

## OLIVER TWIST;

OR, THE PARISH BOY'S PROGRESS.

BY BOZ.

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH.

THE JEW'S LAST NIGHT ALIVE.

THE court was paved from floor to roof with human faces. Inquisitive and eager eyes peered from every inch of space; from the rail before the dock, away into the sharpest angle of the smallest corner in the galleries, all looks were fixed upon one man—the Jew. Before him and behind, above, below, on the right and on the left—he seemed to stand surrounded by a firmament all bright with beaming eyes.

He stood there, in all this glare of living light, with one hand resting on the wooden slab before him, the other held to his ear, and his head thrust forward to enable him to catch with greater distinctness every word that fell from the presiding judge, who was delivering his charge to the jury. At times he turned his eyes sharply upon them to observe the effect of the slightest feather-weight in his favour; and when the points against him were stated with terrible distinctness, looked towards his counsel in mute appeal that he would even then urge something in his behalf. Beyond these manifestations of anxiety, he stirred not hand or foot. He had scarcely moved since the trial began; and now that the judge ceased to speak, he still remained in the same strained attitude of close attention, with his gaze bent on him as though he listened still.

A slight bustle in the court recalled him to himself, and looking round, he saw that the jurymen had turned together to consider of their verdict. As his eyes wandered to the gallery, he could see the people rising above each other to see his face: some hastily applying their glasses to their eyes, and others whispering their neighbours with looks expressive of abhorrence. A few there were who seemed unmindful of him, and looked only to the jury in impatient wonder how they could delay, but in no one face—not even among the women, of whom there were many there—could he read the faintest sympathy with him, or any feeling but one of all-absorbing interest that he should be condemned.

As he saw all this in one bewildered glance, the death-like stillness came again, and looking back, he saw that the jurymen had turned towards the judge. Hush!

They only sought permission to retire.

He looked wistfully into their faces, one by one, when they



passed out, as though to see which way the greater number leant; but that was fruitless. The jailer touched him on the shoulder. He followed mechanically to the end of the dock, and sat down on a chair. The man pointed it out, or he should not have seen it.

He looked up into the gallery again. Some of the people were eating, and some fanning themselves with handkerchiefs, for the crowded place was very hot. There was one young man sketching his face in a little note-book. He wondered whether it was like, and looked on when the artist broke his pencil-point and made another with his knife, as any idle spectator might have done.

In the same way, when he turned his eyes towards the judge, his mind began to busy itself with the fashion of his dress, and what it cost, and how he put it on. There was an old fat gentleman on the bench, too, who had gone out some half an hour before, and now came back. He wondered within himself whether this man had been to get his dinner, what he had had, and where he had had it, and pursued this train of careless thought until some new object caught his eye and roused another.

Not that all this time his mind was for an instant free from one oppressive, overwhelming sense of the grave that opened at his feet; it was ever present to him, but in a vague and general way, and he could not fix his thoughts upon it. Thus, even while he trembled and turned, burning hot at the idea of speedy death, he fell to counting the iron spikes before him, and wondering how the head of one had been broken off, and whether they would mend it or leave it as it was. Then he thought of all the horrors of the gallows and the scaffold, and stopped to watch a man sprinkling the floor to cool it—and then went on to think again.

At length there was a cry of silence, and a breathless look from all towards the door. The jury returned and passed him close. He could glean nothing from their faces; they might as well have been of stone. Perfect stillness ensued—not a rustle—not a breath—Guilty.

The building rang with a tremendous shout, and another, and another, and then it echoed deep loud groans, that gathered strength as they swelled out, like angry thunder. It was a peal of joy from the populace outside, greeting the news that he would die on Monday.

The noise subsided, and he was asked if he had anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon him. He had resumed his listening attitude, and looked intently at his questioner while the demand was made, but it was twice repeated before he seemed to hear it, and then he only muttered that he was an old man—an old man—an old man—and so dropping into a whisper, was silent again.

The judge assumed the black cap, and the prisoner still stood



with the same air and gesture. A woman in the gallery uttered some exclamation, called forth by this dread solemnity; he looked hastily up, as if angry at the interruption, and bent forward yet more attentively. The address was solemn and impressive, the sentence fearful to hear; but he stood like a marble figure, without the motion of a nerve. His haggard face was still thrust forward, his under-jaw hanging down, and his eyes staring out before him, when the jailer put his hand upon his arm, and beckoned him away. He gazed stupidly about him for an instant, and obeyed.

They led him through a paved room under the court, where some prisoners were waiting till their turns came, and others were talking to their friends, who crowded round a grate which looked into the open yard. There was nobody there to speak to *him*; but as he passed, the prisoners fell back to render him more visible to the people who were clinging to the bars, and they assailed him with opprobrious names, and screeched and hissed. He shook his fist, and would have spat upon them; but his conductors hurried him on through a gloomy passage, lighted by a few dim lamps, into the interior of the prison.

Here he was searched, that he might not have about him the means of anticipating the law; this ceremony performed, they led him to one of the condemned cells, and left him there—alone.

He sat down on a stone bench opposite the door, which served for seat and bedstead, and casting his bloodshot eyes upon the ground, tried to collect his thoughts. After a while he began to remember a few disjointed fragments of what the judge had said, though it had seemed to him at the time that he could not hear a word. These gradually fell into their proper places, and by degrees suggested more, so that in a little time he had the whole almost as it was delivered. To be hanged by the neck till he was dead—that was the end. To be hanged by the neck till he was dead.

As it came on very dark, he began to think of all the men he had known who had died upon the scaffold—some of them through his means. They rose up in such quick succession that he could hardly count them. He had seen some of them die,—and joked too, because they died with prayers upon their lips. With what a rattling noise the drop went down; and how suddenly they changed from strong and vigorous men to dangling heaps of clothes!

Some of them might have inhabited that very cell—sat upon that very spot. It was very dark; why didn't they bring a light? The cell had been built for many years—scores of men must have passed their last hours there—it was like sitting in a vault strewn with dead bodies—the cap, the noose, the pinioned arms—the faces that he knew even beneath that hideous veil—Light, light!



At length when his hands were raw with beating against the heavy door and walls, two men appeared, one bearing a candle, which he thrust into an iron candlestick fixed against the wall, and the other dragging in a mattress on which to pass the night, for the prisoner was to be left alone no more.

Then came night—dark, dismal, silent night. Other watchers are glad to hear the church-clocks strike, for they tell of life and coming day. To the Jew they brought despair. The boom of every iron bell came laden with the one deep hollow sound—Death. What availed the noise and bustle of cheerful morning, which penetrated even there, to him? It was another form of knell, with mockery added to the warning.

The day passed off—day, there was no day; it was gone as soon as come—and night came on again; night so long and yet so short; long in its dreadful silence, and short in its fleeting hours. One time he raved and blasphemed, and at another howled and tore his hair. Venerable men of his own persuasion had come to pray beside him, but he had driven them away with curses. They renewed their charitable efforts, and he beat them off.

Saturday night; he had only one night more to live. And as he thought of this, the day broke—Sunday.

It was not until the night of this last awful day that a withering sense of his helpless desperate state came in its full intensity upon his blighted soul; not that he had ever held any defined or positive hopes of mercy, but that he had never been able to consider more than the dim probability of dying so soon. He had spoken little to either of the two men who relieved each other in their attendance upon him, and they, for their parts, made no effort to rouse his attention. He had sat there awake, but dreaming. Now he started up every minute, and with gasping mouth and burning skin hurried to and fro, in such a paroxysm of fear and wrath, that even they—used to such sights—recoiled from him with horror. He grew so terrible at last in all the tortures of his evil conscience, that one man could not bear to sit there, eyeing him alone, and so the two kept watch together.

He cowered down upon his stone bed, and thought of the past. He had been wounded with some missiles from the crowd on the day of his capture, and his head was bandaged with a linen cloth. His red hair hung down upon his bloodless face; his beard was torn and twisted into knots; his eyes shone with a terrible light; his unwashed flesh crackled with the fever that burnt him up. Eight—nine—ten. If it was not a trick to frighten him, and those were the real hours treading on each other's heels, where would he be when they came round again! Eleven. Another struck ere the voice of the hour before had ceased to vibrate. At eight he would be the only mourner in his own funeral train; at eleven—



Those dreadful walls of Newgate, which have hidden so much misery and such unspeakable anguish, not only from the eyes, but too often and too long from the thoughts of men, never held so dread a spectacle as that. The few who lingered as they passed and wondered what the man was doing who was to be hung to-morrow, would have slept but ill that night, if they could have seen him then.

From early in the evening until nearly midnight, little groups of two and three presented themselves at the lodge-gate, and inquired with anxious faces whether any reprieve had been received. These being answered in the negative, communicated the welcome intelligence to clusters in the street, who pointed out to one another the door from which he must come out, and showed where the scaffold would be built, and, walking with unwilling steps away, turned back to conjure up the scene. By degrees they fell off one by one, and for an hour in the dead of night the street was left to solitude and darkness.

The space before the prison was cleared, and a few strong barriers, painted black, had been already thrown across the road to break the pressure of the expected crowd, when Mr. Brownlow and Oliver appeared at the wicket, and presented an order of admission to the prisoner, signed by one of the sheriffs. They were immediately admitted into the lodge.

"Is the young gentleman to come too, sir?" said the man whose duty it was to conduct them. "It's not a sight for children, sir."

"It is not indeed, my friend," rejoined Mr. Brownlow, "but my business with this man is intimately connected with him, and as this child has seen him in the full career of his success and villany, I think it better—even at the cost of some pain and fear—that he should see him now."

These few words had been said apart, so as to be inaudible to Oliver. The man touched his hat, and glancing at him with some curiosity, opened another gate opposite to that at which they had entered, and led them on through dark and winding ways towards the cells.

"This," said the man, stopping in a gloomy passage where a couple of workmen were making some preparations in profound silence,—“this is the place he passes through. If you step this way, you can see the door he goes out at.”

He led them into a stone kitchen, fitted with coppers for dressing the prison food, and pointed to a door. There was an open grating above it, through which came the sound of men's voices, mingled with the noise of hammering and the throwing down of boards. They were putting up the scaffold.

From this place they passed through several strong gates, opened by other turnkeys from the inner side, and having entered an open yard, ascended a flight of narrow steps, and came into a passage with a row of strong doors on the left hand. Motioning



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George Cruikshank

*Fugio in the condemned Cell.*

London, Published by Richard Bentley, 1830.



them to remain where they were, the turnkey knocked at one of these with his bunch of keys. The two attendants after a little whispering came out into the passage, stretching themselves as if glad of the temporary relief, and motioned the visitors to follow the jailer into the cell. They did so.

The condemned criminal was seated on his bed, rocking himself from side to side, with a countenance more like that of a snared beast than the face of a man. His mind was evidently wandering to his old life, for he continued to mutter, without seeming conscious of their presence otherwise than as a part of his vision.

"Good boy, Charley—well done!"—he mumbled. "Oliver too, ha! ha! ha! Oliver too—quite the gentleman now—quite the—take that boy away to bed."

The jailer took the disengaged hand of Oliver, and whispering him not to be alarmed, looked on without speaking.

"Take him away to bed"—cried the Jew. "Do you hear me, some of you? He has been the—the—somehow the cause of all this. It's worth the money to bring him up to it—Bolter's throat, Bill; never mind the girl—Bolter's throat as deep as you can cut. Saw his head off."

"Fagin," said the jailer.

"That's me!" cried the Jew, falling instantly into precisely the same attitude of listening that he had assumed upon his trial. "An old man, my Lord; a very old, old man."

"Here," said the turnkey, laying his hand upon his breast to keep him down. "Here's somebody wants to see you, to ask you some questions, I suppose. Fagin, Fagin. Are you a man?"

"I shan't be one long," replied the Jew, looking up with a face retaining no human expression but rage and terror. "Strike them all dead!—what right have they to butcher me?"

As he spoke he caught sight of Oliver and Mr. Brownlow, and shrinking to the furthest corner of the seat, demanded to know what they wanted there.

"Steady," said the turnkey, still holding him down. "Now, sir, tell him what you want—quick, if you please, for he grows worse as the time gets on."

"You have some papers," said Mr. Brownlow advancing, "which were placed in your hands for better security, by a man called Monks."

"It's all a lie together," replied the Jew. "I haven't one—not one."

"For the love of God," said Mr. Brownlow solemnly, "do not say that now, upon the very verge of death; but tell me where they are. You know that Sikes is dead; that Monks has confessed; that there is no hope of any further gain. Where are these papers?"

"Oliver," cried the Jew, beckoning to him. "Here, here. Let me whisper to you."



"I am not afraid," said Oliver in a low voice, as he relinquished Mr. Brownlow's hand.

"The papers," said the Jew, drawing him towards him, "are in a canvass bag, in a hole a little way up the chimney in the top front-room. I want to talk to you, my dear—I want to talk to you."

"Yes, yes," returned Oliver. "Let me say a prayer. Do. Let me say one prayer; say only one upon your knees with me, and we will talk till morning."

"Outside, outside," replied the Jew, pushing the boy before him towards the door, and looking vacantly over his head. "Say I've gone to sleep—they'll believe *you*. You can get me out if you take me so. Now then, now then."

"Oh! God forgive this wretched man!" cried the boy with a burst of tears.

"That's right, that's right," said the Jew. "That'll help us on. This door first; if I shake and tremble as we pass the gallows, don't you mind, but hurry on. Now, now, now."

"Have you nothing else to ask him, sir?" inquired the turnkey.

"No other question," replied Mr. Brownlow. "If I hoped we could recall him to a sense of his position—"

"Nothing will do that, sir," replied the man, shaking his head. "You had better leave him."

The door of the cell opened, and the attendants returned.

"Press on, press on," cried the Jew. "Softly, but not so slow. Faster, faster!"

The men laid hands upon him, and disengaging Oliver from his grasp, held him back. He writhed and struggled with the power of desperation, and sent up shriek upon shriek that penetrated even those massive walls, and rang in their ears until they reached the open yard.

It was some time before they left the prison, for Oliver nearly swooned after this frightful scene, and was so weak, that for an hour or more he had not the strength to walk.

Day was dawning when they again emerged. A great multitude had already assembled; the windows were filled with people smoking and playing cards to beguile the time; the crowd were pushing, quarrelling, and joking. Every thing told of life and animation, but one dark cluster of objects in the very centre of all—the black stage, the cross-beam, the rope, and all the hideous apparatus of death.

#### CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH,

#### AND LAST.

THE fortunes of those who have figured in this tale are nearly closed, and what little remains to their historian to relate is told in few and simple words.



Before three months had passed, Rose Fleming and Harry Maylie were married in the village church, which was henceforth to be the scene of the young clergyman's labours; on the same day they entered into possession of their new and happy home.

Mrs. Maylie took up her abode with her son and daughter-in-law, to enjoy, during the tranquil remainder of her days, the greatest felicity that age and worth can know—the contemplation of the happiness of those on whom the warmest affections and tenderest cares of a well-spent life have been unceasingly bestowed.

It appeared, on a full and careful investigation, that if the wreck of property remaining in the custody of Monks (which had never prospered either in his hands or in those of his mother) were equally divided between himself and Oliver, it would yield to each little more than three thousand pounds. By the provisions of his father's will, Oliver would have been entitled to the whole; but Mr. Brownlow, unwilling to deprive the elder son of the opportunity of retrieving his former vices and pursuing an honest career, proposed this mode of distribution, to which his young charge most joyfully acceded.

Monks, still bearing that assumed name, retired with his portion to a distant part of the New World, where, having quickly squandered it, he once more fell into his old courses, and, after undergoing a long confinement for some fresh act of fraud and knavery, at length sunk under an attack of his old disorder, and died in prison. As far from home died the chief remaining members of his friend Fagin's gang.

Mr. Brownlow adopted Oliver as his own son, and removing with him and the old housekeeper to within a mile of the parsonage house, where his dear friends resided, gratified the only remaining wish of Oliver's warm and earnest heart, and thus linked together a little society, whose condition approached as nearly to one of perfect happiness as can ever be known in this changing world.

Soon after the marriage of the young people, the worthy doctor returned to Chertsey, where, bereft of the presence of his old friends, he would have been discontented if his temperament had admitted of such a feeling, and would have turned quite peevish if he had known how. For two or three months he contented himself with hinting that he feared the air began to disagree with him, and then finding that the place really was to him no longer what it had been before, settled his business on his assistant, took a bachelor's cottage just outside the village of which his young friend was pastor, and instantaneously recovered. Here he took to gardening, planting, fishing, carpentering, and various other pursuits of a similar kind, all undertaken with his characteristic impetuosity; and in each and all, he has since become famous throughout the neighbourhood as a most profound authority.



Before his removal, he had managed to contract a strong friendship for Mr. Grimwig, which that eccentric gentleman cordially reciprocated. He is accordingly visited by him a great many times in the course of the year, and on all such occasions Mr. Grimwig plants, fishes, and carpenters with great ardour, doing everything in a very singular and unprecedented manner; but always maintaining, with his favourite asseveration, that his mode is the right one. On Sundays, he never fails to criticise the sermon to the young clergyman's face, always informing Mr. Losberne in strict confidence afterwards, that he considers it an excellent performance, but thinks it as well not to say so. It is a standing and very favourite joke for Mr. Brownlow to rally him on his old prophecy concerning Oliver, and to remind him of the night on which they sat with the watch between them waiting his return; but Mr. Grimwig contends that he was right in the main, and in proof thereof remarks that Oliver *did not come back*, after all, which always calls forth a laugh on his side, and increases his good humour.

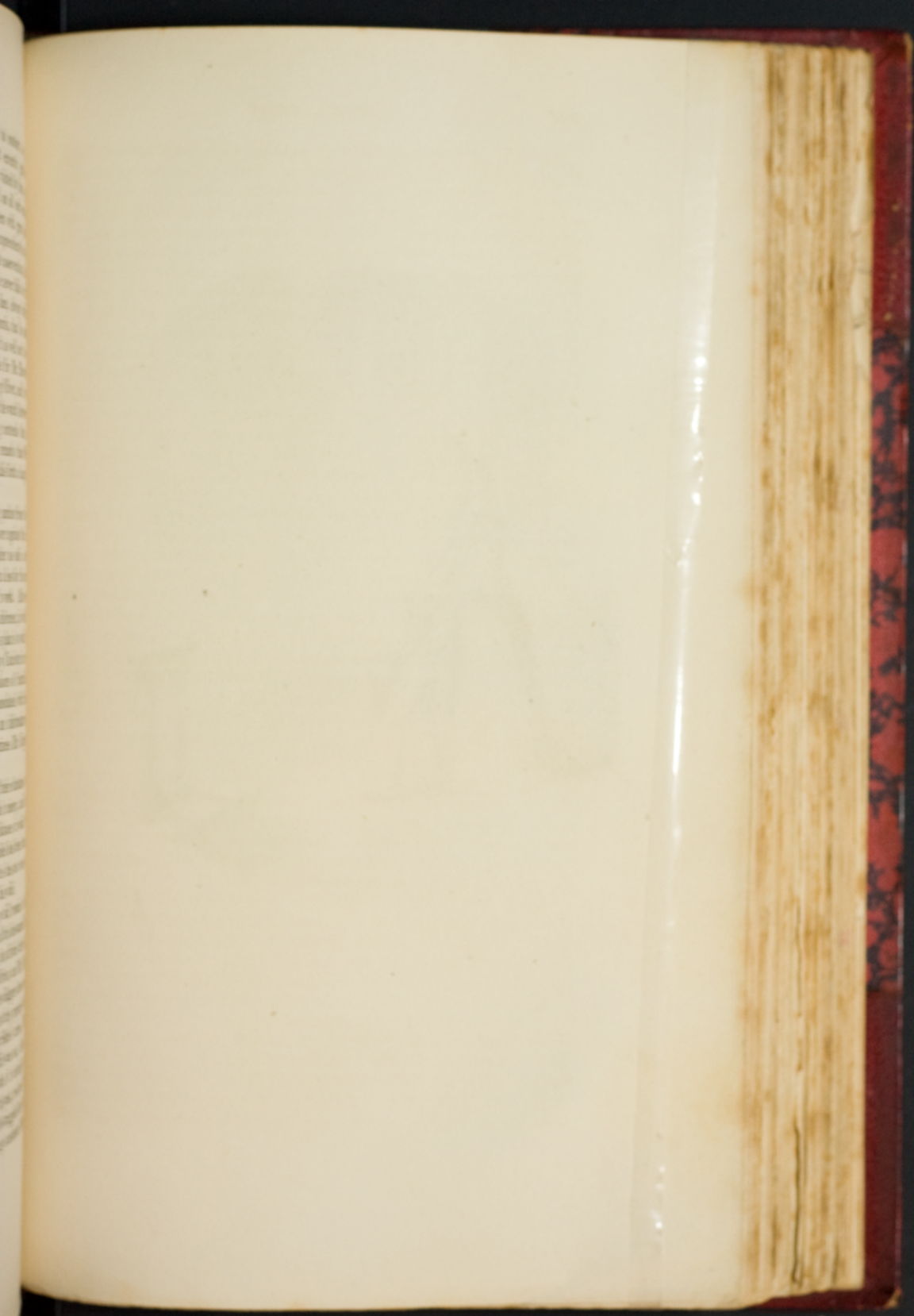
Mr. Noah Claypole, receiving a free pardon from the crown in consequence of being admitted approver against the Jew, and considering his profession not altogether as safe a one as he could wish, was for some little time at a loss for the means of a livelihood, not burdened with too much work. After some consideration he went into business as an informer, in which calling he realizes a genteel subsistence. His plan is to walk out once a-week during church time, attended by Charlotte in respectable attire. The lady faints away at the doors of charitable publishers, and the gentleman being accommodated with threepenny-worth of brandy to restore her, lays an information next day, and pockets half the penalty. Sometimes Mr. Claypole faints himself, but the result is the same.

Mr. and Mrs. Bumble, deprived of their situations, were gradually reduced to great indigence and misery, and finally became paupers in that very same workhouse in which they had once lorded it over others. Mr. Bumble has been heard to say, that in this reverse and degradation he has not even spirits to be thankful for being separated from his wife.

As to Mr. Giles and Brittles, they still remain in their old posts, although the former is bald, and the last-named boy quite grey. They sleep at the parsonage, but divide their attentions so equally between its inmates, and Oliver, and Mr. Brownlow, and Mr. Losberne, that to this day the villagers have never been able to discover to which establishment they properly belong.

Master Charles Bates, appalled by Sikes's crime, fell into a train of reflection whether an honest life was not, after all, the best. Arriving at the conclusion that it certainly was, he turned his back upon the scenes of the past, resolved to amend it in some new sphere of action. He struggled hard and suffered much for some time; but having a contented disposition









*Rose Maylie and Oliver*



and a good purpose, succeeded in the end ; and, from being a farmer's drudge and a carrier's lad, is now the merriest young grazier in all Northamptonshire.

And now the hand that traces these words falters as it approaches the conclusion of its task, and would weave for a little longer space the thread of these adventures.

I would fain linger yet with a few of those among whom I have so long moved, and share their happiness by endeavouring to depict it. I would show Rose Maylie in all the bloom and grace of early womanhood, shedding upon her secluded path in life such soft and gentle light, as fell on all who trod it with her, and shone into their hearts,—I would paint her the life and joy of the fireside circle and the lively summer group ; I would follow her through the sultry fields at noon, and hear the low tones of her sweet voice in the moonlit evening walk ; I would watch her in all her goodness and charity abroad, and the smiling untiring discharge of domestic duties at home ; I would paint her and her dead sister's child happy in their mutual love, and passing whole hours together in picturing the friends whom they had so sadly lost ; I would summon before me once again those joyous little faces that clustered round her knee, and listen to their merry prattle ; I would recall the tones of that clear laugh, and conjure up the sympathising tear that glistened in that soft blue eye. These, and a thousand looks and smiles and turns of thought and speech—I would fain recall them every one.

How Mr. Brownlow went on from day to day, filling the mind of his adopted child with stores of knowledge, and becoming attached to him more and more as his nature developed itself, and showed the thriving seeds of all he could wish him to become—how he traced in him new traits of his early friend, that awakened in his own bosom old remembrances, melancholy and yet sweet and soothing—how the two orphans, tried by adversity, remembered its lessons in mercy to others, and mutual love, and fervent thanks to Him who had protected and preserved them—these are all matters which need not to be told ; for I have said that they were truly happy ; and without strong affection, and humanity of heart, and gratitude to that Being whose code is mercy, and whose great attribute is benevolence to all things that breathe, true happiness can never be attained.

Within the altar of the old village church there stands a white marble tablet, which bears as yet but one word,—“ Agnes !” There is no coffin in that tomb ; and may it be many, many years before another name is placed above it. But if the spirits of the Dead ever come back to earth to visit spots hallowed by the love—the love beyond the grave—of those whom they knew in life, I do believe that the shade of that poor girl often hovers about that solemn nook—ay, though it is a church, and she was weak and erring.