

**“Lines Written In Wilford Churchyard. On Recovery From Sickness”
by Henry Kirke White**

A LITERARY GOTHIC etext.

Here would I wish to sleep. This is the spot
Which I have long marked out to lay my bones in;
Tired out and wearied with the riotous world,
Beneath this yew I would be sepulchred.
It is a lovely spot! The sultry sun,
From his meridian height, endeavours vainly
To pierce the shadowy foliage, while the zephyr
Comes wafting gently o'er the rippling Trent,
And plays about my wan cheek. 'Tis a nook
Most pleasant. Such a one perchance did Gray
Frequent, as with a vagrant muse he wantoned.

Come, I will sit me down and meditate,
For I am wearied with my summer's walk;
And here I may repose in silent ease;
And thus, perchance, when life's sad journey's o'er,
My harassed soul, in this same spot, may find
The haven of its rest---beneath this sod
Perchance may sleep it sweetly, sound as death.

I would not have my corpse cemented down
With brick and stone, defrauding the poor earthworm
Of its predestined dues; no, I would lie
Beneath a little hillock, grass o'ergrown,
Swathed down with osiers, just as sleep the cotters.
Yet may not undistinguished be my grave;
But there at eve may some congenial soul
Duly resort, and shed a pious tear,
The good man's benison---no more I ask.
And, oh! (if heavenly beings may look down
From where, with cherubim, inspired they sit,
Upon this little dim-discovered spot,
The earth,) then will I cast a glance below
On him who thus my ashes shall embalm;
And I will weep too, and will bless the wanderer,
Wishing he may not long be doomed to pine
In this low-thoughted world of darkling woe,
But that, ere long, he reach his kindred skies.

Yet 'twas a silly thought, as if the body,
Mouldering beneath the surface of the earth,
Could taste the sweets of summer scenery,
And feel the freshness of the balmy breeze!
Yet nature speaks within the human bosom,
And, spite of reason, bids it look beyond
His narrow verge of being, and provide

A decent residence for its clayey shell,
Endeared to it by time. And who would lay
His body in the city burial place,
To be thrown up again by some rude sexton,
And yield its narrow house another tenant,
Ere the moist flesh had mingled with the dust,
Ere the tenacious hair had left the scalp,
Exposed to insult lewd, and wantonness?
No, I will lay me in the village ground;
There are the dead respected. The poor hind,
Unlettered as he is, would scorn to invade
The silent resting place of death. I've seen
The labourer, returning from his toil,
Here stay his steps, and call his children round,
And slowly spell the rudely sculptured rhymes,
And, in his rustic manner, moralize.
I've marked with what a silent awe he'd spoken,
With head uncovered, his respectful manner,
And all the honours which he paid the grave,
And thought on cities, where e'en cemeteries,
Bestrewed with all the emblems of mortality,
Are not protected from the drunken insolence
Of wassailers profane, and wanton havoc.
Grant, Heaven, that here my pilgrimage may close!
Yet, if this be denied, where'er my bones
May lie---or in the city's crowded bounds,
Or scattered wide o'er the huge sweep of waters,
Or left a prey on some deserted shore
To the rapacious cormorant,---yet still,
(For why should sober reason cast away
A thought which soothes the soul?) yet still my spirit
Shall wing its way to these my native regions,
And hover o'er this spot. Oh, then I'll think
Of times when I was seated 'neath this yew
In solemn rumination; and will smile
With joy that I have got my longed release.