

OLIVER TWIST ;

OR, THE PARISH BOY'S PROGRESS.

BY BOZ.

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

RELATES HOW OLIVER TWIST WAS VERY NEAR GETTING A PLACE, WHICH WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN A SINECURE.

FOR a week after the commission of the impious and profane offence of asking for more, Oliver remained a close prisoner in the dark and solitary room to which he had been consigned by the wisdom and mercy of the board. It appears, at first sight, not unreasonable to suppose, that, if he had entertained a becoming feeling of respect for the prediction of the gentleman in the white waistcoat, he would have established that sage individual's prophetic character, once and for ever, by tying one end of his pocket handkerchief to a hook in the wall, and attaching himself to the other. To the performance of this feat, however, there was one obstacle, namely, that pocket-handkerchiefs being decided articles of luxury, had been, for all future times and ages, removed from the noses of paupers by the express order of the board in council assembled, solemnly given and pronounced under their hands and seals. There was a still greater obstacle in Oliver's youth and childishness. He only cried bitterly all day ; and when the long, dismal night came on, he spread his little hands before his eyes to shut out the darkness, and crouching in the corner, tried to sleep, ever and anon waking with a start and tremble, and drawing himself closer and closer to the wall, as if to feel even its cold hard surface were a protection in the gloom and loneliness which surrounded him.

Let it not be supposed by the enemies of "the system," that, during the period of his solitary incarceration, Oliver was denied the benefit of exercise, the pleasure of society, or the advantages of religious consolation. As for exercise, it was nice cold weather, and he was allowed to perform his ablutions every morning under the pump, in a stone yard, in the presence of Mr. Bumble, who prevented his catching cold, and caused a tingling sensation to pervade his frame, by repeated applications of the cane ; as for society, he was carried every other day into the hall where the boys dined, and there sociably flogged as a public warning and example ; and, so far from being denied the advantages of religious consolation, he was kicked into the same apartment every evening at prayer-time, and there permitted to listen to, and console his mind with, a general supplication of the boys, containing a special clause therein inserted by the authority of the board, in which they entreated to be made good, virtuous, contented, and obedient, and to be guarded

from the sins and vices of Oliver Twist, whom the supplication distinctly set forth to be under the exclusive patronage and protection of the powers of wickedness, and an article direct from the manufactory of the devil himself.

It chanced one morning, while Oliver's affairs were in this auspicious and comfortable state, that Mr. Gamfield, chimney-sweeper, was wending his way down the High-street, deeply cogitating in his mind his ways and means of paying certain arrears of rent, for which his landlord had become rather pressing. Mr. Gamfield's most sanguine calculation of funds could not raise them within full five pounds of the desired amount; and, in a species of arithmetical desperation, he was alternately cudgelling his brains and his donkey, when, passing the work-house, his eyes encountered the bill on the gate.

"Woo!" said Mr. Gamfield to the donkey.

The donkey was in a state of profound abstraction,—wondering, probably, whether he was destined to be regaled with a cabbage-stalk or two, when he had disposed of the two sacks of soot with which the little cart was laden; so, without noticing the word of command, he jogged onwards.

Mr. Gamfield growled a fierce imprecation on the donkey generally, but more particularly on his eyes; and, running after him, bestowed a blow on his head which would inevitably have beaten in any skull but a donkey's; then, catching hold of the bridle, he gave his jaw a sharp wrench, by way of gentle reminder that he was not his own master: and, having by these means turned him round, he gave him another blow on the head, just to stun him till he came back again; and, having done so, walked up to the gate to read the bill.

The gentleman with the white waistcoat was standing at the gate with his hands behind him, after having delivered himself of some profound sentiments in the board-room. Having witnessed the little dispute between Mr. Gamfield and the donkey, he smiled joyously when that person came up to read the bill, for he saw at once that Mr. Gamfield was just exactly the sort of master Oliver Twist wanted. Mr. Gamfield smiled, too, as he perused the document, for five pounds was just the sum he had been wishing for; and, as to the boy with which it was encumbered, Mr. Gamfield, knowing what the dietary of the work-house was, well knew he would be a nice small pattern, just the very thing for register stoves. So he spelt the bill through again, from beginning to end; and then, touching his fur cap in token of humility, accosted the gentleman in the white waistcoat.

"This here boy, sir, wot the parish wants to 'prentis," said Mr. Gamfield.

"Yes, my man," said the gentleman in the white waistcoat, with a condescending smile, "what of him?"

"If the parish vould like him to learn a light, pleasant trade,

in a good 'spectable chimbley-sweepin' bisness," said Mr. Gamfield, "I wants a 'prentis, and I'm ready to take him."

"Walk in," said the gentleman with the white waistcoat. And Mr. Gamfield having lingered behind, to give the donkey another blow on the head, and another wrench of the jaw, as a caution not to run away in his absence, followed the gentleman with the white waistcoat into the room where Oliver had first seen him.

"It's a nasty trade," said Mr. Limbkins, when Gamfield had again stated his wish.

"Young boys have been smothered in chimneys before now," said another gentleman.

"That's acause they damped the straw afore they lit it in the chimbley to make 'em come down again," said Gamfield; "that's all smoke, and no blaze; vereas smoke ain't o' no use at all in makin' a boy come down; it only sinds him to sleep, and that's wot he likes. Boys is wery obstinit, and wery lazy, gen'lm'n, and there's nothink like a good hot blaze to make 'em come down vith a run; it's humane too, gen'lm'n, acause, even if they've stuck in the chimbley, roastin' their feet makes 'em struggle to hextricate theirselves."

The gentleman in the white waistcoat appeared very much amused with this explanation; but his mirth was speedily checked by a look from Mr. Limbkins. The board then proceeded to converse among themselves for a few minutes; but in so low a tone that the words "saving of expenditure," "look well in the accounts," "have a printed report published," were alone audible; and they only chanced to be heard on account of their being very frequently repeated with great emphasis.

At length the whispering ceased, and the members of the board having resumed their seats, and their solemnity, Mr. Limbkins said,

"We have considered your proposition, and we don't approve of it."

"Not at all," said the gentleman in the white waistcoat.

"Decidedly not," added the other members.

As Mr. Gamfield did happen to labour under the slight imputation of having bruised three or four boys to death already, it occurred to him that the board had perhaps, in some unaccountable freak, taken it into their heads that this extraneous circumstance ought to influence their proceedings. It was very unlike their general mode of doing business, if they had; but still, as he had no particular wish to revive the rumour, he twisted his cap in his hands, and walked slowly from the table.

"So you won't let me have him, gen'lm'n," said Mr. Gamfield, pausing near the door.

"No," replied Mr. Limbkins; "at least, as it's a nasty business, we think you ought to take something less than the premium we offered."

Mr. Gamfield's countenance brightened, as, with a quick step he returned to the table, and said,

"What 'll you give, gen'lm'n? Come, don't be too hard on a poor man. What 'll you give?"

"I should say three pound ten was plenty," said Mr. Limbkins.

"Ten shillings too much," said the gentleman in the white waistcoat.

"Come," said Gamfield; "say four pound, gen'lm'n. Say four pound, and you've got rid of him for good and all. There!"

"Three pound ten," repeated Mr. Limbkins, firmly.

"Come, I'll split the difference, gen'lm'n," urged Gamfield.

"Three pound fifteen."

"Not a farthing more," was the firm reply of Mr. Limbkins.

"You're desp'rate hard upon me, gen'lm'n," said Gamfield, wavering.

"Pooh! pooh! nonsense!" said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. "He'd be cheap with nothing at all, as a premium. Take him, you silly fellow! He's just the boy for you. He wants the stick now and then; it'll do him good; and his board needn't come very expensive, for he hasn't been overfed since he was born. Ha! ha! ha!"

Mr. Gamfield gave an arch look at the faces round the table, and, observing a smile on all of them, gradually broke into a smile himself. The bargain was made, and Mr. Bumble was at once instructed that Oliver Twist and his indentures were to be conveyed before the magistrate for signature and approval, that very afternoon.

In pursuance of this determination, little Oliver, to his excessive astonishment, was released from bondage, and ordered to put himself into a clean shirt. He had hardly achieved this very unusual gymnastic performance, when Mr. Bumble brought him with his own hands a basin of gruel, and the holiday allowance of two ounces and a quarter of bread; at sight of which Oliver began to cry very piteously, thinking, not unnaturally, that the board must have determined to kill him for some useful purpose, or they never would have begun to fatten him up in this way.

"Don't make your eyes red, Oliver, but eat your food, and be thankful," said Mr. Bumble, in a tone of impressive pomposity. "You're a-going to be made a 'prentice of, Oliver."

"A 'prentice, sir!" said the child, trembling.

"Yes, Oliver," said Mr. Bumble. "The kind and blessed gentlemen which is so many parents to you, Oliver, when you have none of your own, are a-going to 'prentice you, and to set you up in life, and make a man of you, although the expence to the parish is three pound ten!—three pound ten, Oliver!—

seventy shillin's!—one hundred and forty sixpences!—and all for a naughty orphan which nobody can love."

As Mr. Bumble paused to take breath after delivering this address, in an awful voice, the tears rolled down the poor child's face, and he sobbed bitterly.

"Come," said Mr. Bumble, somewhat less pompously; for it was gratifying to his feelings to observe the effect his eloquence had produced. "Come, Oliver, wipe your eyes with the cuffs of your jacket, and don't cry into your gruel; that's a very foolish action, Oliver." It certainly was, for there was quite enough water in it already.

On their way to the magistrates, Mr. Bumble instructed Oliver that all he would have to do, would be to look very happy, and say, when the gentleman asked him if he wanted to be apprenticed, that he should like it very much indeed; both of which injunctions Oliver promised to obey, the more readily as Mr. Bumble threw in a gentle hint, that if he failed in either particular, there was no telling what would be done to him. When they arrived at the office, he was shut up in a little room by himself, and admonished by Mr. Bumble to stay there until he came back to fetch him.

There the boy remained with a palpitating heart for half an hour, at the expiration of which time Mr. Bumble thrust in his head, unadorned with the cocked-hat, and said aloud,

"Now, Oliver, my dear, come to the gentlemen." As Mr. Bumble said this, he put on a grim and threatening look, and added in a low voice, "Mind what I told you, you young rascal."

Oliver stared innocently in Mr. Bumble's face at this somewhat contradictory style of address; but that gentleman prevented his offering any remark thereupon, by leading him at once into an adjoining room, the door of which was open. It was a large room with a great window; and behind a desk sat two old gentlemen with powdered heads, one of whom was reading the newspaper, while the other was perusing, with the aid of a pair of tortoise-shell spectacles, a small piece of parchment which lay before him. Mr. Limbkins was standing in front of the desk, on one side; and Mr. Gamfield, with a partially washed face, on the other; while two or three bluff-looking men in top-boots were lounging about.

The old gentleman with the spectacles gradually dozed off, over the little bit of parchment; and there was a short pause after Oliver had been stationed by Mr. Bumble in front of the desk.

"This is the boy, your worship," said Mr. Bumble.

The old gentleman who was reading the newspaper raised his head for a moment, and pulled the other old gentleman by the sleeve, whereupon the last-mentioned old gentleman woke up.

"Oh, is this the boy?" said the old gentleman.

“ This is him, sir,” replied Mr. Bumble. “ Bow to the magistrate, my dear.”

Oliver roused himself, and made his best obeisance. He had been wondering, with his eyes fixed on the magistrates’ powder, whether all boards were born with that white stuff on their heads, and were boards from thenceforth, on that account.

“ Well,” said the old gentleman, “ I suppose he ’s fond of chimney-sweeping ?”

“ He dotes on it, your worship,” replied Bumble, giving Oliver a sly pinch, to intimate that he had better not say he didn’t.

“ And he *will* be a sweep, will he ?” inquired the old gentleman.

“ If we was to bind him to any other trade to-morrow, he ’d run away simultaneously, your worship,” replied Bumble.

“ And this man that ’s to be his master,—you, sir,—you ’ll treat him well, and feed him, and do all that sort of thing,—will you ?” said the old gentleman.

“ When I say I will, I means I will,” replied Mr. Gamfield doggedly.

“ You ’re a rough speaker, my friend, but you look an honest, open-hearted man,” said the old gentleman, turning his spectacles in the direction of the candidate for Oliver’s premium, whose villainous countenance was a regular stamped receipt for cruelty. But the magistrate was half blind, and half childish, so he couldn’t reasonably be expected to discern what other people did.

“ I hope I am, sir,” said Mr. Gamfield with an ugly leer.

“ I have no doubt you are, my friend,” replied the old gentleman, fixing his spectacles more firmly on his nose, and looking about him for the inkstand.

It was the critical moment of Oliver’s fate. If the inkstand had been where the old gentleman thought it was, he would have dipped his pen into it and signed the indentures, and Oliver would have been straightway hurried off. But, as it chanced to be immediately under his nose, it followed as a matter of course that he looked all over his desk for it, without finding it ; and happening in the course of his search to look straight before him, his gaze encountered the pale and terrified face of Oliver Twist, who, despite all the admonitory looks and pinches of Bumble, was regarding the very repulsive countenance of his future master with a mingled expression of horror and fear, too palpable to be mistaken even by a half-blind magistrate.

The old gentleman stopped, laid down his pen, and looked from Oliver to Mr. Limbkins, who attempted to take snuff with a cheerful and unconcerned aspect.

“ My boy,” said the old gentleman, leaning over the desk. Oliver started at the sound,—he might be excused for doing so,

for the words were kindly said, and strange sounds frighten one. He trembled violently, and burst into tears.

"My boy," said the old gentleman, "you look pale and alarmed. What is the matter?"

"Stand a little away from him, beadle," said the other magistrate, laying aside the paper, and leaning forward with an expression of some interest. "Now, boy, tell us what's the matter: don't be afraid."

Oliver fell on his knees, and, clasping his hands together, prayed that they would order him back to the dark room,—that they would starve him—beat him—kill him if they pleased—rather than send him away, with that dreadful man.

"Well!" said Mr. Bumble, raising his hands and eyes with most impressive solemnity,—“ Well! of *all* the artful and designing orphans that ever I see, Oliver, you are one of the most bare-facedest.”

"Hold your tongue, beadle," said the second old gentleman, when Mr. Bumble had given vent to this compound adjective.

"I beg your worship's pardon," said Mr. Bumble, incredulous of his having heard aright,—“ did your worship speak to me?”

"Yes—hold your tongue."

Mr. Bumble was stupified with astonishment. A beadle ordered to hold his tongue! A moral revolution.

The old gentleman in the tortoise-shell spectacles looked at his companion: he nodded significantly.

"We refuse to sanction these indentures," said the old gentleman, tossing aside the piece of parchment as he spoke.

"I hope," stammered Mr. Limbkins,—“ I hope the magistrates will not form the opinion that the authorities have been guilty of any improper conduct, on the unsupported testimony of a mere child.”

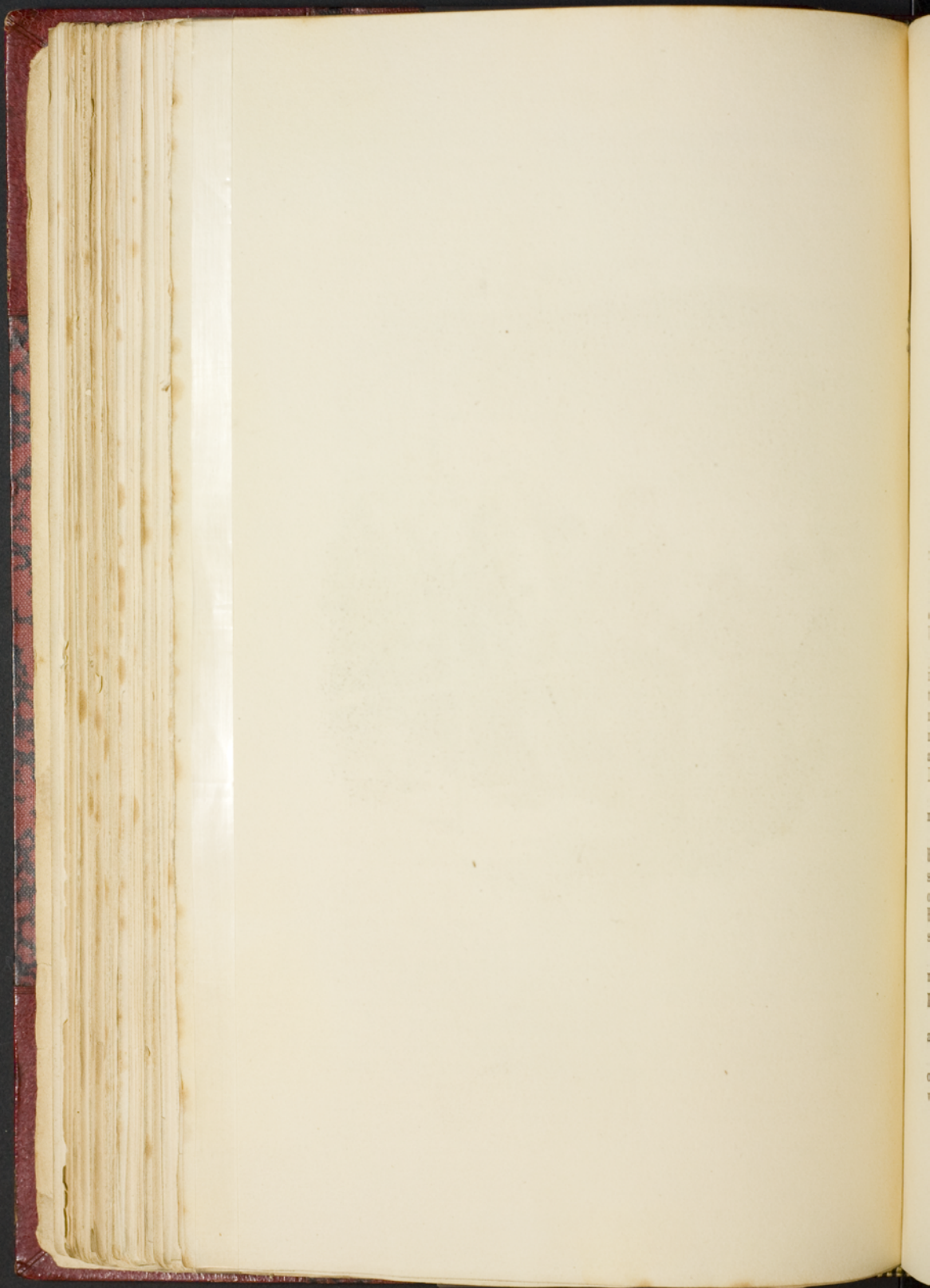
"The magistrates are not called upon to pronounce any opinion on the matter," said the second old gentleman sharply. "Take the boy back to the workhouse, and treat him kindly. He seems to want it."

That same evening the gentleman in the white waistcoat most positively and decidedly affirmed, not only that Oliver would be hung, but that he would be drawn and quartered into the bargain. Mr. Bumble shook his head with gloomy mystery, and said he wished he might come to good; to which Mr. Gamfield replied, that he wished he might come to him, which, although he agreed with the beadle in most matters, would seem to be a wish of a totally opposite description.

The next morning the public were once more informed that Oliver Twist was again to let, and that five pounds would be paid to anybody who would take possession of him.



Oliver escapes being bound apprentice to the Sweep.



CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

OLIVER, BEING OFFERED ANOTHER PLACE, MAKES HIS FIRST ENTRY INTO PUBLIC LIFE.

IN great families, when an advantageous place cannot be obtained, either in possession, reversion, remainder, or expectancy, for the young man who is growing up, it is a very general custom to send him to sea. The board, in imitation of so wise and salutary an example, took counsel together on the expediency of shipping off Oliver Twist in some small trading vessel bound to a good unhealthy port, which suggested itself as the very best thing that could possibly be done with him; the probability being, that the skipper would either flog him to death, in a playful mood, some day after dinner, or knock his brains out with an iron bar,—both pastimes being, as is pretty generally known, very favourite and common recreations among gentlemen of that class. The more the case presented itself to the board in this point of view, the more manifold the advantages of the step appeared; so they came to the conclusion that the only way of providing for Oliver effectually, was to send him to sea without delay.

Mr. Bumble had been despatched to make various preliminary inquiries, with the view of finding out some captain or other who wanted a cabin-boy without any friends; and was returning to the workhouse to communicate the result of his mission, when he encountered just at the gate no less a person than Mr. Sowerberry, the parochial undertaker.

Mr. Sowerberry was a tall, gaunt, large-jointed man, attired in a suit of threadbare black, with darned cotton stockings of the same colour, and shoes to answer. His features were not naturally intended to wear a smiling aspect, but he was in general rather given to professional jocosity; his step was elastic, and his face betokened inward pleasantry, as he advanced to Mr. Bumble and shook him cordially by the hand.

"I have taken the measure of the two women that died last night, Mr. Bumble," said the undertaker.

"You'll make your fortune, Mr. Sowerberry," said the beadle, as he thrust his thumb and forefinger into the proffered snuff-box of the undertaker, which was an ingenious little model of a patent coffin. "I say you'll make your fortune, Mr. Sowerberry," repeated Mr. Bumble, tapping the undertaker on the shoulder in a friendly manner with his cane.

"Think so?" said the undertaker in a tone which half admitted and half disputed the probability of the event. "The prices allowed by the board are very small, Mr. Bumble."

"So are the coffins," replied the beadle, with precisely as near an approach to a laugh as a great official ought to indulge in.

Mr. Sowerberry was much tickled at this, as of course he ought to be, and laughed a long time without cessation. "Well, well, Mr. Bumble," he said at length, "there's no denying that,

since the new system of feeding has come in, the coffins are something narrower and more shallow than they used to be; but we must have some profit, Mr. Bumble. Well-seasoned timber is an expensive article, sir; and all the iron handles come by canal from Birmingham."

"Well, well," said Mr. Bumble, "every trade has its drawbacks, and a fair profit is of course allowable."

"Of course, of course," replied the undertaker; "and if I don't get a profit upon this or that particular article, why, I make it up in the long run, you see—he! he! he!"

"Just so," said Mr. Bumble.

"Though I must say,"—continued the undertaker, resuming the current of observations which the beadle had interrupted,— "though I must say, Mr. Bumble, that I have to contend against one very great disadvantage, which is, that all the stout people go off the quickest—I mean that the people who have been better off, and have paid rates for many years, are the first to sink when they come into the house; and let me tell you, Mr. Bumble, that three or four inches over one's calculation makes a great hole in one's profits, especially when one has a family to provide for, sir."

As Mr. Sowerberry said this with the becoming indignation of an ill-used man, and as Mr. Bumble felt that it rather tended to convey a reflection on the honour of the parish, the latter gentleman thought it advisable to change the subject; and Oliver Twist being uppermost in his mind, he made him his theme.

"By the bye," said Mr. Bumble, "you don't know anybody who wants a boy, do you—a parochial 'prentis, who is at present a dead-weight—a mill-stone, as I may say—round the parochial throat? Liberal terms, Mr. Sowerberry—liberal terms;"—and, as Mr. Bumble spoke, he raised his cane to the bill above him, and gave three distinct raps upon the words "five pounds," which were printed therein in Roman capitals of gigantic size.

"Gadso!" said the undertaker, taking Mr. Bumble by the gilt-edged lappel of his official coat; "that 's just the very thing I wanted to speak to you about. You know—dear me, what a very elegant button this is, Mr. Bumble; I never noticed it before."

"Yes, I think it is rather pretty," said the beadle, glancing proudly downwards at the large brass buttons which embellished his coat. "The die is the same as the parochial seal,—the Good Samaritan healing the sick and bruised man. The board presented it to me on New-year's morning, Mr. Sowerberry. I put it on, I remember, for the first time, to attend the inquest on that reduced tradesman who died in a doorway at midnight."

"I recollect," said the undertaker. "The jury brought in 'Died from exposure to the cold, and want of the common necessities of life,'—didn't they?"

Mr. Bumble nodded.

"And they made it a special verdict, I think," said the undertaker, "by adding some words to the effect, that if the relieving officer had——"

"Tush—foolery!" interposed the beadle angrily. "If the board attended to all the nonsense that ignorant jurymen talk, they'd have enough to do."

"Very true," said the undertaker; "they would indeed."

"Juries," said Mr. Bumble, grasping his cane tightly, as was his wont when working into a passion,—"*juries* is ineddicated, vulgar, grovelling wretches."

"So they are," said the undertaker.

"They haven't no more philosophy or political economy about 'em than that," said the beadle, snapping his fingers contemptuously.

"No more they have," acquiesced the undertaker.

"I despise 'em," said the beadle, growing very red in the face.

"So do I," rejoined the undertaker.

"And I only wish we'd a jury of the independent sort in the house for a week or two," said the beadle; "the rules and regulations of the board would soon bring their spirit down for them."

"Let 'em alone for that," replied the undertaker. So saying, he smiled approvingly to calm the rising wrath of the indignant parish officer.

Mr. Bumble lifted off his cocked-hat, took a handkerchief from the inside of the crown, wiped from his forehead the perspiration which his rage had engendered, fixed the cocked-hat on again; and, turning to the undertaker, said in a calmer voice,

"Well; what about the boy?"

"Oh!" replied the undertaker, "why, you know, Mr. Bumble, I pay a good deal towards the poor's rates."

"Hem!" said Mr. Bumble. "Well?"

"Well," replied the undertaker, "I was thinking that if I pay so much towards 'em, I've a right to get as much out of 'em as I can, Mr. Bumble; and so—and so—I think I'll take the boy myself."

Mr. Bumble grasped the undertaker by the arm, and led him into the building. Mr. Sowerberry was closeted with the board for five minutes, and then it was arranged that Oliver should go to him that evening "upon liking,"—a phrase which means, in the case of a parish apprentice, that if the master find, upon a short trial, that he can get enough work out of a boy without putting too much food in him, he shall have him for a term of years, to do what he likes with.

When little Oliver was taken before "the gentlemen" that evening, and informed that he was to go that night as general house-lad to a coffin-maker's, and that if he complained of his situation, or ever came back to the parish again, he would be

sent to sea, there to be drowned, or knocked on the head, as the case might be, he evinced so little emotion, that they by common consent pronounced him a hardened young rascal, and ordered Mr. Bumble to remove him forthwith.

Now, although it was very natural that the board, of all people in the world, should feel in a great state of virtuous astonishment and horror at the smallest tokens of want of feeling on the part of anybody, they were rather out in this particular instance. The simple fact was, that Oliver, instead of possessing too little feeling, possessed rather too much, and was in a fair way of being reduced to a state of brutal stupidity and sullenness for life by the ill usage he had received. He heard the news of his destination in perfect silence, and, having had his luggage put into his hand,—which was not very difficult to carry, inasmuch as it was all comprised within the limits of a brown paper parcel, about half a foot square by three inches deep,—he pulled his cap over his eyes, and once more attaching himself to Mr. Bumble's coat cuff, was led away by that dignitary to a new scene of suffering.

For some time Mr. Bumble drew Oliver along, without notice or remark, for the beadle carried his head very erect, as a beadle always should; and, it being a windy day, little Oliver was completely enshrouded by the skirts of Mr. Bumble's coat as they blew open, and disclosed to great advantage his flapped waistcoat and drab plush knee-breeches. As they drew near to their destination, however, Mr. Bumble thought it expedient to look down and see that the boy was in good order for inspection by his new master, which he accordingly did, with a fit and becoming air of gracious patronage.

"Oliver!" said Mr. Bumble.

"Yes, sir," replied Oliver, in a low, tremulous voice.

"Pull that cap off of your eyes, and hold up your head, sir."

Although Oliver did as he was desired at once, and passed the back of his unoccupied hand briskly across his eyes, he left a tear in them when he looked up at his conductor. As Mr. Bumble gazed sternly upon him, it rolled down his cheek. It was followed by another, and another. The child made a strong effort, but it was an unsuccessful one; and, withdrawing his other hand from Mr. Bumble's, he covered his face with both, and wept till the tears sprung out from between his thin and bony fingers.

"Well!" exclaimed Mr. Bumble, stopping short, and darting at his little charge a look of intense malignity,—“well, of all the ungratefulest, and worst-disposed boys as ever I see, Oliver, you are the —”

"No, no, sir," sobbed Oliver, clinging to the hand which held the well-known cane; "no, no, sir; I will be good indeed; indeed, indeed, I will, sir! I am a very little boy, sir; and it is so—so—"

“So what?” inquired Mr. Bumble in amazement.

“So lonely, sir—so very lonely,” cried the child. “Everybody hates me. Oh! sir, don’t be cross to me. I feel as if I had been cut here, sir, and it was all bleeding away;” and the child beat his hand upon his heart, and looked into his companion’s face with tears of real agony.

Mr. Bumble regarded Oliver’s piteous and helpless look with some astonishment for a few seconds, hemmed three or four times in a husky manner, and, after muttering something about “that troublesome cough,” bid Oliver dry his eyes and be a good boy; and, once more taking his hand, walked on with him in silence.

The undertaker had just put up the shutters of his shop, and was making some entries in his day-book by the light of a most appropriately dismal candle, when Mr. Bumble entered.

“Aha!” said the undertaker, looking up from the book, and pausing in the middle of a word; “is that you, Bumble?”

“No one else, Mr. Sowerberry,” replied the beadle. “Here, I’ve brought the boy.” Oliver made a bow.

“Oh! that’s the boy, is it?” said the undertaker, raising the candle above his head to get a full glimpse of Oliver. “Mrs. Sowerberry! will you come here a moment, my dear?”

Mrs. Sowerberry emerged from a little room behind the shop, and presented the form of a short, thin, squeezed-up woman, with a vixenish countenance.

“My dear,” said Mr. Sowerberry, deferentially, “this is the boy from the workhouse that I told you of.” Oliver bowed again.

“Dear me!” said the undertaker’s wife, “he’s very small.”

“Why, he *is* rather small,” replied Mr. Bumble, looking at Oliver as if it were his fault that he wasn’t bigger; “he *is* small,—there’s no denying it. But he’ll grow, Mrs. Sowerberry,—he’ll grow.”

“Ah! I dare say he will,” replied the lady pettishly, “on our victuals and our drink. I see no saving in parish children, not I; for they always cost more to keep than they’re worth: however, men always think they know best. There, get down stairs, little bag o’ bones.” With this, the undertaker’s wife opened a side door, and pushed Oliver down a steep flight of stairs into a stone cell, damp and dark, forming the ante-room to the coal-cellar, and denominated “the kitchen,” wherein sat a slatternly girl in shoes down at heel, and blue worsted stockings very much out of repair.

“Here, Charlotte,” said Mrs. Sowerberry, who had followed Oliver down, “give this boy some of the cold bits that were put by for Trip: he hasn’t come home since the morning, so he may go without ’em. I dare say he isn’t too dainty to eat ’em,—are you, boy?”

Oliver, whose eyes had glistened at the mention of meat, and

who was trembling with eagerness to devour it, replied in the negative; and a plateful of coarse broken victuals was set before him.

I wish some well-fed philosopher, whose meat and drink turn to gall within him, whose blood is ice, and whose heart is iron, could have seen Oliver Twist clutching at the dainty viands that the dog had neglected, and witnessed the horrible avidity with which he tore the bits asunder with all the ferocity of famine:—there is only one thing I should like better; and that would be to see him make the same sort of meal himself, with the same relish.

“Well,” said the undertaker’s wife, when Oliver had finished his supper, which she had regarded in silent horror, and with fearful auguries of his future appetite, “have you done?”

There being nothing eatable within his reach, Oliver replied in the affirmative.

“Then come with me,” said Mrs. Sowerberry, taking up a dim and dirty lamp, and leading the way up stairs; “your bed’s under the counter. You won’t mind sleeping among the coffins, I suppose?—but it doesn’t much matter whether you will or not, for you won’t sleep any where else. Come; don’t keep me here all night.”

Oliver lingered no longer, but meekly followed his new mistress.

A REMNANT OF THE TIME OF IZAAK WALTON.

VENATOR, AMATOR, EBRIOLUS.

Venator.

Good morrow, good morrow! say whither ye go,—
To the chase above, or the woods below?
Brake and hollow their quarry hold,
Streams are bright with backs of gold:
’Twere shame to lose so fair a day,—
So, whither ye wend, my masters, say.

Amator.

The dappled herd in peace may graze,
The fish fling back the sun’s bright rays;
I bend no bow, I cast no line,
The chase of Love alone is mine.

Ebriolus.

Your venison and pike
Ye may get as ye like,
They grace a board right well;
But the sport for my share
Is the chase of old Care,
When the wine-cup tolls his knell.

Venator.

Give ye good-den, my masters twain,
I’ll flout ye, when we meet again:
Sad lover, lay thee down and pine;
Go thou, and blink o’er thy noon-day wine;
I’ll to the woods. Well may ye fare
With two such deer as Love and Care.