

AN UNDERTAKER'S STORY.

Fifty Thousand Burials in Fifty Years—How he Learned the Business.

Burial of Zac Taylor, Gen. Harrison, J. Q. Adams, and Other Prominent Men.

Changes in Funeral Fashions.

Philadelphia Times. "Yes," said William Hill Moore, settling himself back with his more hoary head against the cushion of an easy chair and crossing his legs, now somewhat attenuated with age, "yes," said he, "I believe I am the oldest living undertaker. I've been active in the business over fifty years. I began in an alley, but I was not above my business, and I gave my whole time to it, and, of course, the business grew, and I made lots of money. There are a hundred undertakers who have started since, but I was the first one to keep ready-made coffins on hand in Philadelphia and supply funerals as a business, and, so far as I know, it had not been done anywhere else at that time. That was in 1826. I learned the business during the cholera of 1817-20 with a man who buried the dead for the prisons and coroners and that like, and there's no telling the many one in those days that went in the ditch who'd never died at all."

"Why, William," said a little, thin, nervous lady in the room, "you don't mean they were buried alive? Ugh! It makes my flesh creep."

"Yes, Martha, that's it exactly. No telling how many. A good old Quaker friend of mine, buried in 1817, after that, he had everything very plain, I remember, and no handles on the coffin—said to me once, 'William,' said he, 'is there sure that all these buried with the cholera were dead when they put them in the ground?' Said I: 'I never thought whether they were dead or not; I just buried them as fast as I could.'"

"Well, I never forgot the remark. When I fixed up a place for myself on Fifth street—I forget the builder's name now, but I buried all his family, and a large family it was, too—I had two rooms where I used to do embalming and keep bodies, until some one would come to pay for them, but I made up my mind that I'd never bury any of these or anybody else until I was sure they weren't alive. But it's easy to tell. With such as die from apoplexy and sudden like that, it's actually so—here the jolly old undertaker laughed a broad, hearty laugh—"It actually seems they'd decomposed before they died. Ha! ha! ha! Its remarkable how plain the signs of decomposition become to the practiced eye. Why, Sir, I can tell a dead body as quick as that—and no snapped his long fingers in front of his shrewd gray eyes—"but we always put off moving the body as long as the relatives like, unless it gets very bad, and then we does our duty and moves them off. They always like, you know, to have their little cries, and we lets them have their way. John Swift, who was the mayor that time—we buried him in a double coffin, I remember—didn't like the idea of my keeping the bodies a month at a time, but I didn't mind it the latest, and I soon showed him there was no danger. Why, Sir, the dead are no more to us than the sheets of paper you write on. We never think any more what a person dies than you do of asking the people you meet in the street what disease they have. I've been all through cholera, small-pox, and yellow fever, and never had so much as a sick stomach. Most contagious diseases are caught through fear, but a great deal depends on the way a man lives. No undertaker can touch liquor if he wants to keep free from disease. He has to be strictly temperate. He has to be very careful what he eats, too. Its my experience that if a man is careful what he eats and drinks and keeps his stomach in order he need not be afraid of any contagious disease. I had a friend—buried him, too, by the way—who lived to be 90 just by eating as little as possible."

The gaunt, strange-looking old man at this point let his eyes relax, and from their usual dim, vacant gaze, and, in response to a motion, put the large speaking-trumpet which he balanced on the finger to his ear. All he had said up to this point was suggested by a single question shouted into the ear-trumpet, it now became necessary to start him on another train of reminiscences.

"You buried Gen. Patterson, did you not?" he was asked.

"Yes, but I was scarcely able to get there," he replied. "I've been very sick, but I'm not nearly ready for the undertakers yet. Up to a very little while ago we buried all the Judges and Commodores and Generals, and almost all the great people, it seems to me, but Lincoln—we didn't get him."

The undertaker was unable to repress a heavy sigh at the thought of missing the melancholy pleasure of laying away his truly great man. "There were the obscurities of Zachary Taylor," he resumed; "the hearse cost \$3,000. There were eight gray horses, with black covers, trimmed with white, and the men who walked as leaders wore long white bands on their hats and white gloves. It was a grand sight. There was a single tasseled coat \$45. Then I had the obsequies of Bushrod Washington, and Chief Justice Marshall, and General William Henry Harrison, and John Quincy Adams. You may be sure they were the best that could be had. When the body of Henry Clay passed through the city in 1852 there was a funeral procession, and I had that too, but it was not so much of an affair. Dr. Kane, the Arctic explorer, I buried, and Judge Kane and his wife, I buried them too. 'Old Ironsides'—Commodore Stewart, you know—we put him in Woodlands, and there, besides, there was Commodore Bainbridge, Horace Binney, Commodore Elliott, John Price Wetherill, Commodore Hull, Judge Thompson, and President Edgar Thomson, of the Pennsylvania railroad—I buried them too. We were highly complimented for the way we buried him."

At, my memory is getting poor and I can't think of them all. Funerals are very different to what they used to be. Matters are simplified in the burial, but funerals are more numerous, attended and more expensive. It cost about \$400 to bury a man of any consequence now. The use of ice is comparatively new, and they never used to line coffins with satin. I think Dr. Bedell set the style. He was buried in his robes, and the casket was lined with satin. I don't know where they got the idea from, but after that every one who could afford it wanted satin. We get a great many orders in advance from people about the way they want to be buried, and I have known them to come in and look at the different styles of coffins and pick out the kind they wanted years before they died. We have had the full directions for the funeral on the books in their own handwriting. There is a very wealthy gentleman and his sister who have given us orders for their coffins and funerals. I would like the casket lined with white flannel, the lady said in the last letter, like that one you furnished Mrs. —, which was chaste and elegant; only I would like six handles, and, besides the plate, a little silver cross on the lid. But he said and let me lay in the room until you know I am decomposed, for I'm awfully afraid of being buried alive."

Up to 20 or 30 years ago there were not far away, and people walked, the coffin being carried on the shoulders of two men, and they often carried little babies in coffins under my arm myself. The great cemeteries had not grown up then. Eli K. Price and myself are about the only ones remaining of the starters of Woodlands cemetery. Judge Mallory, who was very interested in it at first—I buried him afterwards—persuaded me to go into it. There are some ten thousand buried in it now, and I think I have had something to do with its success. The number I have buried is something incredible. For many years it averaged 100 a month. Mr. Kellogg, my partner, who has kept track of it, says we have buried over 50,000 in the 50 years.

"Now, my son, whatever you say, be careful and don't wound anybody's feelings. I have always tried to make it pleasant for the mourners. When Mayor Stokley's father, who I afterwards buried, lost a little boy and was speaking of Mrs. Stokley's distress, I recommended the adoption of a little one of the same age, belonging to Mrs. Ward, whom I buried, too, and sure enough they did, and he grew up beside Mayor Stokley and distinguished himself in Mexico until I buried him some years ago? You know a great many commit suicide but nobody knows anything about it but the doctor and the undertaker. Many a one I've buried no one knows but me to this day they had the rope around the neck. I always used to carry a crooked needle to sew up gashes in throats. I found it handy to have around. One day a lady—very rich and elegant she was, and had an A I coffin when she died—showed me her husband who had just cut his throat and said: 'Oh, what shall I do?' 'Do,' said I, as I commenced to sew up the cut and put a clean shirt on him, 'don't tell a living mortal, for it's my experience that if you tell anybody a secret you might as well put it in the newspaper; don't tell a living mortal, and it'll be all right.' And sure enough it was. His own brothers don't know to this day but that he died a natural death."

"Ghosts, did you say? Do undertakers believe in them? Fiddlesticks! But strange things happen. The most curious thing is the horse. It's very common for horses to refuse to pull a dead body. I remember one time one of our best teams had just started off when they stopped, trembled, stuck up their ears, and wouldn't budge one inch further. Coaxing was no use, they wouldn't go. We had to take a team out of a hack and put them in the hearse. It was a little child that time, but another time the same thing happened when we were burying a man and his wife together. With this the conversation closed. The old gentleman drew himself to his fullest height, listened to the words of parting shouted through the ear-trumpet, and bowed his visitor out. With age he has lost none of the urbanity peculiar to him in his sturdiest years. Constant intercourse with grief often assumed has shaken his faith in many things. Half a century of hand-to-hand familiar intercourse with the dead has given him a quaint pensiveness mixed with a strange, grim humor. Careful habits leave him in complete possession of all his faculties except that of hearing. One can still imagine what he was in his best days, when it was said that Billy Moore looked more truly mournful than all the other mourners put together. Among the many stories told about him is this one concerning the cemetery, the name of which was sometimes given to the dead in the appellation of Laurel Hill Moore. After scores of years of constant funeral attendance, it is related, Mr. Moore was called upon to officiate at a wedding of a relative. In his long black coat and longer face, with his hands crossed before, as usual, one holding the melancholy heaver hat, he stood ready to nod for the carriages as soon as the minister finished. One by one the vehicles came up. With slow step and look of resignation Mr. Moore escorted the bride and groom down the steps, and as they sprang in and the driver cracked his whip, the old gentleman, the ruling habit overcoming him at the last moment, clapped the carriage door shut with a bang and shouted, "To Laurel Hill."

Mutual Union Telegraph Company. Special Telegrams to the Press. New York, August 30.—It is understood that a contract has been made between the Mutual Union telegraph company and the Baltimore & Ohio railroad company by which the telegraph system of the railroad company will be controlled, so far as public business is concerned, by the Mutual Union company. Negotiations have been in progress for some time and an agreement has now been completed. The terms of contract have not been made public. It is said that other negotiations which the telegraph company has entered upon might be affected by the publication of the details. It is understood, however, that the Mutual Union will begin the management of

the Baltimore & Ohio telegraph lines Thursday. The Baltimore & Ohio railroad made a similar contract with the American Union Telegraph company, but when that company was united with the Western Union the contract with the Baltimore & Ohio was specially excepted in the articles of consolidation. It has been the policy of the Baltimore & Ohio always to maintain its telegraph system independent of the Western Union, and the contract held by the American Union became worthless by its combination with that company.

A Kentucky Lochinvar. His Thirty-Mile Race for a Fourteen-Year-Old Bride. A gentleman from Allen county, who chanced to be in the city yesterday, tells an interesting story of a romantic runaway match which is now being extensively canvassed in that part of the state. Scottsville, a pretty village situated in the county mentioned, about fifteen miles from the Tennessee line, is the home of some of the most aristocratic people in Kentucky. It is a place noted for pretty girls and gallant young men, and among all these the sweetest belle was Miss Ollie Brown, and the handsomest beau Mr. Joseph Carpenter. They loved each other to desperation. There was the sort of love that always leads to marriage, and months they determined to link their destinies. In this case, as in many others, the only obstacle was parental objection. Miss Brown's mother positively declared that she was not old enough to get married, being only 14, and her sweetheart's entreaties were in vain. The young people made one or two ineffectual efforts at elopement, but they were never once balked in their determination to carry out the scheme in a bold and daring way. On last Thursday young Mr. Carpenter drove in a buggy to the residence of his sweetheart, and once more brought her mother to consent to an early wedding. Mrs. Brown was inexorable, Miss Brown was tearful, and Mr. Carpenter excited. At last, when every prayer had been denied, the young man boldly put the question to his sweetheart: "Will you go with me, or mind your mother and remain at home?" The girl looked up through her tears, first at her mother and then at her lover. "I'll go with you," said she at length. "Then come," and with these words young Carpenter caught his lady love in his arms, and hurrying out of the house, leaped into the buggy that was standing in front of the door. The horse received a smart blow of the whip and jumped away in a dead run. As soon as Mrs. Brown perceived the situation she screamed for assistance at the top of her voice. In a few moments the little town was wild with excitement, but the volume of young people seemed to be with the young streets at terrific rate of speed, taking the road that led to Gallatin, Tenn. The mother whose daughter had been stolen wildly sought somebody to go in pursuit of the fugitives, and, if possible, stop the wedding. At length Mr. Manion, a young lawyer, and judge of the police court, consented, in a few moments he was mounted upon a horse of speed and bottom, rattling out of the town in the direction taken by the buggy at a pace that would have captured the "gentleman's cup" at any fair in the state. From the very start it was a race of whip and spur. The fugitives were evidently making for "Squire Fikes' farm," which is just across the Tennessee line, and Judge Manion was hot upon their trail. It was a chase long to be remembered by the people who witnessed it. In front a horse flecked with foam going at top speed, and drawing a light buggy, in which sat, with resolution upon his face, and a beautiful girl nestled trustfully by his side. Perhaps a mile in the rear, a solitary horseman, applying whip and spur thundering along over the level turnpike. The buggy had the best of the race, and pulled up in front of "Squire Fikes' office fifteen minutes in the lead of the man on horseback. The clever "Squire" promptly adjusted his spectacles and read the marriage license. It was all right, and the ceremony would be performed, as the "Squire" said, and he was on the point of pronouncing the words so feverishly awaited by the young people, when Judge Manion, riding like a professional jockey, bore down upon the party and signaled the officer of the law to stop. "I object to this wedding," he said, flinging himself off his panting horse. "Upon what grounds," asked the Squire. "It is the wish of the lady's mother that she shall not marry. I have come at her bidding."

"You will have to show something in writing," said the Squire to the judge. Judge Manion promptly took his seat at a table and dashed off an affidavit reciting the facts. "Squire Fikes read it, and, much to the discomfiture of the runaway, refused to proceed further with the ceremony. The young people pleaded, but all to no purpose. At length Mr. Carpenter said in very simple language: "We will go further. Get in the buggy, my dear, Judge Manion you may prepare for another race. We are off for Gallatin."

The young man meant exactly what he said, and in a few minutes the race was renewed. The distance to Gallatin was eighteen miles, but the buggy horse was staunch and as true as the love of the young couple he was drawing. He leaped nimbly away from the string, and once more got the best of the start. Judge Manion, nothing daunted, again took the saddle and put the spurs to his faithful courser. For four miles the race was neck and neck, neither entry for the grand prize flagging; but at the finish of that distance the horse under saddle cast a shoe and stumbled to the ground completely exhausted. The buggy then glided unaccompanied to Gallatin. Judge Manion picked himself up, determined to carry out his mission, and walked along the road for three miles, when he procured another horse, this time a sorry plodder, and started out once more on a run. In the meantime, however, our young couple had arrived at Gallatin. A preacher was secured and the wedding

was performed at the principal hotel, in the presence of a dozen specially invited guests. Judge Manion galloped into town on his second best horse just in time to congratulate Mr. and Mrs. Carpenter, which he did with the best grace possible. It will be interesting to the readers of The Courier-Journal in Louisville to know that the bride is the daughter of Mr. Robert L. Brown, formerly a well-known merchant of this city. She is also a cousin by marriage of Gen. Eli H. Murray. She is but 14 years of age.

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