

OLIVER TWIST;

OR, THE PARISH BOY'S PROGRESS.

BY BOZ.

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

CHAPTER THE NINTH.

CONTAINING FURTHER PARTICULARS CONCERNING THE PLEASANT OLD GENTLEMAN, AND HIS HOPEFUL PUPILS.

It was late next morning when Oliver awoke from a sound, long sleep. There was nobody in the room beside, but the old Jew, who was boiling some coffee in a saucepan for breakfast, and whistling softly to himself as he stirred it round and round with an iron spoon. He would stop every now and then to listen when there was the least noise below; and, when he had satisfied himself, he would go on whistling and stirring again, as before.

Although Oliver had roused himself from sleep, he was not thoroughly awake. There is a drowsy, heavy state, between sleeping and waking, when you dream more in five minutes with your eyes half open, and yourself half conscious of everything that is passing around you, than you would in five nights with your eyes fast closed, and your senses wrapt in perfect unconsciousness. At such times, a mortal knows just enough of what his mind is doing to form some glimmering conception of its mighty powers, its bounding from earth and spurning time and space, when freed from the irksome restraint of its corporeal associate.

Oliver was precisely in the condition I have described. He saw the Jew with his half-closed eyes, heard his low whistling, and recognised the sound of the spoon grating against the saucepan's sides; and yet the self-same senses were mentally engaged at the same time, in busy action with almost everybody he had ever known.

When the coffee was done, the Jew drew the saucepan to the hob, and, standing in an irresolute attitude for a few minutes as if he did not well know how to employ himself, turned round and looked at Oliver, and called him by his name. He did not answer, and was to all appearance asleep.

After satisfying himself upon this head, the Jew stepped gently to the door, which he fastened; he then drew forth, as it seemed to Oliver, from some trap in the floor, a small box, which he placed carefully on the table. His eyes glistened as he raised the lid and looked in. Dragging an old chair to the table, he sat down, and took from it a magnificent gold watch, sparkling with diamonds.

"Aha!" said the Jew, shrugging up his shoulders, and distorting every feature with a hideous grin. "Clever dogs! clever dogs! Staunch to the last! Never told the old parson where they were; never peached upon old Fagin. And why should they? It wouldn't have loosened the knot, or kept the drop up a minute longer. No, no, no! Fine fellows! fine fellows!"

With these, and other muttered reflections of the like nature, the Jew once more deposited the watch in its place of safety. At least half a dozen more were severally drawn forth from the same box, and surveyed with equal pleasure; besides rings, brooches, bracelets, and other articles of jewellery, of such magnificent materials and costly workmanship that Oliver had no idea even of their names.

Having replaced these trinkets, the Jew took out another, so small that it lay in the palm of his hand. There seemed to be some very minute inscription on it, for the Jew laid it flat upon the table, and, shading it with his hand, pored over it long and earnestly. At length he set it down as if despairing of success, and, leaning back in his chair, muttered,

"What a fine thing capital punishment is! Dead men never repent; dead men never bring awkward stories to light. The prospect of the gallows, too, makes them hardy and bold. Ah, it's a fine thing for the trade! Five of them strung up in a row, and none left to play booty or turn white-livered!"

As the Jew uttered these words, his bright dark eyes which had been staring vacantly before him, fell on Oliver's face; the boy's eyes were fixed on his in mute curiosity, and, although the recognition was only for an instant—for the briefest space of time that can possibly be conceived,—it was enough to show the old man that he had been observed. He closed the lid of the box with a loud crash, and, laying his hand on a bread-knife which was on the table, started furiously up. He trembled very much though; for, even in his terror, Oliver could see that the knife quivered in the air.

"What's that?" said the Jew. "What do you watch me for? Why are you awake? What have you seen? Speak out, boy! Quick—quick! for your life!"

"I wasn't able to sleep any longer, sir," replied Oliver, meekly. "I am very sorry if I have disturbed you, sir."

"You were not awake an hour ago?" said the Jew, scowling fiercely on the boy.

"No—no, indeed, sir," replied Oliver.

"Are you sure?" cried the Jew, with a still fiercer look than before, and a threatening attitude.

"Upon my word I was not, sir," replied Oliver, earnestly.

"I was not, indeed, sir."

"Tush, tush, my dear!" said the Jew, suddenly resuming his old manner, and playing with the knife a little before he laid it

down, as if to induce the belief that he had caught it up in mere sport. "Of course I know that, my dear. I only tried to frighten you. You're a brave boy. Ha! ha! you're a brave boy, Oliver!" and the Jew rubbed his hands with a chuckle, but looked uneasily at the box notwithstanding.

"Did you see any of these pretty things, my dear?" said the Jew, laying his hand upon it after a short pause.

"Yes, sir," replied Oliver.

"Ah!" said the Jew, turning rather pale. "They're mine, Oliver; my little property. All I have to live upon in my old age. The folks call me a miser, my dear,—only a miser; that's all."

Oliver thought the old gentleman must be a decided miser to live in such a dirty place, with so many watches; but, thinking that perhaps his fondness for the Dodger and the other boys cost him a good deal of money, he only cast a deferential look at the Jew, and asked if he might get up.

"Certainly, my dear,—certainly," replied the old gentleman. "Stay. There's a pitcher of water in the corner by the door. Bring it here, and I'll give you a basin to wash in, my dear."

Oliver got up, walked across the room, and stooped for one instant to raise the pitcher. When he turned his head, the box was gone.

He had scarcely washed himself and made everything tidy by emptying the basin out of the window, agreeably to the Jew's directions, than the Dodger returned, accompanied by a very sprightly young friend whom Oliver had seen smoking on the previous night, and who was now formally introduced to him as Charley Bates. The four then sat down to breakfast off the coffee and some hot rolls and ham which the Dodger had brought home in the crown of his hat.

"Well," said the Jew, glancing slyly at Oliver, and addressing himself to the Dodger, "I hope you've been at work this morning, my dears."

"Hard," replied the Dodger.

"As nails," added Charley Bates.

"Good boys, good boys!" said the Jew. "What have you got, Dodger?"

"A couple of pocket-books," replied that young gentleman.

"Lined?" inquired the Jew with trembling eagerness.

"Pretty well," replied the Dodger, producing two pocket-books, one green and the other red.

"Not so heavy as they might be," said the Jew, after looking at the insides carefully; "but very neat, and nicely made. Ingenious workman, ain't he, Oliver?"

"Very, indeed, sir," said Oliver. At which Mr. Charles Bates laughed uproariously, very much to the amazement of Oliver, who saw nothing to laugh at, in anything that had passed.

"And what have you got, my dear?" said Fagin to Charley Bates.

"Wipes," replied Master Bates: at the same time producing four pocket-handkerchiefs.

"Well," said the Jew, inspecting them closely; "they 're very good ones,—very. You haven't marked them well, though, Charley; so the marks shall be picked out with a needle, and we'll teach Oliver how to do it. Shall us, Oliver, eh?—Ha! ha! ha!"

"If you please, sir," said Oliver.

"You'd like to be able to make pocket-handkerchiefs as easy as Charley Bates, wouldn't you, my dear?" said the Jew.

"Very much indeed, if you'll teach me, sir," replied Oliver.

Master Bates saw something so exquisitely ludicrous in this reply that he burst into another laugh; which laugh meeting the coffee he was drinking, and carrying it down some wrong channel, very nearly terminated in his premature suffocation.

"He is so jolly green," said Charley when he recovered, as an apology to the company for his unpolite behaviour.

The Dodger said nothing, but he smoothed Oliver's hair down over his eyes, and said he'd know better by-and-by; upon which the old gentleman, observing Oliver's colour mounting, changed the subject by asking whether there had been much of a crowd at the execution that morning. This made him wonder more and more, for it was plain from the replies of the two boys that they had both been there; and Oliver naturally wondered how they could possibly have found time to be so very industrious.

When the breakfast was cleared away, the merry old gentleman and the two boys played at a very curious and uncommon game, which was performed in this way:—The merry old gentleman, placing a snuff-box in one pocket of his trousers, a note-case in the other, and a watch in his waistcoat-pocket, with a guard-chain round his neck, and sticking a mock diamond pin in his shirt, buttoned his coat tight round him, and, putting his spectacle-case and handkerchief in the pockets, trotted up and down the room with a stick, in imitation of the manner in which old gentlemen walk about the streets every hour in the day. Sometimes he stopped at the fire-place, and sometimes at the door, making belief that he was staring with all his might into shop-windows. At such times he would look constantly round him for fear of thieves, and keep slapping all his pockets in turn, to see that he hadn't lost anything, in such a very funny and natural manner, that Oliver laughed till the tears ran down his face. All this time the two boys followed him closely about, getting out of his sight so nimbly every time he turned round, that it was impossible to follow their motions. At last the Dodger trod upon his toes, or ran upon his boot accidentally, while Charley Bates stumbled up against him behind; and in

that one moment they took from him with the most extraordinary rapidity, snuff-box, note-case, watch-guard, chain, shirt-pin, pocket-handkerchief,—even the spectacle-case. If the old gentleman felt a hand in any one of his pockets, he cried out where it was, and then the game began all over again.

When this game had been played a great many times, a couple of young ladies came to see the young gentlemen, one of whom was called Bet and the other Nancy. They wore a good deal of hair, not very neatly turned up behind, and were rather untidy about the shoes and stockings. They were not exactly pretty, perhaps; but they had a great deal of colour in their faces, and looked quite stout and hearty. Being remarkably free and agreeable in their manners, Oliver thought them very nice girls indeed, as there is no doubt they were.

These visitors stopped a long time. Spirits were produced, in consequence of one of the young ladies complaining of a coldness in her inside, and the conversation took a very convivial and improving turn. At length Charley Bates expressed his opinion that it was time to pad the hoof, which it occurred to Oliver must be French for going out; for directly afterwards the Dodger, and Charley, and the two young ladies went away together, having been kindly furnished with money to spend, by the amiable old Jew.

“There, my dear,” said Fagin, “that’s a pleasant life, isn’t it? They have gone out for the day.”

“Have they done work, sir?” inquired Oliver.

“Yes,” said the Jew; “that is, unless they should unexpectedly come across any when they are out; and they won’t neglect it if they do, my dear, depend upon it.”

“Make ’em your models, my dear, make ’em your models,” said the Jew, tapping the fire-shovel on the hearth to add force to his words; “do everything they bid you, and take their advice in all matters, especially the Dodger’s, my dear. He’ll be a great man himself, and make you one too, if you take pattern by him. Is my handkerchief hanging out of my pocket, my dear?” said the Jew, stopping short.

“Yes, sir,” said Oliver.

“See if you can take it out, without my feeling it, as you saw them do when we were at play this morning.”

Oliver held up the bottom of the pocket with one hand as he had seen the Dodger do, and drew the handkerchief lightly out of it with the other.

“Is it gone?” cried the Jew.

“Here it is, sir,” said Oliver, showing it in his hand.

“You’re a clever boy, my dear,” said the playful old gentleman, patting Oliver on the head approvingly; “I never saw a sharper lad. Here’s a shilling for you. If you go on in this way, you’ll be the greatest man of the time. And now come here, and I’ll show you how to take the marks out of the handkerchiefs.”

Oliver wondered what picking the old gentleman's pocket in play had to do with his chances of being a great man; but thinking that the Jew, being so much his senior, must know best, followed him quietly to the table, and was soon deeply involved in his new study.

CHAPTER THE TENTH.

OLIVER BECOMES BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH THE CHARACTERS OF HIS NEW ASSOCIATES, AND PURCHASES EXPERIENCE AT A HIGH PRICE. BEING A SHORT BUT VERY IMPORTANT CHAPTER IN THIS HISTORY.

FOR eight or ten days Oliver remained in the Jew's room, picking the marks out of the pocket-handkerchiefs, (of which a great number were brought home,) and sometimes taking part in the game already described, which the two boys and the Jew played regularly every day. At length he began to languish for the fresh air, and took many occasions of earnestly entreating the old gentleman to allow him to go out to work with his two companions.

Oliver was rendered the more anxious to be actively employed by what he had seen of the stern morality of the old gentleman's character. Whenever the Dodger or Charley Bates came home at night empty-handed, he would expatiate with great vehemence on the misery of idle and lazy habits, and enforce upon them the necessity of an active life by sending them supperless to bed: upon one occasion he even went so far as to knock them both down a flight of stairs; but this was carrying out his virtuous precepts to an unusual extent.

At length one morning Oliver obtained the permission he had so eagerly sought. There had been no handkerchiefs to work upon, for two or three days, and the dinners had been rather meagre. Perhaps these were reasons for the old gentleman's giving his assent; but, whether they were or no, he told Oliver he might go, and placed him under the joint guardianship of Charley Bates and his friend the Dodger.

The three boys sallied out, the Dodger with his coat-sleeves tucked up and his hat cocked as usual, Master Bates sauntering along with his hands in his pockets, and Oliver between them, wondering where they were going, and what branch of manufacture he would be instructed in first.

The pace at which they went was such a very lazy, ill-looking saunter, that Oliver soon began to think his companions were going to deceive the old gentleman, by not going to work at all. The Dodger had a vicious propensity, too, of pulling the caps from the heads of small boys and tossing them down areas; while Charley Bates exhibited some very loose notions concerning the rights of property, by pilfering divers apples and onions from the stalls at the kennel sides, and thrusting them into pockets which were so surprisingly capacious, that they

seemed to undermine his whole suit of clothes in every direction. These things looked so bad, that Oliver was on the point of declaring his intention of seeking his way back in the best way he could, when his thoughts were suddenly directed into another channel by a very mysterious change of behaviour on the part of the Dodger.

They were just emerging from a narrow court not far from the open square in Clerkenwell, which is called, by some strange perversion of terms, "The Green," when the Dodger made a sudden stop, and, laying his finger on his lip, drew his companions back again with the greatest caution and circumspection.

"What 's the matter?" demanded Oliver.

"Hush!" replied the Dodger. "Do you see that old cove at the book-stall?"

"The old gentleman over the way?" said Oliver. "Yes, I see him."

"He 'll do," said the Dodger.

"A prime plant," observed Charley Bates.

Oliver looked from one to the other with the greatest surprise, but was not permitted to make any inquiries, for the two boys walked stealthily across the road, and slunk close behind the old gentleman towards whom his attention had been directed. Oliver walked a few paces after them, and, not knowing whether to advance or retire, stood looking on in silent amazement.

The old gentleman was a very respectable-looking personage, with a powdered head and gold spectacles; dressed in a bottle-green coat with a black velvet collar, and white trousers: with a smart bamboo cane under his arm. He had taken up a book from the stall, and there he stood, reading away as hard as if he were in his elbow-chair in his own study. It was very possible that he fancied himself there, indeed; for it was plain, from his utter abstraction, that he saw not the book-stall, nor the street, nor the boys, nor, in short, anything but the book itself, which he was reading straight through, turning over the leaves when he got to the bottom of a page, beginning at the top line of the next one, and going regularly on with the greatest interest and eagerness.

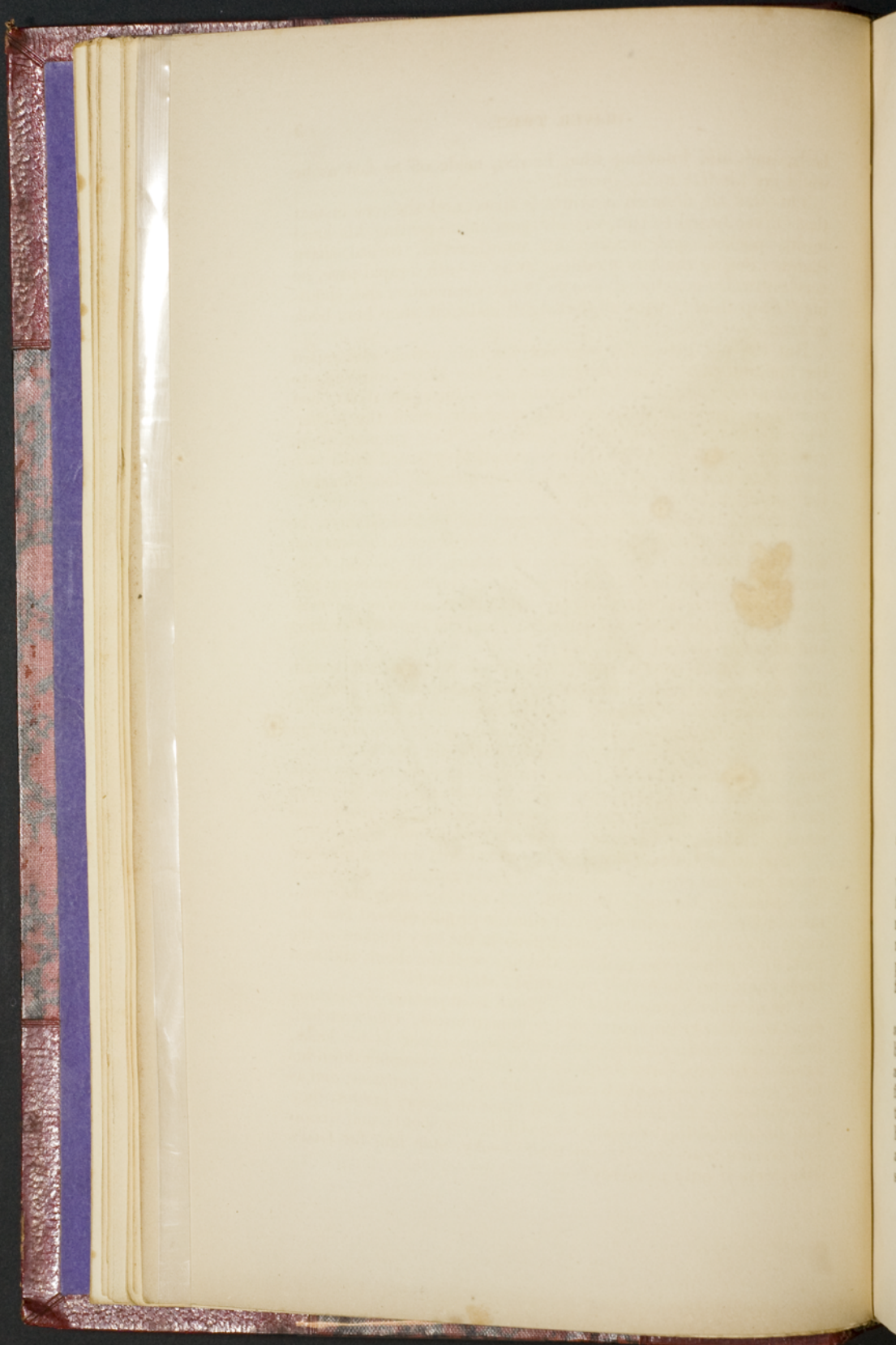
What was Oliver's horror and alarm, as he stood a few paces off, looking on with his eye-lids as wide open as they would possibly go, to see the Dodger plunge his hand into this old gentleman's pocket, and draw from thence a handkerchief, which he handed to Charley Bates, and with which they both ran away round the corner at full speed!

In one instant the whole mystery of the handkerchiefs, and the watches, and the jewels, and the Jew, rushed upon the boy's mind. He stood for a moment with the blood tingling so through all his veins from terror, that he felt as if he were in a burning fire; then, confused and frightened, he took to his



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Oliver amazed at the Dodger's mode of "going to work."



heels, and, not knowing what he did, made off as fast as he could lay his feet to the ground.

This was all done in a minute's space, and the very instant that Oliver began to run, the old gentleman, putting his hand to his pocket, and missing his handkerchief, turned sharp round. Seeing the boy scudding away at such a rapid pace, he very naturally concluded him to be the depredator, and, shouting "Stop thief!" with all his might, made off after him, book in hand.

But the old gentleman was not the only person who raised the hue and cry. The Dodger and Master Bates, unwilling to attract public attention by running down the open street, had merely retired into the very first doorway round the corner. They no sooner heard the cry, and saw Oliver running, than, guessing exactly how the matter stood, they issued forth with great promptitude, and, shouting "Stop thief!" too, joined in the pursuit like good citizens.

Although Oliver had been brought up by philosophers, he was not theoretically acquainted with their beautiful axiom that self-preservation is the first law of nature. If he had been, perhaps he would have been prepared for this. Not being prepared, however, it alarmed him the more; so away he went like the wind, with the old gentlemen and the two boys roaring and shouting behind him.

"Stop thief! stop thief!" There is a magic in the sound. The tradesman leaves his counter, and the carman his waggon; the butcher throws down his tray, the baker his basket, the milkman his pail, the errand-boy his parcels, the schoolboy his marbles, the paviour his pick-axe, the child his battledore: away they run, pell-mell, helter-skelter, slap-dash, tearing, yelling, and screaming, knocking down the passengers as they turn the corners, rousing up the dogs, and astonishing the fowls; and streets, squares, and courts re-echo with the sound.

"Stop thief! stop thief!" The cry is taken up by a hundred voices, and the crowd accumulate at every turning. Away they fly, splashing through the mud, and rattling along the pavements; up go the windows, out run the people, onward bear the mob: a whole audience desert Punch in the very thickest of the plot, and, joining the rushing throng, swell the shout, and lend fresh vigour to the cry, "Stop thief! stop thief!"

"Stop thief! stop thief!" There is a passion for *hunting something* deeply implanted in the human breast. One wretched, breathless child, panting with exhaustion, terror in his looks, agony in his eye, large drops of perspiration streaming down his face, strains every nerve to make head upon his pursuers; and as they follow on his track, and gain upon him every instant, they hail his decreasing strength with still louder shouts, and whoop and scream with joy "Stop thief!"—Ay, stop him for God's sake, were it only in mercy!

Stopped at last. A clever blow that. He 's down upon the pavement, and the crowd eagerly gather round him; each new comer jostling and struggling with the others to catch a glimpse. "Stand aside!"—"Give him a little air!"—"Nonsense! he don't deserve it."—"Where 's the gentleman?"—"Here he is, coming down the street."—"Make room there for the gentleman!"—"Is this the boy, sir?"—"Yes."

Oliver lay covered with mud and dust, and bleeding from the mouth, looking wildly round upon the heap of faces that surrounded him, when the old gentleman was officiously dragged and pushed into the circle by the foremost of the pursuers, and made this reply to their anxious inquiries.

"Yes," said the gentleman in a benevolent voice, "I am afraid it is."

"Afraid!" murmured the crowd. "That 's a good un."

"Poor fellow!" said the gentleman, "he has hurt himself."

"I did that, sir," said a great lubberly fellow stepping forward; "and precious I cut my knuckle agin' his mouth. I stopped him, sir."

The fellow touched his hat with a grin, expecting something for his pains; but the old gentleman, eyeing him with an expression of disgust, looked anxiously round, as if he contemplated running away himself; which it is very possible he might have attempted to do, and thus afforded another chase, had not a police officer (who is always the last person to arrive in such cases) at that moment made his way through the crowd, and seized Oliver by the collar. "Come, get up," said the man roughly.

"It wasn't me indeed, sir. Indeed, indeed, it was two other boys," said Oliver, clasping his hands passionately, and looking round: "they are here somewhere."

"Oh no, they ain't," said the officer. He meant this to be ironical; but it was true besides, for the Dodger and Charley Bates had filed off down the first convenient court they came to. "Come, get up."

"Don't hurt him," said the old gentleman compassionately.

"Oh no, I won't hurt him," replied the officer, tearing his jacket half off his back in proof thereof. "Come, I know you; it won't do. Will you stand upon your legs, you young devil?"

Oliver, who could hardly stand, made a shift to raise himself upon his feet, and was at once lugged along the streets by the jacket-collar at a rapid pace. The gentleman walked on with them by the officer's side; and as many of the crowd as could, got a little a-head, and stared back at Oliver from time to time. The boys shouted in triumph, and on they went.

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

TREATS OF MR. FANG THE POLICE MAGISTRATE, AND FURNISHES A SLIGHT SPECIMEN OF HIS MODE OF ADMINISTERING JUSTICE.

THE offence had been committed within the district, and indeed in the immediate neighbourhood of a very notorious metropolitan police-office. The crowd had only the satisfaction of accompanying Oliver through two or three streets, and down a place called Mutton-hill, when he was led beneath a low archway and up a dirty court into this dispensary of summary justice, by the back way. It was a small paved yard into which they turned; and here they encountered a stout man with a bunch of whisks on his face, and a bunch of keys in his hand.

"What's the matter now?" said the man carelessly.

"A young fogle-hunter," replied the man who had Oliver in charge.

"Are you the party that's been robbed, sir?" inquired the man with the keys.

"Yes, I am," replied the old gentleman; "but I am not sure that this boy actually took the handkerchief. I—I'd rather not press the case."

"Must go before the magistrate now, sir," replied the man.

"His worship will be disengaged in half a minute. Now, young gallows."

This was an invitation for Oliver to enter through a door which he unlocked as he spoke, and which led into a small stone cell. Here he was searched, and, nothing been found upon him, locked up.

This cell was in shape and size something like an area cellar, only not so light. It was most intolerably dirty, for it was Monday morning, and it had been tenanted since Saturday night by six drunken people. But this is nothing. In our station-houses, men and women are every night confined on the most trivial charges—the word is worth noting—in dungeons, compared with which, those in Newgate, occupied by the most atrocious felons, tried, found guilty, and under sentence of death, are palaces! Let any man who doubts this, compare the two.

The old gentleman looked almost as rueful as Oliver when the key grated in the lock; and turned with a sigh to the book which had been the innocent cause of all this disturbance.

"There is something in that boy's face," said the old gentleman to himself as he walked slowly away, tapping his chin with the cover of the book in a thoughtful manner, "something that touches and interests me. *Can* he be innocent? He looked like— By the bye," exclaimed the old gentleman, halting very abruptly, and staring up into the sky, "God bless my soul! where have I seen something like that look before?"

After musing for some minutes, the old gentleman walked with the same meditative face into a back ante-room opening from the yard; and there, retiring into a corner, called up be-

fore his mind's eye a vast amphitheatre of faces over which a dusky curtain had hung for many years. "No," said the old gentleman, shaking his head; "it must be imagination."

He wandered over them again. He had called them into view, and it was not easy to replace the shroud that had so long concealed them. There were the faces of friends and foes, and of many that had been almost strangers, peering intrusively from the crowd; there were the faces of young and blooming girls that were now old women; there were others that the grave had changed to ghastly trophies of death, but which the mind, superior to his power, still dressed in their old freshness and beauty, calling back the lustre of the eyes, the brightness of the smile, the beaming of the soul through its mask of clay, and whispering of beauty beyond the tomb, changed but to be heightened, and taken from earth only to be set up as a light to shed a soft and gentle glow upon the path to Heaven.

But the old gentleman could recall no one countenance of which Oliver's features bore a trace; so he heaved a sigh over the recollections he had awakened; and being, happily for himself, an absent old gentleman, buried them again in the pages of the musty book.

He was roused by a touch on the shoulder, and a request from the man with the keys to follow him into the office. He closed his book hastily, and was at once ushered into the imposing presence of the renowned Mr. Fang.

The office was a front parlour, with a paneled wall. Mr. Fang sat behind a bar at the upper end; and on one side the door was a sort of wooden pen in which poor little Oliver was already deposited, trembling very much at the awfulness of the scene.

Mr. Fang was a middle-sized man, with no great quantity of hair; and what he had, growing on the back and sides of his head. His face was stern, and much flushed. If he were really not in the habit of drinking rather more than was exactly good for him, he might have brought an action against his countenance for libel, and have recovered heavy damages.

The old gentleman bowed respectfully, and, advancing to the magistrate's desk, said, suiting the action to the word, "That is my name and address, sir." He then withdrew a pace or two; and, with another polite and gentlemanly inclination of the head, waited to be questioned.

Now, it so happened that Mr. Fang was at that moment perusing a leading article in a newspaper of the morning, adverting to some recent decision of his, and commending him, for the three hundred and fiftieth time, to the special and particular notice of the Secretary of State for the Home Department. He was out of temper, and he looked up with an angry scowl.

"Who are you?" said Mr. Fang.

The old gentleman pointed with some surprise to his card.

"Officer!" said Mr. Fang, tossing the card contemptuously away with the newspaper, "who is this fellow?"

"My name, sir," said the old gentleman, speaking *like* a gentleman, and consequently in strong contrast to Mr. Fang,— "my name, sir, is Brownlow. Permit me to inquire the name of the magistrate who offers a gratuitous and unprovoked insult to a respectable man, under the protection of the bench." Saying this, Mr. Brownlow looked round the office as if in search of some person who would afford him the required information.

"Officer!" said Mr. Fang, throwing the paper on one side, "what's this fellow charged with?"

"He's not charged at all, your worship," replied the officer.

"He appears against the boy, your worship."

His worship knew this perfectly well; but it was a good annoyance, and a safe one.

"Appears against the boy, does he?" said Fang, surveying Mr. Brownlow contemptuously from head to foot. "Swear him."

"Before I am sworn I must beg to say one word," said Mr. Brownlow; "and that is, that I never, without actual experience, could have believed——"

"Hold your tongue, sir!" said Mr. Fang preemptorily.

"I will not, sir!" replied the spirited old gentleman.

"Hold your tongue this instant, or I'll have you turned out of the office!" said Mr. Fang. "You're an insolent impertinent fellow. How dare you bully a magistrate!"

"What!" exclaimed the old gentleman, reddening.

"Swear this person!" said Fang to the clerk. "I'll not hear another word. "Swear him!"

Mr. Brownlow's indignation was greatly roused; but, reflecting that he might only injure the boy by giving vent to it, he suppressed his feelings, and submitted to be sworn at once.

"Now," said Fang, "what's the charge against this boy? What have you got to say, sir?"

"I was standing at a book-stall——" Mr. Brownlow began.

"Hold your tongue, sir!" said Mr. Fang. "Policeman!—where's the policeman? Here, swear this man. Now, policeman, what is this?"

The policeman with becoming humility related how he had taken the charge, how he had searched Oliver and found nothing on his person; and how that was all he knew about it.

"Are there any witnesses?" inquired Mr. Fang.

"None, your worship," replied the policeman.

Mr. Fang sat silent for some minutes, and then, turning round to the prosecutor, said, in a towering passion,

"Do you mean to state what your complaint against this boy is, fellow, or do you not? You have been sworn. Now, if you stand there, refusing to give evidence, I'll punish you for disrespect to the bench; I will, by——"

By what, or by whom, nobody knows, for the clerk and jailer coughed very loud just at the right moment, and the former dropped a heavy book on the floor; thus preventing the word from being heard—accidentally, of course.

With many interruptions, and repeated insults, Mr. Brownlow contrived to state his case; observing that, in the surprise of the moment, he had run after the boy because he saw him running away, and expressing his hope that, if the magistrate should believe him, although not actually the thief, to be connected with thieves, he would deal as leniently with him as justice would allow.

"He has been hurt already," said the old gentleman in conclusion. "And I fear," he added, with great energy, looking towards the bar,—"I really fear that he is very ill."

"Oh! yes; I dare say!" said Mr. Fang, with a sneer. "Come; none of your tricks here, you young vagabond; they won't do. What's your name?"

Oliver tried to reply, but his tongue failed him. He was deadly pale, and the whole place seemed turning round and round.

"What's your name, you hardened scoundrel?" thundered Mr. Fang. "Officer, what's his name?"

This was addressed to a bluff old fellow in a striped waistcoat, who was standing by the bar. He bent over Oliver, and repeated the inquiry; but finding him really incapable of understanding the question, and knowing that his not replying would only infuriate the magistrate the more, and add to the severity of his sentence, he hazarded a guess.

"He says his name 's Tom White, your worship," said this kind-hearted thief-taker.

"Oh, he won't speak out, won't he?" said Fang. "Very well, very well. Where does he live?"

"Where he can, your worship," replied the officer, again pretending to receive Oliver's answer.

"Has he any parents?" inquired Mr. Fang.

"He says they died in his infancy, your worship," replied the officer, hazarding the usual reply.

At this point of the inquiry Oliver raised his head, and, looking round with imploring eyes, murmured a feeble prayer for a draught of water.

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Mr. Fang; "don't try to make a fool of me."

"I think he really is ill, your worship," remonstrated the officer.

"I know better," said Mr. Fang.

"Take care of him, officer," said the old gentleman, raising his hands instinctively; "he'll fall down."

"Stand away, officer," cried Fang savagely; "let him if he likes."

Oliver availed himself of the kind permission, and fell heavily to the floor in a fainting fit. The men in the office looked at each other, but no one dared to stir.

"I knew he was shamming," said Fang, as if this were incontestable proof of the fact. "Let him lie; he'll soon be tired of that."

"How do you propose to deal with the case, sir?" inquired the clerk in a low voice.

"Summarily," replied Mr. Fang. "He stands committed for three months,—hard labour of course. Clear the office."

The door was opened for this purpose, and a couple of men were preparing to carry the insensible boy to his cell, when an elderly man of decent but poor appearance, clad in an old suit of black, rushed hastily into the office, and advanced to the bench.

"Stop, stop,—don't take him away,—for Heaven's sake stop a moment," cried the new-comer, breathless with haste.

Although the presiding geniuses in such an office as this, exercise a summary and arbitrary power over the liberties, the good name, the character, almost the lives of his Majesty's subjects, especially of the poorer class, and although within such walls enough fantastic tricks are daily played to make the angels weep thick tears of blood, they are closed to the public, save through the medium of the daily press. Mr. Fang was consequently not a little indignant to see an unbidden guest enter in such irreverent disorder.

"What is this? Who is this? Turn this man out. Clear the office," cried Mr. Fang.

"I will speak," cried the man; "I will not be turned out,—I saw it all. I keep the book-stall. I demand to be sworn. I will not be put down. Mr. Fang, you must hear me. You dare not refuse, sir."

The man was right. His manner was bold and determined, and the matter was growing rather too serious to be hushed up.

"Swear the fellow," growled Fang with a very ill grace. "Now, man, what have you got to say?"

"This," said the man: "I saw three boys—two others and the prisoner here—loitering on the opposite side of the way, when this gentleman was reading. The robbery was committed by another boy. I saw it done, and I saw that this boy was perfectly amazed and stupefied by it." Having by this time recovered a little breath, the worthy book-stall keeper proceeded to relate in a more coherent manner the exact circumstances of the robbery.

"Why didn't you come here before?" said Fang after a pause.

"I hadn't a soul to mind the shop," replied the man; "everybody that could have helped me had joined in the pursuit. I could get nobody till five minutes ago, and I've run here all the way."

"The prosecutor was reading, was he?" inquired Fang, after another pause.

"Yes," replied the man, "the very book he has got in his hand."

"Oh, that book, eh?" said Fang. "Is it paid for?"

"No, it is not," replied the man, with a smile.

"Dear me, I forgot all about it!" exclaimed the absent old gentleman, innocently.

"A nice person to prefer a charge against a poor boy!" said Fang, with a comical effort to look humane. "I consider, sir, that you have obtained possession of that book under very suspicious and disreputable circumstances, and you may think yourself very fortunate that the owner of the property declines to prosecute. Let this be a lesson to you, my man, or the law will overtake you yet. The boy is discharged. Clear the office!"

"D—me!" cried the old gentleman, bursting out with the rage he had kept down so long, "d—me! I'll——"

"Clear the office!" roared the magistrate. "Officers, do you hear? Clear the office!"

The mandate was obeyed, and the indignant Mr. Brownlow was

conveyed out, with the book in one hand and the bamboo cane in the other, in a perfect phrenzy of rage and defiance.

He reached the yard, and it vanished in a moment. Little Oliver Twist lay on his back on the pavement, with his shirt unbuttoned and his temples bathed with water: his face a deadly white, and a cold tremble convulsing his whole frame.

"Poor boy, poor boy!" said Mr. Brownlow bending over him. "Call a coach, somebody, pray, directly!"

A coach was obtained, and Oliver, having been carefully laid on one seat, the old gentleman got in and sat himself on the other.

"May I accompany you?" said the book-stall keeper looking in. "Bless me, yes, my dear friend," said Mr. Brownlow quickly. "I forgot you. Dear, dear! I've got this unhappy book still. Jump in. Poor fellow! there's no time to lose."

The book-stall keeper got into the coach, and away they drove.

ELEGIAC STANZAS.

BY MRS. CORNWELL BARON WILSON.

WHY mourn we for her, who in Spring's tender bloom,
And the sweet blush of womanhood, quitted life's sphere?
Why weep we for her? Thro' the gates of the tomb
She has pass'd to the regions undimm'd by a tear!

To the spirits' far land in the mansions above,
Unsoiled, thus early her soul wing'd its flight;
While she bask'd in the beams of affection and love,
And knew not the clouds that oft shadow their light!

Fate's hand pluck'd the bud ere it blossom'd to fame,
No withering canker its leaflets had known;
The ministering angels her fellowship claim,
And rejoice o'er a spirit as pure as their own!

While she knew but life's purer and tenderer ties,
The guardian who watches life's path from our birth
Call'd home the bright being Heav'n form'd for the skies
Ere its bloom had been ting'd by the follies of earth!

Alas! while the light of her young spirit's flame
Shone a day-star of Hope to illumine us here,
The messenger-seraph too suddenly came,
And bore his bright charge to her own native sphere!

Yet mourn not for her, who, in Spring's tender bloom,
Has made life a desert to those left behind;
Like the rose-leaf, tho' wither'd, still yielding perfume,
In our hearts, ever fragrant, her memory is shrin'd!