

**MR. WARBURTON'S ANATOMY BILL,
THOUGHTS ON ITS MISCHIEVOUS
TENDENCY; WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR AN
ENTIRELY NEW ONE, FOUNDED UPON
AN AVAILABLE ANTI-SEPTIC PROCESS**

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Mr. Warburton's Anatomy Bill, Thoughts on Its Mischievous Tendency; With Suggestions for an Entirely New One, Founded upon an Available Anti-Septic Process by William Roberts

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WILLIAM ROBERTS

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THOUGHTS ON ITS MISCHIEVOUS TENDENCY ; WITH

SUGGESTIONS FOR AN ENTIRELY NEW ONE,

FOUNDED UPON AN AVAILABLE

ANTI-SEPTIC PROCESS,

IN AN APPEAL TO MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS, STUDENTS OF ANATOMY,
AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE, ON THE INJURY TO MEDICAL SCIENCE AND
THE HINDERANCES TO THE DECENT INTERMENT OF UNCLAIMED PAU-
PER BODIES NOW DELIVERED UP FOR ANATOMICAL "EXHIBITION,"
CONSEQUENT UPON THE REJECTION OF SUCH A PROCESS.



BY WILLIAM ROBERTS.

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APPEAL TO MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS, &c.

The Study of Anatomy is so connected with the Healing Art, that it is hardly possible to over-rate its importance. The Medical Practitioner, or Student, who has not paid minute attention to this department of knowledge, can never be qualified for the higher walks of his profession; and no Medical School, can be in a proper state of efficiency, which does not furnish ample means for prosecuting this particular branch of science.

But important as is the Study of Anatomy to the Medical Profession, the public have a still deeper, though less immediate interest in its due cultivation, along with that of every other branch, because the public, after all, are the chief gainers or sufferers by skilful or unskilful practice.

In any country the science of Anatomy would be exceedingly valuable; but in one where things are in so artificial a state as here, where manufactures, mining operations, and the use of machinery, dangerous to life and limb, are carried to an unprecedented extent; a knowledge of Anatomy can hardly be too widely diffused. Accidents of all kinds, including some of the most serious and perplexing character, are hourly happening in obscure parts of the country, at a distance from Hospital Surgeons; and where the ordinary country practitioners are, of necessity, called in to do their best, whatever be the amount or the deficiency of their attainments.

But though the public are so deeply concerned that the study of Human Anatomy should be extensively prosecuted, the feelings of our nature are apt to revolt at the means which

are necessary for this end. These, which may be called instinctive feelings, are implanted in us for wise reasons; and are shared by all classes of society. If it be urged that there are instances of persons in the middle and higher ranks, who get the better of these feelings,—*prejudices* as some might be disposed to call them—and calmly contemplate the case of their remains, after death, being submitted to the dissecting knife, it is to be borne in mind that this is not consented to for the public advantage, but with a view to the satisfaction and information of surviving relatives; and that the examination is generally limited to ascertaining the cause of death, and seldom, if ever, occupies more than a few hours. The same is true of those cases where, in the same classes of society, consent is given by near relatives to the opening of the body of some member of their family. In these cases, the body submitted to Anatomical Examination, remains on the same premises where it was first laid out—whoever may be the operator, the chosen medical attendant of the deceased is uniformly present; all is done in privacy, and with the strictest decorum, and the rites of Christian burial are in no respect violated, and seldom postponed more than a day or two in consequence.

To dissection, consent is occasionally given, in particular cases, in the middle and higher classes of society; but to such exposure and treatment of bodies, as is usual, after death, in Schools of Anatomy, not one individual in 10,000 in those walks of life, would consent, either in reference to his own remains after death, or those of any relative for whom he had ever entertained the slightest regard.

The poorer classes of society are as unwilling as the rich that their remains should be entrusted to the Schools of Anatomy: if this had not been the case, that race of men called “resurrectionists,” would never have carried on the profitable trade they did previously to the passing of the Anatomy Act.

The objection, we have said, is natural to us all; high and low, rich and poor. That it was the bounden duty of the Legislature to take means to remedy the scandalous state of things, which existed before the passing of the Anatomy Act, no reasonable man would think of denying: but what is done, should be done upon just and equitable principles, and the interest, feelings, and even prejudices of the *poor* as well as the *rich*, should be regarded. He who is clothed in purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day; and he who pines in poverty, and it may be has but rags to cover him, are equally entitled, in the sight of God and man, to be considered in this matter.

The jealousy that subsisted between the public and private Schools of Anatomy, before the passing of Mr. WARBURTON'S Act, had raised the price of bodies to an extravagant height; the private Schools struggling for existence, and the public ones aiming at monopoly, the old established rates were no longer any rule; and at length the cupidity of the purloiners of dead bodies, was so stimulated by this eagerness and rivalry on the part of the receivers, that the most extravagant demands were made and acceded to.

This state of things was highly dangerous. It was believed to have led to murder; and undoubtedly, the temptation had become so great, that it was likely to lead to it. The preamble of Mr. WARBURTON'S Act affirms, that to supply human bodies for the purpose of Anatomical Examination, divers great and grievous crimes had been committed, and "lately murder, for the single object of selling, for such purpose, the bodies of the persons so murdered."

The public mind became alarmed in consequence; and advantage was taken of that alarm, to bring forward the Anatomy Bill of 1832, than which a more hypocritical, partial, or deceptive Bill, never was concocted.

Disgusting and alarming as were the means by which the Schools of Anatomy were supplied at that time, it is a point not to be lost sight of, that all classes of the community had their share of the annoyance; all were liable to be reached by it. But by the Bill of 1832, the upper and middle classes of society were protected, while the poor alone were left exposed, in the event of destitution or death, to be delivered up to the Anatomical Schools.

The Bill of 1832 is drawn with consummate art. One of its main objects was to *victimise* a certain class, and it accomplishes its purpose without naming that class. The intention of those who drew it up, was—to the utmost extent possible—to lay their hands upon the bodies of those, who might be driven by penury, disease, or accident, into our Poor-Houses, hospitals and infirmaries. But in no one of its one-and-twenty clauses, is there any mention made of those establishments.

Again, the Anatomy Bill of 1832 is so cautiously worded, that no other terms than “anatomical *examination*” are used to express the purpose for which the bodies are delivered over. The words “anatomical *examination*” are studiously repeated, at least, *ten* different times, being in themselves expressive of no more than what may take place in any ordinary *post-mortem* examination.

There was a design in this. The object of the framers of the Bill was, to make the public believe, that *identity* would be preserved; without which, no clauses providing for the interment of bodies, would be worth the parchment upon which they were written. The words “anatomical *examination*” were used to *disguise* instead of express the real intention. The advocates of the Bill knew, that the process in Anatomical Schools is such, that what with sloughing away, and what with being hacked and cut to pieces, there is scarcely a solitary instance where the identity of a body could be proved