NOAH CLAYPOLE ran along the streets at his swiftest pace, and paused not once for breath until he reached the workhouse-gate. Having rested here, for a minute or so, to collect a good burst of sobs and an imposing show of tears and terror, he knocked loudly at the wicket, and presented such a rueful face to the aged pauper who opened it, that even he, who saw nothing but rueful faces about him at the best of times, started back in astonishment.

"Why, what's the matter with the boy?" said the old pauper.

"Mr. Bumble! Mr. Bumble!" cried Noah, with well-affected dismay, and in tones so loud and agitated that they not only caught the ear of Mr. Bumble himself who happened to be hard by, but alarmed him so much that he rushed into the yard without his cocked hat,—which is a very curious and remarkable circumstance, as showing that even a beadle, acted upon by a sudden and powerful impulse, may be afflicted with a momentary visitation of loss of self-possession, and forgetfulness of personal dignity.

"Oh, Mr. Bumble, sir!" said Noah; "Oliver, sir,—Oliver has——"

"What? what?" interposed Mr. Bumble, with a gleam of pleasure in his metallic eyes. "Not run away: he hasn't run away; has he, Noah?"

"No, sir, no; not run away, sir, but he's turned vicious," replied Noah. "He tried to murder me, sir; and then he tried to murder Charlotte, and then missis. Oh, what dreadful pain it is! such agony, please sir!" and here Noah writhed and twisted his body into an extensive variety of eel-like positions; thereby giving Mr. Bumble to understand that, from the violent and sanguinary onset of Oliver Twist, he had sustained severe internal injury and damage, from which he was at that speaking suffering the acutest torture.

When Noah saw that the intelligence he communicated perfectly paralysed Mr. Bumble, he imparted additional effect thereunto, by bewailing his dreadful wounds ten times louder than before: and, when he observed a gentleman in a white waistcoat crossing the yard, he was more tragic in his lamenta-
tions than ever, rightly conceiving it highly expedient to attract the notice, and rouse the indignation, of the gentleman aforesaid.

The gentleman’s notice was very soon attracted; for he had not walked three paces when he turned angrily round, and inquired what that young cur was howling for, and why Mr. Bumble did not favour him with something which would render the series of vociferous exclamations so designated, an involuntary process.

“It’s a poor boy from the free-school, sir,” replied Mr. Bumble; “who has been nearly murdered—all but murdered, sir—by young Twist.”

“By Jove!” exclaimed the gentleman in the white waistcoat, stopping short. “I knew it! I felt a strange presentiment from the very first, that that audacious young savage would come to be hung!”

“He has likewise attempted, sir, to murder the female servant,” said Mr. Bumble, with a face of ashy paleness.

“And his missis,” interposed Mr. Claypole.

“And his master, too, I think you said, Noah?” added Mr. Bumble.

“No, he’s out, or he would have murdered him,” replied Noah. “He said he wanted to—”

“Ah! said he wanted to—did he, my boy?” inquired the gentleman in the white waistcoat.

“Yes, sir,” replied Noah; “and, please sir, missis wants to know whether Mr. Bumble can spare time to step up there directly, and flog him, ‘cause master’s out.”

“Certainly, my boy; certainly,” said the gentleman in the white waistcoat, smiling benignly, and patting Noah’s head, which was about three inches higher than his own. “You’re a good boy—a very good boy. Here’s a penny for you. Bumble, just step up to Sowerberry’s with your cane, and see what’s best to be done. Don’t spare him, Bumble.”

“No, I will not, sir,” replied the beadle, adjusting the wax-end which was twisted round the bottom of his cane for purposes of parochial flagellation.

“Tell Sowerberry not to spare him, either. They’ll never do anything with him, without stripes and bruises,” said the gentleman in the white waistcoat.

“I’ll take care, sir,” replied the beadle. And, the cocked hat and cane having been by this time adjusted to their owner’s satisfaction, Mr. Bumble and Noah Claypole betook themselves with all speed to the undertaker’s shop.

Here the position of affairs had not at all improved, for Sowerberry had not yet returned, and Oliver continued to kick with undiminished vigour at the cellar-door. The accounts of his ferocity, as related by Mrs. Sowerberry and Charlotte, were of so startling a nature that Mr. Bumble judged it prudent to
parley before opening the door: with this view, he gave a kick at the outside, by way of prelude, and then, applying his mouth to the keyhole, said, in a deep and impressive tone,

"Oliver!"

"Come; you let me out!" replied Oliver, from the inside.

"Do you know this here voice, Oliver?" said Mr. Bumble.

"Yes," replied Oliver.

"Ain't you afraid of it, sir? Ain't you a-trembling while I speak, sir?" said Mr. Bumble.

"No!" replied Oliver, boldly.

An answer so different from the one he had expected to elicit, and was in the habit of receiving, staggered Mr. Bumble not a little. He stepped back from the keyhole, drew himself up to his full height, and looked from one to another of the three bystanders in mute astonishment.

"Oh, you know, Mr. Bumble, he must be mad," said Mrs. Sowerberry. "No boy in half his senses could venture to speak so to you."

"It's not madness, ma'am," replied Mr. Bumble, after a few moments of deep meditation; "it's meat."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Sowerberry.

"Meat, ma'am, meat," replied Bumble, with stern emphasis. "You've overfed him, ma'am. You've raised a artificial soul and spirit in him, ma'am, unbecoming a person of his condition, as the board, Mrs. Sowerberry, who are practical philosophers, will tell you. What have paupers to do with soul or spirit either? It's quite enough that we let 'em have live bodies. If you had kept the boy on gruel, ma'am, this would never have happened."

"Dear, dear!" ejaculated Mrs. Sowerberry, piously raising her eyes to the kitchen ceiling. "This comes of being liberal!"

The liberality of Mrs. Sowerberry to Oliver had consisted in a profuse bestowal upon him, of all the dirty odds and ends which nobody else would eat; so that there was a great deal of meekness and self-devotion in her voluntarily remaining under Mr. Bumble's heavy accusation, of which, to do her justice, she was wholly innocent in thought, word, or deed.

"Ah!" said Mr. Bumble, when the lady brought her eyes down to earth again. "The only thing that can be done now, that I know of, is to leave him in the cellar for a day or so till he's a little starved down, and then to take him out, and keep him on gruel all through his apprenticeship. He comes of a bad family—excitable natures, Mrs. Sowerberry. Both the nurse and doctor said that that mother of his, made her way here against difficulties and pain that would have killed any well-disposed woman weeks before."

At this point of Mr. Bumble's discourse, Oliver just hearing enough to know that some further allusion was being made to his mother, recommenced kicking with a violence which render-
ed every other sound inaudible. Sowerberry returned at this
juncture, and Oliver's offence having been explained to him,
with such exaggerations as the ladies thought best calculated
to rouse his ire, he unlocked the cellar-door in a twinkling, and
dragged his rebellious apprentice out by the collar.

Oliver's clothes had been torn in the beating he had received;
his face was bruised and scratched, and his hair scattered over his
forehead. The angry flush had not disappeared, however; and
when he was pulled out of his prison, he scowled boldly on
Noah, and looked quite undismayed.

"Now, you are a nice young fellow, ain't you?" said Sower-
berry, giving Oliver a shake, and a sound box on the ear.

"He called my mother names," replied Oliver, sullenly.

"Well, and what if he did, you little ungrateful wretch?" said
Mrs. Sowerberry. "She deserved what he said, and
worse."

"She didn't!" said Oliver.

"She did!" said Mrs. Sowerberry.

"It's a lie!" said Oliver.

Mrs. Sowerberry burst into a flood of tears.

This flood of tears left Sowerberry no alternative. If he had
hesitated for one instant to punish Oliver most severely, it must
be quite clear to every experienced reader that he would have been,
according to all precedents in disputes of matrimony established,
a brute, an unnatural husband, an insulting creature, a base
imitation of a man, and various other agreeable characters too nu-
merous for recital within the limits of this chapter. To do him
justice, he was, as far as his power went,—it was not very exten-
sive,—kindly disposed towards the boy; perhaps because it was
his interest to be so, perhaps because his wife disliked him.
The flood of tears, however, left him no resource; so he at once
gave him a drubbing, which satisfied even Mrs. Sowerberry
herself, and rendered Mr. Bumble's subsequent application of
the parochial cane rather unnecessary. For the rest of the day
he was shut up in the back kitchen, in company with a pump
and a slice of bread; and, at night, Mrs. Sowerberry, after
making various remarks outside the door, by no means compli-
mentary to the memory of his mother, looked into the room,
and, amidst the jeers and pointings of Noah and Charlotte,
ordered him up stairs to his dismal bed.

It was not until he was left alone in the silence and stillness
of the gloomy workshop of the undertaker, that Oliver gave
way to the feelings which the day's treatment may be supposed
likely to have awakened in a mere child. He had listened to
their taunts with a look of dogged contempt; he had borne the
lash without a cry, for he felt that pride swelling in his heart
which would have kept down a shriek to the last, if they had
roasted him alive. But, now that there were none to see or
hear him, he fell upon his knees on the floor, and, hiding his
face in his hands, wept such tears as God send for the credit of our nature, few so young may ever have cause to pour out before him.

For a long time Oliver remained motionless in this attitude. The candle was burning low in the socket when he rose to his feet, and having gazed cautiously round him, and listened intently, gently undid the fastenings of the door and looked abroad.

It was a cold dark night. The stars seemed to the boy's eyes further from the earth than he had ever seen them before; there was no wind, and the sombre shadows thrown by the trees on the earth looked sepulchral and death-like, from being so still. He softly reclosed the door, and, having availed himself of the expiring light of the candle to tie up in a handkerchief the few articles of wearing apparel he had, sat himself down upon a bench to wait for morning.

With the first ray of light that struggled through the crevices in the shutters Oliver rose, and again unbared the door. One timid look around,—one moment's pause of hesitation,—he had closed it behind him, and was in the open street.

He looked to the right and to the left, uncertain whither to fly. He remembered to have seen the wagons as they went out, toiling up the hill; he took the same route, and arriving at a footpath across the fields, which he thought after some distance led out again into the road, struck into it, and walked quickly on.

Along this same footpath, Oliver well remembered he had trod beside Mr. Bumble, when he first carried him to the workhouse from the farm. His way lay directly in front of the cottage. His heart beat quickly when he bethought himself of this, and he half resolved to turn back. He had come a long way though, and should lose a great deal of time by doing so. Besides, it was so early that there was very little fear of his being seen; so he walked on.

He reached the house. There was no appearance of its inmates stirring at that early hour. Oliver stopped, and peeped into the garden. A child was weeding one of the little beds; and, as he stopped, he raised his pale face, and disclosed the features of one of his former companions. Oliver felt glad to see him before he went, for, though younger than himself, he had been his little friend and playmate; they had been beaten, and starved, and shut up together, many and many a time.

"Hush, Dick!" said Oliver, as the boy ran to the gate, and thrust his thin arm between the rails to greet him. "Is any one up?"

"Nobody but me," replied the child.

"You mustn't say you saw me, Dick," said Oliver: "I am running away. They beat and ill-use me, Dick; and I am going to seek my fortune some long way off; I don't know where. How pale you are!"
“I heard the doctor tell them I was dying,” replied the child with a faint smile. “I am very glad to see you, dear; but don’t stop, don’t stop.”

“Yes, yes, I will, to say good-bye to you,” replied Oliver. “I shall see you again, Dick; I know I shall. You will be well and happy.”

“I hope so,” replied the child, “after I am dead, but not before. I know the doctor must be right, Oliver; because I dream so much of heaven, and angels, and kind faces that I never see when I am awake. Kiss me,” said the child, climbing up the low gate, and flinging his little arms round Oliver’s neck. “Good-bye, dear! God bless you!”

The blessing was from a young child’s lips, but it was the first that Oliver had ever heard invoked upon his head; and through all the struggles and sufferings of his after life, through all the troubles and changes of many weary years, he never once forgot it.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

OLIVER WALKS TO LONDON, AND ENCOUNTERS ON THE ROAD A STRANGE SORT OF YOUNG GENTLEMAN.

Oliver reached the stile at which the by-path terminated, and once more gained the high-road. It was eight o’clock now; and, though he was nearly five miles away from the town, he ran, and hid behind the hedges by turns, till noon, fearing that he might be pursued and overtaken. Then he sat down to rest at the side of a mile-stone, and began to think for the first time where he had better go and try to live.

The stone by which he was seated, bore in large characters an intimation that it was just seventy miles from that spot to London. The name awakened a new train of ideas in the boy’s mind. London!—that great large place!—nobody—not even Mr. Bumble—could ever find him there. He had often heard the old men in the workhouse, too, say that no lad of spirit need want in London, and that there were ways of living in that vast city which those who had been bred up in country parts had no idea of. It was the very place for a homeless boy, who must die in the streets unless some one helped him. As these things passed through his thoughts, he jumped upon his feet, and again walked forward.

He had diminished the distance between himself and London by full four miles more, before he recollected how much he must undergo ere he could hope to reach his place of destination. As this consideration forced itself upon him, he slackened his pace a little, and meditated upon his means of getting there. He had a crust of bread, a coarse shirt, and two pairs of stockings in his bundle; and a penny—a gift of Sowerberry’s after some funeral in which he had acquitted himself more than
ordinarily well—in his pocket. "A clean shirt," thought Oliver, "is a very comfortable thing,—very; and so are two pairs of darned stockings, and so is a penny; but they are small helps to a sixty-five miles' walk in winter time." But Oliver's thoughts, like those of most other people, although they were extremely ready and active to point out his difficulties, were wholly at a loss to suggest any feasible mode of surmounting them; so, after a good deal of thinking to no particular purpose, he changed his little bundle over to the other shoulder, and trudged on.

Oliver walked twenty miles that day; and all that time tasted nothing but the crust of dry bread, and a few draughts of water which he begged at the cottage-doors by the road-side. When the night came, he turned into a meadow, and, creeping close under a hay-rick, determined to lie there till morning. He felt frightened at first, for the wind moaned dismally over the empty fields, and he was cold and hungry, and more alone than he had ever felt before. Being very tired with his walk, however, he soon fell asleep and forgot his troubles.

He felt cold and stiff when he got up next morning, and so hungry that he was obliged to exchange the penny for a small loaf in the very first village through which he passed. He had walked no more than twelve miles, when night closed in again; for his feet were sore, and his legs so weak that they trembled beneath him. Another night passed in the bleak damp air only made him worse; and, when he set forward on his journey next morning, he could hardly crawl along.

He waited at the bottom of a steep hill till a stage-coach came up, and then begged of the outside passengers; but there were very few who took any notice of him, and even those, told him to wait till they got to the top of the hill, and then let them see how far he could run for a halfpenny. Poor Oliver tried to keep up with the coach a little way, but was unable to do it, by reason of his fatigue and sore feet. When the outsides saw this, they put their halfpence back into their pockets again, declaring that he was an idle young dog, and didn't deserve anything; and the coach rattled away, and left only a cloud of dust behind.

In some villages, large painted boards were fixed up, warning all persons who begged within the district that they would be sent to jail, which frightened Oliver very much, and made him very glad to get out of them with all possible expedition. In others he would stand about the inn-yards, and look mournfully at every one who passed; a proceeding which generally terminated in the landlady's ordering one of the post-boys who were lounging about, to drive that strange boy out of the place, for she was sure he had come to steal something. If he begged at a farmer's house, ten to one but they threatened to set the dog on him; and when he showed his nose in a shop, they
talked about the beadle, which brought Oliver's heart up into his mouth,—very often the only thing he had there, for many hours together.

In fact, if it had not been for a good-hearted turnpike-man, and a benevolent old lady, Oliver's troubles would have been shortened by the very same process which put an end to his mother's; in other words, he would most assuredly have fallen dead upon the king's highway. But the turnpike-man gave him a meal of bread and cheese; and the old lady, who had a shipwrecked grandson wandering barefooted in some distant part of the earth, took pity upon the poor orphan, and gave him what little she could afford—and more—with such kind and gentle words, and such tears of sympathy and compassion, that they sank deeper into Oliver's soul than all the sufferings he had ever undergone.

Early on the seventh morning after he had left his native place, Oliver limped slowly into the little town of Barnet. The window-shutters were closed, the street was empty, not a soul had awakened to the business of the day. The sun was rising in all his splendid beauty, but the light only seemed to show the boy his own lonesomeness and desolation as he sat with bleeding feet and covered with dust upon a cold door-step.

By degrees the shutters were opened, the window-blinds were drawn up, and people began passing to and fro. Some few stopped to gaze at Oliver for a moment or two, or turned round to stare at him as they hurried by; but none relieved him, or troubled themselves to inquire how he came there. He had no heart to beg, and there he sat.

He had been crouching on the step for some time, gazing listlessly at the coaches as they passed through, and thinking how strange it seemed that they could do with ease in a few hours what it had taken him a whole week of courage and determination beyond his years to accomplish, when he was roused by observing that a boy who had passed him carelessly some minutes before, had returned, and was now surveying him most earnestly from the opposite side of the way. He took little heed of this at first; but the boy remained in the same attitude of close observation so long, that Oliver raised his head, and returned his steady look. Upon this, the boy crossed over, and, walking close up to Oliver, said,

"Hullo! my covey, what's the row?"

The boy who addressed this inquiry to the young wayfarer was about his own age, but one of the queerest-looking boys that Oliver had ever seen. He was a snub-nosed, flat-browed, common-faced boy enough, and as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see; but he had got about him all the airs and manners of a man. He was short of his age, with rather bow-legs, and little sharp ugly eyes. His hat was stuck on the top of his head so slightly that it threatened to fall off every moment, and
would have done so very often if the wearer had not had a
knack of every now and then giving his head a sudden twitch,
which brought it back to its old place again. He wore a man’s
coat, which reached nearly to his heels. He had turned the
cuffs back halfway up his arm to get his hands out of the
sleeves, apparently with the ultimate view of thrusting them
into the pockets of his corduroy trousers, for there he kept
them. He was altogether as roystering and swaggering a young
gentleman as ever stood three feet six, or something less, in his
bluchers.

“Hullo, my covey, what’s the row?” said this strange young
gentleman to Oliver.

“I am very hungry and tired,” replied Oliver, the tears
standing in his eyes as he spoke. “I have walked a long way;
—I have been walking these seven days.”

“Walking for sivin days!” said the young gentleman. “Oh,
I see. Beak’s order, eh? But,” he added, noticing Oliver’s
look of surprise, “I suppose you don’t know wot a beak is, my
flash com-pan-i-on.”

Oliver mildly replied, that he had always heard a bird’s
mouth described by the term in question.

“My eyes, how green!” exclaimed the young gentleman.

“Why, a beak’s a madg’strate; and when you walk by a beak’s
order, it’s not straight forerd, but always going up, and nivir
coming down agen. Was you never on the mill?”

“What mill?—why, the mill,—the mill as takes up so little
room that it’ll work inside a stone jug, and always goes better
when the wind’s low with people than when it’s high, acos then
they can’t get workmen. But come,” said the young gentleman;

“you want grub, and you shall have it. I’m at low-water-mark,—only one bob and a magpie; but, as far as it goes, I’ll
fork out and stump. Up with you on your pins. There:
now then, morrice.”

Assisting Oliver to rise, the young gentleman took him to an
adjacent chandler’s shop, where he purchased a sufficiency of
ready-dressed ham and a half-quartern loaf, or, as he himself
expressed it, “a fourpenny bran;” the ham being kept clean
and preserved from dust by the ingenious expedient of making a
hole in the loaf by pulling out a portion of the crumb, and stuffing
it therein. Taking the bread under his arm, the young gentle-
man turned into a small public-house, and led the way to a tap-
room in the rear of the premises. Here, a pot of beer was
brought in by the direction of the mysterious youth; and Oliver,
falling to, at his new friend’s bidding, made a long and hearty
meal, during the progress of which the strange boy eyed him
from time to time with great attention.

“Going to London?” said the strange boy, when Oliver had
at length concluded.
"Yes."
"Got any lodgings?"
"No."
"Money?"
"No."

The strange boy whistled, and put his arms into his pockets as far as the big-coat sleeves would let them go.

"Do you live in London?" inquired Oliver.

"Yes, I do, when I'm at home," replied the boy. "I suppose you want some place to sleep in to-night, don't you?"

"I do indeed," answered Oliver. "I have not slept under a roof since I left the country."

"Don't fret your eyelids on that score," said the young gentleman. "I've got to be in London to-night, and I know a spectable old gentleman as lives there, wot 'll give you lodgings for nothink, and never ask for the change; that is, if any gentleman he knows interduces you. And don't he know me?—Oh, no,—not in the least,—by no means,—certainly not."

The young gentleman smiled, as if to intimate that the latter fragments of discourse were playfully ironical, and finished the beer as he did so.

This unexpected offer of shelter was too tempting to be resisted, especially as it was immediately followed up, by the assurance that the old gentleman already referred to, would doubtless provide Oliver with a comfortable place without loss of time. This led to a more friendly and confidential dialogue, from which Oliver discovered that his friend's name was Jack Dawkins, and that he was a peculiar pet and protegé of the elderly gentleman before mentioned.

Mr. Dawkins's appearance did not say a vast deal in favour of the comforts which his patron's interest obtained for those whom he took under his protection; but as he had a somewhat flighty and dissolute mode of conversing, and furthermore avowed that among his intimate friends he was better known by the sobriquet of "The artful Dodger," Oliver concluded that, being of a dissipated and careless turn, the moral precepts of his benefactor had hitherto been thrown away upon him. Under this impression, he secretly resolved to cultivate the good opinion of the old gentleman as quickly as possible; and, if he found the Dodger incorrigible, as he more than half suspected he should, to decline the honour of his farther acquaintance.

As John Dawkins objected to their entering London before nightfall, it was nearly eleven o'clock when they reached the turnpike at Islington. They crossed from the Angel into St. John's-road, struck down the small street which terminates at Sadler's Wells theatre, through Exmouth-street and Coppice-row, down the little court by the side of the workhouse, across the classic ground which once bore the name of Hockley-in-the-hole, thence into Little Saffron-hill, and so into Saffron-hill the
Great, along which, the Dodger scudded at a rapid pace, directing Oliver to follow close at his heels.

Although Oliver had enough to occupy his attention in keeping sight of his leader, he could not help bestowing a few hasty glances on either side of the way as he passed along. A dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen. The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours. There were a good many small shops; but the only stock in trade appeared to be heaps of children, who, even at that time of night, were crawling in and out at the doors, or screaming from the inside. The sole places that seemed to prosper amid the general blight of the place were the public-houses, and in them, the lowest orders of Irish (who are generally the lowest orders of anything) were wrangling with might and main. Covered ways and yards, which here and there diverged from the main street, disclosed little knots of houses where drunken men and women were positively wallowing in the filth; and from several of the doorways, great ill-looking fellows were cautiously emerging, bound, to all appearance, upon no very well-disposed or harmless errands.

Oliver was just considering whether he hadn't better run away, when they reached the bottom of the hill: his conductor, catching him by the arm, pushed open the door of a house near Field-lane, and, drawing him into the passage, closed it behind them.

"Now, then," cried a voice from below, in reply to a whistle from the Dodger.

"Plummy and slam!" was the reply.

This seemed to be some watchword or signal that it was all right; for the light of a feeble candle gleamed upon the wall at the farther end of the passage, and a man's face peeped out from where a balustrade of the old kitchen staircase had been broken away.

"There's two on you," said the man, thrusting the candle farther out, and shading his eyes with his hand. "Who's the t'other one?"

"A new pal," replied Jack, pulling Oliver forward.

"Where did he come from?"

"Greenland. Is Fagin up stairs?"

"Yes, he's a sortin' the wipes. Up with you!" The candle was drawn back, and the face disappeared.

Oliver, groping his way with one hand, and with the other firmly grasped by his companion, ascended with much difficulty the dark and broken stairs which his conductor mounted with an ease and expedition that showed he was well acquainted with them. He threw open the door of a back-room, and drew Oliver in after him.

The walls and ceiling of the room were perfectly black with age and dirt. There was a deal-table before the fire, upon
Oliver introduced to the respectable Old Gentleman.
which was a candle stuck in a ginger-beer bottle; two or three pewter pots, a loaf and butter, and a plate. In a frying-pan which was on the fire, and which was secured to the mantelshelf by a string, some sausages were cooking; and standing over them, with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old shrivelled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair. He was dressed in a greasy flannel gown, with his throat bare, and seemed to be dividing his attention between the frying-pan and a clothes-horse, over which a great number of silk handkerchiefs were hanging. Several rough beds made of old sacks were huddled side by side on the floor; and seated round the table were four or five boys, none older than the Dodger, smoking long clay pipes and drinking spirits with all the air of middle-aged men. These all crowded about their associate as he whispered a few words to the Jew, and then turned round and grinned at Oliver, as did the Jew himself, toasting-fork in hand.

"This is him, Fagin," said Jack Dawkins; "my friend, Oliver Twist."

The Jew grinned; and, making a low obeisance to Oliver, took him by the hand, and hoped he should have the honour of his intimate acquaintance. Upon this, the young gentlemen with the pipes came round him, and shook both his hands very hard,—especially the one in which he held his little bundle. One young gentleman was very anxious to hang up his cap for him; and another was so obliging as to put his hands in his pockets, in order that, as he was very tired, he might not have the trouble of emptying them when he went to bed. These civilities would probably have been extended much further, but for a liberal exercise of the Jew's toasting-fork on the heads and shoulders of the affectionate youths who offered them.

"We are very glad to see you, Oliver,—very," said the Jew. "Dodger, take off the sausages, and draw a tub near the fire for Oliver. Ah, you're a staring at the pocket-handkerchiefs! eh, my dear? There are a good many of 'em, ain't there? We've just looked 'em out ready for the wash; that's all, Oliver; that's all. Ha! ha! ha!"

The latter part of this speech was hailed by a boisterous shout from all the hopeful pupils of the merry old gentleman, in the midst of which they went to supper.

Oliver ate his share; and the Jew then mixed him a glass of hot gin and water, telling him he must drink it off directly, because another gentleman wanted the tumbler. Oliver did as he was desired. Almost instantly afterwards, he felt himself gently lifted on to one of the sacks, and then he sank into a deep sleep.