

FUNERAL OF THE LAST MALE ABORIGINAL.  
MUTILATION OF THE BODY.

On Saturday afternoon the remains of " Billy Lanné " or as he was generally called "King Billy," the last male Aboriginal of Tasmania, were committed to the grave in presence of a very large concourse of the citizens. On the announcement of the "death of the last man," it was generally supposed that the funeral would be made a public affair, and that some part in the arrangements would be taken by the Government; the first announcement made, however, was simply to the effect that the funeral would move from the establishment of Mr. Millington, Undertaker, of Murray-street, at 9 a.m. on Saturday, and inviting friends of the deceased to attend. As previously stated by us, the body had been removed from the Dog and Partridge Hotel, where the man died, to the dead-house at the Hospital, and on an order being sought for its removal to the undertakers, it was declined, on the ground that as the body was of the greatest scientific value, the authorities were determined to do all in their power to protect it. An application to the Colonial Secretary met with the same reply, and the hon.

Sir Richard Dry sent positive instructions to Dr. Stokell that the body of "King Billy" should be protected from mutilation, on this subject, however, we have more to communicate presently. On its being ascertained that the authorities were taking no steps respecting the obsequies, the matter was taken in hand by Mr. J. W. Graves, and invitations were issued to a number of old colonists and natives, requesting their attendance, the funeral being postponed until 2 o'clock. At that hour between fifty and sixty gentlemen presented themselves at the institution, and found all in readiness for the burial. Rumours had, meanwhile, got afloat to the effect that the body had been tampered with, and Capt. McArthur, Mr. Colvin, and some others interested in the deceased, from his connection with the whaling trade, requested that the coffin should be opened in order to satisfy their minds that the ceremony of burial was not altogether a "vain show." This was done by Mr. Graves, and the body was seen, by those who desired to see it, in the condition which will be hereafter described. The lid was then again screwed down, and at the suggestion of some of those present the coffin was sealed. In connection with this part of the proceedings a singular accident occurred. On a seal being asked for, it was found that there was not such a thing in the institution, but on a search being made in the dispensary an old brass stamp was found, and on its being impressed upon the wax, it left the simple word "world." What such an odd seal could have been cut for is unknown, but its turning up under such circumstances, and its accidental use to seal down the coffin of the last man of his race, is a circumstance so singular as to be worth recording. Having been duly sealed, the coffin was covered with a black opossum skin rug, fit emblem of the now extinct race to which the deceased belonged ; and on this singular pall were laid a couple of native spears and waddies, round which were twined the ample folds of a Union Jack, specially provided by the shipmates of the deceased. It was then mounted upon the shoulders of four white native lads, part of the crew of the Runneymede, who volunteered to carry their aboriginal countryman to his grave. Their names were, John Silvester, John Timms, James Davis, and George Attwell. The pall was borne by Captain Hill, of the Runneymede, himself a native of Tasmania, and by three colored seamen, John Bull, a native of the Sandwich Islands, Henry Whalley, a half-caste native of Kangaroo Island, S. A., and Alexander Davidson, an American. The chief mourners were Captain McArthur, of the whaling barque Aladdin, and Captain Bayley, owner of the whaling barque Runneymede. Among the mourners were nearly all the masters of vessels in port, and many gentlemen connected with the whaling trade. There was also a large muster of old colonists and native born Tasmanians. As the procession moved along Liverpool and Murray streets to St. David's Church it gathered strength, and was followed by a large concourse of spectators. The Rev. F. H. Cox read the service, and preceded the body to the grave, clothed in his surplus. On leaving the church the procession numbered from a hundred to a hundred and twenty mourners, and the event re-called to the minds of the old colonists present many an interesting episode of the early days of the colony, and of

that race, the last male representative of which was about to be consigned to his tomb. At the cemetery the Rev. Mr. Cox read the second portion of the impressive burial service of the English Church, and the grave closed over "King Billy" the breast-plate on whose coffin bore the simple inscription "William Lanné, died March 3rd, 1869. Aged, 34 years."

#### MUTILATION OF THE BODY.

Notwithstanding the precautions above referred to, the body of poor "King Billy" has not been respected, nor does the grave around which so many persons gathered on Saturday, contain a vestige of Tasmania's "last man." It is a somewhat singular circumstance that although it has been known for years that the race was becoming extinct, no steps have ever been taken in the interests of science to secure a perfect skeleton of a male Tasmanian aboriginal. A female skeleton is now in the Museum, but there is no male, consequently the death of "Billy Lanné" put our surgeons on the alert.

The Royal Society, anxious to obtain the skeleton for the Museum, wrote specially to the Government upon the subject, setting forth at length the reasons why, if possible, the skeleton should be secured to them. The Government at once admitted their right to it, in preference to any other institution, and the Council expressed their willingness at any time to furnish casts, photographs, and all other particulars to any scientific society requiring them. Government, however, declined to sanction any interference with the body, giving positive orders that it should be decently buried; nor did they feel at liberty to give their sanction to any future action which might be taken; although it is needless to say that so valuable a skeleton would not have been permitted to remain in the grave, and possibly no opposition would have been made to its removal, had it been taken by those best entitled to hold it in the interests of the public and of science, and without any violation of decency. Besides the Royal Society, it seems that there were others who desired to secure "Billy Lanné's" skeleton, and who were determined to have it in spite of the positive orders of the Colonial Secretary.

The dead-house at the Hospital was entered on Friday night, the head was skinned and the skull carried away, and with a view to conceal this proceeding, the head of a patient who had died in the hospital on the same day, or the day previously, was similarly tampered with and the skull placed inside the scalp of the unfortunate native, the face being drawn over so as to have the appearance of completeness. On this mutilation being discovered the members of the Council of the Royal Society were greatly annoyed, and feeling assured that the object of the party who had taken the skull was afterwards to take the body from the grave, and so possess himself of the perfect skeleton, it was resolved to take off the feet and hands and to lodge them in the museum, an operation which was carefully done. The funeral then took place as above described. On the mutilation of the bodies in the dead-house becoming known, a letter was addressed by the Colonial Secretary to Dr. Stokell, requiring a report upon the case, and we have it upon the very highest authority that Dr. Stokoll reported the circumstances much as they are described above, informing the Colonial Secretary that the only persons who had been present in the dead-house during Friday night were a surgeon, who is one of the honorary medical officers, his son, who is a student, and the barber of the institution, and neither of those persons were seen to remove anything from the hospital. It is believed, however, that the skull was thrown over the wall at the back of the dead-house with a string attached to it, and that it was scoured by a confederate stationed in the creek on the other side.

Those reports occasioned a very painful impression among those present at the funeral, and a deputation consisting of Messrs. Colvin, McArthur, and Bayley, waited upon Sir Richard Dry in the evening, and requested that steps should be taken to have the grave watched during the night. Sir Richard at once acquiesced in the proposal, and instructions were given to the police, but in some way they miscarried, possibly owing to the fact that they were not communicated through His Worship the Mayor, and the consequence was that the grave was found disturbed yesterday morning, when Constable Mahony reported that the earth had been removed, that a skull had been found lying on the surface, that a part of the coffin was visible, and that the ground surrounding the grave was saturated with blood. During the morning this report spread through the city, and several hundreds of persons visited the cemetery in the afternoon. On the facts being communicated to Sir Richard Dry, he, in company with the hon. Attorney-General, visited the grave, where they were met by Mr. J. W. Graves. The skull found on the surface was buried in their presence, and a general examination of the ground was made. Whether any other step will be taken respecting the violation of the grave we are unable to say. The visit of ministers to the grave was, we

understand, consequent upon a report that the coffin had been removed, and had this been the case a search warrant would have been issued at their instance, as executors of "Billy Lanné," with instructions in the event of any portions of the body being found in the course of its execution, that they should be taken possession of Sir Richard and Mr. Dobson satisfied themselves, however, of the presence of the coffin, and therefore no step was taken, as it is doubtful whether any legal property in the body exists. Many rumors are afloat as to what has become of the body, and the men employed in the cemetery state that blood was traced from the grave to the gate opposite the stores of the Anglo-Australian Guano Company in Salamanca Place, but that there the traces were lost. There can be little doubt that the body has been secured by the individual who made off with the head, and possibly the fact that it is minus feet and hands may yet lead to the restoration of that important portion, as the skeleton will be comparatively valueless unless perfect.

We have been informed by the Hon. Sir Richard Dry that Dr. Crowther waited upon him on Saturday morning prior to the mutilation being reported, and made a request that the body should be granted to him, in order that he might secure the skeleton for the Royal College of Surgeons, England. Sir Richard Dry informed the Doctor of the prior claim of the Royal Society, and expressed his opinion that if the skeleton was to be preserved at all, it should be in the Hobart Town Museum, where all scientific enquiries respecting the aboriginal race would most probably be made. Dr. Crowther concurred in this view, and received an assurance from Sir Richard that, should any future opportunity present itself of securing a skeleton for the Royal College of Surgeons from among the graves of the aborigines without violating the feelings of individuals or of the community, that should he Sir Richard continue in office, no impediment would be placed in Dr. Crowther's way. The report and other documents connected with the proceedings at the dead-house of the hospital have been referred to the Chairman of the Board of Management of that institution, and it is understood that an inquiry will be at once instituted.

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