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### THE SKULL OF SIR THOMAS BROWNE

Mr. Edmund Owen, writing from the Athenæum Club to the "Times," says—  
"In October, 1682, all that was mortal of the author of "Religio Medici" was laid in the family vault in the church of St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich.

"In 'Urn Burial,' when referring to the lifeless body being destroyed by fire, Sir Thomas Browne seems almost to be taking a look into the dim future, for he writes:—'To be knav'd out of our graves, to have our skulls made drinking-bowls . . . are tragical abominations escaped in burning burials.'

"This gentle writer lay peacefully in his coffin of lead until the year 1840, and, according to the inscription affixed to it, turned it into gold by the dust of his alchemic body. But in 1840 some workmen who were opening the vault broke the lid of the coffin and revealed its contents. Impious hands then 'knav'd' away the head of the corpse, which, somehow or other, afterwards found its way into the museum of the Norwich Hospital, where the skull has ever since been kept with reverential care. Professor Osler (a devout worshipper at the shrine of Sir Thomas Browne) having lately enclosed it in a crystal casket. But in a pathological museum this skull cannot be claimed as of educational value, and it looks there sadly out of place. It seems to me that the right thing would be to have it substituted by a perfect plaster cast and to replace the original in its coffin. The name-plate from the lid of the coffin which was 'knav'd' with the skull has properly been put back in its place.

"We may be sure that when this desirable restoration is made, the vicar will signal the event by having a peal rung out on those glorious bells of St. Peter Mancroft, which will be heard with delight by all Norwich, and will find a happy echo in the heart of every one who knows the 'Religio.' And now is the proper time, late though it be, to undo the sad act of vandalism, so that it may come as a fit ending to the tercentenary of the birth of Sir Thomas Browne, which has just been held with perfect success in the city which he so greatly loved and in which he died."