

position in society than himself. Noah intended to repay to Oliver every insult he had ever received, and to make the new boy's life a misery.

After a few weeks, Mr Sowerberry decided that he liked Oliver's appearance enough to train him in the undertaking business. Oliver's permanent expression of sadness was very suitable, the undertaker thought, for collecting dead bodies from houses and accompanying the coffins to funerals.

One day Mr Bumble came to tell them about a woman who had died in an extremely poor part of the town, and Sowerberry and Oliver went to collect the body. They went down dirty narrow streets where the houses on either side were tall and large, but very old. Some of the houses were almost falling down, and had to be supported by huge blocks of wood. The area was so poor that even the dead rats in the street looked as though they had died of hunger.

They found the right house, and climbed the dark stairs to a miserable little room. Some children watched them from the shadows as they entered. Something lay beneath a blanket on the floor in one corner. A man and an old woman stood near the body. Oliver was afraid to look at them. With their thin faces and sharp teeth, they looked like the rats he had seen outside.

As Sowerberry began to measure the body for a coffin, the man knelt on the floor and cried out, 'She starved to death, I tell you! That's why she died!' He fell to the floor, and all the children behind him started to cry. Sowerberry and Oliver, their work done, left as fast as they could.

They returned the next day with the coffin and four men from the workhouse who were to carry it. The man and the old woman followed the coffin to the church, and waited silently by the grave for the priest to arrive. When at last he came, he hurried through the

burial prayers, and as quickly as possible (it was only a job, after all) the coffin was put into the ground. At this point the husband, who had not moved once during his wife's burial – not even during the long wait for the priest – suddenly fainted to the ground and had to have cold water thrown over him.

'So how did you like it, Oliver?' asked Sowerberry later, as they walked home.

'Not very much, sir,' Oliver answered truthfully.

'You'll get used to it, my boy.'

Oliver wondered how long that would take, and remained silent all the way back to the shop, thinking about everything that he had seen and heard.

3

Oliver goes to London

Oliver was now officially an undertaker's assistant. It was a good, sickly time of year, and coffins were selling well. Oliver gained a lot of experience in a short time, and was interested to see how brave some people were after a death in the family. During funerals for some rich people, for example, he saw that the people who had cried the loudest in church usually recovered the fastest afterwards. He noticed how in other wealthy families the wife or the husband often seemed quite cheerful and calm despite the recent death – just as if nothing had happened. Oliver was very surprised to see all this, and greatly admired them for controlling their sadness so well.

He was treated badly by most of the people around him. Noah was jealous because Oliver went out to burials while he was left

back in the shop, so he treated him even worse than before. Charlotte treated him badly because Noah did. And Mrs Sowerberry was his enemy because Mr Sowerberry was supposed to be his friend.

One day something happened which might seem unimportant, but which had a great effect on Oliver's future. Noah was in a particularly bad mood one dinner-time, and so he tried to make Oliver cry by hitting him, pulling his hair, and calling him horrible names. This was all unsuccessful, so he tried personal insults.

'Workhouse, how's your mother?' he asked.

'She's dead,' replied Oliver, his face going red with emotion.

Noah hoped that Oliver was going to cry, so he continued. 'What did she die of, Workhouse?'

'Of a broken heart, I was told.' And a tear rolled down Oliver's cheek.

'Why are you crying, Workhouse?'

Oliver remained silent, and Noah grew braver. 'You know, I feel very sorry for you, Workhouse, but the truth is your mother was a wicked woman.'

Oliver seemed suddenly to wake up. 'What did you say?'

'She was so bad it was lucky she died, or she would have ended up in prison, or hung.'

His face bright red with anger, Oliver jumped up, seized Noah's throat, and shook the older boy so violently that his teeth nearly fell out. Then he hit him with all his strength and knocked him to the ground.

'He'll murder me!' screamed Noah. 'Charlotte! Help! Oliver's gone mad —'

Charlotte and Mrs Sowerberry ran in and screamed in horror. They took hold of Oliver and began to beat him. Then Noah got up



Charlotte took hold of Oliver and began to beat him.

and started to kick him from behind. When they were all tired, they forced Oliver, who was still fighting and shouting, into the cellar and locked it.

Mrs Sowerberry sat down, breathing heavily. 'He's like a wild animal!' she said. 'We could all have been murdered in our beds!'

'I hope Mr Sowerberry doesn't take any more of these dreadful creatures from the workhouse,' said Charlotte. 'Poor Noah was nearly killed!' Mrs Sowerberry looked at Noah sympathetically.

Noah, who was twice Oliver's size, pretended to rub tears from his eyes.

'What shall we do?' cried Mrs Sowerberry. 'He'll kick that door down in ten minutes.' They could hear Oliver banging and kicking at the cellar door. 'Noah – run and get Mr Bumble.'

So Noah ran through the streets as quickly as he could to fetch the beadle. When he reached the workhouse, he waited for a minute to make sure his face was suitably tearful and frightened.

As soon as Mr Bumble came out, Noah cried, 'Mr Bumble! Mr Bumble! It's Oliver Twist, sir. He's become violent. He tried to murder me, sir! And Charlotte, and Mrs Sowerberry as well.'

Mr Bumble was shocked and angry. 'Did he? I'll come up there immediately and beat him with my stick.'

When he arrived at the shop, Oliver was still kicking wildly at the cellar door.

'Let me out!' he shouted from the cellar, when he heard Mr Bumble's voice. 'I'm not afraid of you!'

Mr Bumble stopped for a moment, amazed and even rather frightened by this change in Oliver. Then he said to Mrs Sowerberry, 'It's the meat that's caused this, you know.'

'What?'

'Meat, madam. You've fed him too well here. Back in the workhouse this would never have happened.'

'I knew I was too generous to him,' said Mrs Sowerberry, raising her eyes to the ceiling.

At that moment Mr Sowerberry returned and, hearing what had happened (according to the ladies), he beat Oliver so hard that even

Mr Bumble and Mrs Sowerberry were satisfied. Mr Sowerberry was not a cruel man, but he had no choice. He knew that if he didn't punish Oliver, his wife would never forgive him.

That night, alone in the room with the coffins, Oliver cried bitter, lonely tears. He did not sleep, and very early in the morning, before anyone was awake, he quietly unlocked the shop door and left the house. He ran up the street and through the town as far as the main road, where he saw a sign that told him it was just seventy miles from there to London. The name London gave the boy an idea. That huge place! Nobody, not even Mr Bumble, could ever find him there! He had heard old men in the workhouse say it was a good place for brave boys, and that there was always work there for those that wanted it. It would be the best place for him. He jumped to his feet and walked forward again.

But after only four miles he began to realize just how far he would have to walk. He stopped to think about it. He had a piece of bread, a rough shirt, two pairs of socks and a penny. But he could not see how these would help him get to London any faster, so he continued walking.

He walked twenty miles that day. The only thing he had to eat was his piece of bread and some water which he begged from houses near the road. He slept the first night in a field, feeling lonely, tired, cold and hungry. He was even hungrier the next morning when he woke up, and he had to buy some more bread with his penny. That day he walked only twelve miles. His legs were so weak that they shook beneath him.

The next day he tried to beg for money, but large signs in some villages warned him that anyone caught begging would be sent to prison. Travellers on the road refused to give him money; they said

he was a lazy young dog and didn't deserve anything. Farmers threatened to send their dogs after him. When he waited outside pubs, the pub-owners chased him away because they thought he had come to steal something. Only two people were kind enough to feed him: an old woman and a gate-keeper on the road. If they had not given him some food, he surely would have died like his mother.

Early on the seventh morning of his journey, Oliver finally reached the little town of Barnet, just outside London. Exhausted, he sat down at the side of the road. His feet were bleeding and he was covered in dust. He was too tired even to beg. Then he noticed that a boy, who had passed him a few minutes before, had returned, and was now looking at him carefully from the opposite side of the road. After a long time the boy crossed the road and said to Oliver, 'Hello! What's the matter then?'

The boy was about Oliver's age, but was one of the strangest-looking people he had ever seen. He had a dirty, ordinary boy's face, but he behaved as if he were an adult. He was short for his age and had little, sharp, ugly eyes. His hat was stuck on top of his head but it looked as though it would blow off at any minute. He wore a man's coat which reached almost down to his feet, with sleeves so long that his hands were completely covered.

'I'm very tired and hungry,' answered Oliver, almost crying. 'I've been walking for a week.'

'A week! The magistrate's order, was it?'

'The magistrate? What's that?'

'A magistrate's a kind of judge,' explained the surprised young gentleman. He realized Oliver did not have much experience of the world. 'Never mind that. You want some food,' he went on. 'I haven't got much money but don't worry - I'll pay.'

The boy helped Oliver to his feet, and took him to a pub. Meat,

bread, and beer were placed before Oliver, and his new friend urged him to satisfy his hunger. While Oliver was eating, the strange boy looked at him from time to time with great attention.

'Going to London?' he asked him finally.

'Yes.'

'Got anywhere to live?'

'No.'

'Money?'

'No.'

The strange boy whistled, and put his arms into his pockets as far as the big coat sleeves would allow him. 'I suppose you want to sleep somewhere tonight, don't you?'

'I do,' replied Oliver. 'I haven't slept under a roof since I started my journey.'

'Well, don't worry. I've got to be in London tonight, and I know a very nice old gentleman there who'll let you live in his place and not even ask you for money!'

Oliver was deeply grateful for this offer of shelter and talked for a long time with his new friend. His name was Jack Dawkins, but he was usually called 'The Artful Dodger'. 'Artful' because he was very clever at getting what he wanted; and 'Dodger' because he was very good at not getting caught when he did something wrong. When he heard this, Oliver felt rather doubtful about having such a friend. However, he wanted first to meet the kind old gentleman in London, who would help him. After that, he could decide whether to continue the friendship with the Artful Dodger.

Oliver in London

For some reason the Dodger did not want to enter London during daylight, so it was nearly eleven o'clock at night when they got near the centre. Oliver had never seen a dirtier or more miserable place. The streets in this district were narrow and muddy, and there were terrible smells everywhere. Children wandered around even at this time of night, in and out of the many shops, playing and screaming. The pubs were full of people fighting, and big, evil-looking men stood in doorways or at dark corners. Oliver almost wanted to run away, but just then the Dodger pushed open a door and pulled Oliver into a dark hall.

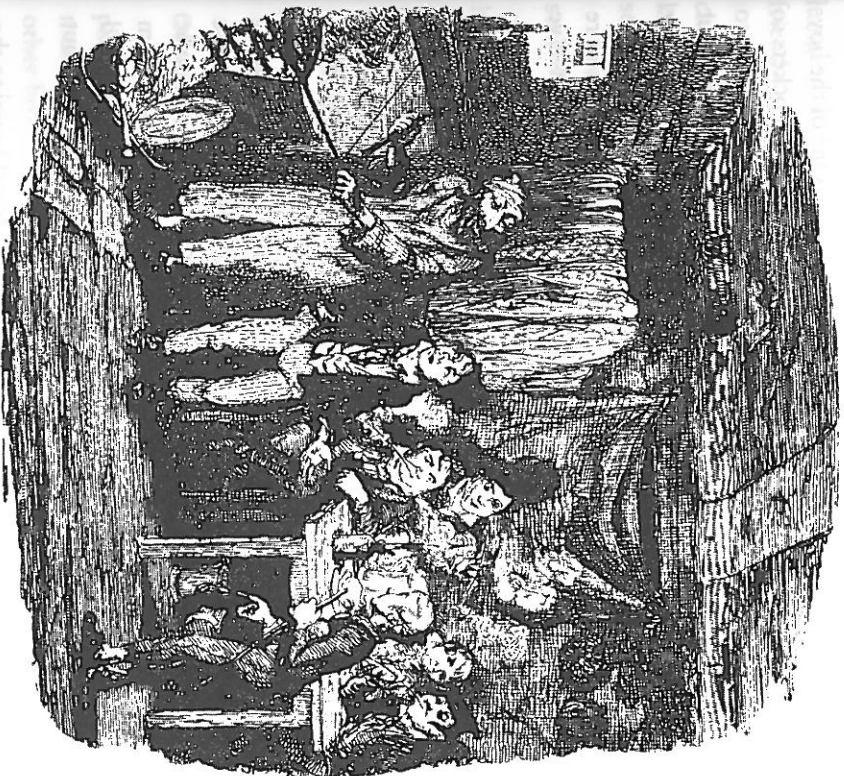
'Who's there?' a voice cried out.

'It's me,' said the Dodger. The faint light of a candle appeared in the hall.

'Who's the other one?'

'A new friend.'

They went up some dark and broken stairs. Oliver could hardly see where he was going, but the Dodger seemed to know the way, and helped Oliver up. They entered a room with walls that were black with age and dirt. In front of the fire was a table with a candle struck into a bottle of beer, and an old man, with a horribly ugly face and red hair, stood next to the fire cooking. He was wearing a dirty old coat and seemed to divide his attention between his cooking and a number of silk handkerchieves, which were hanging near the fire. There were several rough beds in the room. Four or five boys, about the same age as the Artful Dodger, sat round the table, smoking and drinking like middle-aged men. They all looked up when the



George Cruikshank

'My friend Oliver Twist,' the Dodger said to Fagin.

Dodger and Oliver entered.

'This is him, Fagin,' the Dodger said to the old man. 'My friend Oliver Twist.'

Fagin smiled and shook Oliver's hand. Then all the young gentlemen came up to him and shook both his hands very hard,

especially the hand which held his few possessions. One of the boys hanging is!' he murmured. 'Dead men can never talk, or betray old was particularly kind. He even put his hands in Oliver's pockets so friends!'

that Oliver would not have to empty them himself when he went to bed. The boys would probably have been even more helpful, but Fagin hit them on their heads and shoulders until they left Oliver alone.

'We're very glad to see you, Oliver,' said Fagin. 'I see you're staring at the handkerchieves, my dear. Aren't there a lot? We've just taken them all out to wash them, that's all! Ha! Ha! Ha!'

This seemed to be a joke, as the old gentleman and all his young friends gave loud shouts of laughter. Then supper began. Oliver ate his share of the food and was then given a glass of gin-and-water. Fagin told him to drink it fast. Immediately afterwards, Oliver felt himself lifted onto one of the beds and he sank into a deep sleep.

When he woke, it was late morning. Fagin was the only other person in the room, and he was boiling coffee in a pan. When the coffee was done, he turned towards Oliver and looked closely at the boy. Oliver was only just awake and his eyes were half-closed, so he seemed to be still fast asleep. Fagin then locked the door and from a hidden hole in the floor, he took out a small box, which he placed carefully on the table. His eyes shone as he opened it and took out a gold watch covered in jewels.

'Aah!' he said to himself. 'What fine men they were! Loyal to the end. They never told the priest where the jewels were. Nor about old Fagin. Not even at the very end. And why should they? It was already too late. It wouldn't have stopped the rope going round their necks!'

Fagin took out at least six more watches, as well as rings and bracelets and many other valuable pieces of jewellery. He looked at them with pleasure, then replaced them. 'What a good thing

At that moment he looked up and saw Oliver watching him. He closed the lid of the box with a loud crash, and picked up a bread knife from the table. 'Why are you watching me? What have you seen? Tell me – quick!'

'I couldn't sleep any longer, sir,' said Oliver, terrified. 'I'm very sorry.'

'You weren't awake an hour ago?' Fagin asked fiercely, still holding the knife.

'I promise I wasn't, sir,' replied Oliver.

'Don't worry, my dear,' Fagin said, putting down the knife and becoming once again the kind old gentleman. He laughed. 'I only tried to frighten you, my dear. You're a brave boy, Oliver! And did you see any of the pretty things?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Ah,' said Fagin, turning rather pale. 'They – they're mine, Oliver. All I have, in my old age.'

Oliver wondered why the old man lived in such an old, dirty place, when he had so many watches, but then he thought that it must cost Fagin a lot of money to look after the Dodger and the other boys. So he said nothing, and got up and washed. When he turned towards Fagin, the box had disappeared.

Soon the Dodger entered with a cheerful young man named Charley Bates.

'Have you been at work this morning?' Fagin asked the Dodger. 'Hard at work,' answered the Dodger.

'Good boys, good boys!' said Fagin. 'What have you got?'

'A couple of pocket-books and some handkerchieves.'

'Good workers, aren't they, Oliver?' said the old man.

'Very good,' said Oliver. The others all started laughing, though Oliver saw nothing funny in his answer. Fagin inspected these handkerchieves and told the two boys that they were extremely well made and that he was very pleased with their work.

After breakfast they played a very strange game. The cheerful old man put a watch in his jacket pocket, with a guard-chain round his neck, and a notebook and a handkerchief in his trouser pocket. Then he went up and down the room holding a walking stick, just like the old gentlemen who walked in the streets. Sometimes he stopped at the fireplace, and sometimes at the door, pretending to stare with great interest into shop windows. He would then constantly look round, as if afraid of thieves, touching all his pockets in such a natural and funny way that Oliver laughed until the tears ran down his face. All the time, the two boys followed Fagin everywhere, and every time he turned round, they moved out of his sight so quickly that it was impossible to follow their movements.

Finally, the Dodger bumped into him accidentally from behind, and at that moment both boys took from him, very quickly, his watch, guard-chain, handkerchief, and notebook. If the old man felt a hand in any of his pockets he cried out, and then the game began again.

Later, the boys went out again to do some more work. When they had gone, Fagin turned to Oliver. 'Take my advice, my dear,' he said. 'Make them your models. Especially the Dodger. He'll be a great man himself, and will make you one too, if you copy him. Is my handkerchief hanging out of my pocket, my dear?'

'Yes, sir,' said Oliver.

'See if you can take it out, without my feeling it. Just as you saw them doing it when we were playing.'

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

'Has it gone?' asked Fagin.

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

'You're a clever boy, my dear,' said the old gentleman, putting his hand on Oliver's head. 'I've never seen a quicker boy. If you go on like this, you'll be the greatest man in London. Now come here and I'll show you how to take the marks out of handkerchieves.'

Oliver wondered what the connection was between playing at stealing from the old gentleman's pocket and becoming a great man. But he followed him quietly to the table and was soon deeply involved in his new study.

Oliver remained in Fagin's room for many days, picking the marks and names out of the handkerchieves and sometimes playing the same game as before. One evening two young ladies came to visit, and a very cheerful party followed. Oliver thought they were very nice, friendly girls.

The Dodger and Charley Bates went out to work every day, but sometimes came home with no handkerchieves, and Fagin would get very angry. Once he even knocked them both down the stairs and sent them to bed with no dinner because they had returned with nothing.

At last, the morning came when Oliver was allowed to go out to work with the two other boys. There had been no handkerchieves for him to work on for several days and there was not very much to eat for dinner. The three boys set out, but they walked so slowly that Oliver thought they were not going to work at all. Then suddenly the Dodger stopped and put his finger to his lips.

'What's the matter?' demanded Oliver.

'Be quiet!' replied the Dodger. 'Do you see that old man outside the bookshop? He's the one.'

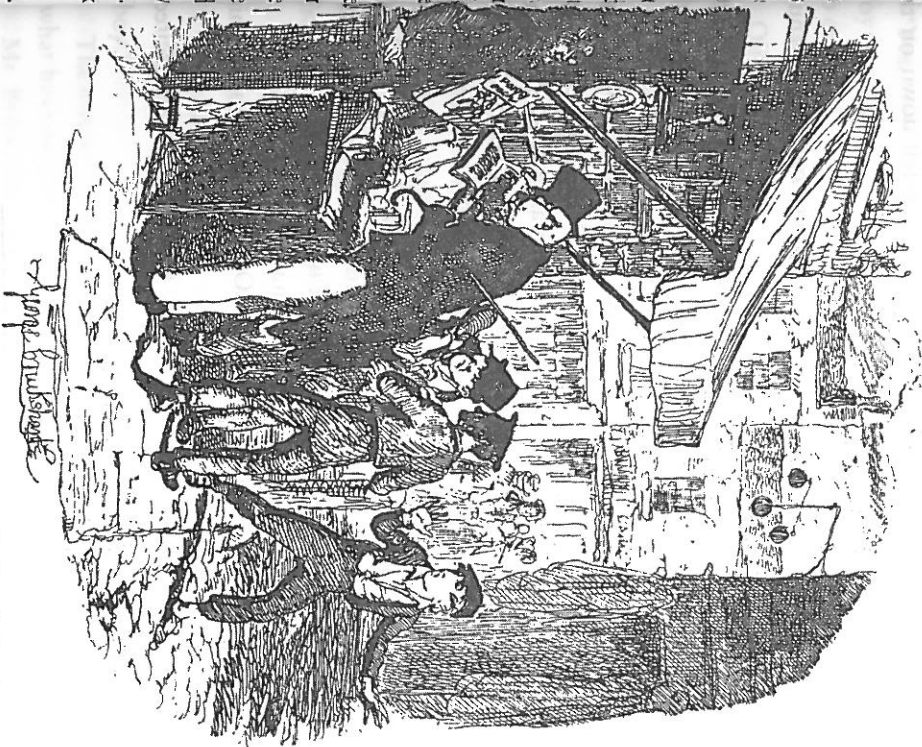
Oliver looked from the Dodger to Charley Bates with great surprise and confusion, but he had been told not to ask questions. The two boys walked quickly and secretly across the road toward the old gentleman. Oliver followed behind them, watching in silent amazement.

The old gentleman looked quite rich; he wore gold glasses, white trousers, and had an expensive walking stick under his arm. He had picked up a book and was standing there, reading it with great concentration – just as if he were in his own armchair at home. Oliver, his eyes wide with horror and alarm, watched as the Dodger put his hand in the old gentleman's pocket, took out a handkerchief and handed it to Charley Bates. Then the two of them ran round the corner as fast as they could.

Suddenly, the whole mystery of the handkerchieves, and the watches, and the jewels, and Fagin, became clear. Oliver stood for a moment in terror, the blood rushing through him until he felt he was on fire. Then, confused and frightened, he started to run. At the same time, the old gentleman, putting his hand to his pocket and realizing his handkerchief was missing, turned round. He saw Oliver running away, so he naturally thought Oliver was the thief. With loud cries of 'Stop thief!', he ran after Oliver with the book still in his hand.

The old gentleman was not the only one who started shouting. The Dodger and Charley Bates, not wanting to attract attention to themselves by running down the street, had stopped round the first corner. When they realized what was happening, they also shouted 'Stop thief!' and joined in the chase like good citizens.

The cry of 'Stop thief!' always causes great excitement. Everybody



Oliver, his eyes wide with horror and alarm, watched as the Dodger put his hand in the old gentleman's pocket.

in the street stopped what they were doing and began to shout themselves. Many joined in the chase with enthusiasm and soon there was a big crowd running after Oliver.

Finally, they caught the exhausted boy. He fell down on pavement and the crowd gathered round him.

'Is this the boy?' they asked the old gentleman.

'Yes,' he answered, leaning over Oliver. 'But I'm afraid he's himself.'

'I did that,' said a huge young man proudly. 'And I hurt my hairy and smelly. As the key turned in the lock, the old gentleman doing it.' The old gentleman looked at him with an expression of dislike.

Oliver lay on the ground, covered with mud and dust and bleeding from the mouth, and looked wildly at all the surrounding him. At that moment a policeman arrived and took Oliver by the collar. 'Come on, get up,' he said roughly.

'It wasn't me, sir,' said Oliver, looking round. 'It was two boys. They're here somewhere.'

'Oh no, they aren't,' replied the policeman. In fact, he was as the Dodger and Charley had quietly disappeared as soon as crowd had caught Oliver. 'Come on, get up!'

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

'I won't,' said the policeman, tearing Oliver's jacket half off back as he lifted him up.

The three of them started walking, followed by the crowd.

'Yes, I am,' replied the old gentleman, 'but I'm not sure that this boy actually took the handkerchief. I don't really want to take him to court.'

'Too late. He must go before the magistrate now.'

Oliver was locked in a small stone cell, which was disgustingly . . . He could be innocent. Where have I seen someone like him

After thinking about this for a few minutes, he said, 'No; it He sighed unhappily, and began reading the

Some time later, the officer touched his shoulder and told him that the court was ready. A magistrate was a judge who dealt with small crimes in local courts, and the magistrate for this district was

His name was Mr Fang and he was a disagreeable, bad-tempered man. Today he was in a particularly bad mood. He frowned angrily at the old gentleman, and asked sharply,

'Who are you?'

'My name, sir, is Brownlow.'

'Officer! What is this man charged with?'

'He's not charged, sir,' answered the officer. 'He's accusing the boy.'

The magistrate looked at Mr Brownlow from head to foot. 'And what have you got to say?'

Mr Brownlow began to explain. 'I was standing outside a bookshop —'

'Be quiet, sir!' shouted Mr Fang. 'Policeman! Now — you arrested Oliver was taken to the nearest police station. The officer at the gate looked at the boy. 'Another young thief, eh?' He turned to the old gentleman, 'Are you the person who was robbed, sir?'

Oliver's life changes

'Are there any witnesses?' asked the magistrate.

'None,' answered the policeman.

Mr Fang then turned to Mr Brownlow and angrily told him to describe what had happened. Mr Brownlow explained that he had run after the boy only because he saw him running away. He did not think that the boy was the actual thief and he hoped that the boy would not be punished. 'He's been hurt already,' he added, 'and now I'm afraid he's very ill.'

'I don't believe that for a moment,' said Mr Fang unpleasantly.

He turned to Oliver. 'Come now, don't try any clever tricks with me! What's your name?' he demanded.

Oliver tried to reply, but he was too weak to speak. He was deadly pale, and he felt the room spinning round him. At last he managed to whisper a request for water, but the magistrate refused angrily. Suddenly, Oliver fainted and fell to the floor.

Mr Fang stared at him angrily. 'Guilty. Three months' prison,' he said immediately. 'Let him lie there. He'll soon be tired of that.' Mr Fang stood up. 'This court is now closed.'

At that moment a man in an old black coat rushed in. 'Stop!' he shouted. 'Don't take the boy away. I saw it all. I'm the bookshop owner.'

Mr Fang's face was black with anger at this unexpected interruption, but the bookshop owner demanded to be heard. He described exactly what had really happened. He had seen two boys steal the handkerchief and then run away, leaving Oliver to be arrested.

In a final burst of bad temper, Mr Fang said that his time had been wasted. He announced that Oliver was innocent, and ordered *everybody* out of the court.

The order was obeyed, and as Mr Brownlow turned to go down

the street, he saw Oliver lying on the pavement, shaking, his face as white as death.

'Poor boy!' said Mr Brownlow, bending over him. He called a coach quickly, laid Oliver on the seat, and drove away.

The coach stopped at a neat house in a quiet, shady street in north London. Oliver was gently carried in to a bed, and received more care and kindness than he had ever had in his life. But he had a fever, and for many days he lay there unconscious. When he eventually awoke, weak, thin and pale, he looked anxiously around the room.

'What room is this? Where am I?' he said. 'This is not the place I fell asleep in.'

Mrs Bedwin, the motherly old housekeeper, heard his words, and instantly came to him. 'Hush – be quiet, my dear, or you'll be ill again. Lie down.'

He lay down, and woke up again much later. After a while, he was able to sit up in a chair, although he was still too weak to walk. In this new position he could see a picture of a woman hanging on the wall opposite. 'Who is that, madam?' he asked the old housekeeper.

'I don't know, my dear. Do you like it?'

'The eyes look so sad, and they seem to be staring at me. As if the person was alive, and wanted to speak to me but couldn't.'

'You're weak and nervous after your illness,' Mrs Bedwin said kindly. 'Don't worry about things like that.'

Later that day Mr Brownlow came in, having heard that the boy was a little better at last. He was delighted to see that Oliver could sit up. But when he saw Oliver's face clearly, Mr Brownlow stared hard at him.

'I hope you're not angry with me, sir,' said Oliver anxiously.