

an intractable spirit was at once recognized and accordingly Oliver was condemned as an enemy to the system and branded as a dangerous character requiring the closest watching. But this was not all. The necessary steps were taken to notify the public that Oliver twist was *to let*, and that a reward of five pounds would be freely paid to any person willing to relieve the workhouse authorities of such a nuisance. This offer was irresistible. It was readily accepted and the troublesome little pauper became the apprentice of a certain Mr. Sowerberry, a coffin-maker in the village. This event marked—certainly not the beginning—of Oliver's troubles, but rather the first turning-point in the long march of misery, begun at his birth, by which he seemed destined to atone for the sin of his unhappy parents.

The abuse and cruelty to which the little fellow was subjected during his residence at the coffin-maker's need not be detailed. It was, to some extent, a new sort of torture, and this circumstance coupled with a sufficiency of food, though of the poorest quality, made it easier for him to endure fresh trials. For a considerable time his efforts to imitate Job were successful; he bore with exemplary patience all the taunts and insults of Mr. Sowerberry, of Noah Claypole, and of Charlotte. From his submissive attitude one might have supposed his former dauntless spirit was at last broken, but subsequent events go to show the groundlessness of any such supposition. He thought it useless to make any show of resentment against such odds, but none the less he felt the full force of every jeering insult, as only a sensitive child can. In this way matters continued for a short while; the climax came on the eventful day when Oliver was left alone in the kitchen with Noah. On this occasion Noah was naturally inclined to indulge in his favorite amusement, that of teasing his young companion. All his taunts failed to produce the desired effect, of bringing tears, or indeed any other visible effect until the dastardly poltroon began to talk of Oliver's mother. "Yer knew, work'us," continued Noah, speaking in a jeering tone of affected pity,—of all tones the most annoying—"yer know, work 'us, it can't be helped now, and of course yer could'nt help it then, and I'm very sorry for it, and I'm sure we all are, and pity yer very much; but yer must know work 'us, yer mother was a regular, right down bad 'un."