

went on with our damnable game of usury, and as we made money we increased our speculations to a large extent. At last we had out an immense number of bills indorsed with our own names, of which however we were pretty confident as to the respectability of most of the acceptors. About the time they became due, I had occasion to leave town for a week. During my absence the day of payment came, and nearly all the acceptors disappointed us with excuses. In this dilemma my partner gave immediate orders for the working of all the engines of the law, and in the interval drew in all our capital, pulled upon all our resources, and borrowed every where that we had credit to enable him to gather in these heavy outstanding responsibilities. When he had succeeded, and was prepared to meet the bills—startled at the enormous amount of money, which he had collected in his hands—a new idea seized him: judge of its brilliancy and whether it was profitable or not, when I tell you that with my return was developed the discovery that my money (I give it precedence for having loved it best) *and* my wife were gone off together *with* my partner, who had left me all the heavy bills to take up as I could. I was totally ruined, and never did a man more deserve to be so.

On the day of my arrival I was arrested by one of the very lawyers who had lived by our firm (how many of us have cherished the serpent by which we have been stung) taken by a bailiff, who I had a hundred times employed to take others, to a sponging house, and thence by *habeas* to jail.

From that time I became a haunted man—haunted by the living not the dead. Shadows would not have scared me, but realities were appalling. I was tossed from prison to prison, just as my difficulties withdrew from me or gathered around me, and like the wandering Hebrew, I had no resting-place away from the misery which I had made. Now it was that my own scarlet crimes first flashed upon me with their conscience-goading and accumulated horrors. Was I in the Fleet prison? There I encountered men whom I had thrust before me into the den; their tale of ruin was told to me in mockery of my own; I saw the gentleman who had once called on me in 'fine attire,' pinched with penury and robed in rags. I learned that the wife who had once reached my house, but not my heart, with her appeal for mercy, was dead; the children whom she had brought with her to rouse pity with their tears, were now crying within *my* hearing, not for their father's liberty, *that* had been long hopeless, but for bread. Do I leave the Fleet, and (again arrested) find myself a prisoner in Whitecross-street?—the young profligate who is blaspheming by my side was accounted virtuous until plunged into a sphere of dissolute companionship by *me*; and yonder drunkard, reeling on with his pot of ale, was both a sober and an honest man till I impaled him in a prison, where sobriety was scoffed at,

and honesty despised. I was the perpetual inmate of jails, and there I was perpetually tormented with the presence of my victims. To whatever cell I might retire the cries of the orphan rang in *my* ears; the tears of the widow fell upon my heart. Conscience carried me over houses that I had desolated, and fancy led me to graves that I had filled. This—this the triumph of remorse was cruel; but when I turned from the dread convictions of my own thoughts, and went again among my fellow prisoners, it was agony, to endure the presence of those whom I had wronged.

'At last, after a term of suffering in the other prisons I got removed to the King's Bench, and there I hoped I had no victims—I was wrong; yet all the first day I saw no one whom I knew, and then

'The strong delusion gained me more and more,' but the events of night dispelled it.

'About eleven o'clock, the hour fixed by law for the retirement of the prisoners, an alarm of serious illness was raised, and an expression of general indignation pervaded the debtors as to the cause. A woman, they said, was dying of want in one of the rooms on the ground floor on the poor side of the prison, and a number of persons had gathered round the door of the apartment in which the sufferer lay, I followed, mechanically with the rest, and saw what they saw. Little could they feel what I felt.

'The crowd, as soon as they had satisfied their curiosity, dispersed in groups to talk over the poor woman's fate. But I—I could not leave—an impulse which I could not resist, a chain which I could not sever, bound me to the cold stone on which I stood; I could not pass from the door of that room, although I yet only knew that a poor woman had laid down to die, and I had seen nothing but a curtainless bed and a barren chamber, as they had been dimly revealed by the light of a small lamp to all who had gathered without. But after all had gone my heart remained a beating listener to the voice that made itself heard in its most secret cells—a whisper of destiny that mysteriously connected my fate with *hers*, *here* the miserable tenant of the desolate room; a spell of mingled terror and excitement was upon me and around me, and I felt that I must go within to see her die.

In another moment the doctor of the prison entered, and I stole after him into the room. There was a deep shadow of the vaulted roof in one corner, and in its darkness I stood to listen and to gaze. The physician had intended to order the patient's removal to the prison infirmary, but he saw that it was too late. On her low bedstead she lay dreaming away her spirit, in her last earthly sleep; the next would be the sleep of death. A woman, who from pity had sat up with her, would have awakened her to the doctor's presence, but he would not have it. 'Let her be,' said he, 'it will soon be over.

'By her lay her young children, one on either side awake, watchful, silent, their eyes filled with tears, and