

Mr Howell adds that these examples are not adduced for the purpose of casting obloquy on the eminent physicians of that day, who vainly endeavoured to reduce to practice in the nineteenth century the standard, but obsolete, doctrines taught almost universally in the medical schools, but solely for the purpose of displaying the state of the science of Public Health in the year 1831-32, as far as the physicians of highest reputation and largest practice may be taken as its exponents.

It need hardly be said that it is with this purpose only that these facts are again cited here.

CHAPTER III.

LONDON CONTINUED—LITERARY AND OTHER WORK,
1820-1834.

THE 'Treatise on Fever' held an important place in the development of that sanitary ideal to the realisation of which my grandfather afterwards devoted himself almost exclusively; but in the course of the years which are treated of in this chapter, he wrote much on other subjects.

During this time severe money losses had necessitated the breaking up of the establishment in Trinity Square; retrenchment became a duty; Mrs Southwood Smith went abroad with the three children of the second marriage¹ to carry on their education; and (his two elder daughters, Caroline and Emily, being engaged

¹ Herman Southwood, born 1820, died 1897; Christina and Spencer, died in childhood.

in teaching away from home) my grandfather once more retired to a strictly studious and professional life at his consulting-rooms in New Broad Street, giving much time to literary work, including the writing of a large number of physiological articles for the 'Penny Encyclopædia.'

Dr Southwood Smith at this period assisted in founding the 'Westminster Review.' This Review, supported as it was by men of great ability and earnest thought, took, as is well known, a leading place in the promotion of the political and social reforms of the day.

His own contributions to it were many. Besides the articles on "Quarantine and Sanitary Laws" already mentioned, the one on "Education," which appeared in the first number, may be specially referred to.

There was also one calling attention to the horrors arising from there being no proper provision for supplying the anatomical schools with the means of dissection, which led to very practical results.

"Body-snatching" is now an extinct crime. Such was the name given to the practice of robbing graves of the bodies of the dead in order

to sell them for the purpose of dissection. Such practices were an outrage against all the feelings which render the resting-places of the dead hallowed spots. One can imagine the horror which the friends of the newly interred must have experienced in finding that their graves had been violated during the night; and worse still were the midnight scenes when the work was interrupted by the police, and struggles ensued.

The men who carried on this trade were called "resurrection-men": they were a depraved and dangerous class, and if the state of things then existing had caused no other evil than that of educating such a class, it would still have been worth much effort to get it remedied.

Without bodies for dissection medical education was impossible, and at that time there was only one legal means by which they could be obtained: those of executed criminals were made over to the medical profession for the purpose of dissection. But this source was, happily, even then a scanty one. Until, therefore, some other provision was made, the employment of "resurrection-men," though against the law, and in itself

revolting to the professors of anatomy, was a necessity.

The difficulty was an increasing one. The wretched men whose trade it was to supply the medical schools were punished with imprisonment and heavy fines, and were, not unnaturally, regarded with abhorrence by the mob—such abhorrence that it was often difficult to protect them from its fury when arrested. In Scotland, especially, this popular feeling was so strong that disgraceful outrages were committed against those even *suspected* of being concerned in exhumation; the churchyards were watched, and the obstacles in obtaining subjects for the schools had become so many that the students were fast deserting them. Indeed throughout Great Britain it appeared as if there would soon be a general desertion of all the native schools, and that students would go to Paris for the education they could not get at home.

In the article by Dr Southwood Smith which first called public attention to these evils, he points out, in a very striking manner, the paramount necessity of a supply of subjects. He reminds his readers of the wild theories of former

times when anatomical knowledge was not possessed, and enforces on their attention the fact that this knowledge can only be acquired, with any degree of perfection, by means of dissection. He further reminds them that no operation can be performed without torture to the living, and danger to life itself, by the hand of a surgeon unpractised in dissection; and no clear judgment formed by the physician on the diseases of the human frame—diseases generally seated in organs hidden from the eye—without a study of the internal structure.

After shortly passing over the evils of the system then prevailing, which have just been pointed out—evils which were then very generally known—he suggests the remedy,—a very simple one. It was, to cease to give the bodies of executed criminals for anatomical purposes, and thus in a measure to take off the stigma on dissection; and then to appropriate to that purpose the bodies of all those who die in hospitals and workhouses *unclaimed by relatives*.

Nothing was done for some time, till in 1828, three years after this paper was written, there came the horrible discovery that the difficulty

of obtaining subjects from the churchyards had become so great that two men, Burke and Hare, had resorted to murder to supply the need—the temptation having been the large price to be obtained for bodies.

When things had come to this climax, legislative attention was aroused. At this time the article which had appeared in the 'Westminster Review' was reprinted as a pamphlet, under the title of 'The Use of the Dead to the Living.' In this form it went through several editions, a copy being presented to members of both Houses of Parliament.

The measures recommended in it were mainly adopted by the Legislature, and have proved completely successful.

There is something at first sight sad in a plan which lets anything that is painful in the thought of such an appropriation of the bodies of the dead fall exclusively on the poor. This did not fail to suggest itself to my grandfather's mind. But it is to the survivors alone that such pain comes, and these friendless ones would have none left to shrink from this use of their remains. Such were to be chosen for the necessary purpose, not

because they were "poor," but because they were "unclaimed." Neither was any pain arising from this arrangement to be compared with that springing from the forcible seizure of bodies in the old times. Out of *that* arose, necessarily, scenes of horror revolting to all sense of the respect due to the dead; while their quiet removal from the hospital to the anatomical school, to be followed, after the necessary dissection, by their burial, is widely different. It seemed, moreover, that the interest of the poor specially demanded a widespread anatomical knowledge in medical men, since they, more than all others, suffered when the means of gaining it were limited. "Poverty, it is true," my grandfather writes, "is a misfortune; poverty, it is true, has terror and pain enough in itself. No legislature ought by any act to increase its wretchedness; but the measure here proposed is pregnant with good to the poor, and would tend, more than can be estimated, to lessen the misery of their condition. For it would give knowledge to the lowest practitioners of the medical art—that is, to persons who are at present lamentably deficient, and into whose hands the great bulk of the poor fall. And, after all, the

true question is, whether the surgeon shall be allowed to gain knowledge by operating on the bodies of the dead, or driven to obtain it by practising on the bodies of the living. If the dead bodies of the poor are not appropriated to this use, their living bodies must be, and will be. The rich will always have it in their power to select, for the performance of an operation, the surgeon who has signalised himself by success; but that surgeon, if he has not obtained the dexterity which ensures success by dissecting and operating on the bodies of the dead, must have acquired it by making them on the living bodies of the poor."

It was said at the time by objectors that the measure in question would deter patients from entering the hospitals, and add terrors to work-houses, but experience has proved that my grandfather was right: the adoption of his plan has not been found to have the slightest effect of the kind.

In considering the work of this period of my grandfather's life, I ought not to omit to mention his lectures, which were full of the same earnestness and originality that characterised all he did. He was lecturer at the Webb Street School of Anatomy, where he gave a course on "Forensic

Medicine," which made much impression at the time. He gave also courses of popular lectures on physiology at the London Institution and elsewhere. To those at the London Institution ladies were admitted—a permission unusual in those times.

One lecture, delivered on a very remarkable occasion, must be mentioned here. My grandfather was the friend and physician of Jeremy Bentham, and was called upon, after his death, to perform a duty which he had solemnly undertaken. The venerable philosopher died in 1832 at the age of eighty-five, and by will desired that his body should be used for the purposes of dissection. He intrusted to Dr Southwood Smith, in conjunction with two other friends, the task of seeing this disposition properly fulfilled, trusting that they would not be deterred by opposition or obloquy.

This disposition of his body was not a recent act. By a will, dated as far back as 1769, it was left, for the same purpose, to his friend Dr Fordyce. The reason at that time assigned for this is expressed by Bentham in the following remarkable words:—

"This my will and special request I make, not out of affectation of singularity, but to the intent and with the desire that mankind may reap some small benefit by my decease, having hitherto had small opportunities to contribute thereto while living."

By a memorandum affixed to this document it is clear that it had undergone revision as lately as two months before his death, and that this part of it, originally made when he was twenty-one, was again deliberately and solemnly confirmed by him at eighty-five.

In thus appropriating his remains to the service of mankind, Bentham carried out, to the last moment of his life, and even after his death, his principle of "Utility."

The subject of dissection was agitating the public mind: the "Anatomy Bill" was not yet passed, and the idea might well present itself to a benevolent mind such as his, that to show a thorough absence of horror or dislike to the idea of being dissected after death would be a means of lessening the prejudice which existed against it.

Whatever may be thought of the "greatest happiness principle" of this philosopher, it did

not cause him to lead a selfish or epicurean life. The long calm expanse of eighty-five years was filled with simple pleasures, with hard work, and contained many sacrifices to the cause of truth.

My grandfather bears his testimony to the wonderful energy and self-devotion of Bentham during his life in these words:—

"Bentham's object was no less a one than to construct an all-comprehensive system of morals and an all-comprehensive code of laws. For the accomplishment of a work so prodigious he put forth an energy commensurate to the end. The extent of mental labour required for this undertaking, and actually brought to it, is truly extraordinary. Every day for nearly half a century did he devote to it never less than eight hours, often ten, and sometimes twelve."

And now, when this busy life was stilled, my grandfather was bound to carry out as fully as possible Bentham's wish that in death too he might be useful. He delivered the oration over the body, in the Webb Street School of Anatomy, on the evening of the 9th of June 1832. One who was there thus writes of it:—

"None who were present can ever forget that impressive scene. The room is small and circular, with no windows, but a central skylight, and was filled, with the exception of a class of medical students and some eminent members of that profession, by friends, disciples, and admirers of the deceased philosopher, comprising many men celebrated for literary talent, scientific research, and political activity. The corpse was on the table in the centre of the room, directly under the light, clothed in a night-dress, with only the head and hands exposed. There was no rigidity in the features, but an expression of placid dignity and benevolence. This was at times rendered almost vital by the reflection of the lightning playing over them; for a storm arose just as the lecturer commenced, and the profound silence in which he was listened to was broken, and only broken, by loud peals of thunder, which continued to roll at intervals throughout the delivery of his most appropriate and often affecting address. With the feelings which touch the heart in the contemplation of departed greatness, and in the presence of death, there mingled a sense of the power which that

lifeless body seemed to be exercising in the conquest of prejudice for the public good, thus co-operating with the triumphs of the spirit by which it had been animated. It was a worthy close of the personal career of the great philosopher and philanthropist. Never did corpse of hero on the battle-field, with his martial cloak around him, or funeral obsequies chanted by stoled and mitred priests in Gothic aisles, excite such emotions as the stern simplicity of that hour in which the principle of utility triumphed over the imagination and the heart."

In the year 1834 my grandfather published his book entitled 'The Philosophy of Health,'¹ the preparation of which had been a work of great care, and had occupied much time for several years before. This book, which was, perhaps, the first attempt to bring the truths of human physiology within the comprehension of the general reader, achieved a marked success. It was full of the clearness and force which characterised all the writings of its author. The strides of modern science have now, of course, left its physiological teaching far behind,

¹ Longmans, 1834.

but at the time it did original educational work and added lustre to his name.

His life in chambers must have been an arduous one—first at 36 New Broad Street, afterwards at 38 Finsbury Square,—his days given up to his ever-increasing practice, his mornings and evenings to writing: the amount achieved was prodigious, and he allowed himself but little relaxation.

I may mention that it was at this time that my grandfather first visited at the house of old Mr Gillies, a city merchant of refined literary tastes and the father of the two distinguished women, Mary and Margaret Gillies (author and artist), who afterwards became the friends for life of himself, his wife, and daughters, and in whose home he—and I with him—had rooms in Kentish Town and afterwards at Highgate, though he occupied for professional purposes the rooms in the city to which I have before referred.

CHAPTER IV.

WORK ON THE FACTORY COMMISSION, 1833.

IN the year 1833 it became clear that some legal interference was necessary with regard to Factories.

In order to understand the abuses which existed in factories in 1833, we must revert to the system of employment at the end of the last century and trace its gradual development.

At that period all the spinning and weaving of the country was domestic, the spinning being carried on in farmhouses and scattered cottages in rural places by the mothers and daughters of the families, and the weaving by men working in their own homes in towns and villages. This peaceful state of things did not last beyond the beginning of the present century. The "spinning-jenny" and "power-loom" were invented,