

THE CEMETERIES.

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In these modern times, when, in spite of all historical etiquette, such cities as New York, Philadelphia and Chicago, having sprung, in a comparatively few years, into their colossal proportions, one is very apt to underrate the steady growth of our own city. Yet, during the last half century, the progress of Toronto has been remarkable. Seventy years ago, when Governor Simcoe began to build Castle Frank, the margin of the bay was lined with dense and trackless forests; the Mississauga Indians held the territory as their own; and the site which the city now occupies was an immense swamp, the peaceful resort of myriads of waterfowl, and was looked upon as better fitted for a frog pond or a beaver meadow than for the residence of human beings. And yet, in spite of all these drawbacks, Toronto is now a large and increasing city; a busy mart, where merchants “do congregate;” the centre of the wealth of Upper Canada.

There is perhaps no better illustration of the growth of the city, than the manner in which it has grown out of its institutions. Its Parliament Buildings, its Jail, its Churches and Schools, its various benevolent and literary institutions, have all at one time or other proved too small for it, and had to be renewed, and this has also been true with respect to its grave yards. Death ever keeps pace with life; and when one extends its sphere, the other claims an interest too.

In wandering among the cemeteries of the city, one can't help being struck with the utilitarian spirit that characterises our times. In ancient days the resting place of the dead was a sacred locality. Amongst the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, and even among the Jews, it was considered a sacrilegious deed to disturb the dead. But we are troubled with no such scruples. We can sell a grave-yard as we would a horse and be troubled with no particular twinges of conscience for the act. In fact, the system of disturbance and spoliation has been carried so far, that probably not one out of ten of our population know where the burying places of the city were. The first was probably that of

ST. JAMES'.

If the passenger on King street will look through the railings around the Anglican Cathedral, he will notice that about an acre of vacant ground surrounds the edifice. This was the old burying ground, sacred to members of the Church of England. This ground was granted by the Government to the congregation, about the beginning of this century, and up till July, 1844, it continued to be made use of as a repository for the dead. As the city increased in population, the demands upon the limited space became great in proportion, and the consequence was that by the year we have mentioned, the whole was filled. It then became evident to the churchwardens that something must be done to remedy this state of matters. After considerable difficulty, they succeeded in purchasing what is now St. James' Cemetery. In every respect it is well adapted for the purpose to which it has been dedicated. The ground is high and rolling, and tastefully laid out. The soil is of that dry, sandy nature which, both from an aesthetic and sanitary view, is a desideratum in every burying place; and were the trees, which now crowd it and hide it, removed, and plants more congenial with the nature of the place substituted, its effect would be infinitely increased. A beautiful mausoleum, for the reception of the dead during winter, stands near the centre of the grounds, and, altogether, it is as attractive as

such a place can be made. But where are all the stones and monuments which used to stand around the cathedral? They have all been removed, and the bodied over which they stood have, as far as possible, been removed, too. When the new cemetery was opened, it was considered advisable to take this step. Every attention was paid to decency and decorum, in the process, and excepting a few old stones lying flat in a corner, there is nothing around the cathedral to indicate that its precincts were once a place where “the wicked ceased from troubling and the weary were at rest.”

The history of

ST. MICHAEL’S CATHEDRAL

Is almost a counterpart of that of St. James’. Around St. Paul’s Church the vacant land served as a burying place for members of the Roman Catholic persuasion, until 2855. In that year, through the exertions of Mr. W.I. Macdonald and Mr. Charles Robertson, five acres of land were purchased on Yonge street, and this forms part of the beautiful Cemetery of St. Michael’s. Subsequently other five acres were added, and to show the great necessity there existed for this extension of burying ground, it may be mentioned that, during ten years, no fewer than 5,500 bodies have been interred in St. Michael’s; and in St. James’, since its opening, 8,420 have been received.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH-YARD.

But, besides St. James’ and St. Paul’s, there were in olden times two other burying places in Toronto. One of them was exclusively for the use of Presbyterians. It was situated in Duchess-street, and occupies the space between that and Britain street. It was granted by Government, about 50 years ago, to the first Presbyterian church in Toronto, which was presided over by the venerable Mr. Harris; and a romantic little nook it is. About a dozen moss-grown stones are scattered over it; a solitary cow crops the grass which covers the still visible mounds, and altogether it has more the appearance of an old country church-yard than anything in the city. And yet the work of resurrection has been busily carried on in it also. During the last twenty years, no bodies have been interred here; but many have been dug up, and conveyed to other cemeteries. The map of the place has somehow got all into confusion, so much so that many parties desirous of removing the remains of their relations cannot, since they know not where they lie. But worse than all, if some of the old residents [sic] are to be credited, when Britain street was being built, numerous coffins were ruthlessly dug up and their contents scattered, and some of the bodies were even so little decayed that the hair remained on their heads. If true it was a piece of human vandalism, and it would seem as if the consequences attached to Britain street still, for a very little Britain it is, and scarcely anybody seems to live in it. At the time of the disruption in Scotland, which showed its effects here, the property passed into the possession of Knox’s Church and remains in their hands still. What may be the ultimate doom of this little landmark in our history we cannot tell. Probably in a few years, it will be built over and the old Presbyterian burying ground will be amongst the things that were.

THE POTTER’S FIELD.

The other old burying place we referred to, bears the somewhat suggestive cognomen of “Potter’s field”. Whether it derived the name from some work of that nature carried on in it, or whether it was named after that in which Judas made so poor an investment, we

cannot tell; at any rate that is its name. It is situated a little to the west of Yonge street, in Yorkville, and is altogether untitled for the purpose it was used for—the situation being low and the soil a wet rough clay. The origin of this burying place seems to have been with fifty or sixty of the inhabitants of Toronto—or of York as it was then called—who deeming the then existing burying places inadequate to the wants of the community, entered upon a subscription, and raised funds sufficient to purchase this piece of ground. By an Act of the Legislature they were formed into a Trust, and under their management, it was carried on till about the year 1851, when the inhabitants of Yorkville deeming it from its proximity, prejudicial to the health of the inhabitants of the district, sought for and obtained an interdict prohibiting any further interments in the place. This placed the Trustees in a quandary, but they were assisted out of it by what had been done two or three years before by three merchants of the city. The gentlemen we refer to were the Hon. Mr. McMurrich, and Messrs. McGlashin and Shaw, who impatient at the dilatoriness of the inhabitants in setting about obtaining a general burying place, commensurate with the wants of the city, commenced to do it themselves. For a long time they had to encounter the greatest difficulties. There was plenty of land in the market; but whenever they offered to purchase, and it became known to what purpose they meant to apply it—negotiations dropped at once. Profiting by experience, it struck them that the better way was to say nothing about ulterior purposes, and acting on this principle they at length obtained possession of what is now the

TORONTO NECROPOLIS.

The land was in a miserable state at the time of the purchase, being filled with stumps and overgrown with rank grass. They set to work, however, cleared the stumps, rooted out the grass, obtained a charter from Government declaring it a common burying ground free to all, and at last sold it to the Trustees of the Potter's Field for the sum of £3,750. As Government wisely requires that every burying ground must be free of incumbrances before being used, and as the Trustees had only £400 on hand, they laid themselves under personal obligations for the amount. Their foresight has been amply justified by the results. This debt has been all liquidated, and not only so, but they have purchased another piece of ground to the south of the cemetery at a cost of \$3000, have expended several thousand dollars in ornamenting the ground, and are now purposing [sic] to extend their operations by purchasing ground for another cemetery more conveniently situated for the western part of the city. Some time ago a cry was raised touching this Trust. Mercenary motives were imputed to the members of the Trust, and some people spoke as if they could pocket the profits, but this is, we are informed, an impossibility. The Trust is incorporated by an Act of Parliament, which contains clauses stringent enough to prevent any individual from touching a single farthing of the funds.

It would be superfluous for us to enter upon a description of the beauties of this cemetery. Its position, the picturesqueness of the scenery around, the taste displayed by Mr. Hayder in beautifying and ornamenting the grounds are known to everybody, but it is not superfluous to refer to the nuisance that exists on the north side, in the shape of a chemical work. On entering the gate the first thing that meets one is a stench of the most horrible and sickening nature. It is the smell of bones, and one's mind instantly reverts to the mausoleum and the graves, but the bones are in a chemical work. Why is not the proprietor at least compelled to build a chimney tall enough to convey the noxious vapours over the surrounding locality? But this is an unnecessary question if as we are informed, the city corporation has just leased to the proprietor of the work a place to store powder in, in such a position that if an explosion took place, it would endanger a large amount of property.

PRIVATE BURYING GROUNDS.

In the city there are several private burying grounds. For instance, in the neighbourhood of the Queen's Park is that belonging to the Powell family, where are interred the remains of the Hon. William Dummer Powell, who was created a Puisne Judge in 1794, and raised to the Chief Justiceship in 1816. In the same locality is the cemetery of the Baldwin family, where lie the remains of the late Dr. Baldwin, one of the earliest and most influential settlers in the Province; and the late Hon. Robert Baldwin, at one time Premier of the Province. We understand, however, that the bodies are being or are about to be removed from there to St. James' Cemetery. They have served their time. When first occupied they were retired rural spots, far from the hum of the busy city, but houses have encompassed them round, and they no longer enjoy those amenities, their founders fondly imagined would ever belong to them.

MILITARY CEMETERY.

We had almost omitted to refer to the fact that the cemetery in Victoria Square has for a long series of years been used as a burying ground exclusively for soldiers, their wives and children.