

CHAPTER VI.

Death of Donald the Pensioner—Hare's Debt—Negotiations with the Doctors—A Bargain Struck—Sale of Donald's Body.

THE beginning of the connection of the persons whose career, up till 1827, we have endeavoured to describe in the preceding chapter, with the resurrectionist movement, may be said to have been to a certain extent accidental.

In Hare's house in Tanner's Close there resided for some time an old pensioner named Donald. About Christmas, 1827, he died, owing his landlord about £4, but as a set off against this his quarter's pension was about due, though, of course, it was more likely this would go to some relative who might be unwilling to pay the debt to Hare. The funeral arrangements were made, and everything was in readiness for consigning the remains of the old veteran to their kindred dust, when it occurred to Hare that by selling the body to the doctors he might be able to save himself from making a bad debt through the inconvenient death of his lodger before the pension was due. Burke, in his confession, stated that Hare made the proposition to him, promising a share of the proceeds. After some hesitation Burke agreed to the scheme; the coffin, which had been "screwed down," was opened, and tanners' barks substituted for the body, which was concealed in the bed. Thereafter the coffin and its contents were carefully buried. In the evening the two men visited Surgeon's Square, Hare remaining near at hand, while Burke went towards the door of Dr. Knox's class-rooms. He was noticed by one of the students; and the following strange conversation, founded on the record of it by Leighton, took place between them:—

"Were you looking for any one?" the student said, as he

peered into the dour-looking face of the stranger, where perhaps there had never even once been seen a blush.

"Umph! Are you Dr. Knox?"

"No; but I am one of his students," was the reply of the young man, who was now nearly pretty well satisfied as to the intention of the stranger whom he had accosted.

"And sure," observed the latter, "I'm not far wrong thin, afther all."

"And I may suit your purpose as well, perhaps."

"Perhaps," answered the strange man; "perhaps you may, sir."

"Well," said our friend, the young student, "don't be at all afraid to speak out. Tell me your business, although I have myself an idea as to what it may be. Have you got '*The Thing?*'"

"Doun't know, sir, what you mean."

"Ah! not an old hand at the trade, I perceive. You were never here before, perhaps?"

"No," said the stranger.

"And don't know what to say?"

"No," said the stranger. And the bashful man again turned his gloomy downcast optics to the ground, and appeared also as if he didn't very well know or to be able to make up his mind as to what he should do with those hands of his, which were not made for kid gloves—perhaps for skin of another kind rather.

And shouldn't this hardened and callous-hearted student have been sorry for a man in such confusion? But he wasn't; nay, he evidently had no sympathy whatever with his refinement.

"Why, man, don't you speak out?" he said somewhat impatiently.

"There's somebody coming through the Square there," was the reply, as the man looked furtively to a side.

"Come in here, then," said the student, as he pulled the man into a large room where there were already three other young men, who also acted as assistants of Dr. Knox. And there now they were, in the midst of a great number of coarse tables, with one in the middle, whereon were deposited—each having

its portion—masses or lumps of some matter which could not be seen by reason of all of them being covered with pieces of cloth—once white, but now dirty gray, as if they had been soiled with clammy hands for weeks or months. . . .

“Sure, and I’m among the dead,” said the man,
“and I have something ov that kind to——”

“Sell,” added an assistant sharply, as, in his scientific ardour, he anticipated the merchant.

“Yes.”

“And what do you give for *wun*?” he answered, as he sidled up to the ear of the young anatomist who had been speaking to him.

“Sometimes as high as £10.”

“And wouldn’t you give a pound more for a fresh one?” said he, with that intoxication of hope which sometimes makes a beggar play with a new-born fortune.

“Sometimes more and sometimes less,” replied the other; “but ‘the thing’ must always be seen.”

“And by my sowl it is a good thing, and worth the money any how.”

“Where is it?”

“At home.”

“Then if you will bring it here about ten it will be examined, and you will get your money; and since you are a beginner, I may tell you, you had better bring it in a box.”

“And have we not a tea-chest all ready, which howlds it nate, and will not my friend help me to bring it?”

“Well, mind the hour, and be upon your guard that no one sees you.”

The young students who had this conversation with Burke were two men who afterwards became famous in their profession—Sir William Ferguson, F.R.S., the author of a *System of Practical Surgery*; and Thos. Wharton Jones, one of the most eminent physiologists of the country. So that the training they obtained in these troublous times has proved highly beneficial to medical science, and through it to humanity.

But to continue the story of the disposal of old Donald’s body. Having come to this agreement with the students,

Burke joined his companion, and went home. They put the body into a sack, and carried it to Surgeons' Square. When they arrived there they were in doubt as to what they should do with it. They laid it down at the door of a cellar, and then went to the room, where they saw the students again. By their instructions they carried the corpse into the room, took it out of the sack, and placed it on a dissecting table. A shirt which was on the body they removed at the request of the students, and Dr. Knox, having examined it, proposed they should get £7 10s. The money was paid by Jones, Hare receiving £4 5s., and Burke £3 5s., the paymaster saying he would be glad to see them again when they had any other body to dispose of. This is Burke's account of the transaction, as made in his confession on the 3rd January, 1829, and it substantially agrees with the fuller account given by Leighton.

This was the first transaction these two men had with the doctors, and it is curious to notice how an incident of so little moment in itself should be to them the first step in a long and terrible course of crime—long in the sense that, considering its nature, they should have for such a length of time kept out of the reach of the law, or, indeed, of any suspicion of being anything worse than pitiful creatures of resurrectionists, who were willing to rob graves of their mouldering contents for a few paltry pounds. That step, however, was enough.

CHAPTER VII.

New Prospects—Description of Hare's House—The Murder of Abigail Simpson, the Old Woman from Gilmerton—The Two Sick Men.

THE success of their first transaction with the doctors developed new feelings in the hearts of Burke and Hare, and their two female companions. Their minds, unconsciously, had been undergoing a degrading process, and the action they had taken with regard to the old pensioner's body opened up the

way to them into a more complete state of moral turpitude. They thought they saw in this new traffic, if they could by any means obtain possession of the remains of their fellow-creatures, an easier method of attaining a comfortable livelihood than any they had yet tried, even though it should involve the committal of murder; for they seemed fatally blind to the consequences which it was certain such a course as they contemplated would in all probability bring to them. Their argument, it may be assumed, was that if they got bodies to sell, no matter how, they would be able to throw off suspicion; and instead of doing what others then did, go to the churchyards and plunder them of their ghastly contents, they took for their motto the significant question Burke put to the student when he was negotiating for the sale of Donald's body—"Wouldn't you give a pound more for a fresh wun?" It was perhaps the case that they did not make up any definite plan of operations for the future; but it is beyond doubt that the outline of the plan they ultimately adopted was suggested by the conversation in Knox's rooms, while the details, in respect of the individual members, may have been worked out as occasion presented—each act leading on to the next until the last foul crime was committed.

Before beginning the horrid record, it will be well to give a description of the scene of the enactment of most of the crimes—Log's lodging-house, in Tanner's Close:—

"The entry from the street," says Leighton, "begins with a descent of a few steps, and is dark from the superincumbent land. On proceeding downwards, you came—for the house, which was razed for shame, is no longer to be seen—to a smallish self-contained dwelling of one flat, and consisting of three apartments. One passing down the close might, with an observant eye, have seen into the front room; but this disadvantage was compensated by the house being disjoined from other dwellings, and a ticket, 'Beds to let,' as an invitation to vagrants, so many of whom were destined never to come out alive, distinguished it still more. The outer apartment was large, occupied all round by these structures called beds, composed of knocked-up fir stumps, and covered with a few gray sheets and brown blankets, among which the squalid wanderer

sought rest, and the profligate snored out his debauch under the weight of nightmare. Another room opening from this was also comparatively large, and furnished much in the same manner. In place of any concealment being practised, so far impossible, indeed, in the case of a public lodging-house, the door stood generally open, and, as we have said, the windows were overlooked by the passengers up and down; but as the spider's net is spread open while his small keep is a secret hole, so here there was a small apartment, or rather closet, the window of which looked upon a pig-stye and a dead-wall, and into which, as we know, were introduced those unhappy beings destined to death. The very character of the house, the continued scene of roused passions, saved it from that observation which is directed towards temporary tumults, so that no surprise could have been excited by cries of suffering issuing from such a place, even if they could have been heard from the interior den; and that was still more impossible, from the extraordinary mode of extinguishing life adopted by the wary and yet unwary colleagues. In this inner apartment Burke used to work when he did work, which, always seldom, soon came to be rare, and eventually relinquished for other wages."

In this place Donald the pensioner died, and here it was that the most terrible series of modern tragedies was committed. The plan having been agreed upon by the two confederates—it is doubtful if the two women had anything to do with its formation—Hare began by prowling about the streets to see if he could fall in with any person who would make a likely subject upon whom they could practice. For a time he was unsuccessful, but at length an opportunity arrived. This was, according to Burke's confession of the 3rd January, 1829, early in the spring of 1828, and, according to the one published in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, on the 11th February. Leighton, however, says it was one afternoon in December 1827, though he gives no other reason for differing from Burke, though in this instance the criminal does not speak generally, but with absolute definiteness. Whichever month it was, the fact is certain that one afternoon Hare met an old woman the worse of drink in the Grassmarket. This was Abigail Simpson, belonging to Gilmerton, a village on the outskirts of Edinburgh,

who had come into the city to obtain the pension granted her by a gentleman in the New Town—Sir John Hope, it has been suggested—who gave her one-and-sixpence a week, and a can of kitchen-fee. Her call had been made, and some of the money she had apparently spent in drink, for she was under the influence of it when she met Hare. He thought she looked a fitting subject. She was old and weakly, and the little strength of mind and body left her by her potations could surely be overcome very easily if she were once in a suitable place for the commission of his shocking design. Hare spoke to her, professing that he had seen her before; and she, garrulous and doted, readily entered into conversation with him. Speedily they became fast friends, and he easily persuaded her to accompany him to his house, where they would have a “dram” together in honour of their happy meeting. Once in the house, Mrs. Simpson was treated with overflowing kindness. She was introduced to Burke as an old friend, and the whisky was placed before her. She and the others partook of the liquor, though it is probable that her entertainers were more circumspect than she was in her libations. Highly pleased with her reception she told all about herself and her affairs, and of how she had a fine young daughter at home, who was both good and beautiful. Hare said he was a bachelor, and he spoke to the old woman of marrying her daughter, so that they would have all the money among them. When the supply of drink was finished, Mrs. Hare bought the can of kitchen-fee from Mrs. Simpson for one-and-sixpence, and this money was also expended in the purchase of more whisky for the use of the company. The fun became fast and furious. The old woman crooned some of the songs of her youth, and Burke, who, as it has already been seen, was himself something of a musician, contributed his share to the harmony of the evening. It was proposed that Mrs. Simpson should not go home that night, and to this she readily assented, for, as the *Courant* confession of Burke puts it, “she was so drunk she could not go home.” This was their chance, but somehow or other it was not taken advantage of—perhaps it was because they were not “old hands at the trade,” and they lacked sufficient courage at the time to carry out their evil intentions

against the old woman; just as likely they were too much intoxicated themselves to commit the crime; possibly they were joined by other lodgers, before whom they could not act. Be that as it may, the poor victim lay the last night of her life in a state of thorough intoxication. When morning came, she was sick and vomiting, and cried to be taken home to her daughter. Her entertainers expressed the utmost sympathy for her condition, and in their brutal "kindness" they gave her some porter and whisky, which quickly made her again helplessly drunk. The time had now arrived. The house was quiet, and the courage of the two men was sufficient for the deed they contemplated. Hare placed his hand over her mouth and nose to stop her breathing, and Burke laid himself across her body in order to prevent her making any disturbance. Resistance there was really none. The woman was beyond resistance, and any noise she might have been able to make was stifled by the method adopted to compass her death. In a few minutes she was dead, and the men lifted the body out of the bed, undressed it, and bundled it up in a chest. Hare took away the clothing, among which was a drab mantle, and a white-grounded cotton shawl with blue spots, with the intention of putting it in the canal. One of the men afterwards informed Dr. Knox's students that they had another subject to give them, and it was agreed that a porter from Surgeon's Square should meet them at the back of the Castle in the evening. Burke and Hare carried the chest, with its ghastly contents, to the meeting place, and thence the porter assisted them with it to the rooms. "Dr. Knox," says Burke, "came in when they were there; the body was cold and stiff. Dr. Knox approved of its being so fresh, but did not ask any questions." The price paid the murderers for the corpse of old Abigail Simpson, of Gilmerton, was ten pounds.

The work of wholesale murder was now fairly begun, and the conspirators had gained confidence by the success of their first effort. There were no qualms of conscience—if there were they were speedily drowned in drink—strong enough to stop them in the course upon which they had so rapidly entered. The fear of discovery had passed away when they saw

how easily and quietly they could work, and the desire for more victims became—shall we charitably say?—a mania.

The next unfortunate who fell into their foul clutches was a miller known to Burke simply as "Joseph." The man was related by marriage to one of the partners of the Carron Iron Company, then the principal ironfounding firm in Scotland, and at one time had himself been in possession of a decent competency. He had, however, lost his money, and was so reduced that he had to reside in Hare's house in Tanner's Close. Joseph, while lodging there, became very ill, and the report went forth that the malady by which he was attacked was an infectious fever. Hare and his wife were alarmed lest the rumour should damage the reputation of their house, and keep lodgers away. It was accordingly agreed that Joseph should be put out of the way as quickly as possible, and that by the remedy they had applied so successfully in the case of Mrs. Simpson. Burke laid a small pillow over the sick man's mouth, and Hare lay across the body to keep down his arms and legs. Death ensued as a matter of course, and the body was sold in Surgeon's Square for ten pounds. It does certainly seem strange that such a set of circumstances should lead up to the murder of the miller, and having in view the line of conduct these two men had now adopted, it is more than probable that the report of Joseph lying ill of fever was circulated by them to avert suspicion at his disappearance, and render his death from apparently natural causes more probable.

Another case very similar to this one, but in all likelihood distinct from it, is mentioned in one of the confessions of Burke, which, though not to be depended upon absolutely, must be assumed to be accurate in their main features. In the *Courant* confession the condemned man mentions the murder of an Englishman as having followed that of Mrs. Simpson; though in the document prepared by the Sheriff-Clerk the case of Joseph the miller is given in its place. The victim in this other instance was a native of Cheshire, also a lodger in Hare's house, who was ill with jaundice at the time the tragedy with Abigail Simpson was being enacted. He was a very tall man, about forty years of age, and found a livelihood by selling "spunks," or matches, on the streets of Edinburgh. His death was caused

by the efficient plan now adopted by Burke and Hare, who obtained the customary ten pounds from Dr. Knox for the body, and no questions asked.

As indicative, however, of the untrustworthiness of these confessions, it is interesting to notice at this point that while in the document published in the *Courant*, and attested as correct by Burke's own signature, the murder of the Englishman is placed in point of time after that of Simpson; yet, in the official confession, emitted fully a fortnight earlier, the commission of the crime is stated to have occurred in May, and as the fourth on the terrible list. It is nevertheless to be feared that although there may be some doubt as to the exact dates when some of the murders were committed, Burke did not make full confession of the various acts of wanton sacrifice of human life in which he had been engaged, perhaps, unfortunately, because they were so numerous, and were done in such a short space of time, that his memory could not carry every individual case and its proper details.

CHAPTER VIII.

Qualms of Conscience—The Murder of Mary Paterson and Escape of Janet Brown—Preservation of the Fallen Beauty.

IT is remarkable that at so early a period in their career of crime Burke and Hare should have shown so much boldness as they exhibited in the murder of Mary Paterson, a young woman unfortunately too well known on the streets of Edinburgh; and it is equally remarkable how, considering the whole circumstances, they were able to carry out the crime and dispose of the body without detection.

There is little reason to doubt that Burke was in the first instance a man of finer nature than Hare, though their guilt in the end was at least equal. Hare, it seems, could play his part in the slaughter of a fellow-mortal without any qualms of conscience, and he slept as quietly the night after he had provided a "subject" for the doctors, as if his soul were

unstained with guilt. Burke, however, was a man of a different temperament, and though reckless he could not altogether banish the moral teachings of his church from his mind. "Thou shalt do no murder," rung in his ears, but under the benumbing influences of drink the command was forgotten and broken, and then followed the fearful looking for judgment. He could not sleep without a bottle of whisky by his bed-side, and he had always on the table a two-penny candle, burning all the night. When he wakened, sometimes in fright, he would take a draught at the bottle, often to the extent of half of its contents at a time, and that induced sleep, or, rather, stupor.

In one of these "waukrife" fits, Burke, early on the morning of Friday, the 9th April, 1828, left the house, and made towards a public house in the neighbourhood of the Canongate, kept by a man named Swanston. While he sat drinking rum and bitters with the landlord, two young women, of apparently doubtful character, entered the house, and ordered a gill of whisky, which they immediately set about to consume. These were Mary Paterson or Mitchell and Janet Brown, both residing with a Mrs. Worthington in Leith Street. They had been apprehended the previous evening for some offence against the law, probably for being drunk and quarrelsome, and lodged in the Canongate Police Station. Between four and five o'clock in the morning they were liberated, and went to a house in the vicinity, where they had formerly lodged, occupied by a Mrs. Laurie, who endeavoured to persuade them to remain with her. She was unsuccessful, and they left for Swanston's public house, where they met with Burke.

The women and Burke, it is said, were strangers to each other, but he, whose conscience had been again quieted by the liquor he had imbibed, thought he saw in them two fine subjects for the doctors. In his most winning manner he went up and spoke to them, asked them to have a drink with him, and ordered a round of rum and bitters. They were not at all averse to the treat, so they sat down and consumed three gills at the expense of their smooth-spoken entertainer. At last Burke had ingratiated himself so much with the girls that he proposed they should accompany him to his lodgings, near by,

and partake of breakfast with him. His story was that he was a pensioner, and to Brown, who had some objection to going with him, he said he could keep her comfortably for life if she and her companion, who was quite willing, would go with him. He talked them round, until they agreed to accompany him. Purchasing two bottles of whisky he gave one to each of them, and the trio then set off for Constantine Burke's house in Gibb's Close, off the Canongate. This Constantine Burke, his brother, was a married man, with several of a family, and was a scavenger in the employment of the Edinburgh Police establishment. It was never known whether he and his wife had any complicity in the murders, but it was shrewdly suspected at the time that they were at least aware of them, especially of the one that was committed in their house.

When Burke and his two companions arrived at the house they found that the brother and his wife were newly out of bed, but had not as yet got time to kindle the fire. The house, on that account, looked rather gloomy for the reception of guests, and Burke upbraided his sister-in-law—or landlady as he wished her to appear—for her carelessness. The fire was, however, speedily lighted, and a cheerful glow was shed through the apartment, which even then was nothing very fine. The entrance to it was up a narrow wooden trap-stair, and along a dark passage. The door was only fastened by a latch. The place itself was but meagrely furnished, the most prominent articles it contained being a truckle bed, and another with tattered patch-work curtains; while on the walls were nailed, by way of adornment, some tawdry prints. The fire, however, improved its appearance somewhat, and Mrs. Constantine Burke and her brother-in-law set about the preparation of breakfast. Soon there was on the table a plentiful supply of food, consisting of tea, bread and butter, eggs, and haddocks,—altogether a feast which could not have been anticipated by the look of the apartment itself or of its accustomed occupants. The company sat down, and the conversation became general and altogether friendly, so that, what with the drink they had imbibed, and the warmth of their reception, the girls began to feel quite happy. Constantine Burke left to attend to his daily employment; and when the breakfast dishes were cleared off

the table the two bottles of whisky were produced, and the debauch, begun at so early an hour, was renewed. Burke and Mary Paterson drank recklessly, the former to keep up his courage for the murder he contemplated, and the latter simply because she liked the liquor; but Brown was more temperate, though she did not altogether abstain. Mary at length succumbed to the potency of the whisky, and she lay back asleep in her chair. Burke now saw that at least one of his proposed victims was safe, and his suggestion to Brown that they should go out and have a walk was agreed to quite readily. It is difficult at first sight to surmise what can have been his object in making this movement, but it may find an explanation in the fact that soon the couple were seated in a public house with pies and porter before them. The mixture of drinks made Brown more stupid, and after a while she accompanied the man back to the house in Gibb's Close, in a very drunken condition, but still retaining some little knowledge of what she was doing. Again the whisky was produced. While they sat drinking, Helen M'Dougal, who had entered the house while they were out, and who had hidden herself behind the bed-curtains, broke in upon their conversation. The sister-in-law whispered to Brown that this was Burke's wife, and M'Dougal fiercely attacked the girls, accusing them of attempting to corrupt her husband. Brown explained that neither she nor her own helpless companion knew Burke was married. M'Dougal having heard this explanation apologised to Brown and pressed her to resume her seat, and she then turned with the fury of a tigress upon her husband, breaking the dishes on the table. Burke threw a glass which, striking her on the forehead, caused an ugly gash which bled profusely. Mrs. Constantine Burke rushed out of the house, and went, it has been assumed, for Hare, and soon afterwards Burke succeeded in turning his M'Dougal out, locking the door after her. Mary Paterson slept through all the hubbub, while Brown stood aside in terror. Burke endeavoured to induce the latter to sit down again, and she, though willing enough, was put in so much fear by the noise made by M'Dougal in the passage leading to the house that she felt the sooner she was at home it would be the

better for herself. Finding he could not persuade her to stay, Burke conducted her past his paramour, and then returned to the house, where Mary Paterson still lay unconscious. Hare arrived soon afterwards; the two men combined to try their fatal skill on the intoxicated girl; and in a few minutes her soul had fled from her poor frail body. The women were conveniently outside, and when they came in the corpse was lying on the bed covered up. They asked no questions, for they probably knew as well as if they had witnessed it, what had been going on. Having completed their work the men left the house.

In the meantime, Janet Brown had made her way as best she could to the house of Mrs. Laurie, which she and Paterson had visited immediately before meeting with Burke. She told, as coherently as possible, the story of what had happened to herself and her companion during the day, and Mrs. Laurie, judging that the company in which they had been was somewhat rough, sent her servant along with Janet to bring Mary away. Muddled with the drink she had taken, the girl found the greatest difficulty in returning to the house she had so recently left. At last she applied for information to Swanston, the publican, who informed her that Burke was a married man, and that she would probably find him in his brother's house in Gibb's Close. Thither she went, and after mistaking the door she succeeded in getting the place she wanted. Mrs. Hare was sitting inside, and whenever she saw Brown she jumped towards her as if to strike her, but thinking better of it, she held back. The girl asked where Mary Paterson had gone, and they replied that she was out with Burke. The unlikeliness of the story did not seem to suggest itself to her, though if she had been in any other than a semi-intoxicated condition she would have remembered that when she left the house Mary was totally incapable of walking on account of the drink she had taken. On the invitation of Hare and his wife and M'Dougal, she again, for the third time, sat down at the table to partake of more whisky. Mrs. Laurie's servant, seeing the state of matters, left Brown and returned to her mistress.

Hare now calculated on a second victim, and he plied Brown with more liquor, while M'Dougal, to keep up the

appearance, poured forth invective against her husband for going away with Paterson, who, poor girl, lay dead on the bed beside them. While this was going on, and the girl was fast becoming a fit subject for the murdering arts of Hare, the servant had informed Mrs. Laurie of how matters looked in Gibb's Close, and she, rather alarmed, sent the girl back to bring Janet Brown away. In this she succeeded, and Hare, considering his object frustrated, left the house shortly after her. Later in the afternoon Brown, partially sobered, returned again—how like the moth careering recklessly round the candle that works its destruction!—and again inquired for Mary. The answer she received this time was that Burke and her friend had never returned. Brown went out to search for her, and with the aid of Mrs. Worthington, with whom she resided, she found that Mary Paterson had not gone with Burke. They called again at Constantine Burke's house for an explanation, and the inmates there, seeing that their former story had been proven untrue, said the girl had gone away with a packman to Glasgow. This was not at all satisfactory, but what could they do? If they had called in the police and searched the house they would speedily have unravelled the mystery, but they were, unfortunately for themselves, of a class whose relationship with the authorities was not of the most pleasant description, and who, therefore, sought to have as little to do with them as possible.

About four hours after Mary Paterson's death her murderers had her body in Dr. Knox's dissecting room, and had received eight pounds for their forenoon's work. This expedition, in itself, was rather foolhardy, for while the corpse was cold it was not very rigid, and presented the appearance of recent death; and it was all the more so on account of the fact that Burke and Hare were supposed to be resurrectionists of the old type, who robbed graves of their contents. Ferguson, the student already mentioned, and one of his companions, thought they knew the girl, and one of them said she was as like a girl he had seen in the Canongate only a few hours before as one pea was to another. But more than that, the girl's hair was in curl papers, so that all the external appearances were that the body was fresh, and had not been buried. They asked Burke

where he had obtained the body, and his reply was that he had purchased it from an old woman residing at the back of the Canongate. One of the students gave him a pair of scissors, and he cut off her fine flowing tresses, and these he would probably sell to a hairdresser to be made up for the use of some proud dame.

But this was not all. Mary Paterson, in life, was an exceedingly good-looking girl,—indeed, her fine personal appearance had to a certain extent contributed to her ruin. Her handsome figure and well-shaped limbs so attracted the attention of Dr. Knox, that he preserved the body for three months in spirits, and invited a painter, whose name is suppressed in Burke's confession, to his rooms to see it. Her friends, however, knew nothing of this, and they searched everywhere, but without success. For some months Janet Brown asked Constantine Burke, every time she saw him, if he had ever heard anything of Mary Paterson since she went away with the tramp to Glasgow, but he replied to her only with a growl, and there the matter rested for eight months, until the great conspiracy against human life was brought to light. And surely Mary Paterson, notwithstanding all her faults, was worthy of a better fate. Beautiful and well educated, she had lost in youth the guiding care of a mother. Her beauty was a snare to her, and her perverse will, though accompanied but not modified by a kind heart, greatly tended to accomplish her downfall.

CHAPTER IX.

Unknown Victims—The Two Old Women—Effy the Cinder Raker—"A Good Character with the Police"—Burke and Hare Separate—The Murder of Mrs. Hostler.

IN view of what has already been said as to the serious discrepancies in the confessions given to the world by Burke, and considering also that many of the persons murdered, even according to these confessions, were never sought after by their friends, if they had any, the impossibility of taking the

crimes in their chronological order will be at once evident. We therefore propose, in the present chapter, to bring together as many details as can be gathered respecting these unknown victims, reserving, in the meantime, an account of those more prominent instances which came within public ken either through the medium of the trial, or by subsequent inquiry.

One forenoon Mrs. Hare, in the course of her peregrinations, found herself in the company of an old woman whom she persuaded to go with her to her house. There the whisky was, as usual, produced, and a mid-day carouse indulged in by the two women; but Mrs. Hare, it may be presumed, would drink very sparingly. At this time Hare was at work unloading the canal boats at Port-Hopetoun, and Burke was busy mending shoes in his cellar. That this was so may be taken as indicating that in point of time this was one of the earliest adventures of the terrible quartette, for latterly, when they were in receipt of a large and, as they made it, a steady income from the doctors, the men threw aside all honest work, and devoted themselves to their murderous employment. However, at this period, they were sometimes engaged in the creditable affairs of life. When Hare came home for dinner his wife had her unknown acquaintance in bed, in a helplessly drunken state, although she had had some trouble before she got that length. Three times had Mrs. Hare put the old woman to bed, but she would not sleep, and every time she plied her with more drink until at length she attained her purpose. Hare, seeing the woman in this condition, carefully placed a part of the bed-tick over her mouth and nose, and went out to resume his work. When he returned in the evening the woman was dead, having been suffocated by the bedding he had placed over her. Burke, if his own statement is to be credited, had nothing to do with this cool and deliberate murder, but if not an accessory to the fact he was certainly one after it, for he assisted Hare to undress the body, place it in a tea-chest, and convey it that night to Dr. Knox's rooms, where they received and divided the usual fee. The name of this woman was not known, even to Burke, and all that he could tell of her was the manner of her death, and that she had some time previously lodged in Hare's house for one night.

As a set-off against the crime just mentioned, there is one in which Burke acknowledged that he alone was engaged. This was the murder of an old woman in May, 1828. She came into the house as a lodger, and of her own accord she took drink until she became insensible. Hare was not in the house at the time, and Burke, by the usual method of suffocation, produced her death. No time was lost in conveying the body to Surgeon's Square.

In the murder of an old cinder woman, however, both the men were engaged. During the course of her work of searching for small articles of inconsiderable value among the contents of ashpits and cinder heaps, and about the coach-houses, this woman, familiarly known as Effy, came across small pieces of leather which she was in the habit of selling to Burke, who used them for mending the shoes entrusted him for repair. One day he took her into Hare's stable, which he used as a workshop, and gave her drink, possibly on the pretence of finishing some business transaction between them; it may have been in part payment of scraps of leather he had received from her, for a murder never seems to have been committed except when the funds were at a low ebb, and at the rate at which the confederates were carousing and indulging in finery, that was very frequent. Hare joined his companion in the work of making the woman incapable, and she was soon so overcome by the liquor she had consumed, that she lay down to sleep on a quantity of straw in the corner. Their time for action had again arrived, and they carefully placed a cloth over her so as to stop her breathing. "She was then," proceeds the confession, "carried to Dr. Knox's, Surgeon Square, and sold for £10." This is always the end of the matter, and for a few paltry pounds these persons were willing to take the life of a fellow creature.

But in spite of all his loose way of living, and, as we have seen, somewhat drunken habits, Burke had a good character with the police, and on one occasion made them the means of furnishing him with a victim. A "good character with the police" in the locality in which he lived would be of some consideration. It was then inhabited, and still is, by the lowest classes of the community, and the criminal element would be

prominent. Burke, so far as is known, had always been able to keep clear of the minions of the law, and in this respect his character would seem to them to be of a better type than those who engaged in a less shocking, if more open, form of crime. They would look upon him as a poor workman, a little foolish, perhaps, but still, as the place went, comparatively respectable; yet, as they found out latterly, he was the most wicked criminal in the city, with, perhaps, the exception of his accomplice Hare. It seems strange that he should have been able to manage the police in such a way as to make them serve his vile purposes, but it must be remembered that he was a man possessed of considerable assurance and not a little of that winning tongue proverbially belonging to his race. However, this was the way the incident came about.

Early one morning, when probably on the outlook for some poor unfortunate whom he could drug with whisky and put to death, he came across Andrew Williamson, a policeman, assisted by his neighbour, dragging a drunken woman to the watch-house in the West Port. They had found her seated on a stair, but thought she would be safer and more comfortable in a police cell. And so she would have been if they had carried out their intention. Burke saw in her a victim who had herself half done the work he contemplated, so he went to the constables, and said:—"Let the woman go to her lodgings." The men were willing to do so, but they did not know where she lived. Burke proffered his services to take her home, and they, presuming he knew something about her, gladly gave him the charge of their loathsome burden. The murderer did not look upon her in that light—she was to him a valuable prize, loathsome though she might be as a drunken, debauched woman. He took her to Hare's house. There is hardly any need to say what was done with her. That she fell into Burke's hands in such a condition indicates her end. That night she was murdered by Burke and Hare in "the same way as they did the others," and for her body they received ten pounds from Dr. Knox.

But the last of these, what may be called, isolated cases, took place in the house of John Broggan, whither Burke and his wife removed in Midsummer, 1828. Why this change of residence

took place has never been satisfactorily explained. Some have supposed that the parties quarrelled, and there is undoubted evidence of a dispute between Burke and Hare about the time of the removal, but, certainly, if the separation of residence was due to such an event, they do not seem to have kept up the ill-feeling long, for they were soon together at work at their shocking trade. Others, again, have thought it more probable that the change was due to a desire to extend the business in which they were now engaged, or to avert any suspicions that may have been raised by the frequent disappearance of people seen to enter Log's Lodging House. Either of these suppositions is feasible, but, as will be shown later on, a dispute as to the division of the money received from Dr. Knox in payment for a body was the primary cause of the separation; though, after the difference between them was settled, the change may have been found very convenient. Broggan's house was situated only a short distance from the abode of the Hares, and into it Burke and M'Dougal first went in the capacity of lodgers, but it was afterwards rented by them.

In the month of September, or, perhaps, October, after this removal had taken place, a widow woman of the name of Hostler, was washing for some days in Broggan's house. This woman's husband, a street porter, had died but a short time previously, and she was forced to seek for employment at washing and dressing, and, during the harvesting season, in the fields. The Broggans had engaged her to wash their clothes, and after a full day's work she went back the day after to finish up. When this was done Burke pressed her to take a drop whisky along with him. They soon were in a happy state, and the sound of merriment was heard by the neighbours, who, however, paid little attention to the matter, very possibly because Mrs. Broggan had but a little before been confined, and their idea was that the "blythmeat" and the "dram" incident to such an occasion, were going round. Burke, in his second confession, said Broggan and his wife were not in the house at the time, but the fact already mentioned rather tells against the latter's absence. Whoever were present seemed to be enjoying themselves. Mrs. Hostler drank heartily, and as the liquor

warmed her blood and raised her spirits, she sang her favourite song, "Home, Sweet Home." Burke, notwithstanding all the black sin on his soul, and the evil purpose in his mind, sang too, and the mirth to the outsiders seemed real and legitimate. But the drink she had imbibed made the woman sleepy, and at last she was forced to lie down on the bed. Hare by this time had joined his accomplice, and they speedily smothered the poor woman. She did not die without a severe struggle. In her hand at the time of death she had ninepence-halfpenny, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the murderers were able to open the tightly-grasped hand, to take away the money. The body was packed into a box, and placed in a coal-house in the passage until an opportunity occurred for taking it to Surgeon's Square. That evening the corpse of Mrs. Hostler lay in Dr. Knox's rooms, and Burke and Hare were richer by eight pounds, though they had to answer for another murder.

CHAPTER X.

Old Mary Haldane—The End of her Debauch—Peggy Haldane in Search of her Mother—Mother and Daughter United in Death.

BUT returning to the cases about which more is known than those spoken of in the last chapter, or which possessed features that have given them a greater hold on the public mind, the first to call for notice are the murders of an old woman named Haldane, and her daughter Margaret, which took place before Burke changed his residence.

Old Mary Haldane, it seems, was called "Mistress" merely out of courtesy, for she had no claim to the title. A woman of some considerable personal charms in her youth, she had given way to the deceiver, and at last found herself on the streets, a drunken, worthless vagrant. She had three daughters, one of whom married a tinsmith named Clark, carrying on business in the High Street of Edinburgh ; the second, at the

time of her mother's death, was serving a term of fourteen years' transportation for some offence; while the third was simply following the unfortunate example of one who should have sheltered her from evil influences. Old Mary was well-known to Burke and Hare and their wives, having at one time been a denizen of Log's lodging-house. According to Burke's own admission this was how the murder was committed:— "She was a lodger of Hare's. She went into Hare's stable; the door was left open, and she being drunk, and falling asleep among some straw, Hare and Burke murdered her the same way as they did the others, and kept the body all night in the stable, and took her to Dr. Knox's next day. She had but one tooth in her mouth, and that was a very large one in front." This account, however, hardly agrees with what was brought out by subsequent inquiries. Burke, it would appear, had long thought of her as a proper subject for his murdering craft, and one day, when he felt that something further would have to be done to renew their exhausted exchequer, he went out to look for Mary. She had left Hare's lodgings, and was then away on a drunken debauch. His search was unfruitful at the time, but two days later he saw her standing at the close leading to the house in which she then resided. She was then in the condition of the man who said he was "sober and sorry for it," for she readily agreed to accept the dram Burke offered her if she went along with him. Mary was well-known in the district, and the *gamins* regarded her as a butt for their little practical jokes and coarse fun. They ran after her as she passed along the Grassmarket towards the West Port, all the more so as she was in the company of a well-dressed man, because Burke's personal appearance and habit had been improved by the large sums of money he was every now and then receiving from Dr. Knox for his ghastly merchandise. Many persons noticed the strangely assorted couple, and although they wondered a little at the time to see them going along the street in so friendly a manner, they soon forgot all about it, until the disclosures of the trial brought the incident back to their recollections. As Burke and Mrs. Haldane were on their way along, they met Hare walking in the opposite direction. Hare, if he were not previously aware of his

colleague's object, now quickly divined it, and stood to speak with them. Mary agreed to accompany her old landlord to his house in Tanner's Close; and Burke, having chased away the children who were tormenting the poor woman, left them to transact some other business. He was not, however, long behind them in arriving at Hare's house, where the two women—M'Dougal and Mrs. Hare—had provided whisky for the good of the company. The bottle was passed round, and Mrs. Haldane partook greedily of its contents, so greedily, indeed, that in a marvellously short time she was helplessly intoxicated. Then followed the usual process of "burking;" and Mary Haldane, unfortunate in life, was equally unfortunate in her death. Of course the women had retired from the apartment before the last scene was enacted. Probably they did not care to see the end, for it was inconvenient if they should be called upon as witnesses, though they must have known what was being done, as they certainly contributed largely to bring about the commission of the deed. This was but a part of the method, and in this, as in other respects, it was carefully carried out. What Dr. Knox or his assistants gave them for Mary Haldane's body is not known, but it has been suspected that, providing a regular and good supply, the conspirators were now receiving twelve or fourteen pounds for every "subject" they took to Surgeon's Square.

But this was not the end of the Haldane tragedy—there was yet another victim from that already unfortunate family. Mention has been made of the daughter Margaret, who was only too closely following in the footsteps of her wayward mother. Notwithstanding the terrible career of these two unfortunates, there seems to have been as strong a bond of affection between them as should always exist between a daughter and a mother. Margaret, or Peggy, Haldane soon missed her mother, and after the lapse of a day or two set out to look for her. It was nothing new for the old woman to be away for a short time, but on this occasion the absence was more prolonged than usual. She went about asking every one she knew if they had seen Mary Haldane, and her "begrutten face" and tawdry finery drew sympathy from many to whom that feeling was an almost total stranger. Many gave her

what help they could to trace her missing mother, but for a time they were without a clue, until David Rymer, a grocer in Portsburgh, mentioned to a neighbour that he had seen Mary Haldane in the company of Hare on the way to his house. The girl felt that her search was now at an end, and so it was, for she would soon be beside her lost parent. At Hare's house she called in the full expectation of finding her mother, perhaps it might be in the midst of a debauch, but that was nothing out of the way, and surely she would get her home with her. On entering the house Peggy met Mrs. Hare and Helen M'Dougal, who, to her surprise, denied that Mary Haldane had recently been with them, and who, in the fear of discovery, endeavoured to strengthen their repudiation by abusing the old woman and her daughter. Hare, in an adjoining apartment, heard what was going on, and set to work to deceive the girl in a much more astute manner. Blank denial could only send her back to those who had helped her to trace her mother to his house, suspicion might be raised, and inquiry, he saw, could only result in complete discovery. He therefore came out of his den, and, silencing the clamorous tongues of his two female associates, he assured Peggy that he could give her the explanation of her mother's disappearance. In his heart he knew no one could throw more light than he on the matter, but it was his purpose rather to darken than illuminate the inquiring mind of the poor searcher. He invited her into the adjoining room to taste the inevitable "dram"—drink and die. She was not averse to a drop of whisky, and she sat down at the table where her mother but a few days before had indulged in her last debauch, aye, and where many before had done the same. Burke had noticed Peggy enter the house, and he followed soon after her. It was wonderful how readily these two men closed round their victims. He sat down at the table with Hare and the girl, and the former began his explanation. He admitted, of course, that he had seen old Mary, for there was a policy in that, but he added that she left him to go on a visit to some friends she had at Mid-Calder, a few miles to the west of Edinburgh. It must have appeared a little strange to Peggy that her mother should have gone visiting among her

family friends without letting her daughter know of her intention, but then Mary's ways were somewhat erratic; and the hope that a walk to Mid-Calder would discover her mother, combined with the benumbing effects of the whisky she was drinking, quieted her anxieties. The potation wrought speedily, and the young woman passed from the talkative and merry state of drunkenness to the dull and stupid, until, at last, she was ready for the sacrifice. She was so drunk, says Burke, that he did not think she was sensible of her death, as she made no resistance whatever.

Burke's confession regarding Peggy Haldane's murder has been proven by inquiry to be inaccurate in some details; but there is no reason to doubt his account of the manner of it. He says it was committed in Brogan's house. That was not the case, for the crime occurred in Log's lodging house, of which Hare was then the landlord. He said, "Hare had no hand in it," and that "this was the only murder that Burke committed by himself, but what Hare was connected with;" but this statement is contradicted by another of Burke's own confessions; and, further, we have seen that if Hare took no active part in the murder itself, he was at least accessory to it. However, as to the manner there need be little doubt:—"She was laid with her face downwards, and he (Burke) pressed her down, and she was soon suffocated." What a dreadful death! Yet no more dreadful than that met by all the victims of the soul-hardened conspirators. The body was put into a tea chest, and taken to the rooms of Dr. Knox. Mary and Peggy Haldane were again under the same roof: they were again together, but in Death! Burke acknowledged that he received eight pounds for this victim, but, as he said, he did not always keep mind of what he got for a subject, though he had no doubt Dr. Knox's books would show. These books, however, never saw the light of day.