

corpse. Sir William Hamilton, of the chair of Metaphysics; George Coombe, the phrenologist; Mr. Liston, the surgeon, and Mr. Joseph, the sculptor, were among the spectators. The skeleton was prepared as an osteological specimen, as had been directed in the sentence, and exists to this day in the museum of the Department of Anatomy in the University of Edinburgh. Here, too, is a piece of Burke's skin, tanned to leather. It used to be said in medical circles in Edinburgh that one or two tobacco pouches or pocket books had been made out of the murderer's skin; they were described as "soft as glove leather".

It was not merely that Burke and Hare murdered people; they were deliberate, systematic, ingenious and one may say scientific murderers. This is the aspect that appealed to DeQuincey when he mentions them in his "Murder as one of the Fine Arts". They employed the simple method of asphyxiation following on alcoholic intoxication—putting their hands over the mouth and nose of the victim—a method suggested by Hare as one leaving no external signs of violence and one at that time unknown to medical jurists. The miscreants received for each corpse sums varying from £7 to £14, which, to idle and illiterate men in their position, were very large sums indeed. In the space of less than eleven months they dispatched at least sixteen persons—male and female, old and young, hideous and comely, it mattered not; they were tracked down, decoyed, poisoned, suffocated, and sold to be dissected. It was said that one of the demonstrators, Dr. Ferguson, and some of the students recognized two of the bodies as those of persons not only very recently in good health but alive and walking on the Edinburgh streets, namely "Daft Jimmie" or James Wilson, an idiot youth, and Mary Patterson, a prostitute, whose body was so well developed that Knox did not permit it to be dissected, but had it

preserved in alcohol to demonstrate certain points in myology. It is on record that he brought in an artist to view the corpse.

The last victim was an old woman called Doherty, who was murdered on the night of Friday, October 31st, 1828, in Burke's room, and whose body David Paterson, Knox's porter, was brought to see on the Saturday morning as it lay in the straw at one side of the bed. Later in the day the corpse was delivered at Knox's, Surgeon's Square. Lodgers in the neighbouring rooms, who had seen the old woman alive on Hallowe'en, searched Burke's room early the next morning and found the body as described; but while they went out to fetch the police it had disappeared and Burke and Hare had set off for Newington, where Knox lived in order to be paid for "the subject", as it happened, their last.

Burke and Hare were at no time body-snatchers, although to allay suspicion they encouraged a belief to that effect among inquisitive neighbours in the West Port. They discovered that with much less risk and fatigue they could command prices quite as high as those paid to the riflers of graves or "resurrectionists", as they were always called. R. L. Stevenson has perpetuated this inaccuracy in the chapter on Greyfriars in his "Edinburgh Picturesque Notes".

Phrenology was all the rage when Burke's brain was dissected, and the professors of that pseudo-science lost no time in examining this notorious person in the light of their great delusion. The phrenological report given in the "West Port Murders" (Edinburgh 1829, Anonymous) occupies eleven pages and includes copious measurements of Burke's head and a description of the cast that was made of it.

The report bristles with all the flagrant errors and consummate nonsense of the phrenologists in their heyday.