And on his deare bed fellow,

Jennet MacMath he did bestow,  
Out of his lovelie affection,  
A fit and goodlie portion.  
Thankfull she herself to prove  
For a signe of mutuall love,  
Did not pains nor charges spare  
To set up this fabrick fair;  
As Artemis, that noble frame,  
To her deare Mausoulus name."

He died 16th July, 1635, of his age 65.

As this poem ends abruptly with the stone, it is probable that it would have gone on indefinitely, had marble held out.

But we have come round to George Heriot's simple tomb, dated 1610. Just outside the churchyard is Heriot's more enduring monument, the magnificent hospital, or college, for the maintenance and education of boys. This suggests one of the churchyard anecdotes. A young man named Hoy, about ninety years ago, was sentenced to death for burglary. He had been a pupil at Heriot's, and many of the lads were his acquaintances; they are very clannish at Heriot's, and he was sure of their sympathy. Having escaped from jail, furnished by a friend with the key of Mackenzie's ill-famed mausoleum, he secreted himself therein, and the lads in Heriot's stealthily saved him food from their meals, and conveyed it to him by night. For six weeks he was here hidden, then sailed for the continent by way of Leith, and returned no more.

Telling this anecdote, we have reached once more the recess where the Covenanters were imprisoned, and now close by recalling a story of love in this place of death. Among the Covenanters held here was a handsome young man. Despite the prohibitions of the Council, some of the good women of the city went to these prisoners with food and clothes. One notable dame was accompanied by a lovely daughter, who cast kindly eyes on the young hero of Bothwell, and he on his part was violently in love with her. This love was tried by years of absence, when the youth expiated the crime of Covenanting, by slave life on the plantations. At last the exile returned, and the patience of years was rewarded by a happy marriage and long life of prosperity.

One of the finest monuments of Grayfriars, dated at 1687, is *now down in the coal cellar* between the two churches, ignominious sepulture for a Baillie of Edinburgh; thus times change. So also we have in one or two of the tombs fragments of carvings from the old monastery of Grayfriars, of date 1436.

We close with the inscription to us most curious of all; it is to be found on the scroll sides of six stone steps, which lead from the northern to the southern portions of the yard, its date is un-

known. But on our way we gather up this:

"She was!  
But words are wanting to say what,—  
Think what a wife should be,  
And she was that!"

And here are our old inscriptions—for the gate arch this: "*Pax intrantibus. Salvus exstantibus.*" Old tomb arch, thus: "Gif ve deid as ve soold, ve myght Half as ve Vald"—which we think means, "if he had died as he should, he might have (in eternity) what he would (enjoy)."

## ALSATIA.

BY GEORGE LEE.

**W**ESTWARD, the Vosges their blue peaks uplifting,  
Eastward, the Rhine flowing down to the main,  
Ballon d'Alsace to the south, and clouds drifting  
Round its bold summit; all northward a plain.

High wave the grainfields, in plenty abounding,  
Dark stands the forest upon the hill-side;  
Yonder a skylark his glad note is sounding;  
Green hedges pasture and meadow divide.

Group of gay peasants, as evening approaches,  
Homeward returning high on a hay-load!  
Little care they for fine fashions and coaches,  
Nature on them has her blessings bestowed:

Blessings so great that they cannot be measured—  
Health for the body, content for the mind;  
Worthy to be by the richest man treasured,  
Choicer than diamonds, or gold thrice refined.

See! there a tourist is wearily walking:  
Jules checks the horses and asks him to ride;  
Buxom Annette, who is laughing and talking,  
Gives him her hand, and he mounts to her side.

Peerless Alsatia!—beautiful Rhineland!  
Wrested by Germany lately from France;  
Rich in thy people, in grain-land and vine-land,  
France to regain thee is waiting her chance.