

EXECUTION, CONFESSION, AND A LIST OF ALL THE HORRID MURDERS COMMITTED BY BURKE, ALSO THE DECISION ABOUT HARE'S CASE.

This day, Wednesday 28th Jan, 1829, William Burke underwent the last sentence of the law, for the murder of Mrs Docherty, one of the victims of the West Port Tragedies. At an early hour, the spacious street where the scaffold was erected, was crowded to excess ; and all the windows which could command a view, were previously bespoken, and high prices given for them.

Burke was brought from the Calton Hill Jail betwixt Tuesday night and Wednesday morning. At the moment the coach arrived at the entrance to the Lock-up, by the front of the County Hall, the unhappy man might have heard the busy clanking of the hammer of the men employed in putting up the scaffold, where he was shortly to make his final exit. It was wisely considered by the authorities, that the prisoner and the assistants at the execution should be so prepared before leaving the Lock-up, that no useless time should be spent on the drop, accordingly, after spending the morning in prayer, and going through the ceremonies practised by the Roman Catholic Church, a few minutes after 8 the procession moved up by Libberton's Wynd, at the head whereof was the scaffold.

When he presented himself on the Scaffold, the crowd, to their shame and utter propriety of decency, gave three triumphant cheers, which were heard at a great distance.

After a very short conference with Mr Reid, the Catholic clergyman he, precisely at a quarter past eight, impatiently threw away the handkerchief and surrendered his guilty soul to his Maker. His struggles were long and violent, and his body was agonizingly convulsed. We observed that his fall was unusually short, scarcely more than three inches, the noose instead of being as is usual, immediately behind his ear, was at the very summit of the vertebrae. We should have mentioned that when the rope was placed about his neck there was a universal cry raised of "Burke him;" and, during the whole of the horrible process, there were repeated cries of Hare, Hare. A precentor or clerk was upon the scaffold, as it had been arranged that he should exercise his function; but such were the indications of the feelings of the populace, that those in authority saw it prudent to dispense with this part of the ceremony. Great attempts were made by the Magistrates, officers and others in attendance, upon the scaffold, by signals, to silence the mob during the putting up of prayers; but their efforts were altogether ineffectual. At every struggle the wretch made when suspended, a most rapturous shout was raised by the multitude.

When the body was cut down, at three quarters past eight, the most frightful yell we ever heard was raised by the indignant populace, who manifested the most eager desire to get the monster's carcase within their

clutches, to gratify their revenge, even after the law had been satisfied, by tearing it to pieces. They were only restrained by the bold front presented by the police. We observed the persons under the scaffold, with knives and scissors, possessing themselves of part of the rope and even slipping into their pockets some of the shavings from the coffin. The scramble at this time was of the most extraordinary nature ever witnessed at an execution in this country.

On Friday, the public were admitted to see the body of Burke, previous to dissection, and upwards of 21,000 saw it, from 10 till 5.

Burke was aged 35 years, was born in the parish of Orrery, county of Tyroune, he received good education for one of his rank. He was originally brought up a weaver in Straban, but tiring of that employment, he became a baker. He afterwards enlisted in the Donegal militia, in which he served five years; during most of that time he was servant to one of the officers, and acquitted himself so well, that he gained the approbation and respect of all who knew him. He married during that time a woman in Ballinha, county of Mayo, by whom he had two children, who are dead, but his wife still survives in Ireland. When his regiment was disbanded, he deserted his wife, and children and came to Scotland, and picked up from the streets of Glasgow the woman McDougal, with whom he has since co-habited; she was a common prostitute, although her husband was at that time alive. Burke was engaged as a labourer on the Union Canal, and has resided in Edinburgh about 11 years, but has been occasionally absent for long periods.

Burke was one of the most singular characters ever consigned to the scaffold. He was considerably superior in education to his own class of his countrymen, and was just possessed of so much knowledge as should make the recollections of a series of murders drise him to the borders of despair. He was a man of remarkable firm nerve, and although only few days divided him and a painful death he strived to be perfectly calm - he even laughed and attempted to talk over the murder of his victims with as much gurrility and indifference, as a shopkeeper would over his losses in trade, or the good bargains he has made. But yet he candidly confessed that he felt the full horrors of his situation; he was always caught weeping bitterly, and involuntary but heavy sighs escaped him in conversation. He paid particular attention to the instructions of his priest, and was diligent in his preparation for the awful change he has since undergone. He was very communicative, and freely made confession of his former guilt; while examined by the Solicitor for the mother of Daft Jamie to procure evidence against Hare, he declared that he harboured no vindictive feeling against him, and that "as a dying man he would tell the truth."

Burke complained much of the cold he experienced in his cell, which aggravated the complaint under which he laboured. One gentleman who had visited him, remarked that this was a cold place, "Yes" he said, "it is; but since matters have come to this pass, I must just bear it." The indulgence he experienced in his diet, was according to the directions of his physician, who had ordered it on account of his health. The

nearer his end approached, his mind seemed to acquire greater firmness, and he expressed himself prepared to meet the scaffold with as much calmness as if he were going to his bed.

List of the 16 Murders committed by Burke.

In December 1827, a man died in Hare's house, whose body they sold to the Anatomists for L10. Getting so much money at a time when they were in a state of poverty, prompted them to look after means of the same kind, and the subject of murder was often talked over betwixt Hare and him. The first victim was an old woman belonging to Gilmerton, whom Hare had observed intoxicated on the street, and enticed into his house; they stupified her with more whisky, and put her to death in the way they pursued ever afterwards, by covering and pressing upon the nose and mouth with their hands. The body was carried to Surgeon's square, and the money readily obtained for it.

The next unfortunate victim was a English Packman, who had lodged in Hare's house; they got him intoxicated, and he was suffocated in the usual manner. Success made them more eager, and Burke confessed that at this time he was continually hunting after his prey.

A woman of the name of Mary Haldane, a dissipated character, was enticed into the house, and fell an easy prey. It is very strange that the daughter of this woman, a common prostitute, was kidnapped into the house not long after, and unconscious of her mother's fate.

Hare, during a short absence of Burke at Glasgow, dispatched one victim, who is understood to be the minister's servant.

We will here enumerate the unfortunate victims Burke has assassinated besides the above already mentioned, and if we find space, give a sketch of the most particular murders afterwards: - An old man well known by the name of Miller Joe. The old Irishwoman and her grandson. The Cindergatherer whom Burke enticed of the street. Daft Jamie, of whom the following is a correct portrait:

A woman who was intoxicated on her way to the watch house, whom Burke took under his charge to give her a night's lodging. A woman from the country who took lodgings in Hare's house. The girl McDougal cousin to Burke's pretended wife. Mrs Ostler the washerwoman. And the woman Docherty.

Of these, nine were murdered in Hare's house, and two in the cellar adjoining to it, which was used by him as a stable. Four or five of them were effected in what was first Broggan's, and afterwards Burke's house, and one in Constantine Burke's, in Gibb's, Close.

The two houses which were inhabited by this gang, were well chosen for the purposes for which they were intended. Burke's dwelling, in which he has only resided since about the month of June last, is at the end of a long passage, and is separated from every other house except one. After going through a close from the street, there is a descent by a stair to the passage, at the end of which is to be found this habitation of wickedness. It consists of one apartment, an oblong square, at the end of which is a miserable bed, under which is still to be seen the straw in which his murdered victims were concealed. The house of Hare is in a still more retired situation. The passage to it is by a dark and dirty close, in which there are no inhabitants except in the flat above. It has two dark and dismal apartments, which look upon a dead wall. Both houses are on the ground floor.

The crime for which Burke was condemned, is the murder of Mrs Campbell or Docherty. she left Glasgow in search of her son, and stopt in Edinburgh a few days; her money ran short, and on her way back again, she went into a shop in the West Port seeking charity; Burke happened to be there, and he thinking her a fit victim, insisted on her coming with him to breakfast, pretending that his mothers name was Docherty, and some relative to her. - They plied whisky into her, and continued dancing and singing during the day, till about 11 at night, when in a pretended scuffle betwixt Burke and Hare, they threw the old woman down, and Burke immediately threw himself upon her, and throttled her. They sold the body for L10.

The circumstances attending the murder of Daft Jamie, a poor silly lad who wandered harmlessly about the street are these: - He had been in the Grassmarket seeking his mother, when Burke met him and promised to take him to where she was; he was accordingly led to the murderous den, where, after intoxicating him he fell a victim, but was not so easily dispatched as the former ones; he struggled hard, got on his feet, and would have mastered one of the murderers, if they had not both exerted their utmost strength to overpower him.

Mrs Ostler, an industrious sober woman, belonging to the Grassmarket, who gained a livelihood by washing, and who was employed by Burke, was murdered by him about 14 days previous to the death of Mrs Campbell, and that the body was packed up to represent a bale of goods coming from the country. Also, that in the course of the autumn a poor Irish mendicant and her son, a lad of 14 or 15 years of age, and of weak intellect, were murdered. The female was bereaved of life when lying asleep on the straw so often described; she was stript and put into a herring barrel among brine; while Hare strangled the lad over his knees, by the fire-side, and thrust the corpse into the cask above his mother

The first murder which was charged against Burke, although it is surmised that several had been committed before that time, is that of the girl Paterson, who was about 18 or 19 years of age. It appears that this girl, with one of her associates, Janet Brown, had been lodged in the Canongate Police Office on Tuesday night, the 8th April, they were kept till six o'clock next morning, when they went to the house of one Swanstoun,

to procure spirits, here they were met by Burke, who asked them to drink. They accompanied him to Constantine Burke's house, in the Canongate. After they had been in the house for some time, Burke and his wife began to quarrel and to fight, which seems to have been the usual preliminary to mischief, in the midst of this one of the girls left the house, and the other she was strangled, and the body carried that same evening to surgeon's square.

Hare is a rude ruffian, with all the outward appearance of ruffian, drunken, ferocious, and profligate, and appears to have been the more deeply designing of the two. Burke was the only one of the two qualified to manage the out door business of the copartnery, and he it was, accordingly, that always went out to prowl for victims, and to decoy them to their destruction. The following is an exact likeness of Hare.

Hare's wife was set at liberty lately, and in crossing the Bridges, was recognised by some person who had seen her in jail. A crowd soon gathered round her, and pelted her with snow balls and other missiles; and had not the police promptly interfered in her behalf, the ungovernable rabble that beset her would have quickly executed summary justice both on herself and the sickly infant she bore in her arms. An idea prevailed in the West Port, that she had taken refuge in her old den, and a multitude of disorderly people congregated thereto, to root her out of it, but quietly dispersed when assured she was not in the neighbourhood. We understand that she left the Police Office in the twilight, to wander whither is not easy to guess, but it is to be hoped, that the populace will not allow a commendable detestation of crime to lead to acts of outrage, which the law must punish with the same rigour in her case as in that of any other child of sin and misery that breathes under its protection.

The High Court of Justiciary after meeting on the case of Hare on Monday the 26th, ordered information to be lodged, and on Monday last decided, that Hare could not be put on trial for crimes for which he was previously admitted King's Evidence or approver, Hare will accordingly be liberated.

As every thing relating to such a villain as Burke may be interesting at present, we add the following particulars about him during his residence in the parish of Peebles. - He and Helen McDougal resided in that burgh in the year 1825 and 1826, and part of 1827. "I find," says our correspondent, "that he is a native of Orrey, in Tyrone in Ireland, that he was a Roman Catholic, was a labourer, and employed in working on the roads, and in cutting drains. He made considerable pretensions to religion, as I recollect, on my first visit to his house, he had one or two religious books lying near him, which he said, he read, - being at that time confined by a sore leg. He seemed a man of quiet manners, and on my questioning him about his country and profession, there appeared a mystery about him. Since he has gained a guilty notoriety, I have made enquiry among his neighbours of his character; and I am informed that he was an inoffensive man, but that he help suspicious hours. On the Saturday nights and sabbath days, his house was the scene of riot and drunkenness with the lowest of his countrymen. When he left this place, he owed the woman from

whom he rented his room between forty and fifty shillings. He was then going to the harvest, and promised to return and pay the rent, which he never did. On application being made to him afterwards in Edinburgh for payment, he sent word to the woman to meet him at the head of Eddlestone Water, a wild and desolate part of the road leading from this place to Edinburgh. The meeting was to be at ten o'clock at night, when he would pay her. Recent disclosures have fully proved for what purpose such a meeting was to take place,

Burke made an attack upon an unfortunate girl in St. Cuthbert's entry, at the head of the West Port, evidently with a murderous intent, but she managed to escape his clutch, and fled for shelter to the watch-house. She there stated, that a man had seized her suddenly by the throat, but that her screams made him quit his gripe. The description she gave of the assailant exactly corresponded with Burke, who was not known to the police personally, and search was made for him, but he had left town. The affair, at the time, was only regarded as one of those indignities to which abandoned females are exposed.