

**Observations respectfully addressed to Members of Parliament / Benjamin Travers.**

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# OBSERVATIONS

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**RESPECTFULLY ADDRESSED TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT.**

THE ANATOMY BILL, now before the House of Commons, is so objectionable in some material points, that a more particular consideration of its operation and consequences, should it pass into a legal enactment, is earnestly to be desired.

The source of supply is so easy and ample, that although fenced by strong restraints in the shape of penalties for the violation of its conditions, on the part of buyer and seller, it will still act as a stimulus to the worst passions of men ; and not only encourage a repetition of the nefarious crimes which have been lately brought to light, but will assist to screen them from detection. A man who would commit murder for *ten* pounds would not shrink, under urgent circumstances, to do it for *two*. The absence of the motive is the only security against the propensity, and the motive is the most powerful of all, the love of money.

In every instance, and it is to be feared there are many, in which a Lodging-House-Keeper has a poor and friendless inmate, the body of that inmate may become a security against loss, and an incentive to murder.

Nor could the Licensing of Anatomical Schools, nor hedging round the License with legal penalties, much less, leaving the violation of the law to the exclusive cognisance of the Attorney General, put an end to the practice of Burking, so long as the transfer of bodies is a matter of legal traffic by sale and purchase.

The desiderata for the common interests and protection of the public and the medical profession, and they are inseparable, are :---

I. The Legalisation of Anatomy.

II. The Licensing of Schools of Anatomy, and the prohibition to practice anatomy, except in the Licensed Schools, under a heavy penalty. Excepting always such examinations to ascertain the appearances after death, as are practised by permission or desire of relatives, in the house in which the deceased died.



III. The Official Registration of the Licenses.

IV. The Official Supervision of the Schools by Inspectors duly authorised.

V. To permit resident Owners and Masters of Houses, Governors or Superintendants of Institutions, public and private, of every denomination, to deliver up for anatomical purposes, the dead bodies of persons, their lodgers or inmates, who have died without friends, or whose relations consent to such appropriation, the contrary not having been expressed by such persons before death, to a Licensed Anatomical School, through the medium and with the approbation of the Inspector, provided always, a certificate of the illness and cause of death by a duly authorised medical practitioner be delivered with the body.

VI. To require that the certificate delivered with each body should be registered by the Teacher of the School to which such body is conveyed; and that the register be always open to the Licensing Authorities.

VII. To provide a salary for the persons appointed to inspect and superintend the transfer of dead bodies out of a fund arising from the supply of the Schools.

VIII. To make it a misdemeanor, punishable by fine or imprisonment at the suit of the party aggrieved, for any person to obtain money in or by the aforesaid transfer, or by the sale of bodies.

The Bill is good, inasmuch as it suggests the source of supply above mentioned; the delivery of certificates; and the appointment of Inspectors; and as it repeals the offensive penal statute condemning the bodies of murderers to dissection; but the removal of this need not be accompanied by the infliction of others, even more odious. No punishment can reach the dead, nor does any enactment, of this description, produce any salutary influence upon the living. But that should not be made by association odious, which the laws of humanity render indispensable, viz: the dissection of the dead human body; therefore the substitution of other posthumous penalties is objectionable, not to say disgraceful, in an age and country emerged from a state of barbarism.

I think it may fairly be questioned, whether the Secretary of State for the Home Department is the proper person in whom to vest the power of granting Licenses for Schools of Anatomy, and appointing Inspectors for their Regulation.



It is with the deepest conviction of the importance of the Bill, and the most earnest desire for its speedy and full success in the prevention of crime and the promotion of science, that I offer at such a moment these observations. But as it would be more consistent with a sense of moral duty that ten should die for want of anatomical knowledge in the Surgeon, than that one should be murdered for the purpose of obtaining that knowledge, let the temptation to assassination, now unhappily discovered to be equally easy of perpetration and concealment, be removed, first, by rendering bodies an illegal object of traffic, and then by opening the abundant sources of supply abovementioned. But while they can be bought and sold, the fluctuations of a market, perfectly undefined by License or qualification, will furnish a continual inducement to Burking.

It would in my opinion be injurious to the interests of the Medical Profession as well as to those of the public at large, that Anatomy should be practised except in Licensed Schools, or that Licenses should be granted without due examination of the claims of applicants by competent authorities.

BENJAMIN TRAVERS, F. R. S.

*Surgeon to St. Thomas's Hospital.*

Bruton Street,  
January 30th, 1832.

It is with the deepest conviction of the importance of the Bill, and the most earnest desire for its speedy and full success in the prevention of crime and the promotion of science, that I offer such a moment these observations. But as it would be more consistent with a sense of moral duty that I should die for want of anatomical knowledge in the Surgeon, than that one should be murdered for the purpose of obtaining that knowledge, let the temptation to assassination, now unhappily discovered to be equally easy of perpetration and concealment, be removed, that by rendering bodies an illegal object of traffic, and then by opening the abundant sources of supply (unmentioned). That while they can be bought and sold, the fluctuations of a market, perfectly unregulated by license or qualification, will furnish a continual inducement to killing.

It would in my opinion be injurious to the interests of the Medical Profession as well as to those of the public at large, that Anatomy should be practised except in licensed Schools, or that licenses should be granted without due examination of the claims of applicants by competent authorities.

BENJAMIN TRAVERS, F.R.S.