

ST. DAVID'S CEMETERY.

IT THROWS LIGHT ON EARLY HISTORY.

THE FIRST CHURCH.

BURIAL PLACE OF GOVERNOR COLLINS.

(By J. Moore-Robinson, F.R.G.S.)

The cemetery of old St. David's, Hobart, is yielding its century-old secrets. Bravely has it held the romances of the settlement days in Van Diemen's Land, but now yielding to modern requirements, and in the course of changing from a cemetery to a recreation ground a veritable harvest of romance is being gathered.

Chief among those lying in this old-time "God's Acre" is David Collins. Around the story of Collins a fabric of uncertainty has been woven. This is due in part to the loss of early records, in part to the fact that Collins was not one of the great men of history, and in part to a chronological error made by no less an authority than Sir John Franklin. It is a curious fact that the date of Collins's death is wrongly inscribed on his tomb. Epitaphs are proverbially unreliable, but dates on cenotaphs are usually correct. Then, again, historians have juggled with the facts. It has been said severally that Collins was not buried in the cemetery, but under the altar of the Cathedral; that his remains had been removed, that one of the early doctors—sometimes Hopley and sometimes Bowden—was buried in the same vault. In all of these has rumour proved to be the lying jade of repute.

An examination of the ground in the vicinity of Collins's tomb has resulted in several interesting revelations. To begin with, Tasmania's first Governor was not buried under the tomb, but some distance from it. Again, his vault was unusually large and deep. Again, the vault lies at an angle compared with the modern cenotaph. This is interesting, because it indicates that the vault was constructed while the old burying ground was still "in the bush," while when Franklin erected the tomb in 1837 its alignment conformed to the boundaries of the cemetery. The vault lies east and west, the tomb faces the S.E. The vault was over 8ft. deep and 9ft. long, and over 4ft. wide. It was constructed of bricks—bricks typical of the first decade of the 19th century, bricks long and wide and very flat. I have observed similar bricks at the first settlement at George Town, and probably both came from the same place. The vault was strongly arched, and the original entrance was from the western end. When 57 years later Franklin, with native generosity, erected the handsome monument, he probably decided that, owing to its great weight, it should be built on solid ground at the western end of the vault, and in order to guard the remains he laid a massive block of freestone over the vault. This is a beautiful piece of stone, 10ft. long, 4½ft. wide, and over a foot thick. It is said to weigh three tons. Franklin opened a new entrance to the vault at the eastern end, and chiselled on the freestone slab: "The Entrance to Governor Collins's Vault." A recent ex-

amination of the vault indicated the fact that Collins has rested in solitude. There is no sign of the presence at any time of another interment. This effectually disposes of the story of one of the doctors having been buried with Collins.

ERROR ON THE TOMBSTONE.

In his generous labours Franklin committed an error. Either he was careless or misinformed. For 88 years the great monument he erected has blazoned to the world the statement that Collins died on March 28, 1810. It is curious that such an error could have been possible. As a fact, that was the day of the funeral. Collins died at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 24, 1810, and was buried on the following Saturday, the 28th. Adopting a suggestion the Tasmanian Diocesan Council has agreed to alter the date. At the same meeting Dr. Crouch moved, and Mr. Dennis Butler seconded, a resolution, which permits the Council to cause an additional slab to be attached to Collins's tomb. The inscription on this slab will set out that it is erected on the site of the first church building erected in Tasmania. And thereby hangs the tale, because later historians, believing that Collins was buried under the altar of the first church, and believing also that "old St. David's" Church and not this temporary wooden building was "the first church" have in imagination shifted Collins to where old St. David's Church stood. This curious theory received support from the remarkable fact that under the altar of old St. David's Church a vault-like structure was prepared and was the subject of much curiosity when the building was pulled down in 1874, and no man knoweth the why and the wherefore. When Collins died the officers of the establishment were sorry. With a tardy recognition of the fitness of things they erected a temporary wooden structure over his vault, and used it for divine service. It was completed in 1810, but was what a modern would call "jerry built." In it that crusted old Divine, the Rev. Robert Knopwood, preached, telling his congregation, as T. G. Gregson avowed, to "do as I say but not as I do." The building was only about 30 feet by 15 feet, and in 1812 was blown down by a winter tempest. Its woodwork was despoiled and the burial place of Collins uncovered. To quote Tasmania's veteran historian, the Rev. John West, "Thus the first Governor's burial place was laid bare to the careless tread of strangers." And so it remained until, as aforesaid, Sir John Franklin reared the present monument in 1837.

THE BURIAL OF COLLINS.

It is not difficult to visualise the burial of Governor David Collins, R.N., 115 years ago, March 28, 1810. The details are set out in that curious weekly newspaper intitled "The Derwent Star and Van Dieman's Land Intelligencer." This remarkable publication, the first newspaper of Van Dieman's Land, had only about 12 issues. It appeared once a week and cost 2s. per copy. It was about the size of a double sheet of notepaper, and its news items varied with the fickle fancies of its editor, reputed to have been the Police Magistrate and Mineralogist, Mr. A. W. Humphreys. In the issue, No. 7 of Tuesday, April 3, 1810, this venerable newspaper details the sad event. With the faithfulness of a modern moving picture director the "Intelligencer" mapped

faithfulness of a modern moving picture director the "Intelligencer" mapped out the funeral proceedings. A diagram indicated the position of the late Governor, the chief mourners, the nutes, the officers and the settlers. So faithful a story needs no embellishment and though only three copies of this issue are extant it may still be inspected by those sufficiently interested. To it Collins's successor, Edward Lord, Senior Lieutenant of Marines, contributed an eloquent panegyric. He lauded the virtues of the late Governor and with remarkable lack of literary invention shamefully plagiarised the American who wrote of George Washington, calling Collins "the father of his people." At the same time Lord authorised curious public expenditures for the funeral including black silk hat bands for the nutes and military, white cotton stockings for the ladies, black arm bands for the officers, and other items which were utterly disallowed later on by the supreme Governor at Sydney.

The cortege was slow, long and impressive. There was the rolling of the military drums as the sad procession wended its way through pristine bush. The military were properly pipe-clayed and brushed. The Rev. Robert Knopwood, in full canonicals occupied his allotted place and in sonorous voice solemnly committed the remains of Collins to the safe keeping of mother earth. The beautiful words of the unchanging liturgy must have seemed solemnity itself. "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes." Thus were committed the remains of David Collins, which were enclosed in a Huon pine shell. This was placed in a leaden coffin, which in turn was placed in a Huon pine casket. The coffin was lowered into the vault, bricklayers sealed the entrance, and Collins lay at rest.

THE PERSONALITY OF COLLINS.

He was no great figure and his abilities and disabilities have been limned by various historians, including Professor Ernest Scott. None can claim for him the wisdom of a great consul. Contrary to evidence he officially stated that what is now Victoria was a waste and unfit for human habitation.

A man of medium height, of slight build, he reached only, I believe, the altitude of a petty tyrant. He stood by while one of his soldiers received 700 lashes, and he flogged women at the cart's tail through the settlement. Although his orders reeked with pious sentiment, in his six years of settlement at Hobart, he failed to erect one

the Imperial authorities is true. Yet while he fills an important niche in the interesting history of Australian settlement he fills it somewhat ungraciously. Still, peace be to his ashes, for I am glad that an investigation of his last resting place has enabled us to set at rest, I trust for ever, some disquieting uncertainties which have wreathed his story.

place of worship. It is true that in this he erred in goodly company, for many years elapsed after settlement before Sydney had a church. The Port Phillip settlement established by Ratman, Falkner, Wedge and others was well established before a place of worship was thought of. Still Collins might have done better. He attempted no lay-out of Hobart which at the time of his death was a chaotic collection of dwellings. That he was shamefully neglected by the Imperial authorities is true. Yet while he fills an important niche in the