

## **Appendix to the lecturers lectured.**

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Roberts, Samuel, 1763-1848.  
University of Leeds. Library

### **Publication/Creation**

Sheffield : printed by A. Whitaker & Co., 1835.

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Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

# APPENDIX

TO THE

LECTURERS LECTURED.

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SHEFFIELD:

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1835.

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APPENDIX

1870

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PRINTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

1870

## LATE RIOTS.

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TO THE EDITORS OF THE SHEFFIELD IRIS.

SIRS,—In a letter by “A Freeholder,” it is asserted that this town is likely not only to be *doctor-ridden*, but to be ridden by them to death; also, that eventually the wicked are ever entrapped in the works of their own hands. The present week has, in my opinion, afforded a strong and impressive instance of the truth of both of the foregoing assertions in the riots caused, as it seems to me, by the proceedings of a part of the medical men, which threatened, at one time, to have been attended with much loss of life, as well as destruction of property, far beyond what has taken place.

I now understand, that the party above alluded to have the modest assurance to assert that *I* have been the cause of the late disturbance. In refutation of this, I shall, in the first place, state the circumstance as it came to my knowledge, and my consequent conduct. I was coming down from home, after dinner, on Sunday, when I was met by two respectable young men, who were coming to inform me of a riot which they said suddenly began, about two hours before, in Eyre Street, in consequence of circumstances that had taken place at a building, for which I was in trust, used as a Surgeons’ Hall, by a certain number of medical gentlemen, who had separated themselves from the general body.

My informant stated that an alarming cry of *murder* issuing from the place, a number of neighbours and passengers hastened to it, and, on getting in, found two ferocious looking men and a woman, of much the same appearance, apparently all drunk and quarrelling; the latter stated that the men had been attempting to murder her, while the conduct of all three was so outrageous, that Mr. Raynor, the police surveyor, living near, was sent for. Mr. Raynor since states his belief, that had it not been for prompt assistance they would have murdered him. (The two men have been committed for the assault.) That the two men, after strong resistance, were secured, and sent off to prison; but, in the mean time, a great crowd had assembled, many of whom forced their way up the stairs. One of my informants went after some of them to get them down. In the first room he saw, he said, a skeleton suspended; in another was the body of a

man stretched on the floor ; in another room was a skeleton in an upright position at the back of the door ; and in a third, the bodies of a man and of a female, the latter partly operated upon, having one stocking on. The stench, however, of the whole of the rooms was so intolerable, that it made him quite ill, while the rush of the people up the stairs was become such that it was with difficulty he got down. The other, who did not go up stairs, had got a bone which he had taken from a lad in the street. They said that some of the police officers and constables being come, they had cleared the house, and that though the crowd had become very great, they trusted that there would be no more mischief done.

I did not then go near the place, but went straight to the church. Before leaving church, however, after service, I sent up to Mr. Albert Smith, as magistrates' clerk, to request that there might be a sufficient force kept upon the premises to afford protection to it. This was done, and remained during the night ; but, unfortunately, in the morning all of them, or nearly so, left the place, and in a very short time such a mob had assembled, and begun the work of devastation, as the civil force, when it came, could not repress. The military, however, arrived in time to save, it is probable, many lives, as the mob had begun the removal of the large timber which probably must have let the walls down upon them.

Now, it will be recollected by most of those who see this, that in October last, I published a small pamphlet entitled the 'The Lecturers Lectured ;' in which I stated the whole particulars of the transactions that had taken place, relative to the obtaining possession of the building in question, by the off-set Society of Medical Men, together with some allusions to the disagreement among themselves, which led to the separation. I do apprehend that there was not at that time a person, unconnected with the party, who read the statement (it has never been contradicted in any particular,) who did not condemn their conduct, as basely cruel, and disgraceful. It will there be seen that I had no remedy, though I am well convinced that their possession was illegal. Not for my own sake, but for that of those for whom I was in trust, I did all, but go down on my knees to them to induce them to relinquish possession, but in vain. I foresaw, and foretold, all that has since happened, as well as the scenes which are now well known to have since taken place in those premises, which it would be disgusting to describe. I told them that the public would never submit to such an unnecessary, abominable nuisance, and that if they had

any regard either for the public or themselves, they would give it up. The result is well known. I had, as they well knew, my hands tied behind me; and, therefore, though I knew pretty well what was going on, I have, I believe, scarcely ever mentioned the subject since to any one, till the occurrence of the late riot. So far, then, I think it will not appear to any one to have been *my fault*. Neither, I apprehend, will the proceedings which have taken place there since they have had the premises, be attributed to me, any more than their having put persons in the possession of the premises, whose character and conduct were the immediate cause of the riot.

The strong, and long continued exertions which I made before the passing of the Dissecting Bill, to prevent the enacting of a law, which appeared to me, so cruel, so unjust, and so wicked, must be remembered by a great proportion of the readers of this. I believed that, being at complete variance with what God requires, viz.—justice, mercy, and humble obedience, it never would, never could, prosper.

The oppression of the poor has always been the precursor of national tumult and national destruction.—There is no one in this town who has dared, as I have done, boldly and explicitly to condemn the conduct of the lower classes here, whenever they have suffered themselves to be misled to do wrong, by those whose motives they have since learned more duly to appreciate. I, then, am, in a particular manner, called upon to come forward with equal boldness to defend them, as well as I can, from the oppression and wrong of the higher classes. For the former, I can make many allowances, for the latter, I can make few, or none. The lower classes in this kingdom (I include now all who of late have been termed operatives,) are like a *high pressure engine*, possessing almost enormous power, and while not oppressed, constantly exercising that power for the public good; but too much may be laid upon it. If forced beyond its powers, nay, if it be forced even near the *extent* of its power, and any neglect, or accident to the safety valve occur, the consequence is an explosion, attended by destruction to all within its reach.

Unhappily, our Rulers, for some years past, have been so inattentive to this truth that they have blindly and stupidly been framing, and passing, Bills for the oppression of the poor, which are as inexplicable as they are base, cruel, and impolitic. In fact, there has been but few intelligible bills passed during the last four or five years. I shall particularly instance the Chimney Sweepers' Bill, the

Dissecting Bill, and the Poor Law Bill. All these are cruelly oppressing the poor, yet inexplicable. They must all be either rescinded, or completely new modelled. The question, as regards Dissecting is,—is the being subjected to dissection after death a punishment, or not? If it be, which I presume no one will deny, then I say that the law which subjects any particular class of persons to that punishment, without their having committed any crime, is cruel, unjust, and wicked. If the class so subjected to unmerited punishment be the *poor*, it is peculiarly impolitic and dangerous, since it must weaken their attachment to both the State and its Rulers, the final consequence of which a fool may discern.

We will now look at the stupidity of this horrible Dissecting Act. I have no doubt but that the framers of the Bill (for I do believe that not one twentieth part of the passers knew much, if any thing, about it) meant to give the Overseers of the Poor a right to give up to the surgeons for dissection any body (not claimed) being that of a person dying in the workhouse. But I deny that it *does so*—and I assert that they do it at their peril. I am no lawyer, and if I were, I should, like the rest, know perhaps very little about law, especially about modern laws—but I think that I can understand thus much. The law says that any *legal possessor* of a body, not being an undertaker, may (if he have not been legally forbidden) give it to the surgeons. A legal possessor, I apprehend, must possess in right of some law. Now, then, what law gives an Overseer a right to the body of a pauper? Not, I presume, the general common law—certainly not the old Poor Laws—nor the new Poor Laws, nor the Dissecting Law—how then is he a *legal possessor*? He dare not to keep the body from the next of kin, and if he be not the **LEGAL** possessor, he has no right to consign it to the surgeons. The Dissecting Bill does not *create* him a *legal possessor*, but, *if he be such*, it gives him the power of giving the body, under certain restrictions, for dissection. A precious law this truly, disgusting the people, opening the road, and throwing temptations in the way, of thousands, to crimes of almost all degrees, and of all kinds. While, at the same time, it is squandering the public money in maintaining *district INSPECTORS* with their expences, and hundreds a year, who never *inspect* anything but their perquisites—in fact they have not a “hand’s chair” given them to do. As if afraid after all that the surgeons should not obtain a sufficient number of bodies our humane and sapient rulers have passed a subsequent bill by which almost all paupers may be compelled to go into the work-

houses, so that now it must be rather difficult to induce the surgeons to take them all.

My throat, perhaps, not being a very wide one, I cannot always swallow what the surgeons wish me to do; for instance, their *assertion* that they only want so many bodies to dissect *for the good of the public*. Still the assertion may *possibly* be true; in which case, if the *public* be satisfied by their dissecting a tenth part of the present number, and the Surgeons continue to make their charges in the present way—they will have less trouble, save time, and get more money. Now had not they better try this plan for a year or two. I think that they know that the public is not unreasonable.

I must now, if they please, have a word in conclusion with these Right Honourable Gentlemen, who have, in my opinion, been the perverse authors of all the dreadful, riotous, proceedings of the last Sabbath and the two following days; and who, in consummation of their folly, are going about accusing *me* as being the author of the mischief which they have themselves produced, and of which I had forewarned them, and begged of them to avoid occasioning.

Pray, Honourable Gentlemen, did *I* apply to *you* to take the premises? Did not you know that I had the letting of them? Did you apply to me when you wanted them? Did you not take them of one whom you *knew* had not the power to let them? Did I not tell you, as soon as ever I heard of your having done so, that he had no such power, and that *I* would never agree to your having them? Did I not call upon you and state fully the cruelty, injustice, and impolicy of your persisting to keep a possession—your doing so being in my opinion totally illegal? Nay, did I not do all but go down on my knees to beg of you (on Mrs Roberts's account) to procure other premises? and did you not, in spite of all this, persevere in keeping possession? Did you not conduct the business within the walls of those premises in a way that gave rise to reports, exasperating the people against you? Did you not put persons in possession of the premises whose characters you knew were of the most horrible description? Did not they, on the Sabbath day, admit one other, at least as bad as themselves, and after all getting beastly drunk, did not these men attempt (if not to murder) greatly to abuse the woman? Did she not, amidst violent shrieks, assert and persist in the assertion that they intended to murder her? Was it not in consequence of these dreadful occurrences on the Sabbath day that the exasperated people were collected into a mob? Was it not by the brutal beings who were drunk in the house, that the life of Mr Raynor,



the police officer, was so greatly endangered, and have they not been committed for that offence? Do not you, Honourable Gentlemen, think that *one* large splendid building for dissecting purposes is quite enough for a town like this? Had not you, gentlemen, formerly—apart from the other medical men—a dissecting house in another part of the town belonging to one of your body? Did not you render it so annoying that he would not have it there any longer? Did you not then join those other medical gentlemen at the Surgeons' Hall, in Surrey Street? Did you not then soon throw all into confusion—quarrel, part, and abuse them in no very polite terms in a letter which you sent to them? And was it not after all this that, well knowing that nobody would let you a place of his own for the purpose—that you applied for, and obtained in the way that you did—my premises in Eyre Street?

All the foregoing things I believe you did; and from the first it has been my endeavour to prevent the mischief which I foresaw, and foretold, must be the consequence. Yet you, conceiving my hands were tied,—which, indeed, they *were*,—regardless of my entreaties and prognostications, dared to set me and common prudence at defiance. You have now, however, set me at liberty, and I shall dare now for the future to act for myself.

Whatever bodies may be decreed by law to be operated upon, ought, I think, to have the official seal of the District Inspector—if there is to be one—or of the Coroner for the district, affixed to it, and it ought to be felony for any person whatever to operate upon a body not so sealed. A list of the whole ought to be annually published.

SAMUEL ROBERTS.

Sheffield, Jan. 31, 1835.