

This was more than Oliver could endure. Undaunted by the fact that his head would no more than reach to Noah's top waistcoat button, he rushed on his tormenter, dealt him a blow that felled him to the ground, and forced the coward to cry for help. As too often happens the outcome of this quarrel was that the innocent came in for all the punishment; while Noah who was an adept at deceit and lying effectually cleared himself of all blame. In the absence of Mr. Sowerberry, the beadle was called in as the only available person capable of managing such a stalwart refractory as Oliver had shown himself; but even the presence of this functionary failed to bring the young rebel to subjection. In fact Mr. Bumble, having heard of the ferocity of his late *protege*, though it prudent to parley before allowing him to escape from the dingy apartment in which, by the combined force of all the members of the Sowerberry household, he had been locked up. "With this view he gave a kick at the outside by way of prelude, and applying his mouth to the keyhole said, in a deep 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.

' Aint you afraid of it sir ? Aint you atrembling while I speak, Sir ?' said Mr. Bumble.

' No,' replied Oliver boldly."

This unexpected reply took the parochial officer by surprise, and caused him so much agitation that even the cocked hat was perceptibly moved. He ultimately concluded that it was better not to molest the little prisoner for some time, and with his usual humanity suggested that he should be starved for a few days, then fed on workhouse diet.

Oliver's conduct on this occasion is well adapted to give us an insight to his disposition. His filial love, in anybody an infallible mark of a noble nature unknown to meanness or servility of any sort, is in him doubly praiseworthy from the fact that he never saw his mother and knew absolutely nothing of her. Shortly after his quarrel with Noah our little hero conceived the idea of running away from the coffin-maker's, and accordingly we find him one morning bright and early on the high road to London. The