

The second prisoner was a child, with an expressive rather than a handsome countenance. On it were depicted sadness, want, and fatigue. It was childhood seared by misfortune—a young but blighted heart: it was pain, in place of the buoyant pleasure of young life. There he stood in the darkest recess of the office, concealing his face in his hands, through the fingers of which his tears fell rapidly, and awaiting with shame and visible anxiety the decision of his case. I felt moved and interested; it seemed to me that this child could not be a criminal.

"Well, my little man," said I, "and what enormous offence have you been guilty of? The child made no reply, but his tears increased. A policeman undertook to explain the case.

"The enormous offence," said the latter, of which he has been guilty, your Worship, is no less than burglary. He has been in the habit of climbing over a wall, and breaking into a kitchen much better supplied no doubt than his own, where each time after regaling himself at his neighbour's expense, he has carried off a piece of plate."

Thus this child, scarcely twelve years old, had already made frightful progress in vice. His tears were the resource of cunning—in his distress, he used them as a weapon of defence.—So young, and already so corrupt! Unfortunate child! Yet at his age can guilt really exist? Oh, no! This child was only deserving of pity—the blame, the disgrace of his fault, ought to have fallen upon his parents. Taught from his tenderest infancy to consider the whole world as his prey, to rob was, in his idea, to work and live: it was the exercise of an industry—of a trade which procured him a subsistence.

I now turned to the third prisoner, whom I had not seen before, and beheld a female leaning against the office table. Her fleshless hands, her livid complexion, her sunken and glassy eyes, her hollow cheeks, and those deep furrows, dug not by age but by starvation, pictured her to my senses as death still clinging to life with desperate and pertinacious grasp. She was a living skeleton. She had been driven to do wrong by hunger, which she had not the *virtue* to support. Knowest thou not, thou poor wretch, that thou art permitted to suffer, but not to eat? the law grants thee protection at this price; and dost thou not appreciate such an advantage?—dost thou appreciate all that it has done for thee, in allowing thee the privilege of dying, and deserted, on a bundle of straw, in some dark garret; whilst, from the rooms under thee, thou canst hear the song of gladness and the mirth of revellers? How ungrateful thou art! When thou wert stung by hunger, and all thy fellow creatures