

**A lecture on the exhumation and dissection of human bodies / by M.B. Wright.**

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WRIGHT (M.B.)

A LECTURE

ON THE

EXHUMATION AND DISSECTION

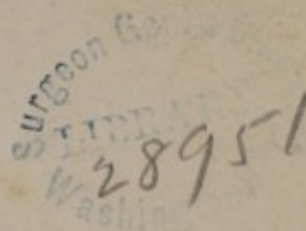
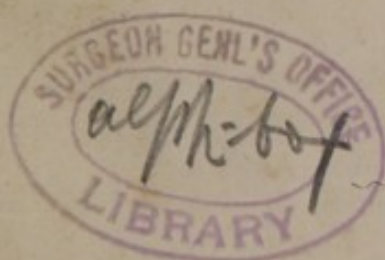
OF

HUMAN BODIES.

BY

M. B. WRIGHT, M. D.,

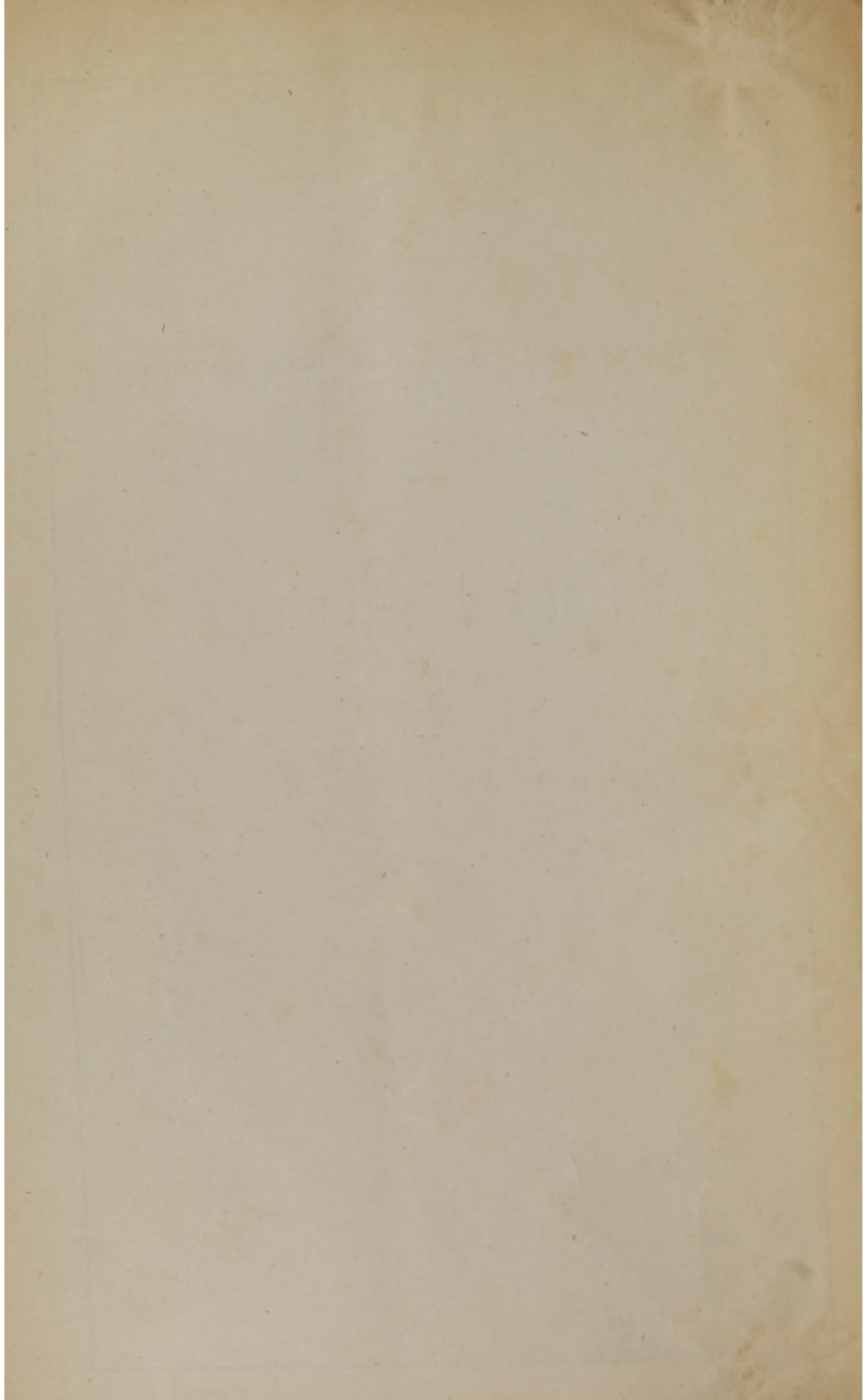
PROFESSOR ETC. IN THE MEDICAL COLLEGE OF OHIO.



CINCINNATI:

PRINTED BY J. A. ROBINSON & CO. 109 MAIN STREET.

1846.



*Aspects of Anthropology*

A LECTURE

ON THE

EXHUMATION AND DISSECTION

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MEDICAL COLLEGE OF OHIO,

NOVEMBER 18TH, 1846.

At a meeting of the *Medical Class*, held in the College Edifice, G. R. HUNT was called to the Chair, and E. W. STEELE chosen Secretary.

The object of the meeting being explained, it was on motion

*Resolved*, That a committee of six be appointed by the Chairman, to request of Prof. M. B. WRIGHT a copy of his Introductory Lecture delivered on the evening of the 3d inst., for publication.

The Chairman appointed the following gentlemen: Messrs. J. S. McGrew, J. W. Davis, T. W. Jones, J. S. McIteeny, T. Cook, and O. C. Kendrick.

On motion, adjourned.

G. R. HUNT, Chairman.

E. W. STEELE, Secretary.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

MEDICAL COLLEGE OF OHIO,

Nov. 18TH, 1846.

*Prof. M. B. Wright*:—Dear Sir: The undersigned, a committee of the Medical Class, take great pleasure in handing you the above minute: and very respectfully request, that, if agreeable, the Address, at your earliest convenience, be placed at our disposal, in view of its publication.

We are, dear sir, with great respect, yours, &c.,

J. S. MCGREW, T. W. JONES, T. COOK,

J. W. DAVIS, J. S. MCITEENY, O. C. KENDRICK,

*Committee.*

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CINCINNATI, November 20, 1846.

*Gentlemen*: I thank you for your kind notice of my Introductory Lecture. It is yours, to dispose of in any manner you may deem best.

Sincerely, your friend,

M. B. WRIGHT.

Messrs. MCGREW, DAVIS, JONES, MCITEENY, COOK, and KENDRICK, *Com.*

## LECTURE.

GENTLEMEN:

By the usages of this Institution, I am authorised to read to you an introductory lecture, upon any subject appertaining to our profession. On the present occasion, I shall avail myself of the privilege thus conferred, to offer you a few reflections upon the exhumation and dissection of human bodies. These reflections are founded upon a bill introduced into the last General Assembly, and which, in a modified form, became a law.

We present the inquiry, at the outset, Would the study of anatomy be facilitated by the passage of a law authorising dissections? At first view, most persons would return an affirmative answer. But such a question, opens a broad field for reflection. We have neither time nor inclination to enter it, in the character of a disputant, yet, we cannot withhold an expression of opinion upon one or two points. No law can continue in effective operation, which is not sanctioned by the people. Such an one as is now under consideration, would excite prejudices, and an opposition, which years of studied caution might not be sufficient to overcome. And the difficulties which now beset us, in carrying on dissections, would be greatly enhanced.

Open, unrestrained dissections, would tend to immorality. Where will you witness such constant exposures of mutilated bodies as are witnessed in Paris? And where will you find the same amount of bold, unblushing infidelity, as in that great city? Give free license to the dissector, and you deprive him of all motive to practice concealment. The idler, who, at first, would marvel at his unrefinement and cruelty, would at length

turn away with an established indifference of life. He would look upon man as upon all material things—destined to death and decay, without the power of reanimation. To him, the body would appear little else than a homogenous mass, formed and fashioned by a law of nature, and not by infinite wisdom. The physician who examines it with care and judgment, derives, as he unfolds its complicated organization, a faint impression of the character of its divine author. Without this, he, too, would be liable to the blight and curse of unbelief.

A criminal statute, demands approval or opposition, according to the extent of its prohibitions and punishment. He who, in his anatomical pursuits, violates professional decency, and manifests a total disregard of private and public feeling, cannot, and should not, escape condemnation. A law, the provisions of which would necessarily lead to an abandonment of dissections, would result in any thing but good to mankind. To be just and useful, a law, while it held out punishment to the thoughtless and fool-hardy, should silently commend the cautious and considerate. To my mind, if there be any crime connected with this subject, it consists in the *manner* of taking dead bodies, and in the wrong selection of them.

A statute may contain so many details, and impose penalties so degrading and severe, as to defeat its own objects. Such was the nature of the original resurrection bill of last winter. It prohibited the appointment of any one as a professor, who was not willing to give bond and security, that no dissections should be carried on in the colleges. The enforcement of such a law, would have resulted in an abandonment of the colleges, as places for medical teaching, or, in the procuring of other buildings for purposes of dissection. Suppose the former, would any advantages have accrued to community? Would the dead have reposed any the more quietly and safely in their graves? We think otherwise, and a part of our reasons for thus thinking, may be summed up in few words.

In this Institution, the "*materiel*" for dissection is furnished to students. It is obtained by properly authorised persons, and

no body is admitted, which, it is believed, upon exposure, would excite any painful regrets. Governed by a desire not to injure private feeling, but to secure public confidence, the professor, whose business it is, keeps a watchful and protective eye over all the cemeteries within his reach. Deprive him of every interest to be, in this manner, vigilant, and whose tomb would be safe from the rapacity of those employed by the Institutions of other states?

Most of the outcry against dissections has originated in unwise and inconsiderate legislation. First, in granting charters for the encouragement of false and deceptive systems of practice; second, in authorizing schools to be established in places altogether unsuited to the successful prosecution of medical science: third, in multiplying Medical Schools to an almost indefinite extent. It may not be amiss to enlarge, somewhat, upon each of these three points.

The origin of the Steam System, and its introduction into Ohio, are known to most, if not to all of us. At first, its doctrines were simple, and its medicines were few. Until within a comparatively recent period, not one of its advocates had the boldness to modify it, either in theory or practice. But their arrogant leader died, and contrary to all former asseverations, he died from disease. Now, the scramble commenced, among those who were anxious to wear the mantle of the fallen chief. From the Old Dominion, came a successful claim in behalf of one of her loquacious sons. But, with him, as with some other prophets, it was supposed that fame could be acquired more rapidly abroad, than in his own country. The capital of Ohio was selected as the theatre of a medical enterprize, and appeals were made to the Legislature to aid in its success. By some, it was treated with indifference; by others, as one of the conceits of an enthusiastic mind. The idea that a college was necessary to teach the use of lobelia or pepper, was too absurd for serious consideration. Enthusiasm, however, with its boldness, and cunning with its combined devices, excited the members of the Legislature to impatience, and finally triumphed over



sober reason. The charter which established the Steam College in Columbus, has been modified so as to admit of a change of location, and we now have it in our midst, under the name of the "Literary and Botanico Medical College of Ohio." It still proclaims that Thompsonism is the basis of its doctrines, but, in the face of all former declarations, it is now claimed that a knowledge of practical anatomy is essential to successful practice.

Another Medical School was established near the centre of the State, and the history of its teachings is also a history of tergiversations. In a circular, issued soon after the organization of its first Faculty, it was intimated, if not positively declared, that the knife was an unnecessary and cruel means of cure, and the idea was for some time entertained that dissections would not be practiced. The people were lulled into a feeling of security, but, it was a feeling which had its limits. The grave, here and there, was despoiled of its sleeping tenant, and such outrages were committed as induced the Legislature to declare the charter of the College void. What next? In a short time thereafter, a new charter was obtained, and the college of reformers was transferred to Cincinnati, under the name of the "Eclectic Medical College." Practical Anatomy and Operative Surgery are among the branches which its professors partially teach. To obtain the consent of the Legislature for the establishment of these Schools, it was necessary to profess different systems of practice. But, to what extent do they differ? The one consists of the steam practice with additions; while the other is composed of these additions, to which has been superadded the steam practice. In the one case, the pyramid rests upon its base, in the other upon its apex, the difference consisting only in a change of position—not of structure. How is the system of these Schools related to regular scientific practice? It sustains about the same relation, as the nail to the entire edifice. Those who adopt it, pull weeds from the corners of the fences, leaving the ripe and full harvest to be gathered and garnered by others. They prefer the chaff with its slight admixture of

grain, to the clean and wholesome wheat. If, in their anatomical investigations, they have transcended the power intended to be given them, it will serve as a caution in future legislation.

The location of Medical Colleges in small inland towns or cities, is injurious, both to the profession and the public. Their facilities for teaching are limited, and the education of their pupils, must necessarily be imperfect. They cannot give the necessary instructions in anatomy without a due supply of subjects. These subjects must be procured from neighbouring burial grounds, or from others through the country, and at considerable hazard and expense. Except during the prevalence of a fatal epidemic, or when more than the usual number of deaths have occurred from ordinary causes, a selection of subjects cannot be made. The excitement produced, and the indignation expressed, in the northern portion of the State, and in the Legislature during the last winter, may be taken as slight evidence of the truth of our assertions.

In no place, in the non-slaveholding states, can classes be taught practical anatomy, peacefully and successfully, save in large cities. Here, individuals are numerous, who subsist upon public charity, or prey upon public morals; who live degraded and die as outcasts. Failing to render themselves useful in some way while living, and forfeiting all claims to affectionate remembrance when dead, why may not their bodies be employed to subserve some useful end?

It is the belief of most professional men, that Medical Schools, in any considerable number are adverse to a substantial, scientific mental culture. As a general remark it is true, that competition gives activity to business, and is an incentive to learning and to professional exertion. But, the history of Medical Colleges does not sustain this principle. Their establishment is too often sought to attain some ambitious end, or as a means to succeed in some revengeful opposition. In places where a number of Medical Colleges exist, each prompted by an honourable emulation, both as regards the extent and completeness of studies, there is too often exhibited a total disregard of all feeling.

or relationship in procuring subjects for dissection. Will the profession say there is no iniquity in this? Will public forbearance authorise the continuance of such proceedings? Or will not the number of Medical Schools be kept within proper limits, not only that they may be encouraged to enlarge their means of usefulness, but that they may be held to a strict accountability for their acts? With such a variety of Medical Schools as now exist, well may the people exclaim, in the language of the frogs in the fable, "It may be sport for you, but it is death to us!"

There are certain individuals in all communities, whose wishes are not entitled to respect, and whose approbation is not worth the seeking. Their characters are an enigma. They oppose without knowledge, and cherish prejudices without reason. They would close their doors against a houseless wanderer, as against some visible pestilence. They would turn a deaf ear to his cries for bread. They would point to the gutter as his fit resting place. They might urge for him a christian burial, but they would not contribute one cent to save him from becoming a prey to the wolves. Yet, if you were to touch that decaying body with the knife of the dissector, these kind hearted creatures would never cease to follow you with their hatred and persecutions.

There are no subjects which excite the imagination, and lead it astray more readily, than those which relate to the dead. Is a murder committed, a thousand tragical occurrences are added to give it completeness, and to render it a suitable subject for fireside narration. Has some criminal expiated his offence upon the scaffold? it is not enough that he was once a man, and that he had been led astray by unbridled passions, but he must needs be fashioned into the likeness of a demon, with all his depravity and cruelty of heart. Let me present a short paragraph, the substance of which may be taken from almost any of the newspapers of the day.

A. B., the murderer of C. D., has paid the penalty due his crime. The testimony was conclusive as to his guilt, and he

listened to his sentence without emotion. In his cell, he was sullen, revengeful and unrepenting. On his way to the place of execution he looked calmly upon the multitude who followed him. He ascended the scaffold with a firm step, and threw upon the spectators an expression of ineffable contempt, notwithstanding the weight of crime he was about to carry with him to eternity. The prayers and exhortations of the minister, whose feelings had been enlisted in his behalf, were as unheeded as the passing breeze. The fatal noose was carefully adjusted, the cap was drawn over the face of the criminal to conceal its hideous aspect, and as soon as it was announced that all was ready the drop fell. From some unexpected cause his cap was displaced, exhibiting to an excited people his glaring eye-balls starting from their sockets—his livid and distorted features—and the twitchings of his mouth and lids. The strength of the rope was not sufficient to sustain the weight of the body with its violent convulsions, and it descended rapidly to the earth. It was not yet dead, and the executioner, eager in the discharge of his duty, and to improve in the science of butchery, made a second and a third effort before he had completed his work. After hanging for half an hour, the body was delivered to the surgeon for dissection, to whom it had been previously sold by the criminal himself.

All these, with various other elements, are deemed essential to a legal and interesting public execution. How strangely inconsistent is the public mind. There will stand a gaping crowd, from early morn until noonday, and from noonday until night, with mud under their feet, and a storm over their heads, in anxious expectation to see a fellow being hung by the neck until he is dead, dead, dead. And they never feel horror stricken, until they reflect how inhumanly he is to be treated by the hands of the doctors.

Medical students, like newspaper editors, often deal in the marvellous and then smile at individual credulity. Not long since an occurrence was related to an old lady somewhat in the following strain: On a dark stormy night like the present, the

resurrectionist is on the alert, and I am reminded of my own grave-yard adventures. I was one of four who had agreed to exhume the body of a man, of immense height, who had died suddenly. After procuring the necessary pick and spades, rope and sack, we proceeded to the designated place of burial. But the light from the surrounding windows fell brightly upon the tomb-stones, and rendered it unsafe, at so early an hour, to engage in the execution of our task. Wrapped in our cloaks, we lay concealed in the dark shadows of the church, until after midnight. Then we assumed the duty assigned us. One was stationed at the entrance, another, at the outlet of the grave-yard, as sentinels, while a third and myself commenced the digging. No countersign was given of approaching danger, until we had reached the lid of the coffin. It was made of thick boards, and fastened with long screws, so that much force was required to break it. It gave way with a loud noise, which resounded from house to house, and roused the faithful watch-dogs from their slumbers. A general barking ensued, lamps were lighted, and forms were dimly seen, passing the windows. Not a footstep, however, was heard approaching us, and we returned to our labour, which had been temporarily suspended. A rope was fastened around the neck of the corpse, and after much and long continued effort it was dragged from its resting place. We had not gone far with our burden, when, as we turned a corner, a man came suddenly upon us. We did not falter, for we discovered at once that he was a staggering drunkard. At length we became weary, and transferred our load to a wheelbarrow, which we found after much search under a wood-shed. It gave a relief to our shoulders, but the noise of its rusty axle grated harshly upon our ears. Day-light was fast approaching—smoke was issuing from many a chimney—the butcher's wagon was passing on its way to the market, and every step we took was attended with hazard. In sight of home we came to a halt. Doctors what have you there? inquired one gruffly. With our hearts in our throats, we fell back a short distance, and watched the movements of

the intruder. We saw him lift the sack, and place his hand upon its cold, human contents—we saw him start—shudder—and with uplifted hands he ran until out of sight. We siezed this, as the only favourable moment for escape, and carrying our treasure with us, reached the place which had been prepared for our reception.

If such a story were told to exercise a talent for invention, and to fill up an idle hour, it might not create much mischief, but, students cannot be too careful, even in the relation of facts, not to excite unmerited reproach.

The subject of post mortem examinations, intimately connected with the one under consideration, is one of sufficient importance to claim the serious and constant attention of the profession. It has been said that these examinations are solicited from a morbid curiosity, and not from any expectation that they will result in practical good. Such a charge, however, rests upon no solid foundation, and has been uttered without thought. If examinations of disease after death, were made to subserve individual purposes only, they should not be allowed. But, we maintain, that whatever is beneficial to the profession, contributes also to the public weal. The more correct our views of disease, the greater the benefits which we confer upon our patients. Our pathological knowledge would indeed be imperfect, if obtained exclusively from symptoms. We know that the brain is encased within the cranium—the heart and lungs within the chest—the stomach and liver within the abdomen, but without adding to an association of symptoms during life, a visual inspection of structure and changes after death, how imperfect would be our knowledge of their diseases. Post mortem examinations then, result in general good, and are often peculiarly beneficial to individuals and families. Circumstances may modify the general aspect of disease—some of the more common symptoms may be absent, or strange ones may have been superinduced. Families are endowed with peculiarities of mind and disposition, and why shall not disease appear with anomalous features? There are several symptoms

which are characteristic of Consumption, and especially when they exist at the same time, but, individuals have died whose lungs were almost a mass of tubercles, and, yet, their presence had not been indicated by pain, cough or expectoration. Disease of the lungs then, might progress and terminate fatally, without its presence being suspected, unless examinations shall have been made of those in the same family, similarly affected. Where is there a parent, who would not request that his own lifeless body be opened, if he thought that it would be the means of throwing light upon the diseases of his child? Or, where is there an individual, who, in view of its great value to a brother or sister, would withhold a similar request? We do not hesitate to say, that upon every man in community, there is as strong a demand, scientifically, socially and morally, to aid in post mortem investigations, as there is upon physicians to make them. And it is one of those important subjects upon which we should all unite, as in a common cause.

Post mortem examinations are often required when death is supposed to be the result of violence. Without them, the verdict of a jury of inquest might defeat the ends of justice, or pronounce guilt upon the innocent. There is no law which requires a physician to perform such service, and when rendered, he should receive an adequate remuneration. But in most instances, it is shamefully withheld, and for no better reason, than, that the information thus acquired is a sufficient recompense. Carry this principle to the tailor who cuts your coat—to the blacksmith who shoes your horse—to the lawyer who pleads your suit—and to the judge who decides upon your case, and how will it result? The skill and knowledge of each is improved by practice, but it is no reason why others should be permitted to dispose of this skill and this knowledge as their own. I have never yet learned, from any authentic source, that Doctors were not included in that brief, but comprehensive sentence, "The labourer is worthy of his hire." I know that public officers have now and then thought otherwise, but as we have the remedy in our own hands, we should compel

them to learn the lesson of reciprocal justice. Let me select a case, from the many which might be given, in illustration.

After an individual had been several days buried, it was rumored that his death had been caused by violence. The coroner, ever ready to discharge this part of his duty, requested two Physicians of high standing, to examine the body. They left their business, traveled seven or eight miles in the country, assisted in raising the corpse, and then instituted a careful and protracted dissection. It was a hot day in summer—the body was undergoing rapid decomposition—and the odour from it was sufficient to make Grahamites of all those who seat themselves astride the public purse, and in the name of protection ride it as a hobby. Well, after all this, what think you was the amount of the fee which they received? An hundred dollars? No. Fifty dollars? No. Twenty dollars? No. Ten dollars? No. Then how much did they receive? They received the enormous sum, and in actual cash, too, of two dollars and fifty cents! They were indeed fortunate, for others have rendered similar service, and without being rewarded even by thanks.

If young physicians were to reflect seriously upon the responsibility which they assume in making post mortem examinations to aid in a criminal prosecution, they would not *volunteer* their services. Upon their testimony, the liberty, and even the life of the accused might depend. Their own lives are not free from jeopardy, for by a prick or a cut from the knife, a poison from a putrid or contaminated body, has been introduced into the system, and with fatal results.

The question whether a knowledge of anatomy is essential to a clear understanding of disease, is one which will not justify discussion. All will admit the importance of this knowledge, although, there may not be an entire agreement as to the best means of obtaining it. Those who oppose the dissection of human bodies, claim, that by the aid of engravings and models we can acquire information enough for all practical purposes. They are doubtless of great value to the student—they create a deeper and more lasting impression upon the mind. And to



a certain extent their advantages may be compared with those of the map in acquiring a knowledge of Geography. But neither will convey to us any thing more than an outline of their several subjects. The soil might yield its grain—the rivers might flow on—and the tempest might lash the ocean wave into angry foam and to a mountainous height, but how imperfectly would they be represented by the map before us. Black lines cannot portray our green forests, and extended prairies—our vine covered hills and fertile vales. If we would know the extent and value of the mine, we must remove its surface, follow its veins, and examine their thickness—and then subject the ore to the heat of the furnace.

The direction of the blood-vessels and the proximity of important organs, may be learned from plates and models, but we can know but little of their structure, their intimate and essential relations, their functions or their several changes under the influence of disease, except by a laborious and protracted use of the knife. I have heard it said that the pills of some doctors would be as fatal to our gallant soldiers as the bullets of the Mexicans. Although such a remark may have been made in scorn, it contains much sober truth. Let us pause for a moment and indulge in a few illustrative thoughts. On the right is heard the report of cannon; on the left is seen the flash and smoke of battle; in the centre is a fierce and hurried conflict; there is a general and determined struggle for victory; numberless fortresses and masked batteries have accomplished their deadly work. "The ardour of the troops" has led them into unseen dangers, but by swift action and undaunted bravery they have triumphed. Do they all live and rejoice that they have sustained the glory of American arms and the honour of the American name? No. There lay prostrate in dust and gore, three hundred slain and two hundred groaning from their wounds. To whom shall we carry the man with the bleeding artery? The other with the shattered limb? the other with the fractured skull? the other whose jaws has been shot away? the other whose eye is hanging from its socket? Shall the

arrest of hemorrhage, the amputation of limbs, the extraction of balls, the stitching and dressing of wounds be entrusted to a fellow soldier, to a self-educated and self-constituted doctor, or to the Surgeon whose skill is founded upon knowledge acquired in the dissecting-room?

There is no subject, perhaps, upon which the judgment and the feelings have contended for supremacy more, than upon the subject of dissections. In the argument of the one, is presented the lifeless and decaying body—the dark, damp place of its deposit—the worms by which it must be speedily devoured—the suffering and claims of the living. In the argument of the other, is embodied a recollection of form and features—of kindred and affection—of thoughts and sensibilities, and they cannot be separated from the inanimate mass. When the bereaved mother, in her hour of lonely reflection, recalls the image of a child which death had taken from her, she does not dwell upon the stiffened limbs, the cold, damp brow, the attenuated cheek, the colourless lip, or the sunken eye, all rendered still more death-like by the long, white shroud. No. She thinks of it in its helplessness, when she nursed it in her arms and nourished it from her own body—or at a later period, when in its clean and neat summer dress, and with its ringlets flowing gracefully about its neck, it looked as gay as the butterfly, and as attractive as innocence itself; and when its spirit seemed too light and airy for the clouds of sorrow to rest upon it. She has, perhaps, lost her active, glad-some, thoughtless boy. She does not think of him as one of the putrid, ghastly, skeletonised tenants of the tomb, but as he appeared to her in the days of his infancy—or in more advanced childhood, when he was happy in rolling his hoop, or cracking his whip, and holding his imaginary steeds. And then with the speed of a celestial messenger, her mind escapes from its material encasement and enters the spirit world, when, she imagines that she can hear the consolatory and musical whisperings of her angelic children, and feel their spotless wings fanning her fevered cheek.

The mind is not willingly transferred from a contemplation of

man's organisation and endowments to his inevitable death and decay. We may think of ourselves as we are, and of our ultimate destiny, without remorse and without fear. But we shudder when we draw a portraiture of our own bodies in the shroud and coffin. The poet was never more true to nature—he never appealed to the judgment and the best feelings of the human heart more impressively and tenderly than when he penned the lines upon the burial of Sir John Moore. The spirit had departed—but the identity of the living man was there.

“ Not in sheet, nor in shroud they wound him,  
But he lay like a warrior taking his rest,  
With his martial cloak around him.”

How pleasantly and how soothingly do such faithful delineations glide over the memory.

The natural mind, finds great difficulty in becoming reconciled to an everlasting separation of the soul from the body. The Indian buries, with the warrior, his bow and battle-axe, and the ornaments which signalised him as a chief. And when a tribe is being driven from the land of their fathers, they gather up the bones which have been long buried, and carry them to their new homes, that when the departed spirit returns to claim its dust, it may not mourn in the midst of loneliness and desolation.

There are many persons, whose minds are in a high state of cultivation, who suppose that we are in constant communion with unseen spirits. How common is it for even the stout hearted man, in passing, at night, a place where one has been hung, or a murder committed, to seize his cane convulsively, to start at every noise, and almost to feel the nearness of some one, and his own coat sliding from his shoulders. In passing a graveyard, he sees a ghost behind every tomb-stone, and hears the rustling of their loose, flowing robes. And it is a happy moment, when he can suddenly close the door of his dwelling without being seized, and when light, instead of darkness, becomes visible.

The argument that the undying part of our natures inhabits the far distant spirit land exclusively, because we see it not, hear it not, feel it not, is not conclusive. Our bodies are under the constant influence of imponderable agencies, and yet, we are scarcely sensible of their presence, until the tall oak is in an instant rent in twain, and the fibres which have been hundreds of years accumulating, are scattered by the winds. The eagle leaves the crag and soars towards the sun. She is concealed from view as she spreads her wings and floats upon the upper clouds, but climb to her eyry, let one screech of distress escape from her young, and with one swoop she will fasten her talons upon you.

It is just that we should compare the feelings of others with our own under like circumstances. And, there is nothing to which this golden rule will apply with more force, than in exhumations and dissections. We have all been called to mourn over the loss of those, endeared to us by the ties of kindred or affection. We visit their graves, as the holy spots of earth. We plant around them the evergreen, as a token of our lasting remembrance, and we strew flowers over them, that the balmy air may be filled with fragrance. They are places, of all others, best calculated to excite our minds to serious and profitable reflections. In loneliness and in sadness we have sat upon the sod which covers them—reflecting upon the past, and indulging in hopes of the future—and we have never gone back to the busy world without being better prepared to enjoy its rational pleasures, and to endure its unavoidable ills. Would there have come up from the depths of any untenanted hillock such heart-felt influences?

Erect your monuments to commemorate the achievements of the heroic dead. Let the foundation of the one, be as broad and durable as Bunker Hill, and rear the peak of the other, high above the Rio Grande. Enclose within them the bones of those who fell in defence of the rights and honour of their country, and they will inspire a grateful and imitative spirit. But their influence upon the noble daring of men, would extend

into futurity no further than the echo from their sides, while those bones were permitted to moulder upon the soil of New England—to rot in the chapparel, or to lay scattered and to bleach around Monterey.

When the weary pilgrim traverses the subterranean passages in the catacomb walled with skulls, grim and hollow-eyed, he feels the full force of the inscription, "Remember that thou art dust." But when he leans against their cold sides, and beholds nothing but deep recesses and jutting rocks, he derives no profit for the future—no gratification worthy a place in the memory.

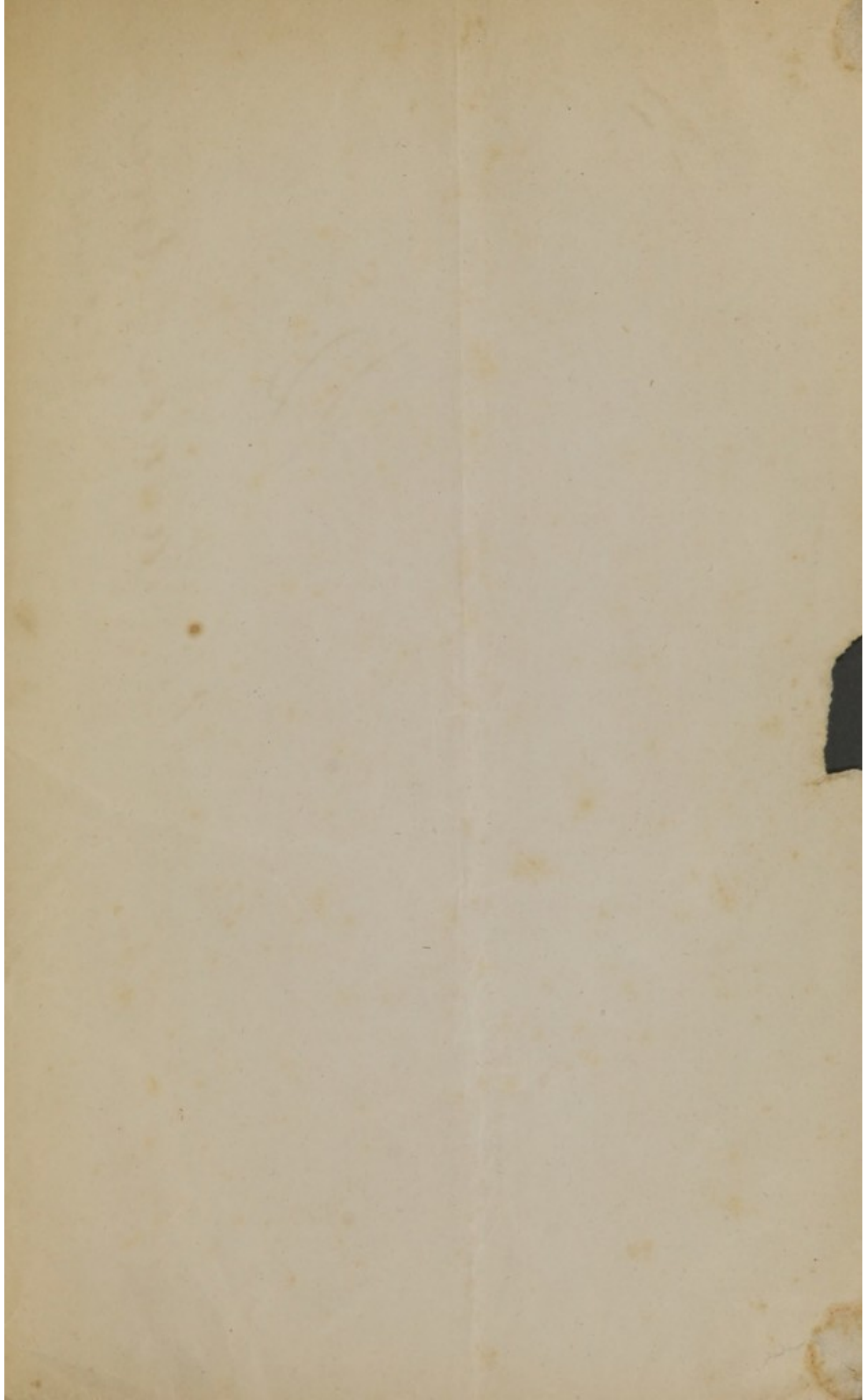
Nations, as well as individuals, cherish an affection for the dead. Not many years since, a ship spread her canvass to the breeze, and departed for "the lone isle of the ocean." The thoughts of millions accompanied her across the wide waste of waters. And why was this? Her commander had been commissioned to disentomb the once mighty Napoleon. Why not permit his manly form to remain beneath the sod which kindness and fidelity had implanted? While there, his ambition was placed in comparison with the boundless sea. The passions which urged him onward, found a faithful representative in the tempest which lashed with the ocean wave the rock bound shore. And why not allow his proud soul to continue in lonely communion with the spirit of the great deep? The sentiment of an enthusiastic people, whose armies he had so often led to victory, forbade it. They could visit the last resting place of other heroes and kings, but they were required to travel in imagination to St. Helena, and there search under the willow for the grave of him, who had been greatest among them. Feeling and expectation were manifested in one general shout, when the remains of the Emperor reached the shores of France, The column of Napoleon in the Place Vendome, echoes and reechoes victory upon victory, as it attracts the gaze of the passer by. But in the chapel of St. Jerome, is the tomb which contains the body of Napoleon. Upon the marble lay the hat of the warrior—the sword by which he had cut his way to the

throne—and the crown which he had worn as a king. There stand the Sentinels, in silence and in awe, as if in expectation of hearing a sepulchral voice demanding a legitimate descent of the sceptre. Who, in such a place, would not feel that there was terror in the silence, and majesty in the repose of the tomb?

Who, with an American heart, does not look to Mount Vernon as the central and redeeming spot of earth? The Father of his country is there. From his tomb issues an influence, as grateful to the feelings of his people, as incense from an holy altar. In it, are lessons of wisdom, of prudence, of devotion, of triumph. And even the bones of the loved one, may yet be the means of saving our happy land from the hands of the spoiler.

In our conduct towards the dead, let us not forget that they were once among the living. Our claims upon them, do not cancel their claims upon us. We can examine their frames, and turn to good account their curious workmanship, without handling them with brutal rudeness. An exercise of delicacy and tenderness, will not in anywise mar our dignity as men.







D.

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