

in any open resistance the odds were so completely against him, that flight seemed the best resource. He gently stole to the window, and having by one dreadful effort broke the rusty bolt by which the casement had been fastened, he let himself down without noise or difficulty. This betokens good, though he, pausing an instant in dreadful hesitation, what direction to take. This momentary deliberation was fearfully interrupted by the hoarse voice of the men calling aloud, "*The boy has fled—let loose the blood-hound!*" These words sunk like a death knell on his heart, for escape appeared now impossible, and his nerves appeared to melt away like wax in a furnace. Shall I perish without a struggle! thought he, rousing himself to exertion, and, helpless and terrified as a hare pursued by its ruthless hunters, he fled across the heath. Soon the baying of the blood-hound broke the stillness of the night, and the voice of its masters sounded through the moor, as they endeavoured to accelerate its speed,—panting and breathless the boy pursued his hopeless career, but every moment his pursuers seemed to gain upon his falling steps. The hound was unimpeded by the darkness which was to him so impenetrable, and its voice rung louder and deeper on his ear—while the lanterns which were carried by the men gleamed near and distinct upon his vision.

At his fullest speed, the terrified boy fell with violence over a heap of stones, and having nothing on but his shirt, he was severely cut in every limb. With one wild cry to Heaven for assistance, he continued prostrate on the earth, bleeding and nearly insensible. The hoarse voices of the men, and the still louder baying of the dog, were now so near, that instant destruction seemed inevitable—already he felt himself in their fangs, and the bloody knife seemed to gleam before his eyes,—despair renewed his energy, and once more, in an agony of affright, that seemed verging towards madness, he rushed forward so rapidly that terror seemed to give wings to his feet. A loud cry near the spot he had left arose on his ears without suspending his flight. The hound had stopped at the place where the pedlar's wounds had bled so profusely, and deeming the chase now over, it lay down there, and could not be induced to proceed; in vain the men beat it with frantic violence, and tried again to put the hound on the scent,—the sight of blood had satisfied the animal that its work was done, and with dogged resolution it resisted every inducement to pursue the same scent a second time. The pedlar boy in the mean time paused not in his flight till morning dawned—and still as he fled, the noise of steps seemed to pursue him, and the cry of his assassins sounded in the distance. Ten miles off he

reached a village, and spread instant alarm throughout the neighbourhood—the inhabitants were aroused with one accord into a tumult of indignation—several of them had lost sons, brothers, or friends, on the heath, and all united in proceeding instantly to seize the old woman and her sons, who were nearly torn to pieces by their violence. Three gibbets were immediately raised on the moor, and the wretched culprits confessed before their execution to the destruction of nearly fifty victims in the Murder-Hole which they pointed out, and near which they suffered the penalty of their crimes. The bones of several murdered persons were with difficulty brought up from the abyss into which they had been thrust; but so narrow is the aperture, and so extraordinary the depth, that all who see it are inclined to coincide in the tradition of the country people that it is unfathomable. The scene of these events still continues nearly as it was three hundred years ago. The remains of the old cottage with its blackened walls (haunted, of course, by a thousand evil spirits), and the extensive moor, on which a more modern *inn* (if it can be dignified by such an epithet) resembles its predecessor in every thing but the character of its inhabitants; the landlord is deformed, but possesses extraordinary genius; he has himself manufactured a violin, on which he plays with untaught skill,—and if any *discord* be heard in the house, or any *murder* committed in it, *this* is his only instrument. His daughter (who has never travelled beyond the heath) has inherited her father's talent, and learned all his tales of terror and superstition, which she relates with infinite spirit; but when you are led by her across the heath to drop a stone into that deep and narrow gulf to which our story relates,—when you stand on its slippery edge, and (parting the long grass with which it is covered) gaze into its mysterious depths,—when she describes with all the animation of an *eye-witness*, the struggle of the victims grasping the grass as a last hope of preservation, and trying to drag down the assassin, as an expiring effort of vengeance—when you are told that for three hundred years the clear waters in this diamond of the desert have remained untasted by mortal lips, and that the solitary traveller is still pursued at night by the howling of the blood-hound, it is *then only* that it is possible fully to appreciate the terrors of THE MURDER-HOLE.

A want is to states what exercise is to individuals: a proper proportion may contribute to health and vigour; but too much emaciates and wears out a constitution.