

## LINES ON A SKELETON.

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REWARD of two hundred and fifty dollars, offered more than three-quarters of a century ago, for the discovery of the identity of the author of "Lines on a Skeleton" was as unsuccessful in attaining its object as had been the search made by the literary world of Great Britain, and it now seems scarcely likely that the person who wrote this remarkable poem will ever be known as its author.

The story of the finding of the manuscript is to the effect that in the year 1820 an attendant in the Museum of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, in London, came upon a couple of sheets of paper lying near a human skeleton. Glancing at the sheets, he saw that they contained verses. The ink with which they had been written was scarcely dry, and the idea occurred to the finder that they might have been penned by some official of the institution. Accordingly he took the sheets to one of his superiors, and in the course of the next few days the manuscript passed through the hands of several well-known medical men who were wont to visit the college. One of these gentlemen copied the verses and sent them to the *Morning Chronicle*, which promptly printed them.

The poem made a marked impression on the public mind, and earnest efforts were made by several prominent literary people to discover the identity of the author.

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### ANONYMOUS.

BEHOLD this ruin! 'Twas a skull  
Once of ethereal spirit full.

This narrow cell was Life's retreat,  
This space was Thought's mysterious seat,  
What beauteous visions filled this spot,  
What dreams of pleasure long forgot,  
Nor hope, nor joy, nor love, nor fear,  
Have left one trace of record here.

Beneath this moldering canopy  
Once shone the bright and busy eye,

But start not at the dismal void—  
 If social love that eye employed,  
 If with no lawless fire it gleamed,  
 But through the dews of kindness beamed,  
 That eye shall be forever bright  
 When stars and sun are sunk in night.

Within this hollow cavern hung  
 The ready, swift, and tuneful tongue;  
 If Falsehood's honey it disdained,  
 And when it could not praise was chained;  
 If bold in Virtue's cause it spoke,  
 Yet gentle concord never broke—  
 This silent tongue shall plead for thee  
 When Time unveils Eternity!

Say, did these fingers delve the mine?  
 Or with the envied rubies shine?  
 To hew the rock or wear a gem  
 Can little now avail to them.  
 But if the page of Truth they sought,  
 Or comfort to the mourner brought,  
 These hands a richer meed shall claim  
 Than all that wait on Wealth and Fame.

Avails it whether bare or shod  
 These feet the paths of duty trod?  
 If from the bowers of Ease they fled,  
 To seek Affliction's humble shed;  
 If Grandeur's guilty bribe they spurned,  
 And home to Virtue's cot returned—  
 These feet with angel wings shall vie,  
 And tread the palace of the sky!