

Poetry.

RECORDS OF WOMAN.

BY MRS HEMANS.

The following is the picture of Gertrude von der Wart, whose devotedness to her husband on the rack is well known.

Her hands were clasp'd, her dark eyes raised,
The breeze threw back her hair;
Up to the fearful wheel she gazed—
All that she loved was there.
The night was round her clear and cold,
The holy heaven above,
Its pale stars watching to behold
The night of earthly love.

"And bid me not depart," she cried,
"My Rudolph say not so!
This is no time to quit thy side;
Peace, peace, I cannot go.
Hath the world aught for me to fear
When death is on thy brow?
The world! what means it?—mine is here—
I will not leave thee now.

I have been with thee in thine hour
Of glory and of bliss;
Doubt not memory's living power
To strengthen me through this!
And thou, mine honor'd love and true,
Bear on, bear nobly on!
We have the blessed heaven in view,
Whose rest shall soon be won."

And were not these high words to flow
From woman's breaking heart?
Thro' all that night of bitter woe
She bore her lofty part;
But oh! with such a gazing eye,
With such a curdled cheek—
Love, love! of mortal agony,
Thou, only thou, should'st speak!

The wind rose high—but with it rose
Her voice, that he might hear;
Perchance that dark hour brought repose
To happy bosoms near,
While she sat striving with despair
Beside his tortured form,
And pouring her deep soul in prayer
Forth on the rushing storm.

She wiped the death damps from his brow,
With her pale hands and soft,
Whose touch upon the lute chords low
Had stilled his heart so oft,
She spread her mantle o'er his breast,
She bath'd his lips with dew,
And on his cheek such kisses pres'd
As hope and joy ne'er knew.

Oh! lovely are ye love and faith,
Enduring to the last!
She had her meed—one smile in death—
And his worn spirit pass'd.
While ev'n as o'er a martyr's grave
She knelt on that sad spot,
And weeping bless'd the God who gave
Strength to forsake it not!

EXTRAORDINARY EXHUMATION.
JOHN HAMPDEN.

Narrative of the disinterment of the body of John Hampden, Esq., (commonly called the "Patriot") in Hampden church, Bucks, on the 21st July, 1823, to ascertain the cause of his death; some historians supposing that he was wounded in the shoulder by a shot from the enemy at the battle of Chalgrave-field (June 1643); others supposing that he was killed by the bursting of his own pistol, with which his son-in-law, Sir Robert Pye, had presented him. Present on the occasion—The Right Honorable Lord Nugent, Counsellor Denman, the Rev. Mr. Brookes, Mr. Heron, Mr. Grace, (steward to the Earl of Buckinghamshire), George Coventry, six other young gentlemen, with whose names I was not acquainted, twelve grave-diggers and assistants, with the clerk of the Parish.

The manner in which Mr. Hampden met his death had long been a disputed point in history.

Lord Clarendon, Rushworth, Ludlow, Noble, and others, severally state that at the battle of Chalgrave field he was mortally wounded in the shoulder by a musket ball, that he lingered for several days, and expired in great agony.

Lord Clarendon says, that Hampden "being shot into the shoulder with a brace of bullets, which broke the bone, within three weeks after died with extraordinary pain, to as great a consternation of all that party as if their whole army had been defeated or cut off."

Sir Philip Warwick states that "Mr. Hampden received a hurt in his shoulder, whereof he died in three or four days after: for his blood in his temper was acrimonious, as the scum commonly on his face shewed." In another place he observes, "One of the prisoners taken in the action said, that he was confident Mr. Hampden was hurt; for he saw him, contrary to his usual custom, ride off the field, before the action was finished, his head hanging down and his hands leaning upon his horse's neck.

What reliance can we place upon historians, when we see such contradictory statements? Lord Clarendon says, he

lingered near three weeks—Sir P. Warwick, that he died in three or four days; the former, that two bullets broke the shoulder-bone, the latter that he was only hurt in the shoulder. But the following is the most contradictory statement of all, equally worthy of credit, perhaps more so, as it was related by Sir Robert Pye, who married Hampden's eldest daughter.

"Two of the Harleys and one of the Foleys, being at supper with Sir Robert Pye, at Farringdon-house, Berks, on their way to Herefordshire, Sir Robert Pye related the account of Hampden's death as follows:—

"That at the action of Chalgrave-field, his pistol burst, and shattered his hand. He, however, rode off and got to his quarters; but finding the wound mortal, he sent for Sir Robert Pye, then a Colonel in the Parliament army, and who had married his eldest daughter, and told him that he looked on him as in some degree accessory to his death, as the pistols were a present from him. Sir Robert assured him, that he bought them in Paris, of an eminent maker, and had proved them himself. It appeared, on examining the other pistol, that it was loaded to the muzzle with several supernumerary charges, owing to the carelessness of a servant, who was ordered to see the pistols were loaded every morning, which he did without drawing the former charge."—From *Lord Oxford's Papers*.

In order to ascertain the real facts, application was made by Lord Nugent to the Earl of Buckinghamshire, (to whom the family estates have descended), that the coffin might be opened and the body examined.

The Earl, after due consideration, granted the request, which was confirmed by the rector, who politely tendered his assistance to further the inquiry.

It is remarkable, that so distinguished and opulent a family as that of Hampden should never have possessed a private vault, for the interment of the respective branches of the family;—such, however, is not the case; they have, from a very early period, been buried in the chancel of the church, about four feet deep.

On the morning of the 21st of July, we all assembled in the church, and commenced the operation of opening the ground. After examining the initials and dates on several leaden coffins, we came to the one in question, the plate of which was so corroded, that it crumbled into small pieces on touching it. It was therefore impossible to ascertain the name of the individual that it contained.

The coffin had originally been enclosed in wood, covered with velvet, a small portion only of which was apparent, near the bottom at the left side, which was not the case with those of a later date, where the initials were very distinct, and the lead more perfect and fresher in appearance.—The register stated, that Hampden was interred on the 25th day of June, 1643, an old document, still in existence, gives a curious and full account of the grand procession on the occasion; we were, therefore, pretty confident, that this must be the one in question, having carefully examined all the others in succession.

It was lying under the western window, near the tablet erected by him, when living, to the memory of his beloved wife, whose virtues he extols in the most affectionate language. Without positive proof, it was reasonable to suppose that he would be interred near his adored partner, and this being found at her feet, it was unanimously agreed that the lid should be cut open to ascertain the fact, which proved afterwards that we were not mistaken.

The parish plumber descended, and commenced cutting across the coffin, then longitudinally, until the whole was sufficiently loosened to roll back, in order to lift off the wooden lid beneath, which was found in such good preservation, that it came off nearly entire. Beneath this was another lid of the same material, which was raised without materially giving way.

The coffin had originally been filled up with saw-dust, which was found undisturbed, except the centre, where the abdomen had fallen in. The saw-dust was then removed, and the process of examination commenced. Silence reigned. Not a whisper or breath was heard. Each stood on the tip-toe of expectation, awaiting the result as to what appearance the face would present when divested of its covering.

Lord Nugent descended into the grave, and first removed the outer cloth, which was firmly wrapped round the body—then the second, and a third—such care having been extended to preserve the body from the worm of corruption.

Here a very singular scene presented itself. No regular features were apparent, although the face retained a death-like whiteness, and sheathed the various windings of the blood vessels beneath the skin. The upper row of teeth were perfect, and those that remained in the under jaw, on being taken out and examined, were quite sound.

A little beard remained on the lower part of the chin, and the whiskers were strong, and somewhat lighter than his hair which was a full auburn brown. The upper part of the bridge of the nose still remained elevated, the remainder had given way to the pressure of the cloths, which had been firmly bound round the head. The eyes were but slightly sunk in, and were covered with the same white film which characterized the general appearance of the face.

Finding that a difference of opinion existed as to the indentation in the left shoulder, were it was supposed he had been wounded, it was unanimously agreed upon to raise up the coffin altogether, and place it in the centre of the church where a more accurate examination might take place.

The coffin was extremely heavy, but by elevating one end with a crow-bar, two strong ropes were adjusted under either end; and thus drawn up by 12 men in the most careful manner possible.

* The battle of Chalgrave-field was fought on the 18th of June, 1643. Hampden died on the 24th, and was buried on the 25th, as stated in the parish register. Sir W. Dugdale mentions several instances where persons of rank were interred the day after their decease.

Being placed on a trestle, the first operation was to examine the arms, which nearly retained their original size, and presented a very muscular appearance.

On lifting up the right arm, we found that it was dispossessed of its hand. We might therefore naturally conjecture that it had been amputated, as the bone presented a perfectly flat appearance, as if sawn off by some sharp instrument. On searching under the clothes, to our no small astonishment, we found the hand or rather a number of small bones enclosed in a separate cloth.

For about six inches up the arm the flesh had wasted away, being evidently smaller than the lower part of the left arm, to which the hand was very firmly united, and which presented no symptoms of decay further than the two bones of the fore finger loose. Even the nails remained entire, of which we saw no appearance in the cloth containing the remains of the right hand.

At this process of the investigation, we were perfectly satisfied that, independently of the result of any further examination, such a striking coincidence as the loss of the right hand would justify our belief in Sir Robert Pye's statement to the Harleys, that his presentation pistol was the innocent cause of a wound which afterwards proved mortal. It was, however, possible, that at the same moment, in the heat of the action at Chalgrave, when Colonel Hampden discharged his pistol at his adversary, that his adversary's ball might wound him in the shoulder; for he was soon afterwards observed, as stated by Sir Philip Warwick, "with his head hanging down, and his hands leaning on his horse's neck."

In order to corroborate or disprove the different statements relative to his having been wounded in the shoulder, a close examination of each took place.

The clavicle of the right shoulder was firmly united to the scapula, nor did there appear any contusion or indentation that evinced symptoms of any wound ever having been inflicted. The left shoulder on the contrary, was smaller and sunken in, as if the clavicle had been displaced. To remove all doubts, it was adjudged necessary to remove the arms, which were amputated with a penknife.

The socket of the left arm was perfectly white and healthy, and the clavicle firmly united to the scapula, nor was there the least appearance of contusion or wound.

The socket of the right shoulder, on the contrary, was of a brownish cast, and the clavicle being found quite loose and disunited from the scapula, proved that dislocation had taken place. The bones, however, were quite perfect. Such dislocation, therefore, must have arisen, either from the force of a ball or from Colonel Hampden having fallen from his horse, when he lost the power of holding the reins by reason of his hand being so dreadfully shattered. The latter in all probability was the case, as it would be barely possible for a ball to pass through the shoulder without some fracture either of the clavicle or the scapula.

In order to examine the head and hair, the body was raised up and supported with a shovel; on removing the cloths which adhered perfectly to the back of the head, we found the hair in a complete state of preservation. It was a dark auburn colour, and according to the custom of the times was very long—from five to six inches. It was drawn up and tied round at the top of the head with black thread or silk. The ends had the appearance of having been cut off. On taking hold of the top-knot, it soon gave way, and came off like a wig.

Here a singular scene presented itself. The worm of corruption was busily employed, the skull in some places being perfectly bare, whilst in others the skin remained nearly entire, upon which we discovered a number of maggots and small red worms on the feed with great activity. This was the only spot where any symptoms of life was apparent; as if the brain contained a vital principle within it, which engendered its own destruction; otherwise, how can we account, after a lapse of near two centuries, finding living creatures preying upon the seat of intellect, when they were no where else to be found, in no other part of the body. He was five feet nine inches in height, apparently of great muscular strength, of a vigorous and robust frame; forehead broad and high; the skull altogether well formed, such an one as the imagination would conceive capable of great exploits.

Here I close the narrative—one of singular interest to those who were eye witnesses of the examination, which presented a scene so novel, so ghastly, but at the same time so full of moment, that it will ever prove a memorable event in the short era of our lives. We recalled to mind the virtuous actions of the deceased; his manly defence against the tyranny of the Star Chamber, his abandonment of every social and domestic tie for the glorious cause of freedom; and whilst we gazed upon his remains remembered, that that voice which was once raised on behalf of his country had contributed in no small measure to pave the way for the blessings of liberty, which but for his warning, might to this day have been withheld from an enlightened people.

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