

THE
TOMBS OF ENGLISH ARTISTS.

No. 2.—R. J. WYATT.

THE Germans have a loving designation for the burial-grounds of their own land,—they term each of them "God's-acre;" indicating the small spot sacred to heaven, and holding all they loved on earth. It is not gloomy to this affectionate people to contemplate the last resting-place of friends, where they desire to rest also, and where they plant shrubs and fresh flowers to record a love that death has no power to extinguish. With somewhat similar feeling of relationship with the dead an Englishman treads the burial-ground sacred to Protestants at Rome. The departed were your own people,—men who thought and pondered as you now do in this "Niobe of nations,"—men whose poetic inspirations may have warmed your heart in your English home, and induced your visit to this classic ground,—men whose Art-works will also live and vindicate the somewhat despised taste of the northern races from the full condemnation of their southern brethren. Many and varied will be the feelings with which these gravestones will be read, and much solemn and holy thought be elicited in a lonely walk among them.

There is a native grandeur in this locality that cannot fail to impress its poetry on every visitor blest with an appreciation of the solemnly beautiful. The thoughts that arise here are ably expressed by the poet Rogers. He says:—"When I am inclined to be serious, I love to wander up and down before the tomb of Caius Cestius. The Protestant burial-ground is there; and most of the little monuments are erected to the young: young men of promise, cut off when on their travels, full of enthusiasm, full of enjoyment; brides in the bloom of their beauty, on their first journey; or children borne from home in search of health. This stone was placed by his fellow-travellers, young as himself, who will return to the house of his parents without him; that, by a husband or a father, now in his native country—his heart is buried in that grave."

"It is a quiet and sheltered nook, covered in the winter with violets; and the pyramid that overshadows it gives it a classical and singularly solemn air. You feel an interest there, a sympathy you were not prepared for. You are yourself in a foreign land, and they are for the most part your countrymen. They call upon you in your mother tongue—in English—in words unknown to a native, known only to yourselves: and the tomb of Cestius, that old majestic pile, has this also in common with them,—it is itself a stranger among strangers; it has stood there till the language spoken round about it has changed; and the shepherd, born at the foot, can read its inscription no longer."

The pyramidal sepulchre of Caius Cestius is the only monument of that form in Rome. It is believed to be of the age of Augustus, and may commemorate the person named by Cicero in his oration for Flaccus. We know from the inscription cut upon its face that he was a Tribune, and one of the seven *Epulones*—an office of high sacerdotal dignity.

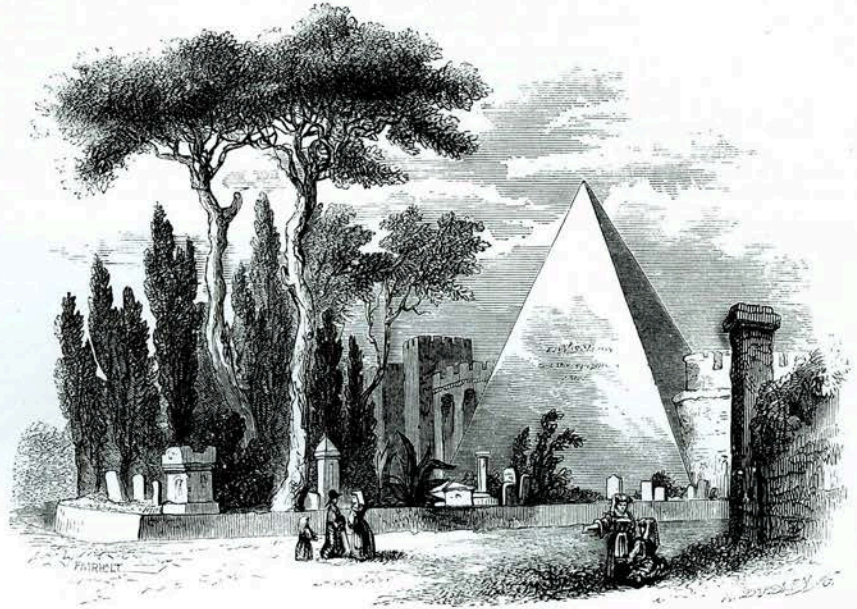
The old cemetery, represented in our largest cut, had become too small for its uses some years since, and an additional piece of ground has been granted beside it. At present it has a sunken dry ditch all round it; the new one is walled, and the corner of that wall is seen on the right of our view. It is in this new cemetery that Wyatt lies. He died at Rome, in May, 1850, at the age of fifty-five—suddenly, in the midst of his Art-labours, with no note of illness, for he was apparently well until his servant found him struggling with death when she entered his bedroom in the morning. Thus was snatched from amid his fellow-artists one who was an ornament to his profession, and a man of whom his country might be proud, for he was a gentleman, in every sense of the word, and his devotion to Art was earnest and high-minded. It is pleasant to record the love his fellows bore towards him, and to see that the simple and graceful stone which marks his last resting-place is erected there by his countryman, friend, and fellow-sculptor in Rome—John Gibson. Surely there is a mystic bond of brotherhood in all great minds, and Art should hallow and strengthen it.

Wyatt's career was more than usually retired.

he laboured incessantly on his works, and allowed nothing to interfere with his continuous devotion to Art, for which alone he seemed to live. Rome was the home of his adoption; the Italian sculptor Rossi was his instructor; Canova was the artist who first invited him to "the Eternal City," giving the young sculptor the offer of a place in his studio, together with the benefit of his advice and assistance. Thither Wyatt travelled in 1821, and never revisited England except for a few months in 1841;

for thirty years did he assiduously labour in Rome, rising before day had dawned, and working after lamp-light. He was an unmarried man, and his devotion to Art was complete: in fact, he appears to have felt no other pleasure than in the employment which has made his name and memory famous.

Let us not depart from this small and sacred enclosure without a visit to two other graves of great and well-beloved Englishmen. Records connected with two great poetic names may be seen



THE PROTESTANT CEMETERY, ROME.

close to the old Roman defences of the city. On the sloping bank is a plain heavy slab; the simple inscription upon it was placed there by Byron; all that remains of Shelley lies beneath. His body was burnt in the Gulf of Spezzia, near which he was drowned; the burning was conducted after the manner of the ancients; the body was consumed, but the heart was found entire, and with the ashes was placed beneath this stone. Two words only record the fact,—*Cor cordium*—"The heart of

hearts"—follows the simple name of Percy Bysshe Shelley, with the dates of his birth and death, and Shakspeare's fine lines:—

"Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea change
Into something rich and strange."

It is in front of the tree in our cut; that on the other side of the tree commemorates the grave of his daughter. In the old cemetery is a still more melancholy memorial of genius "done to death by



TOMB OF SHELLEY.

slandrous tongues;" it is the gravestone of John Keats, thus inscribed:—"This grave contains all that was mortal of a young English poet, who, on his death-bed, in the bitterness of his heart at the malicious power of his enemies, desired these words to be engraved on his tombstone—'Here lies one whose name was writ in water.'" The harsh and inhuman character of the comments on this unfortunate son of the Muses undoubtedly hastened his death, and can only be excused by minds as coarsely



TOMB OF KEATS.

unfeeling; for no rightly constituted judgment can reflect with anything but sorrow and shame at the brutality which squeezed the bitterest gall of criticism in the dying cup of sorrow fate proffered to this unfortunate young man. Surely the poetic mind, clouded by no other sin than errors of judgment, should deserve better treatment than is awarded to a criminal at the bar. There is but slight difference between that reviewer's pen and the assassin's dagger.

F. W. FAIRHOLT.