



THE ANCIENT CHURCHYARD YEW

The following lines have been inspired by a visit to the churchyard and contemplation of the famous old yew, under whose spreading branches so many Corsham residents have passed to their last resting place. They are written by Mr. C. Johnson, brother-in-law of Mr. H. Hulbert, of High Street. They appeared in the Liverpool "Weekly Mercury," on August 7th:-

IN A WILTSHIRE CHURCHYARD.

While fancy is free and distractions are few,
Why not rest here and muse 'neath this spreading yew,
Whose branches ward off either sunbeam or shower,
While drooping to form a most wonderful bower?

For ages this tree has stood faithful and fast,
While the centuries slowly and grandly marched past,
Whilst whole generations have lived their brief day,
Strolled oft through this graveyard, then come here to stay!

Look round at these tombstones – Old Time has decreed,
That what man once engraved man no longer may read!
They crumble to dust, like the pilgrims who sleep
Beneath this old tree, and no mourners now weep!

The earth still rolls on, and the verdant old tree,
All rustle and sway in the murmuring breeze,
And the flowers still bloom, and the meadows are green,
And the sun still shines down on a beautiful scene!

Poor man, only man, saith the poet, is vile,
Which tempts man to wonder if living's worth while –
To linger and love an uncertain brief spell,
Then end with a dirge and a funeral bell!

Old yew tree, 'tis said, may incline one to slumber,
And musings like these the mind but encumber;
Still how would this shady old God's Acre seem
Should I drop off to sleep and fall into a dream!

Strange that eyelids grow heavy, droop, shut out view,
Till nothing remains but that darkening old yew,
That a curtain rolls up and discovers life's stage,

Over which man has strutted from youth into age!

See, on comes an actor, who, looking severe,
Asks, "Friend may I ask why you're lingering here?
Just having a sleep on a sweltering day?
Well, we only take sleepers who promise to stay!"

I awoke, and the sound of the old church chimes
Proved I wasn't dead, could still move with the times!
I moved! And if ever "grave" thoughts you'd pursue,
Go and rest you awhile 'neath that somber old yew!

C. Johnson

Corsham, August 1915

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