

the dreams of the dying novelist, for in the delirium of his last illness he kept repeating, "Burke, Sir Walter". Lockhart's words are, "A few times, also, I am sorry to say, we could perceive that his fancy was at Jedburgh, and 'Burke, Sir Walter,' escaped him in a melancholy tone." The occasion referred to was an election at Jedburgh in May, 1831, when his carriage was mobbed.

But the reasons for the celebrity of these miscreants are by no means exhausted. The trial of Burke and Helen Macdougall, as might be supposed, was one of the most sensational ever held in the High Court of Judiciary in the Parliament House at Edinburgh. It began at 10.15 a.m. on the morning of December 24th, 1829, and did not end until 9.30 a.m. the next day, Christmas morning. It therefore lasted all day and all night: the jury was absent only fifty minutes. The medico-legal aspects were entirely new; the evidence of Dr. (afterwards Sir) Robert Christison, the medical expert for the Crown, being of unusual interest. It came out that no signs whatever of external violence could be detected on the bodies, if one excepted the rupture of some cervical ligaments, an injury which, as Christison had to admit, could perfectly well have been produced *post mortem*. As a matter of fact, these ligaments were ruptured by the corpses being forced, bent up, into relatively too small tea-chests or barrels which the ruffians used to transport their victims on a handcart or "hurrley" or on their shoulders to Knox's rooms.

A number of lawyers either at that time possessing or subsequently attaining to the highest distinction were engaged on the case whose legal aspects gave rise to a prolonged debate between Bench and Bar, and, indeed, constituted a precedent for all subsequent procedure. The subject in debate was whether Hare and his wife, certainly accomplices in a majority of the murders, could be permitted to

give evidence—so-called King's evidence—against Burke; and if so, could the Hares be cross-examined in regard to murders in which they had assisted Burke but for which Burke was not being tried. It was decided that King's evidence might be admitted, but that Hare could not be forced to answer any question he did not wish to relating to any parts he might have played in the grim dramas.

The popular interest in all this rose to an indescribable pitch of intensity. No fewer than fifty-five witnesses were called, amongst them William Pultney Alison, M.D., Professor of the Theory of Physic in the University of Edinburgh, and also three of Dr. Knox's assistants, two of them eminent in after life; Thomas Wharton Jones, Huxley's teacher of physiology at Charing Cross, who was the discoverer of the diapedesis of leucocytes, and William Ferguson, later Sir William, the distinguished surgeon. At least two of the lawyers involved in the case, Mr. Francis Jeffrey and Mr. Henry Cockburn, became, as Lords Jeffrey and Cockburn respectively, not only ornaments of the Scottish bar but world-renowned figures in the republic of Scottish letters. Sir Walter Scott's interest in the case was very largely professional.

The execution by hanging of William Burke in the open air at eight o'clock outside the Old Tolbooth prison at the head of Liberton's wynd, on the morning of January 28th, 1829, was witnessed by 20,000 persons on the lowest estimate and by 40,000 on the highest. It was destined to be one of the last of public executions within the realm of Scotland, and Burke the last person sentenced to be hanged and dissected. This sentence was carried out in all its grimness, for the body was publicly anatomized by Professor Monro (*tertius*) in his lecture room at the University, through which, in the course of two days, 30,000 persons filed past the