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OR,
Literary and Scientific Mirror.

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The Kaleidoscope.

APPROPRIATING DEAD BODIES FOR SURGICAL PURPOSES.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,—I observed in the last *Liverpool Mercury* an account of the disinterment of thirty-three dead bodies; in which it was stated that this occurrence had produced a great sensation in your town, and that popular indignation was much raised in consequence of it.

This account, Sir, has been copied into many of the provincial papers, and, no doubt, will figure in the columns of the London ones; so that popular indignation will not only rage in Liverpool, but throughout the whole empire a cry will be raised against such an atrocious deed, as the disinterment of dead bodies for the purposes of dissection. Strange illusion! that the very cause which can alone retard the stroke of death, should become a theme of disgust and horror, and that, with the characteristic of brawling ignorance, the millions of Britain should wish and strive to retard the advance of a science which arrays itself against disease and pain!

I must confess, Sir, that I did not expect to find the editor of the *Mercury* arraying himself against the resurrectionists. His efforts for the promotion of science have been great, and attended with no small degree of success. How strange then is it for him to raise his voice in aid of popular clamour, and cry down the only process by which the anatomist can obtain subjects, or render his science flourishing!

Having made these preliminary remarks, I shall now, Sir, with your leave, proceed to state a few reasons why the practice of disinterment, for the purposes of dissection, ought to continue, though both the law and the popular voice are against it. I am well aware that, in thus supporting the cause of the resurrectionist, I shall have but few admirers; yet conscious of the justice of my cause, I do not scruple to array myself against prejudices the most unjust and unfounded.

The greatest of all blessings, Sir, is health: without it learning and affluence, wit, beauty, and honour, are but as dust in the balance; and this earth, with all its beauty and all its grandeur, becomes a dreary and appalling desert. If such be the importance of health, ought not that to be cherished which is the foe of the foes of health, and which, when health can no longer war against disease, alone prevents the approach of dissolution? All will answer in the affirmative. But how can this foe to disease be cherished and strengthened? By the practice of anatomy. And how can the practice of anatomy be carried on? By the dissection of dead bodies. Let us pause, and wonder at the folly of those who, in the face of so obvious a truth, would wish to prevent the anatomist from obtaining subjects for the purposes of dissection.

But it may be remarked, that, though the science of anatomy be in itself so important, it ought not to be carried on by the violation of the resting-place of the dead. Assuredly not, if subjects could be obtained by any other means: and if those who urge this argument cannot show these means, they are not warranted in exclaiming against the robbery of the churchyard.

It is strange, Sir, that while popular execration rests

upon the resurrectionist, and while his calling is so odious and abhorrent, he should be the means through which mankind receive great and incalculable benefits. Through the churchyard robber, the interests of a mighty and important science are promoted, the attacks of disease are repelled, and death is oft set at defiance.

There is, generally, Sir, in cases of disinterment, for the purposes of dissection, a great cry about it being revolting to humanity,—against the laws of God,—dreadful to contemplate, &c. This, Sir, is the merest gabble. Answer me this, all ye who shudder at the idea of dissection:—which is the most appalling to contemplate—the worm and corruption feeding on a dead body, or the dissecting knife of the anatomist piercing it? It boots not to the dead whether it remains become a mass of loathsome corruption, or whether, by the means of science, they become subservient to the interests of the living; but to the living it is an object of the greatest importance that every discovery should be made by which their lives could be prolonged. If this argument can be overcome, I shall then join in the universal clamour against the resurrectionist, "but not till then."

I must bring this epistle to a close. In my next I intend to pursue this subject further; and, in the meantime, challenge all the opposition that can be brought forward against me, to answer the first part of my argument. Hoping you will have no objection to insert this, I remain, yours,
EDGAR.

Manchester, Oct. 18, 1826.

The observation of the writer of the foregoing letter, which applies to the editor of the *Mercury*, requires a brief explanation, which we shall here offer. Our correspondent must be aware that many of the articles which appear in a newspaper, and particularly notices of local occurrences, are copied from one paper into another, without being always revised or remodelled by the editor of the paper into which they are transferred. The statement respecting the recent disinterment of thirty-three human bodies was one of this description; and the term miscreant, as applied to those agents who are usually termed resurrection men, thus found its way into the *Mercury*: and it is this circumstance, we presume, to which our correspondent alludes in his observation concerning the editor of the *Mercury*.

In order to put our correspondent in possession of our own opinion upon this subject, we shall here transcribe from the *Mercury* a brief editorial article, which appeared in the 14th vol. of that journal, published May 20, 1825:

RESURRECTION MEN, AND IMPEDIMENTS TO THE PROGRESS OF ANATOMY.

Veneration for the dead is connected with the noblest and sweetest sympathies of our nature; but the promotion of the happiness of the living is a duty from which we can never be exonerated.—*Westminster Review*.

"Although the title we have prefixed to the present article may, for a moment, startle many of our readers, we entreat their attention to what we have to offer upon a matter of the highest importance, and one which must very soon be obtruded upon their notice and that of the legislature. The subject is one of great delicacy, which can,

not be unreservedly discussed without traversing somewhat rudely those feelings which universally prevail amongst civilized and savage communities. We are aware, therefore, that the expression of an opinion, not in unison with the prevailing prejudices on the subject, will render us liable to misrepresentation, and, perhaps, severe animadversion. We have a duty to perform, however, and we have more than once, of late, reproached ourselves for having shrunk from discharging it, out of deference to popular feeling, which, however natural and universal, ought not to be permitted to operate to the serious detriment of science and humanity. It is undeniable, that if human subjects for dissection cannot be had in this country, the progress of anatomy will be seriously impeded, if not altogether arrested. Such is the opposition made in Scotland to the procuring of bodies by the ordinary means; so summary is the vengeance with which the resurrection men are there visited when detected, that unless some legislative means be speedily adopted, the study of anatomy will be altogether discontinued, and the pupils must pursue their medical studies in other countries, where less formidable obstacles to the progress of their pursuits exist."

"The very extraordinary sentence lately passed upon two individuals in this town, who were detected in the act of removing a body, must be fresh in the recollection of our readers; and, while few persons will go the length of openly approving the practice in which they were detected, we have not conversed with a single person who does not think with us, that the punishment is excessive. For our own parts, were we in the habit of deriving profit or instruction from the dissection of subjects obtained by means similar to those for which the persons in question have been doomed to eighteen months' imprisonment, we should have made it a point of honour and of conscience to intercede, through every possible channel, for a remission of such a punishment, and if our efforts proved abortive, we should at least have done every thing in our power to render the period of incarceration as little irksome as possible.

"It is somewhat singular, that while it is admitted that human subjects must be procured for anatomical purposes, the agents who provide such subjects should be regarded with general horror and aversion. As it will not be denied that these men are necessary evils, under the present system, this passage in the Gospel of St. Matthew is literally applicable to their profession, and the odium it entails upon them—"For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." Chap. xviii. verse 7. Their crime, like that of theft amongst the Spartans, does not consist so much in the act itself, as in having suffered themselves to be detected; and the light in which they are regarded, reminds us of one of the many peculiarities which prevailed amongst the Egyptians. It was

"The Medical School at Edinburgh, in fact, is now subsisting entirely on its past reputation, and in the course of a few years it will be entirely at an end, unless the system be changed."—*Westminster Review*, No. III. p. 85.

"The average number of medical students in Edinburgh is 700 each session. For some years past, the difficulty of procuring subjects has been so great, that out of all that number not more than 150 or 200 have ever attempted to dissect; and even these have latterly been so opposed in their endeavours to prosecute their studies, that many of them have left the place in disgust."—*Ibid.* p. 85.

essential in the opinion of that singular people, that the body, after death, should be as long as possible preserved from decay, and the process of embalming was, of course, held in the highest estimation amongst them; and yet the persons who performed this indispensable operation, were, like our modern resurrection men, avoided and reviled. We cannot immediately adduce the precise English authority upon which we state this circumstance, but we find the singular coincidence thus noticed by a French author:—
« Comme ils faisoient dependre le bonheur des morts de la conservation des cadavres, ils avoient un art merveilleux pour les embaumer, de sorte que leurs momies durent encore; cependant, par une contradiction absurde, ceux qui faisoient l'operation, étoient en horreur après avoir touché aux cadavres, et prenoient la fuite. »

“ Before we take leave of the subject, we must not omit to call the particular attention of our readers to an excellent article in the third number of the *Westminster Review*, entitled ‘The Use of the Dead to the Living.’ Nearly forty pages are there devoted to the investigation of this important matter; and many useful hints are given with a view to facilitate the means of obtaining human subjects for anatomical purposes, without having recourse to the present furtive and revolting expedients. We must refer to the work itself for the specification of those plans, merely observing here, that the Reviewers recommend that ‘all unclaimed dead bodies in the charitable institutions, or in the streets, be delivered up to dissection previously to interment, as was the practice in Edinburgh a century ago.’ We shall only say, in conclusion, that we should feel no uneasiness whatever, were we convinced that our own body would, after death, be rendered in any way useful to the living; and we can therefore entirely approve of the suggestion to which we have just alluded, without becoming fairly subject to the imputation of ‘not doing to others as we would they should do unto us.’”

Connected with this subject, the following petition will be perused at this time with more than ordinary interest:—

TO THE HONOURABLE THE COMMONS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.
 The humble Petition of the undersigned Members of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society,

SHOWNETH,

That without an intimate knowledge of the anatomy of the human body, as it appears to your petitioners, the professors of medicine and surgery are unable to afford any reasonable prospect of stopping the progress of disease, or of remedying the accidents to which the human frame is liable.

That such an intimate knowledge of anatomy is only to be acquired by patient, and laborious, and repeated dissections; and the students of anatomy in this country have, generally, been supplied with bodies by the disinterment of the dead.

That, during the last century, it was declared by the Judges to be an offence at the common law to disinter the dead, even for the purpose of dissection, as being contrary to public decency.

That your petitioners unreservedly admit, that the present system of disintering the dead is mischievous and disgusting, and that some other plan should, without delay, be adopted in its stead. It is mischievous, because the employment of men in the night time in the secret breach of the laws is a nursery for crime, as the continued commission of one offence leads men, by degrees, to the disregard of all moral obligation; and it is disgusting, because the invasion of the grave offends against the natural feelings of mankind; but your petitioners humbly submit to your honourable House, that until some means shall be devised for supplying anatomical students with subjects, without recourse being had to exhumation, the practice must, necessarily, prevail.

That of late prosecutions for this offence have been very numerous, and most severe sentences have followed conviction; and, in consequence, the number of dead bodies for dissection have considerably diminished, and the operations of the anatomist have been thereby greatly fettered. They have increased, too, the rapacity of the disintersers of the dead, and have compelled students to leave London and Edinburgh for Dublin and Paris, where the difficulties of acquiring anatomical knowledge are not so great.

That your petitioners beg to suggest, that if the bodies of persons dying in hospitals, workhouses, penitentiaries, and

prisons, not claimed by relations or friends willing to incur the expense of their burial, should, by legislative enactment, be delivered over to anatomists before interment, there would be a sufficient number of bodies for anatomical purposes, and the spoliation of the tomb (which, though so brutalizing, is at present necessary) would cease; and provision might be made, in any enactment, for the decent interment of the remains, after the purposes of the anatomist shall have been satisfied.

That your petitioners are aware, that in the minds of the charitable and the humane fears may be entertained, that the dread of dissection might prevent many poor objects from entering into workhouses or public hospitals, whom indigence or malady might naturally lead to seek such an asylum, but your petitioners are strongly of opinion, that if any such feeling should arise, it would be of short continuance only; for the hospitals at Paris, where a similar practice prevails, are always filled. And your petitioners humbly suggest, that bodies are now generally removed from the graves of poor persons, because of the greater facility of getting them; and that the opening of the dead before interment is less revolting to the mind, than their disinterment for the same purpose.

Your petitioners, therefore, humbly pray, that your honourable House will be pleased to take into consideration the difficulties of acquiring anatomical knowledge in this country under the existing laws; and that your honourable House will be pleased to institute such legislative measures, as may supply the students of anatomy in this country with dead bodies, and may, at the same time, put an end to the revolting practice of disintering the dead.

And your petitioners, &c.

Tales, Romances, &c.

[ORIGINAL]

MONKISH LEGENDS.

NO. I.

THE FATE OF WALDECK.

About the beginning of the thirteenth century, when the powers of the Emperors of Germany were too feeble to control the Princes of the empire, and when each noble who possessed a fortified habitation, and a few barren acres around it, lorded with absolute sway over his vassals, flourished the Baron of Hergswolf. The castle of Hergswolf stood on an eminence on the borders of the Black Forest, and was originally one of the strong-holds which the Emperor Charlemagne erected when he subdued Germany. At the time our story commences, Conrad, the sixth baron of Hergswolf, was its lord, and having by his alliance with the daughter of a neighbouring baron, increased his power and territory, the castle was enlarged and fortified, and rendered one of the strongest in Germany.

At a few miles' distance from the castle stood the monastery of St. Werburgh; it was founded by Rodolph, third baron of Hergswolf, and endowed with a third of his lands. For this munificent grant, the successors of Rodolph cherished a hatred deep and intense against the Abbot and brethren of St. Werburgh, but feeling themselves too weak to brave the thunders of the church, they were constrained to nourish their hatred in silence, though each Baron on his death-bed obliged his successor to swear irreconcilable enmity to the monks of St. Werburgh, and to pause at no means by which they could be exterminated. This hatred Conrad inherited from his father; and having been taught from his earliest years to regard the monks as the robbers of his inheritance, it was with joy he found himself, by his marriage with the daughter of Baron Ernest, able to attack the enjoyers of his rights.

The first step Conrad took was to order his vassals to cease attending the services of the monastery. This produced a remonstrance from Ingulphus, the Abbot; but Conrad replied with insulting taunts. These the Abbot bore in silence, and omitted no opportunity of persuading the vassals to attend the festivals of the church; but awed

by their Lord, the vassals refused to obey. The Abbot, therefore, prepared to thunder forth excommunication against the Baron and his vassals, but before he could accomplish this, Conrad resolved, by one bold stroke, to rid himself for ever of the monks of St. Werburgh, and to annex their lands to his own. For the purpose of the better accomplishment of his designs, Conrad had entered into treaty with a band of Free Companions, mercenaries, who sold their services to the highest bidder, and who, living a lawless life, cared neither for the Church nor the Emperor. The leader of this band, Martin Waldeck, readily undertook for a stipulated sum, to attack the monastery and murder the monks, so that no intelligence of the outrage might reach the Pope, the only power able to avenge it. For this purpose he assembled his band, and proceeded to the monastery; but the monks having received notice of his approach, closed the gates, and from the lattice of the church excommunicated the Baron of Hergswolf, his vassals, and retainers. Baffled in his project, Waldeck returned to the castle, and informed the Baron of the ill success of his expedition; nothing could exceed the dismay of Conrad, at the disastrous tidings. “Waldeck (said he) these monks must be exterminated; bound by the sacred oath I made my father on his dying bed, I must, now I am able to brave the Emperor, destroy them.” “Baron of Hergswolf (returned Waldeck) that task be mine; by hell I swear, though fiends receive my soul the next moment, I will root up the monks and destroy their habitation.” “But the means? the means?” good Waldeck (replied the Baron.) “Ere this the Abbot will have despatched a courier to Rome, and the Pope will command every noble of the empire to war against me.” “This emissary must be stopped, (said Waldeck;) the road to Italy passes near the castle; I will watch the courier's approach, and rid you of any fear on his account; this done, soon shall the monastery become the grave of its inmates.” Saying this, Waldeck quitted the apartment, and soon after left the castle.

The shades of night drew on, as Waldeck sallied from the castle (for he calculated, and truly so, that the monks would not send their emissary until night would enable him to proceed unobserved.) It was a calm and beautiful summer evening; the moon shed a halo of light over streams, and fields, and waving trees; the stars of heaven beamed brightly from their thrones; not a breath of air disturbed the deep repose of even, and no sound broke on Waldeck's ear, save the trampling of his horses; but wholly absorbed in anticipation of vengeance, he heeded not the calm beauties of the night, and rode on in gloomy silence. When Waldeck arrived at the place which the emissary must pass, he dismounted from his horse, and patiently awaited the coming of his victim. Some hours elapsed and no person appeared; but Waldeck kept at his post. The moon now shone with redoubled lustre, and tinged with a silvery brightness the boughs which overhung his path; a soft wind sighed gently through the forest; and it seemed, as if borne by the breeze, a voice came, which said, “Waldeck, forbear!” but the Free Companion was unmoved. “Though hell be my portion (said he) I will fulfil my promise.” All again was silent; the moon's rays were withdrawn, though no cloud overshadowed her, and a hoarse murmur sounded through the forest, “Thy doom is sealed!” but the undaunted man continued at his post undisunayed. At length he heard the trampling of a horse, and soon perceived a monk of the monastery of St. Werburgh approaching; in fact, it was the Abbot himself, who was proceeding to Rome, as well on account of the outrage his monastery had sustained, as to perform a pilgrimage he had long meditated. Ingulphus took this rash step, foolishly imagining that the excommunication he had fulminated against the Baron would effectually protect the monastery from all danger.

When the Abbot approached, Waldeck sprang forward, and seizing him by the waist, cast him to the ground. The unfortunate Ingulphus, when he beheld the ruthless assassin ready to plunge a dagger into his bosom, exclaimed,