

CHAPTER II.

AS has been stated in the previous chapter, there was no need of the resurrection-men, so long as the teaching of anatomy was confined to the Company of Barbers and Surgeons. It has also been pointed out that, as late as 1714, Cheselden was reprimanded for having anatomical demonstrations at his private house. Soon after this date, however, began the establishment of private schools. Mr. Nourse, of St. Bartholomew's, was one of the first to deliver public lectures at his own house. After a time this probably became inconvenient, as we find his advertisement, in 1739, worded thus :

" ANATOMY.

" Designing to have no more lectures at my own house, I think it proper to advertise that I shall begin a Course of Anatomy, Chirurgical Operations and Bandages on Monday, the 11th of Nov., at St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

" EDW. NOURSE, Assistant Surgeon
and Lithotomist to the said Hospital."

Percivall Pott, who was apprenticed to Nourse, followed his master's example, and lectured on Surgery. In 1737 we find Dr. Fr. Nicholls advertising thus :

“On Wednesday, the 2nd of February, at the House below the Bull Head, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, at five in the evening, will begin a Course of Anatomy and Physiology, introductory to the study and practice of Physick in all its branches by Fr. Nicholls, M.D. N.B. A compendium referring to the several matters, explain'd in these Lectures, is sold by John Clarke, under the Royal Exchange, and F. Woodward, at the Half Moon, within Temple Bar, Booksellers.”

The following is the advertisement of Cæsar Hawkins, from a newspaper of 1739 :

“In Pall Mall Court, in Pall Mall. On Thursday, the 5th of February next, will begin a Course of Anatomy, with the principal Operations in Surgery and their suitable Bandages, by Cæsar Hawkins, Surgeon to St. George's Hospital.”

Joshua Brookes' advertisement, in 1814, ran as follows :

“THEATRE OF ANATOMY, BLENHEIM STREET,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

“The Summer Course of Lectures on Anatomy, Physiology, and Surgery, will be commenced on Monday, the 6th of June, at seven o'clock in the

morning. By Mr. Brookes.—Anatomical Conversations will be held weekly, when the different Subjects treated of will be discussed familiarly, and the Students' views forwarded. To these none but Pupils can be admitted. Spacious Apartments, thoroughly ventilated, and replete with every convenience, will be open at five o'clock in the morning, for the purposes of Dissecting and Injecting, when Mr. Brookes attends to direct the Students and demonstrate the various parts as they appear on Dissection.

“The inconveniences usually attending Anatomical Investigations, are counteracted by an antiseptic process. Pupils may be accommodated in the House. Gentlemen established in Practice, desirous of renewing their Anatomical Knowledge, may be accommodated with an apartment to dissect in privately.”

A very interesting account of the old Anatomical Schools, by Mr. D'Arcy Power, will be found in the *British Medical Journal*, 1895, vol. 2, p. 141. The paper is entitled “The Rise and Fall of the Private Medical Schools in London.” It has been reprinted, with other articles, in a pamphlet, entitled *The Medical Institutions of London*.

In Great Britain, as no licence was required for opening an Anatomical School, there was no limit to their number; there was also

no regular legal supply of subjects, except the bodies of murderers, executed in London and the county of Middlesex, which came to the schools through the College of Surgeons. In Paris a licence had to be obtained before opening an Anatomical School, and bodies were regularly supplied to the licensed places.

With the rise and competition of the Medical Schools in London, the difficulty of getting an adequate number of bodies increased. The absolute necessity of having a good supply for the use of students, so as to prevent them from going off to rival schools, caused the teachers to offer large prices, and thus made it worth while for men to devote themselves entirely to obtaining bodies for this purpose. At first the trade was carried on by a very few men, and without any public scandal, but the inducements mentioned above enticed others into the business; these were of the lowest class, often professed thieves, and the fights and disputes of these men, one with the other, in churchyards, often made really more scandal than the actual stealing of the bodies. It was stated

by the police in 1828 that the number of persons who, in London, lived regularly on the profits of exhumation, did not exceed ten ; but there were, in addition to these, about two hundred who were occasionally employed. These latter individuals were thieves of the lowest grade, and the most desperate and abandoned class of the community. The men worked generally in gangs, and would do anything to spoil the success of their opponents in the business. If a body were bought by one of the teachers from an outside source, the regular men would sometimes break into the dissecting-room and cut the body in such a manner as to make it useless for anatomical purposes. If this could not be done, they would give information to the police that a stolen body was lying in a certain dissecting-room. Joshua Brookes, the proprietor of the Blenheim Street, or Great Marlborough Street, School, was a victim in this way ; a body, for which he had paid 16 guineas, was taken away from his school through information of this kind, and the police officer who carried out the business was, as a reward for his efforts, presented with

a silver staff, purchased by public subscription. Brookes seems to have got on very badly with the resurrection-men; at one time, because he refused five guineas as a *douceur* at the beginning of the session, two dead bodies, in a high state of decomposition, were dropped at night close to his school by the men whom he had thus offended; one of these bodies was placed at the Poland Street end of Great Marlborough Street, and the other at the end of Blenheim Street. Two young ladies stumbled over one of these bodies, and at once raised such a commotion that, had it not been for the prompt assistance of Sir Robert Baker and the police, Brookes would have fared very badly at the hands of the mob which soon collected. The fact of his house being near to the Marlborough Police Court, on more than one occasion saved Brookes from the popular fury.

A subject was brought to him one day in a sack, and paid for at once; soon after it was discovered that the occupant of the sack was alive. This was not a case of attempted murder; the "subject" was a confederate of those from whom he had been purchased, and had, in all

probability, been thus introduced to the premises for purposes of burglary.

The competition of the schools had risen to such a height in the demand for bodies, that Brookes stated that for a subject, which would have cost two guineas in his student days, he had paid as much as sixteen guineas. Nor was the cost of the body the only expense to the teacher. At the beginning of each session he was waited upon by the resurrection-men, who offered to supply him regularly with bodies at a fixed price, on the condition that a *douceur* was paid down at once. The teachers were powerless in the matter, and had either to accede to the offered terms, or to lose their students through not having a sufficient supply of subjects. The scarcity of bodies was most keenly felt at the beginning of the session; the resurrection-men knew that they could command their own terms, and would not supply any subjects until the teachers had conceded all their demands. This was felt to be bad for the students, and Dr. James Somerville, who was assistant to Brodie at the Great Windmill Street School, in giving evidence before the Committee on Anatomy,

said that "the pupils not being able to proceed for a certain time lose their ardour, and get into habits of idleness."

At the end of the session the resurrection-men again waited on the proprietors of the schools, and demanded "finishing money." In some papers relating to Sir Astley Cooper, which were referred to in a letter published in the *Medical Times*, 1883, vol. 1, p. 343, we read: "May 10th, 1827, Paid Hollis, Vaughan, and Llewellyn, finishing money, £6 6s. od. 1829, June 18th, Paid Murphy, Wildes, & Naples, finishing money £6 6s. od."

The cost of the bodies in this way to the teachers was more than they could charge to the students, and the deficiency thus created was made up by increased fees for the lectures. The expenses, moreover, did not end here. If one of the resurrection-men was unfortunate enough to get a term of imprisonment, the teacher had to partly keep the man's wife and family whilst he was serving his sentence. A solatium was also expected on his release from gaol. Mr. R. D. Grainger spent £50 in this way for one man, and several guineas in keeping the family of another Resurrectionist

whilst the latter was in gaol. Sir Astley Cooper is known to have spent large sums of money for a similar purpose. The following may be cited as examples: "January 29th, 1828, Paid Mr. Cock to pay Mr. South half the expenses of bailing Vaughan from Yarmouth and going down £14 7s. od. 1829, May 6th, Paid Vaughan's wife 6s. Paid Vaughan for twenty-six weeks' confinement at 10s. per week, £13 os. od."

If any independence were shown by the teachers, and the demands of the men resisted, victory generally fell to the lot of the Resurrectionists. A teacher, perhaps, would refuse to pay the exorbitant demands, and would employ other men to obtain bodies for him. These were then watched by the regular gang, and information to the police was laid against them on every occasion. The bodies obtained by the irregular men were often taken from them by those who considered they had a monopoly in the business; these subjects were then hacked and cut about so as to make them quite useless for anatomical purposes. So the supply at this particular school would be very short, and great indignation would arise

amongst the students, who had paid their fees, and therefore demanded an adequate number of bodies for dissection. The teacher was thus obliged to give way, and to accede to the demands of the regular gang.

The teachers formed themselves into an Anatomical Club for their own protection; by this means it was hoped to regulate the price to be paid for bodies, by agreement amongst the members of the Club not to give more than a certain amount. This agreement does not seem, according to Mr. South, to have been very faithfully kept, and so, with new schools springing up and giving rise to still greater competition, the teachers were as much as ever in the hands of the resurrection-men.

It must not be supposed that all the bodies which were supplied to the schools were exhumed. Many of them were stolen or obtained by false pretences before burial. Glennon, the police officer, who has been before mentioned in connection with Joshua Brookes, told the Committee that he had recovered between fifty and a hundred bodies for persons who had had their houses broken open, and bodies stolen from them whilst in

the coffin awaiting burial. The following case, tried at the London Sessions in 1830, is an example of this :

“LONDON ADJOURNED SESSIONS.

“TUESDAY.—BODY-SNATCHING. — A well-known pilferer of graves, named Clarke, was tried upon an indictment, charging him with having stolen the body of a dead child, aged about four years, which had been under the care of a nurse named Mary Hopkins. The facts which came out in evidence are as follows : The deceased was the daughter of a woman of the town, residing in Shire Lane, and had been kept at the nurse’s lodging, which was in the same neighbourhood. She died on a Friday, and Clarke, whose ears were described as ‘quick to the toll of the passing bell,’ paid the nurse a visit the next morning, under pretence of hiring a cellar under the house. He took occasion to notice the poor woman’s son ; said it was a pity to see the boy idle, and that he should have immediate employment, and called again with evidences of still stronger interest in favour of the family. ‘By the way,’ said he, ‘I understand you have had a death

lately.' 'Yes, sir,' said the nurse, 'a poor little girl is departed.' 'Poor little dear,' cried the snatcher, 'I should like to look at the little innocent.' He was forthwith led into the front parlour, where the body lay in a coffin, and observing that its position was favourable to his intention, he sympathized with the nurse, and said, 'We must all come to this sooner or later,' and then he went to get a half-pint of summut to comfort them. The nurse disposed of a glass, which presently set her in a profound sleep, and when she awoke the body of the babe was gone. It appeared that the snatcher, after having quitted the house, as if for good, returned, and opening the parlour-window hooked out with a stick the corpse of the child, and went off with it towards a market that is open at all hours, near Bridge-water Square. However, a police officer, who knew his trade, laid hands upon him, telling him he was wanted. The snatcher then threw down the child and took to his heels, but was apprehended and lodged in the Compter. The nurse proved the identity of the body. Upon her cross-examination, by Mr. Payne, she stated that the mother had not been to see

the deceased for four or five days before the death. The Jury returned a verdict of Guilty, but some of them audibly spoke of recommending the prisoner to mercy, but made no appendage to that effect. The Recorder sentenced the prisoner to be imprisoned for the space of six calendar months."

Sometimes these stolen bodies were claimed after payment had been made to the resurrection-men, but before any dissection had taken place. The following refers to Guy's Hospital : "Returned to Vestry Clerk of Newington, by order of the Treasurer, one male and two females, purchased of Page, &c., on the 25th, who had broken open the dead-house to obtain them."

Bodies of suicides, and of those who had met with an accidental death, were frequently stolen whilst they were awaiting the coroner's inquest. Often in these cases the body-thieves, after selling the subject to a teacher of anatomy, secretly gave information to the police where the missing body might be found. It was then seized by the police, and, after the inquest, handed over to those who claimed to be relatives; these supposed relatives were

frequently confederates of the thieves, and by them the body was at once taken off and again sold to another teacher.

The following case is from a newspaper of 1823 :

“SUICIDE AND THE BODY STOLEN.—Tuesday evening last a young woman of respectable and interesting appearance was observed for some time parading the banks of the Surrey Canal, Camberwell, in a melancholy mood, and at length she plunged into the water ; on which a man rushed in after her and dived several times, but failed in recovering the body, which was not found till the following morning, when it was taken to the Albany Arms, near the Canal, for the Coroner’s inquest, which was to have taken place on Thursday. On the landlord proceeding to the shed on Wednesday morning, where the body had been deposited, he discovered, that in the course of the night, it had been broken open, and the corpse of the female stolen away. He instantly repaired to the Police Office, Union Street, and gave information of the circumstance to the Magistrates, who gave orders that immediate inquiry should

be made at Mr. Brookes's, where the body has since been discovered and given up. The poor woman was unclaimed, and the verdict of the Coroner's Jury was 'Found Drowned.'"

A favourite trick, in the carrying out of which a woman was generally necessary, was that of claiming the bodies of friendless persons who died in workhouses, or similar institutions. Immediately it was found out that such an one was dead a man and woman, decently clad in mourning, in great grief, and often in tears, called at the workhouse to take away the body of their dear departed relative. If the trick proved successful, as it often did, the body was taken straight off to one of the schools and sold. The parish authorities, probably, were not over particular about giving up the body, if the deceased were a stranger, as by this means they saved the cost of burial.

Subjects, too, were obtained from cheap undertakers, who kept the bodies of the poor until the time for burial. The coffin was weighted so as to conceal the fraud, and the mockery of reading the Burial Service over it was gone through in the presence of the unsuspecting relatives.

That some bodies were obtained by murder there can be no doubt. The exposure caused by the trials of Burke and Hare in Edinburgh, and Bishop and Williams in London, proves this.

The facts previously stated, however, go very far to exonerate the anatomists from the false charge (freely made at the time) of their being privy to these murders. It has been frequently stated that signs of murder could be easily seen, and that the fact of the body being fresh, and there being no evidence of its having been interred, ought to have at once suggested foul play, and to have caused the teacher to communicate with the police. But it must be remembered that the murders were generally very artfully contrived by suffocation, so as to leave no outward signs of ill-treatment. It was also no uncommon thing, for the reasons just given, to receive at the schools bodies in quite a fresh state, which had evidently never received sepulture.

An account of the *post mortem* on the Italian boy, for whose murder Bishop and Williams were hanged,* has been preserved by Mr.

* See also p. 107.

Clarke.* The examination of the body was carried out by Mr. Wetherfield, of Southampton Street. There were also present Mr. Mayo, Lecturer on Anatomy at King's College; Mr. Partridge, his demonstrator; Mr. Beaman, Parish Surgeon; and his Assistant, Mr. D. Edwards, and Mr. Clarke. The boy's teeth had been removed and sold to a dentist, but beyond this there were no external marks of violence on any part of the body. The internal organs were carefully examined, but no trace of injury or poison could be found. Mr. Mayo, who had a peculiar way of standing very upright with his hands in his breeches' pockets, said, with a kind of lisp he had, "By Jove! the boy died a nathral death." Mr. Partridge and Mr. Beaman, however, suggested that the spine had not been examined, and after a consultation it was decided to do this. It was then found that one or more of the upper cervical vertebræ were fractured. "By Jove!" said Mr. Mayo, "this boy was murdered." The conviction of Bishop and Williams was due, in a very great measure, to Mr. Partridge and Mr. Beaman.

* *Autobiographical Recollections of the Medical Profession*, p. 101.

At the present day it is well-nigh impossible to understand the relations between men of honour and education, such as the teachers of anatomy were, and the ruffians who carried on this ghastly trade. It must, however, be borne in mind that, until the passing of the Anatomy Act in 1832, there was no provision for supplying the means by which the student might be taught this necessary part of his professional education; the only way in which teachers could get material for giving instruction was by dealing with the resurrection-men.

It would have been quite impossible for the resurrection-men to have obtained the number of bodies they frequently did, had they not been able to bribe the custodians of the different burial-grounds. Sometimes they met with a difficulty in the shape of a keeper newly appointed to replace one who had been dismissed for being privy to these depredations. In most instances this was soon overcome; if, at the outset, the custodian could not be bribed, he could generally be induced to drink, and then, whilst he was in a state of intoxication, the body which the resurrection-men wished to obtain could be easily removed.

After this first step there was generally very little difficulty in the future.

Sometimes, too, the grave-diggers not only gave information to the Resurrectionists, but acted as principals themselves. In Benson's *Remarkable Trials* is recorded the case of John Holmes, Peter Williams, and Esther Donaldson. Holmes was grave-digger at St. George's, Bloomsbury; Williams was his assistant, and Donaldson was charged as an accomplice. They were prosecuted before Sir John Hawkins at the Guildhall, Westminster, in December, 1777, for stealing the body of Mrs. Jane Sainsbury, who died in the previous October, and was buried in the St. George's burial-ground. Holmes and Williams were sentenced to six months' imprisonment, and to be whipped on their bare backs from the end of Kingsgate Street, Holborn, to Dyot Street, St. Giles. The sentence, says Benson, was duly carried out amidst crowds of well-satisfied and approving spectators. The woman Donaldson was acquitted.

The ranks of the resurrection-men were largely recruited from the keepers of burial-grounds. When these men had lost their

situations for connivance at the stealing of bodies, they naturally joined their old associates, and became part of the regular gang.

The bribery of the custodians will account for the large number of bodies often obtained in one night. Had there been the slightest vigilance on the part of the authorities, it would have been absolutely impossible for the resurrection-men to have spent the time necessary for their work without detection. The amount of time required for the work depended greatly on the soil. One man told Bransby Cooper that he had taken two bodies from separate graves of considerable depth, and had restored the coffins and the earth to their former positions in an hour and a half. Another man said that he had completed the exhumation of a body in a quarter of an hour ; but in this instance the grave was extremely shallow, and the earth loose and without stones. If much gravel had to be dug through, the resurrection-men had a peculiar way of using their spades, so that the gravel was thrown out of the grave quite noiselessly.

On Thursday, February 20th, 1812, the Diary tells us that 15 large bodies and one

small one were obtained from St. Pancras. No doubt this was simplified by the custom of burying several paupers in one grave. To obtain these it was necessary to dig all the earth out, so that each coffin could be dealt with; the men generally worked very soon after a funeral, and so the earth was much more easily moved than it would have been if they had been obliged to dig through undisturbed ground. When only one body was to be had, a small opening was dug down to the head of the coffin, which was then broken open, and the body was pulled up with a rope, fastened either round the neck or under the armpits.

In a memoir of Thomas Wakley, the founder of *The Lancet*,* the following account of the *modus operandi* of the resurrection-men is given: "In the case of a neat, or not quite new grave, the ingenuity of the Resurrectionist came into play. Several feet—fifteen or twenty—away from the head or foot of the grave, he would remove a square of turf, about eighteen or twenty inches in diameter. This he would carefully put by, and then commence to mine. Most pauper graves were

* *Lancet*, 1896, vol. i, p. 187.

of the same depth, and, if the sepulchre was that of a person of importance, the depth of the grave could be pretty well estimated by the nature of the soil thrown up. Taking a five-foot grave, the coffin lid would be about four feet from the surface. A rough slanting tunnel, some five yards long, would, therefore, have to be constructed, so as to impinge exactly on the coffin head. This being at last struck (no very simple task), the coffin was lugged up by hooks to the surface, or, preferably, the end of the coffin was wrenched off with hooks while still in the shelter of the tunnel, and the scalp or feet of the corpse secured through the open end, and the body pulled out, leaving the coffin almost intact and unmoved.

“The body once obtained, the narrow shaft was easily filled up and the sod of turf accurately replaced. The friends of the deceased, seeing that the earth *over* his grave was not disturbed, would flatter themselves that the body had escaped the Resurrectionist ; but they seldom noticed the neatly-placed square of turf, some feet away.”

A somewhat similar account is given in

the *Memorials of John Flint South*.^{*} This method is also referred to by Bransby Cooper,[†] who states that it was told him by one "who fancied he had found out their secret, but had, no doubt, been deceived by some of them purposely." Bransby Cooper also says that he asked one of the principal resurrection-men as to the feasibility of this method, and the man showed him several objections to it, and stated that "it would never do." This statement was made after the resurrection-days were over, when there could be no advantage in keeping the true plan secret. It must be remembered that there were some amateur body-snatchers, and that it was not at all unlikely that the regular men would tell to them a plan as full of difficulties as that quoted above. To make the tunnel as described, would be impossible, and it is somewhat difficult to see how grappling-irons were fastened to the coffin; a man could hardly get down a tunnel 18 in. in diameter and 15 feet in length to do this; if he did succeed, his difficulties in returning must have

^{*} *Memorials of John Flint South*, by C. T. FELTOE, 1884, p. 100. [†] *Life of Sir Astley Cooper*, vol. i. p. 354.

been still greater. To pull a body out of the head or foot of a coffin, as described, is an impossibility. No allowance is made, either, in digging the tunnel for obstacles, in the shape of intervening graves or grave-stones. As regards the evidence on the surface of a grave having been disturbed, it would be greater in one opened in this manner than if the recently-disturbed earth had been again dug out. It would be impossible to get back into the tunnel all the earth dug out in the course of its construction, and this loose earth would at once attract attention. Generally, bodies were removed before the graves were finally tidied up, so that it was difficult to notice a fresh disturbance.

The writer of the Diary was a cemetery-keeper when he first began his resurrection proceedings; his *modus operandi*, in some cases, was to take the body out of the coffin, and place it in a sack, before he began to fill in the grave. Then, as he gradually threw the earth in, he kept pulling the sack to the surface, so that when his work of filling in was completed, he had the sack close to the top of the grave. He had then only to wait until

night, when he was able, under cover of the darkness, to remove the body without fear of detection. When the resurrection-men had been successful in their night's work, they were glad to find a temporary shelter for the bodies, as near at hand as possible. This was generally an out-house belonging to one of the schools which they regularly supplied; the men were permitted to place the bodies there for the night, and to fetch them away the next day. This explains some of the entries in the Diary, such as "Took the whole to —," and the next day, "Removed the whole from —." Before removing any of the bodies, the men would find out exactly where they were wanted, and so would save much risk of being arrested with the bodies in their possession.

If the following broadside could be believed, the resurrection-men sometimes performed a valuable service to those who had been buried—

"MIRACULOUS CIRCUMSTANCE:

"Being a full and particular account of John Macintire, who was buried alive, in Edinburgh, on the 15th day of April, 1824, while in a

*trance, and who was iaken up by the resur-
rection-men, and sold to the doctors to be
dissected, with a full account of the many
strange and wonderful things which he saw
and felt while he was in that state, the whole
being taken from his own words.*

“I had been some time ill of a low and lingering fever. My strength gradually wasted, and I could see by the doctor that I had nothing to hope. One day, towards evening, I was seized with strange and indescribable quiverings. I saw around my bed, innumerable strange faces; they were bright and visionary, and without bodies. There was light and solemnity, and I tried to move, but could not; I could recollect, with perfectness, but the power of motion had departed. I heard the sound of weeping at my pillow, and the voice of the nurse say, ‘He is dead.’ I cannot describe what I felt at these words. I exerted my utmost power to stir myself, but I could not move even an eyelid. My father drew his hand over my face and closed my eyelids. The world was then darkened, but I could still hear, and feel and suffer. For three days a number of friends called to see

me. I heard them in low accents speak of what I was, and more than one touched me with his finger. The coffin was then procured, and I was laid in it. I felt the coffin lifted and borne away. I heard and felt it placed in the hearse ; it halted, and the coffin was taken out. I felt myself carried on the shoulders of men ; I heard the cords of the coffin moved. I felt it swing as dependent by them. It was lowered and rested upon the bottom of the grave. Dreadful was the effort I then made to exert the power of action, but my whole frame was immovable. The sound of the rattling mould as it covered me, was far more tremendous than thunder. This also ceased, and all was silent. This is death, thought I, and soon the worms will be crawling about my flesh. In the contemplation of this hideous thought, I heard a low sound in the earth over me, and I fancied that the worms and reptiles were coming. The sound continued to grow louder and nearer. Can it be possible, thought I, that my friends suspect that they have buried me too soon ? The hope was truly like bursting through the gloom of death. The sound ceased. They dragged me out of the

coffin by the head, and carried me swiftly away. When borne to some distance, I was thrown down like a clod, and by the interchange of one or two brief sentences, I discovered that I was in the hands of two of those robbers, who live by plundering the grave, and selling the bodies of parents, and children, and friends. Being rudely stripped of my shroud, I was placed naked on a table. In a short time I heard by the bustle in the room that the doctors and students were assembling. When all was ready the Demonstrator took his knife, and pierced my bosom. I felt a dreadful crackling, as it were, throughout my whole frame; a convulsive shudder instantly followed, and a shriek of horror rose from all present. The ice of death was broken up; my trance was ended. The utmost exertions were made to restore me, and in the course of an hour I was in full possession of all my faculties.

“STEPHENSON, PRINTER, GATESHEAD.”

It was quite necessary for the Committee on Anatomy to adopt some means to protect the resurrection-men who gave evidence before it;

this was done by suppressing their names, and using letters of the alphabet to distinguish the witnesses one from another. Popular feeling was so bitter against these men that they were often severely handled by the mob. Sometimes the mob made a mistake, and the innocent suffered for the guilty. In 1823 a coach containing an empty coffin was being drawn along the streets of Edinburgh; the people, suspecting that it was intended to convey a body, taken from some churchyard, seized the coach; it was with great difficulty that the police rescued the driver from the fury of the mob. The coach they could not save; it was taken through the streets, thrown over a mound, and smashed; the people then kindled a fire with the fragments, and danced round it. It turned out that the coffin was intended to convey to his house, in Edinburgh, the body of a physician who had died in the country.

On another occasion two American gentlemen, who were looking at the Abbey of Linlithgow after nightfall, were mistaken for resurrection-men, and assaulted by the mob.

One of the witnesses, called "A.B.," but who was probably Ben Crouch himself, stated that

twenty-three in four nights was the greatest number he had ever obtained. He added, "When I go to work, I like to get those of poor people buried from the workhouses, because instead of working for one subject, you may get three or four. I do not think, during the time I have been in the habit of working for the schools, I got half a dozen of wealthier people." Another witness, who is called "C.D.," but who was, without doubt, the writer of the Diary, stated that, "according to my book," in 1809 and 1810 the number of bodies disposed of in England was 305 adults and 44 small; but the same year 37 were sent to Edinburgh, and the gang had 18 in hand, which were never used at all. In 1810-11, 312 adults were disposed of in the regular session, and 20 in the summer, in addition to 47 smalls. In the Report of the Committee in 1828, it was pointed out that, at that time, there were over 800 students attending the Schools of Anatomy in London, but of these not more than 500 actually worked at dissection. The number of subjects annually available for instruction amounted to between 450 and 500, or rather less than one for each student.

The average price of an adult body was stated to be £4 4s. od. It may be here explained that a "small" was a body under three feet long; these were sold at so much per inch and were generally classified as "large small," "small," and "fœtus." The earnings of the resurrection-men may be gathered from the above entry. To take the year 1810-11, the receipts for bodies alone come to 1328 guineas; this is exclusive of "smalls," and probably also of the teeth, in which these men did a large trade. Teeth, in those days, were very valuable; the amounts received by some of the men for teeth only will be dealt with in the chapter containing biographical notices of some of the principal London resurrection-men. It may be here mentioned that on one occasion Murphy obtained the entry to a vault belonging to a meeting-house, on the pretence of selecting a burial-place for his wife. Whilst in there he managed to slip back some bolts, so that he could easily gain an entrance at another time; this he did at night, and got possession of teeth by which he made £60.

From the statements of the teachers it is

most likely that £4 4s. od. is under the average price paid for bodies. It must be remembered, too, that this amount does not include the retaining-fee paid at the beginning of the session, nor the "finishing-money" which was demanded at its close. The 1328 guineas spoken of above would be divided amongst six or seven persons, and this, for men in their position, was a large income. The biographical notes of the chief workers in this horrible trade will show that some few of them did save money. Taking them, however, as a whole, they were a dissolute and ruffianly gang; reference to the Diary proves their drunken habits, and there is more than one entry to show that they were often in pecuniary difficulties; so much so that on one occasion they were obliged to have recourse to Mordecai, the Jew.

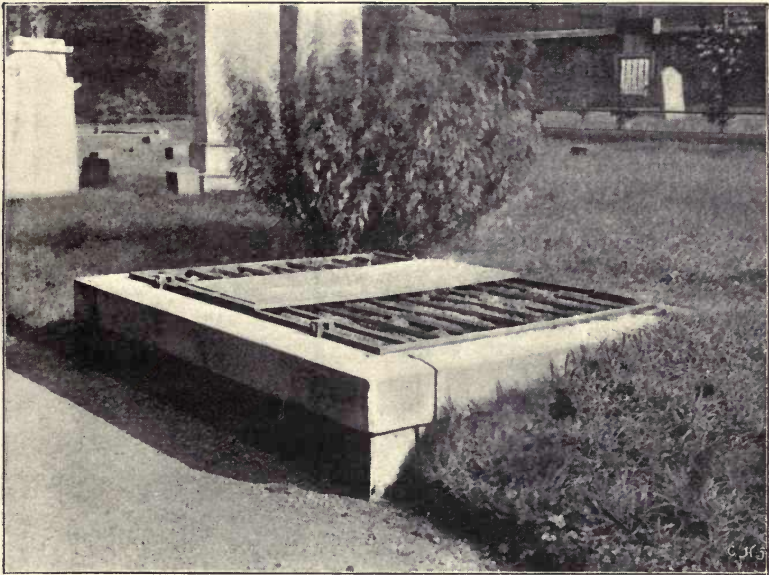
It was quite useless for those who had just buried a relative or friend to depend either upon the custodian of the burial-ground, or upon the watch, to see that the newly-made grave was not violated. The resurrection-men often met with a guard, instituted by the friends of the deceased, who would take it in turns to watch by the grave-side through the

whole night; these friends were frequently armed, and were not afraid to use their arms if the resurrection-men gave them an opportunity. As a rule the body-snatchers made off when they found a guard in the cemetery; it was to their interest not to create a riot, and if they were strong enough to drive off the watchers, the latter could soon raise a tumult, whereby the bodily safety of the thieves would be endangered.

Matters did not always pass off so peaceably, particularly in Ireland, as the following extract from an Irish newspaper for 1830 shows :

“**DESPERATE ENGAGEMENT WITH BODY-SNATCHERS.**—The remains of the late Edward Barrett, Esq., having been interred in Glasnevin churchyard on the 27th of last month (January), persons were appointed to remain in the churchyard all night, to protect the corpse from ‘the sack ’em-up gentlemen,’ and it seems the precaution was not unnecessary, for, on Saturday night last, some of the gentry made their appearance, but soon decamped on finding they were likely to be opposed. Nothing daunted, however, they returned on Tuesday morning with augmented force, and well armed.

About ten minutes after two o'clock three or four of them were observed standing on the wall of the churchyard, while several others were endeavouring to get on it also. The party in the churchyard warned them off, and were replied to by a discharge from fire-arms. This brought on a general engagement; the sack 'em-up gentlemen fired from behind the churchyard wall, by which they were defended, while their opponents on the watch fired from behind the tomb-stones. Upwards of 58 to 60 shots were fired. One of the assailants was shot—he was seen to fall; his body was carried off by his companions. Some of them are supposed to have been severely wounded, as a great quantity of blood was observed outside the churchyard wall, notwithstanding the ground was covered with snow. During the firing, which continued for upwards of a quarter of an hour, the church bell was rung by one of the watchmen, which, with the discharge from the fire-arms, collected several of the townspeople and the police to the spot—several of the former, notwithstanding the severity of the weather, in nearly a state of nakedness; but the assailants were by this



MORTSAFE IN GREYFRIARS CHURCHYARD, EDINBURGH.

time defeated, and effected their retreat. Several of the head-stones bear evident marks of the conflict, being struck with the balls, &c."

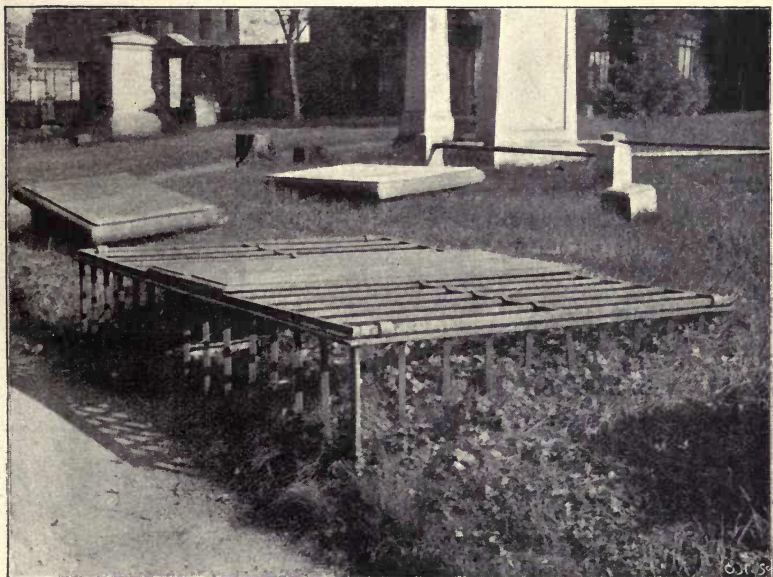
Most of the disgraceful riots which took place in the burial-grounds, were not between resurrection-men and friends guarding a grave, but between two gangs of body-snatchers. In cases of this kind one gang would do all in its power to bring its rival into disrepute; the stronger party, after driving the weaker one away, would put the burial-ground into a most disgraceful state, and then give information against their opponents.

Besides watching, many other devices were tried to prevent the depredations of the resurrection-men; spring guns were set in many of the cemeteries, but these were often rendered harmless. If the men intended going to a certain grave at night, late in the afternoon a woman, in deep mourning, would walk round the part of the cemetery in which the grave was situated, and contrive to detach the wires from the guns. Loose stones were placed on the walls of the grave-yard, so as to make scaling the walls almost an impossibility; this

was useless when the custodian had a house with a window looking into the burial-place. If entrance could not be obtained in this way, there was generally some other house through which the men could gain admission to the grave-yard. Mort-safes, or strong iron guards, were placed over newly-made graves for protection; some of these can be seen at the present day in the Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh (see illustrations).

Iron coffins were also used by some persons to protect their friends from the Resurrectionist. The following interesting advertisement appeared in *Wooler's British Gazette* for October 13th, 1822:

“ Many hundred dead bodies will be dragged from their wooden coffins this winter, for the anatomical lectures (which have just commenced), the articulators, and for those who deal in the dead for the supply of the country practitioner and the Scotch schools. The question of the right to inter in iron is now decided. Lord Chief Justice Abbott declared he wished they might be generally used; Justice Bailey declared that if the Ecclesiastical Court was to grant a suit



MORTSAFE IN GREYFRIARS CHURCHYARD, EDINBURGH.

