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## History of the Anatomy Act of Pennsylvania

W. S. Forbes

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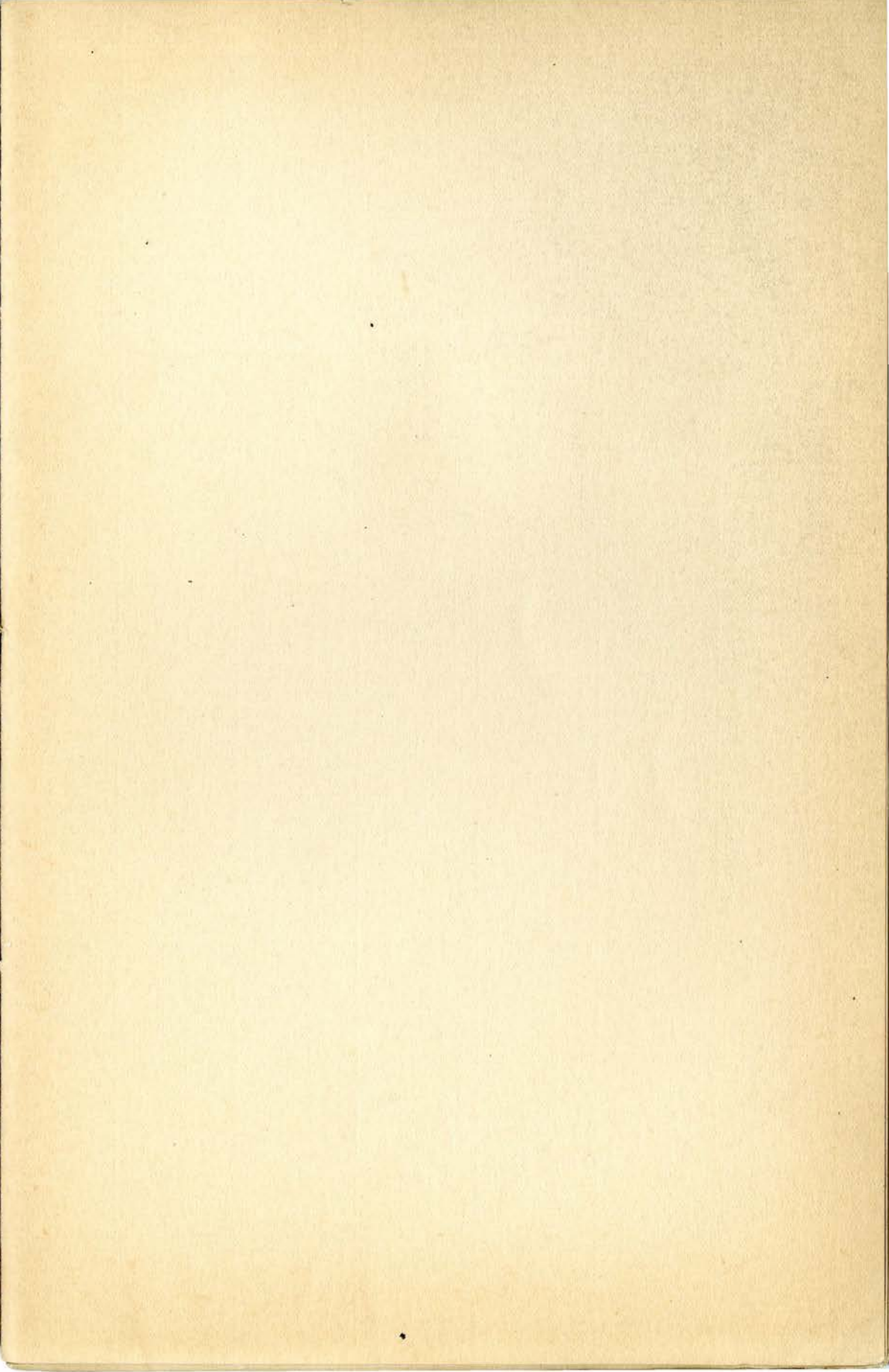
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HISTORY OF THE ANATOMY  
ACT OF PENNSYLVANIA

BY

W. S. FORBES, M.D.



ANATOMY - ACT

HISTORY  
OF THE  
ANATOMY-ACT  
OF  
PENNSYLVANIA

BY  
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Jefferson Medical College Hospital

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THE PHILADELPHIA MEDICAL PUBLISHING COMPANY  
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1898

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED  
TO  
STUDENTS OF MEDICINE  
BY THEIR FRIEND  
THE AUTHOR

This history of the Anatomical Act was prepared in accordance with the request of the W. S. Forbes Anatomical League of Jefferson Medical College.

THE W. S. FORBES ANATOMICAL LEAGUE OF JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE.

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HISTORY OF THE FIRST ANATOMY-ACT OF PENNSYLVANIA.

At a stated meeting of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, held February 6, 1867, Dr. W. S. Forbes offered the following resolution:

*Resolved*, That a committee of three be appointed to present the views of this College to the Legislature of the State, urging the passage of a law sanctioning the dissection of dead human bodies."

He said: "In presenting this resolution and asking its adoption by the college, it may be proper to state how legislative enactment, authorizing and regulating the dissection of unclaimed dead human bodies, will enhance the cultivation of the study of anatomy.

"Two considerations present themselves at the very threshold of the matter. One is general in its nature, representing the broad catholic principle of being right in itself, and embraces the very root of everything that is accurate, and useful, and learned in medicine. The other is entirely local in its character, and interesting to us as physicians of a great medical metropolis. These considerations gravely appeal to this body for sanction in its highest corporate capacity, and impel us to ask for legislative action.

"In regard to the first consideration, that of its being right in itself, I am free to confess, in this learned body it would be out of place to do more than announce so manifest a statement.

"I shall therefore address myself at once to the examination of the remaining consideration, namely, that of its being interesting to us as physicians of Philadelphia. And I trust it may not be thought impertinent

in me to state, by way of preface, that after having been a teacher of anatomy and operative surgery in this city for ten years,<sup>1</sup> to classes numbering in the aggregate near a thousand students, some of them now within the sound of my voice, I may be supposed to know something of the difficulties in the way of obtaining sufficient *material* for purposes of practically teaching so large a number of young gentlemen.

"In view of the fact that our city contains now three-quarters of a million of inhabitants, I think it is idle to suppose there is not an ample number of *unclaimed dead bodies* in this city and commonwealth to satisfy the demands of all who may come for the purpose of cultivating a knowledge of anatomy, both healthy and morbid. In what then is the difficulty?

"I believe it consists entirely in the fact that as there is no law of the Commonwealth by which our physicians can claim these dead bodies, to be used for medical investigation, the authorities in whose hands they are lodged do not feel themselves at liberty to give them up for any purpose, however laudable.

"They are therefore buried, and are afterward obtained surreptitiously by a third party, the so-called 'resurrectionists,' who engage in a degrading traffic, and sell them to the highest bidder, and as it is well known that the anatomists of medical schools in distant States send here every winter to supply their dissecting-rooms, the debasing trade is stimulated, and the practical teachers here and elsewhere find themselves in unworthy competition with each other. Consequently the price demanded, and often obtained, is such as to tempt the resurrectionist to enter private cemeteries and graves, and even to commit murder, as was the case in

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Forbes opened "The College Avenue Anatomical School" at the southeast corner of Tenth Street and College Avenue (now Chant Street above Chestnut), in March, 1857.

Edinburgh, in 1829,—all tending to bring obloquy on anatomical teaching, to deter the student from pursuing his studies with that degree of diligence which is requisite for his future usefulness, and to the injury of our city as a seat of medical learning.

"During the civil war, when a surgeon of volunteers, and particularly as Medical Director of the 13th Army Corps, U. S. Volunteers, before and during the siege of Vicksburg, in 1863, I had ample opportunities of being a painful witness in observing the want of a practical knowledge of anatomy, on the part of many surgeons. And I can attribute this ignorance only to the obstacles in the way of having freely and systematically dissected the dead body during their novitiate and afterwards.

"Believing this to be the case, and with the view of removing one very great difficulty, I drew up the following 'Act,' and submitted it last winter to the Legislature of the State:

“ AN ACT

*For the Promotion of Medical Science, and to prevent the Traffic in Human Bodies.*

“SECTION 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in General Assembly met, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That the Inspectors and Superintendent of any county prison, the Board of Guardians of any City or County Almshouse, the Coroner of any County, or any other public officer having charge thereof or control over the same, shall give permission to any physician or surgeon of the same county, upon his request made therefor, to take the bodies of such persons dying in such prison, almshouse, or county, as are required to be buried at the public expense, to be by him used within the State for the advancement of medical science, preference being given to medical schools, public and private; and said bodies to be distributed to and among the same, equitably, the number assigned to each being proportioned to that of its students; provided, however, that if the deceased person, during his or her last sickness, of his or her own accord, shall request to be buried; or if any person, claiming to be, and satisfying the proper



authorities that he is of kindred to the deceased, shall ask to have the body for burial, it shall be surrendered for interment; or, if such deceased person was a stranger or traveler, who died suddenly, the body shall be buried, and shall not be handed over as aforesaid.

“SECTION 2. Every physician or surgeon, before receiving any such dead body, shall give to the proper authorities surrendering the same to him, a sufficient bond that each body shall be used only for the promotion of medical science within this State, and whosoever shall use such body or bodies for any other purpose, or shall remove the same beyond the limits of this State; and whosoever shall sell or buy such body or bodies, or in any way traffic in the same, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall, on conviction, be imprisoned for a term not exceeding five years, hard labor, in the county jail.’

“This Act passed the House of Representatives, but in the Senate a member objected to it as being unworthy of the age in which we live, and as his influence was of weight in that assembly, it was thought proper to withdraw the ‘Act,’ until a more propitious time.

“In view of which I now desire to have the sanction of this body, believing that coming from such high authority, and exerted in so just a cause, there can be but one issue to the event.”

The resolution was duly submitted, and the college unanimously passed it.

The committee appointed were,

DR. W. S. FORBES,  
DR. S. D. GROSS,  
DR. D. HAYES AGNEW.

At a stated meeting of the College of Physicians held April 3, 1867, Dr. Forbes, chairman of the committee appointed to present the views of the college to the Legislature of the State, urging the passage of a law sanctioning the dissection of dead human bodies, read the following report:

“MR. PRESIDENT:—The committee appointed to present the views of this college to the Legislature of the State, urging the passage of a law sanctioning the dissection of dead human bodies, respectfully report, that they convened, and concluded to express the views of the college in the form of a statutory act, and ask that it be made a law. Accordingly, the paper drawn up, and read, and shown to the college by Dr. Forbes, the mover of the resolution, appointing this committee on the 6th of February, entitled ‘An Act for the Promotion of Medical Science, and to prevent the traffic in human bodies,’ was approved and placed in the hands of Senator Wilmer Worthington, of Chester, a doctor of medicine, and a gentleman whose high character and influence materially advanced our cause, with the request that he would read it in place, and ask its passage by the Senate. This Act provides that the bodies of all persons to be buried at public expense shall be given to any physician or surgeon of the same city or county claiming them for the promotion of medical science; and that an equitable distribution of these bodies shall be made, preference being given to medical schools, public and private; and that they shall in no case be taken out of the State, and that no traffic in them whatsoever shall exist. The Senate referred the Act to a committee, which adopted a negative report, and pre-

sented it the following day. Senator Worthington then asked the Senate to recommit the Act, and that permission be granted the college committee to appear and explain their views. This was granted.

"Your committee determined to go to Harrisburg for this purpose, and as one of their number, Dr. Gross, was unable, from professional and other engagements, to accompany them, Dr. Henry Hartshorne was invited to unite with and assist them in their endeavors. Dr. Hartshorne consented, and your committee would acknowledge his services.

"Your committee found the legislative mind opposed to the passage of our Act, and it became necessary to explain its virtues with becoming care, for it was called a 'Ghastly Act,' with more temper than wisdom, by leading representatives.

"It was submitted that the Legislature had granted charters to a number of medical institutions which based their instruction on a knowledge of anatomy, and yet there was no law permitting the examination of the human body. That in the courts of the Commonwealth the physician was liable to be arraigned for malpractice, in cases of accident requiring surgical treatment, and yet he was debarred from obtaining the very knowledge he was required to display under heavy penalties.

"That owing to the absence of such a law as was now presented for their sanction, giving all *unclaimed dead bodies* to the medical institutions, the price demanded and obtained by the degraded and debased creatures who engage in the traffic, known as the resurrectionists, became a temptation to commit murder, as in the case of Burke, who at Edinburgh, in 1829, slew fifteen innocent human beings, for the purpose, as he confessed at his trial, of obtaining four guineas from the medical schools.

"That it was only when the cause of this dreadful crime became known the British Parliament, in view of the necessity of anatomical investigation, passed the so-called Warburton Act, which was found in a measure to subserve the purposes for which it was intended.<sup>2</sup>

"That graves and private cemeteries were entered, and the dead bodies brought to the dissecting-table here, and frequently sent to distant cities for purposes of anatomical instruction, were often sought after by sorrowing friends much to the chagrin of the anatomist, and maledictions applied to his pursuit.

"These, with other arguments, were advanced, and finally, it was gravely observed that, as it was impossible in the nature of things to prevent the examination of the dead body of man, and as there was no law of the Commonwealth regulating the matter, it was manifest the bodies of distinguished legislators themselves, after a life full of good works, were no longer safe in their graves, but were liable to be rudely disturbed.

"After this interview the Senate committee presented an affirmative report.

"When called up on its final passage some days after in the Senate, it was objected that unless the provisions of this Act were restricted to Philadelphia, it ought not to pass, on the ground that the views of the constituents of the rural representatives were not known on the subject.

"The chairman of the college committee being present on the occasion, was asked if it would suit the views of the college to restrict the provisions of the Act to Philadelphia, with the remark that if it did not, the Act probably could not pass. The chairman, being alone at the Capitol at this time, assumed the responsibility of saying that he believed the College of Physicians had

<sup>2</sup> See *Lancet*, vol. ii, 1831-32. Curiously enough, the Warburton Act, while legalizing dissecting, does not prevent the traffic in dead bodies.

the catholic desire of having the benefit of the Act extended to every part of the State, but certainly if it could not be obtained for their neighbors, they would receive it themselves. At the same time he observed it would be well to reflect that from the very title of the Act, 'to prevent the traffic in dead bodies,' if the restriction spoken of was made, while the traffic could not exist in Philadelphia, it might be otherwise in the State at large. Yet such was the prejudice against the Act the restriction was made, and when the vote was being taken, a Senator from Allegheny asked to have his district included with Philadelphia, which was done, and the Act passed the Senate.

"It became necessary, on a subsequent visit, when the Act came before the House, to address the same arguments to the members of the House of Representatives, and they approved the action of the Senate.

"The Governor of the State was seen, and made the occasion of a third visit to the Capitol, and your committee rejoice to announce our Act became a law on the 18th of March, 1867.

"It reads as follows :

"AN ACT

*For the Promotion of Medical Science, and to prevent the Traffic in Human Bodies in the City of Philadelphia and County of Allegheny.*<sup>3</sup>

"SECTION 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in General Assembly met, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That any public officer in the City of Philadelphia or County of Allegheny, having charge thereof or control over the same, shall give permission to any physician or surgeon of the same city or county, upon his request made therefor, to take the bodies of deceased persons

<sup>3</sup> The States of New York and Massachusetts have passed laws on this subject somewhat similar to this one. See Revised Statutes of New York, 5th edition, vol. ii, page 67; General Statutes of Massachusetts, 1860, page 195.

required to be buried at the public expense, to be by him used within the State for the advancement of medical science, preference being given to medical schools, public and private; and said bodies to be distributed to and among the same, equitably, the number assigned to each being proportioned to that of its students; provided, however, that if the deceased person, during his or her last sickness, of his or her own accord, shall request to be buried; or if any person, claiming to be, and satisfying the proper authorities that he or she is of kindred to the deceased, shall ask to have the body for burial, it shall be surrendered for interment; or, if such deceased person was a stranger or traveler, who died suddenly, the body shall be buried, and shall not be handed over as aforesaid.

"SECTION 2. Every physician or surgeon, before receiving any such dead body, shall give to the proper authorities surrendering the same to him, a sufficient bond that each body shall be used only for the promotion of medical science within this State; and whosoever shall use such body or bodies for any other purpose, or shall remove the same beyond the limits of this State; and whosoever shall sell or buy such body or bodies, or in any way traffic in the same, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall, on conviction, be imprisoned for a term not exceeding five years, at hard labor, in the county jail.

(Signed)

"L. H. HALL,

"Speaker of the Senate.

"JOHN P. GLASS,

"Speaker of House Rep.

"Approved March 18, 1867.

"JOHN W. GEARY, Governor.'

"Such is the law obtained from our Legislature through the action of this college in its corporate capacity.

"A law, the humane provisions of which were first partially established in Edinburgh<sup>4</sup> in 1505, and yet more extended in France after the revolution of 1798, and under the First Empire; and the wisdom of which was observed by the British Parliament in a statute

<sup>4</sup> See *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, October 1866. "Historical Sketch of the Edinburgh Anatomical School, by John Struthers, M.D., F.R.C.S., Edinburgh, Professor of Anatomy in the University of Aberdeen."

only of late, when a frightful crime revealed its necessity.

"All of which is respectfully submitted.

"Signed by the committee.

"W. M. S. FORBES, M.D., *Chairman.*

HALL OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, }  
Thirteenth and Locust Streets, April, 1867. }

On motion of Dr. Rodman, the College of Physicians unanimously passed a vote of thanks for "the able and successful exertions" made to obtain this law.

After the passage of the above Act a voluntary association of the teachers of anatomy was formed in Philadelphia. This association was composed of the demonstrators in the chartered and private schools of anatomy. By-laws were agreed upon and an equitable distribution of the unclaimed bodies was begun accordingly—the number assigned to each school being proportioned to that of its students. For some years the number of bodies thus obtained was sufficient.

This voluntary association of anatomists in Philadelphia continued in operation until it was superseded by the Act of June, 1883, which extended the Act of 1867 to every county in the State, and provided specifically the machinery for the equitable distribution of the unclaimed bodies required to be buried at the public expense. It will be remembered that the Act of 1867 was necessarily restricted to Philadelphia and the County of Allegheny. (See page 14.)

As the number of medical students coming to Philadelphia increased, however, and as knowledge of a higher grade in anatomy, very properly, was exacted of every student, a greater number of dead bodies was needed.

In a few years it was discovered that in the Act of

1867 the words "*shall give permission* to take the bodies of deceased persons required to be buried at the public expense," did not bind certain officials who had control of the bodies. Thus, when these bodies were asked for more than one of the officials said, "Yes, go and take them, permission is given, that is the law," it was found that these very bodies now so civilly permitted to be taken, had already vanished. They could not be found.

The *Medical News*, of Philadelphia, in its issue of 23d December, 1882, says, in relation to the Coroner and the unclaimed bodies under his control: "Indeed, he (the Coroner) states, that in accordance with his view of the law (the Act of 1867) it is his duty to have them buried, and that after he has given the certificate of death his control over them ceases."

The Coroner owned and conducted at this time the Philadelphia School of Anatomy. As the head of a private school of anatomy he was a member of the Association of Anatomists having the *equitable* distribution of the unclaimed bodies. At a meeting of this association held at the College of Physicians during the last week of 1882 for the purpose of revising and extending the Act of 1867, I moved that the words "give permission" be stricken out and the word *deliver* be inserted, so that the act would read, "That Coroners (and other mentioned officials) shall deliver such body or bodies," etc.

The Coroner then arose in his seat and objected, saying, among other things, that he warned us such wording of the act would defeat its passage in the Legislative Assembly.

I replied, that if the words "shall deliver" were not inserted, experience taught us the law would not be worth the paper upon which it was printed. I moved that the advice of counsel be sought, which was done.

The words "shall deliver" are now in the law, and form its chief binding quality.

On Wednesday, March 21, 1883, the following editorial appeared in the *Germantown Telegraph* newspaper:

#### MEDICAL SCIENCE VINDICATED.

On Saturday last, Dr. Forbes, Demonstrator of Anatomy in Jefferson Medical College, who was on trial in the Court of Quarter Sessions in this City, on a charge of conspiracy to rob the graves in Lebanon Cemetery of the bodies of the dead, was after a full and fair trial acquitted of the charge, and left the court amid the congratulations of his friends and of the public. It appeared by the testimony in the case that Jefferson Medical College educates annually six hundred students in the science of medicine, and that an indispensable part of the training is that each one of these students shall in the course of his term dissect entirely one human body. Dr. Forbes being in charge of that department, had of course received the bodies for dissection and kept a record of them, but was careful not to know from what source they were obtained. Many of course came from the almshouses, the hospitals, the prisons, the public institutions, from Potter's Field, from the Coroner's office, and from other sources peculiar to the unclaimed dead. But in the case under trial it appeared that a number of bodies of colored persons had been taken from Lebanon Cemetery—from trenches or deep pits in which dozens of dead bodies were buried in common, and which but for that regular relief would soon have been overflowing. A sensation newspaper reporter employed one of the private detectives of Pinkerton's police bureau, and between them they worked up the case so successfully as to have caught some of the parties engaged in carrying off the bodies. There is a bill now pending in the Legislature, which it is to be hoped will pass, making it lawful to supply medical institutions with bodies for dissection from the public sources named above.

#### UNREASONING CLAMOR CONDEMNED.

From the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

The result of the trial of Dr. Forbes is precisely that which was expected by all fair and intelligent men. The prosecution was begun under the pressure of a great and unreasoning public clamor, and it is the highest tribute to the wise integrity of our courts that, unaffected by public clamor, a case of so much importance has been determined in strict accordance with the highest principles of law and justice.

It is not my purpose at present to write an account of this trial. I will do this on some future occasion. Some strange characters appeared both in and behind the scene in court. It is sufficient now to state that this trial in the Court of Quarter Sessions in Philadelphia is a part, a very important part, of the history of medical education in the United States, in that it forced the public and the legislative mind to extend the beneficent act of 1867 to every county of the State, and forced the officials, the Coroners included, to deliver up under penalty the bodies under their control that are to be buried at the public expense. The delivery of the dead bodies under the control of the Coroner and all other officials is thus made mandatory. Many States of the Union have now adopted this law.

The trend of the medical mind of the country on this whole matter may be obtained from an examination of the medical journals of this period extending from November 1882, to May, 1883, notably the *Medical News* of Philadelphia, December 9, 1882, and December 23, 1882, and the *New York Medical Journal* of January 13, 1883, and again March 24, 1883, the *Medical Times* of Philadelphia, March 10, 1883, and the *Medical and Surgical Reporter* of March 24, 1883.

The arrest was made December, 1882. The trial began three months afterwards, on Monday, and continued until the following Saturday, the 17th of March, 1883.

From the day of arrest to the end of the trial, certain newspapers of the city during this entire period, with the most determined rancor, continued to arouse the public to a great pitch of excitement.

These newspapers can now be seen in the public libraries of the city.

The contumely thus cast at me injured me in many ways, and, sad enough, it alienated certain friends who were near to me.

These misfortunes came upon me while in the line of my duty. I was striving, and it has always been my endeavor, to place the teaching of practical anatomy, with the sanction of law, on a sure, safe, and lasting foundation, knowing that it embraces the very root of everything that is accurate and useful and learned in medicine.

I may be permitted to rejoice that this is now accomplished for the benefit of our portion of the English-speaking people.

The following has been furnished me by the secretary of the Philadelphia County Medical Society :

"From minutes of meeting, January 3, 1883: On motion the order of business was suspended to permit the introduction of the following resolution offered by Dr. W. S. Forbes :

"*Resolved*, That a committee of three be appointed to present the views of this society to the Legislature of the State urging such alteration in the Act entitled 'An Act for the promotion of Medical Science and for preventing traffic in human bodies, as may further promote the designs of the original Act.'"

The resolution was adopted and the committee appointed. The following petition with the Act appended was presented to the Legislature :

## PETITION.

*To the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.*

The petition of the undersigned respectfully shows that they present herewith the draft of "An Act for the Promotion of Medical Science by the Distribution and use of Unclaimed Human Bodies for Scientific Purposes, through a Board Created for that Purpose, and to Prevent Unauthorized Uses and Traffic in Human Bodies," which they pray your honorable bodies to enact into a law for the following reasons :

It will increase the necessary facilities for medical education within this State, and will materially aid in preventing desecration of burial grounds. Your petitioners do not deem it necessary to argue the point that the repeated dissection of the human body is necessary before any student of medicine should be allowed to take charge of the health and lives of the community. No woman in childbirth, no person the victim of accident, no sufferer from disease is safe in the hands of men ignorant of the structure of the human body.

The only proper method to supply this knowledge is to furnish by law the bodies of those who have no friends or relatives whose feelings could be wounded by their dissection. This was done by the Anatomy Act of 1867. But this Act is defective in that its application is limited to the counties of Philadelphia and Allegheny, and an adequate supply of unclaimed dead human bodies is not furnished, and it does not provide specifically the machinery for an equitable distribution of the dead bodies so given for dissection.

In the Session of 1881-2, there were in the Dissecting and Operative Surgery Classes of the Philadelphia Medical and Dental Colleges 1,493 students. Each student pursues his studies in anatomy during two years. If he be allowed to dissect one-half of one body a year—including also the practise of operations upon the same—this would require 746 dead bodies. The professors would need for their lectures about 50 more, making in all 796 "subjects." But during that same session the number actually available for use from all sources was only 405. This is only one-half of the smallest number reasonable, to say nothing of the desirableness of a larger number to afford all the facilities a great Commonwealth should give its citizens, who can obtain their needful knowledge in no other way that is lawful.

That it is "needful" one will readily see when it is remembered that the want of such knowledge renders doctors liable to suits for malpractice, which suits are upon the calendar of well nigh every court of the State. The scanty supply is due to the fact that the unclaimed dead of *one county* are the only ones that are given for dissection, although the students come from all parts of this State in large numbers, as well as from other parts of this and other countries. (The present law, it is true, applies to Allegheny County, but this is practically of no use to the Philadelphia Colleges.)

During the ten years, 1873-1883, at the Jefferson Medical College and the University of Pennsylvania alone, out of a total number of over 10,000 students, there were 2,686 from Pennsylvania; of this number 1,172 were from Philadelphia and 1,514 from other parts of the State. In view of these important facts it would seem but just that the unclaimed and uncared-for dead who must be a burden upon the taxpayers of the several counties of the State for burial, should be given to the medical schools to supply this urgent need for dissecting material by students from every county in the State.

And your petitioners will ever pray, etc.

## AN ACT

For the promotion of medical science by the distribution and use of unclaimed human bodies for scientific purposes through a board created for that purpose and to prevent unauthorized uses and traffic in human bodies.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted, etc.,* That the professors of anatomy, the professors of surgery, the demonstrators of anatomy and the demonstrators of surgery of the medical and dental schools and colleges of this Commonwealth, which are now or may hereafter become incorporated, together with one representative from each of the unincorporated schools of anatomy or practical surgery, within this Commonwealth, in which there are from time to time, at the time of the appointment of such representatives, shall be not less than five scholars, shall be and hereby are constituted a board for the distribution and delivery of dead human bodies, hereinafter described, to and among such persons as, under the provisions of this act, are entitled thereto. The professor of anatomy in the University of Pennsylvania,\* at Philadelphia, shall call a meeting of said board for organization at a time and place to be fixed by him within thirty days after the passage of this act. The said board shall have full power to establish rules and regulations for its government, and to appoint and remove proper officers, and shall keep full and complete minutes of its transactions; and records shall also be kept under its direction of all bodies received and distributed by said board, and of the persons to whom the same may be distributed, which minutes and records shall be open at all times to the inspection of each member of said board, and of any district attorney of any county within this Commonwealth.

SECTION 2. All public officers, agents and servants, and all officers, agents and servants of any and every county, city, township, borough, district and other municipality, and of any and every alms-house, prison, morgue, hospital, or other public institution having charge or control over dead human bodies, required to be buried at the public expense, are hereby required to notify the said board of distribution or such person or persons as may, from time to time, be designated by said board or its duly authorized officer or agent, whenever any such body or bodies come to his or their

A board for the distribution and delivery of certain dead human bodies constituted.

Meeting of the board to be called.

Powers of the board.

Records to be kept.

And to be open to inspection.

Officials having charge of dead bodies to notify the board.

\* Professor Joseph Leidy, A.M., M.D., LL.D., etc., was the Professor of Anatomy in the University of Pennsylvania at this time. Professor Leidy called the first meeting of the board for organization and presided at this meeting, and was elected its first President. Professor Leidy continued to preside at every annual meeting of the board until his death in 1891.

And deliver the same without fee or reward.

To be used in the cause of medical science.

Notice not to be given when bodies are claimed by relatives.

Nor when the person was a traveler.

Distribution of bodies regulated.

Physicians may be designated by the board to receive bodies.

Certain schools, &c., to be preferred.

Bodies to be held twenty-four hours.

Carriers may be employed.

Bodies to be enclosed.

Receipts to be taken for bodies.

Schools, &c., to give bond before receiving bodies.

To be approved

possession, charge or control, and shall, without fee or reward, deliver such body or bodies, and permit and suffer the said board and its agents, and the physicians and surgeons from time to time designated by them, who may comply with the provisions of this act, to take and remove all such bodies to be used within this State for the advancement of medical science, but no such notice need be given nor shall any such body be delivered if any person claiming to be and satisfying the authorities in charge of said body that he or she is of kindred or is related by marriage to the deceased, shall claim the said body for burial, but it shall be surrendered for interment, nor shall the notice be given or body delivered if such deceased person was a traveler who died suddenly, in which case the said body shall be buried.

SECTION 3. The said board or their duly authorized agent may take and receive such bodies so delivered as aforesaid, and shall, upon receiving them, distribute and deliver them to and among the schools, colleges, physicians and surgeons aforesaid, in manner following: Those bodies needed for lectures and demonstrations by the said schools and colleges incorporated and unincorporated shall first be supplied, the remaining bodies shall then be distributed proportionately and equitably, preference being given to said schools and colleges, the number assigned to each to be based upon the number of students in each dissecting or operative surgery class, which number shall be reported to the board at such times as it may direct. Instead of receiving and delivering said bodies themselves, or through their agents or servants, the board of distribution may, from time to time, either directly or by their authorized officer or agent, designate physicians and surgeons who shall receive them, and the number which each shall receive: *Provided always however*, That schools and colleges incorporated and unincorporated, and physicians or surgeons of the county where the death of the person or such person described takes place, shall be preferred to all others: *And provided also*, That for this purpose such dead body shall be held subject to their order in the county where the death occurs for a period not less than twenty-four hours.

SECTION 4. The said board may employ a carrier or carriers for the conveyance of said bodies, which shall be well enclosed within a suitable encasement, and carefully deposited free from public observation. Said carrier shall obtain receipts by name, or if the person be unknown by a description of each body delivered by him, and shall deposit said receipt with the secretary of the said board.

SECTION 5. No school, college, physician or surgeon shall be allowed or permitted to receive any such body or bodies until a bond shall have been given to the Commonwealth by such physician or surgeon, or by or in behalf of such school or college, to be approved by the prothonotary of the court

of common pleas in and for the county in which such physician or surgeon shall reside, or in which such school or college may be situate, and to be filed in the office of said prothonotary, which bond shall be in the penal sum of one thousand dollars, conditioned that all such bodies which the said physician or surgeon, or the said school or college shall receive thereafter shall be used only for the promotion of medical science within this State, and whosoever shall sell or buy such body or bodies, or in any way traffic in the same, or shall transmit or convey or cause to procure to be transmitted or conveyed said body or bodies, to any place outside of this State, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding two hundred dollars, or be imprisoned for a term not exceeding one year.

SECTION 6. Neither the Commonwealth nor any county or municipality, nor any officer, agent or servant thereof, shall be at any expense by reason of the delivery or distribution of any such body, but all the expenses thereof and of said board of distribution shall be paid by those receiving the bodies, in such manner as may be specified by said board of distribution, or otherwise agreed upon.

SECTION 7. That any person having duties enjoined upon him by the provisions of this act who shall neglect, refuse or omit to perform the same as hereby required, shall on conviction thereof, be liable to a fine of not less than one hundred nor more than five hundred dollars for each offense.

SECTION 8. That all acts or parts of acts inconsistent with this act be and the same are hereby repealed.

APPROVED—The 13th day of June, A. D. 1883.

ROBT. E. PATTISON,  
Governor.

Such is now the law of this Commonwealth. All of which is respectfully submitted.

W. S. FORBES, M.D.,

*Professor of General, Surgical and Descriptive Anatomy,  
and Clinical Surgeon to the Jefferson  
Medical College Hospital.*

Jefferson Medical College,  
Philadelphia, 1898.

by the prothonotary and filed.

Amount of bond.  
Condition.

Traffic in bodies prohibited.

Penalty.

Expenses of delivery, &c., regulated.

Punishment for violation of act.

Repeal.



