

Dickens Charles, Rives Hallie Erminie

Tales from Dickens



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CHARLES DICKENS

Charles John Huffham Dickens, the master story-teller, was born in Landport, England, February 7, 1812. His father was a clerk in one of the offices of the Navy, and he was one of eight children.

When he was four years old, his father moved to the town of Chatham, near the old city of Rochester. Round about are chalk hills, green lanes, forests and marshes, and amid such scenes the little Charles's genius first began to show itself.

He did not like the rougher sports of his school-fellows and preferred to amuse himself in his own way, or to wander about with his older sister, Fanny, whom he especially loved. They loved to watch the stars together, and there was one particular star which they used to pretend was their own. People called him a "very queer small boy" because he was always thinking or reading instead of playing. The children of the neighborhood would gather around him to listen while he told them stories or sang comic songs to them, and when he was only eight years old he taught them to act in plays which he invented. He was fond of reading books of travel, and most of all he loved *The Arabian Nights* and *Robinson Crusoe*.

He had a great affection for Chatham and Rochester, and after he began to write stories that were printed, he often used to put these places into them. It was at Chatham that poor little David in the story, *David Copperfield*, lay down to sleep when he was running away from London to find his aunt, Miss Betsy Trotwood. It was to Rochester that Mr. Pickwick in *Pickwick Papers*, rode with Jingle. Rochester was really the "Cloisterham" where the wicked choir master, John Jasper, killed his nephew, in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. And it was in those very marshes near by, that Magwitch, the escaped convict in *Great Expectations*, so frightened little Pip. It is easy to see that the young Charles Dickens noted carefully and remembered everything he saw, and this habit was of great use to him all his life.

These happy years were not to last long. When he was nine years old, his father became poor and the family was obliged to move to London, where it lived in a shabby house in a poor suburb. Before another year had passed, his father was put into prison for debt – the same prison in which Little Dorrit, in the story of that name, grew up. A very bitter period followed for the solitary ten-year-old boy – a time in which, he long afterward wrote, "but for the mercy of God, he might easily have become, for any care that was taken of him, a little robber or a little vagabond." The earlier history of David in *David Copperfield* is really and truly a history of the real Charles Dickens in London. He was left to the city streets, or to earn a hard and scanty living in a dirty warehouse, by pasting labels on pots of blacking. All of this wretched experience he has written in *David Copperfield*, and the sad scenes of the debtors' prison he has put into *Pickwick Papers* and into *Little Dorrit*. Even Mrs. Pipchin, of whom he told in *Dombey and Son*, and Mr. Micawber in *David Copperfield*, were real people whom he knew in these years of poverty and despair. Dickens's life at this time was so miserable that always afterward he dreaded to speak of it, and never could bear even to walk in the street where the blacking warehouse of his boyhood had stood.

Better days, however, came at last. He was able to begin school again, and though the head-master was ignorant and brutal (just such a one as Mr. Creakle in *David Copperfield*) yet Dickens profited by such teaching as he received.

After two or three years of school, he found employment as clerk in a lawyer's office. This did not content him and he made up his mind to learn to write shorthand so as to become a reporter,

in the Houses of Parliament, for a newspaper. This was by no means an easy task. But Dickens had great strength of will and a determination to do well whatever he did at all, and he succeeded, just as David Copperfield did in the story.

And like the latter, too, about this time Dickens fell in love. He did not marry on this occasion, as did David, but how much he was in love one may see by the story of David's Dora.

The theater had always a great attraction for Dickens. Throughout his life he loved to act in plays got up and often written, too, by himself and his friends. Some of his early experiences of this kind he has told in the adventures of Nicholas Nickleby at Mr. Crummles's theater. But his acting was for his own amusement, and it is doubtful if he ever thought seriously of adopting the stage as a profession. If he did, his success as a reporter soon determined him otherwise.

When he was twenty-one he saw his first printed sketch in a monthly magazine. He had dropped it into a letter-box with mingled hope and fear, and read it now through tears of joy and pride. He followed this with others as successful, signed "Boz" – the child nickname of one of his younger brothers. This was his beginning. He was soon on the road to a comfortable fortune, and when at length *Pickwick Papers* appeared, Dickens's fame was assured. This was his first long story. It became, almost at once, the most popular book of its day, perhaps, indeed, the most popular book ever published in England. Soon after the appearance of its first chapters, Dickens married Miss Catherine Hogarth, daughter of the editor of one of the London newspapers, who had helped him in his career.

Many have tried to explain the marvelous popularity of *Pickwick Papers*. Certainly its honest fun, its merriment, its quaintness, good humor and charity appealed to every reader. More than all, it made people acquainted with a new company of characters, none of whom had ever existed, or could ever exist, and yet whose manners and appearance were pictured so really that they seemed to be actual persons whom one might meet and laugh with anywhere.

With such a success, and the money it brought him, Dickens had leisure to begin the wonderful series of stories which endeared him to the whole English-speaking world, and made him the most famous author of his day. *Oliver Twist* came first, and it was followed by *Nicholas Nickleby* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

In the first two of these stories one may see most clearly the principle that underlay almost all of Dickens's work. He was never content merely to tell an interesting story. He wrote with a purpose. In *Oliver Twist* that purpose was, first, to better the poorhouse system, and second, to show that even in the lowest and wickedest paths of life (the life wherein lived Fagin with his pupils in crime and Bill Sikes the brutal burglar) there could yet be found, as in the case of poor Nancy, real kindness and sacrifice. In *Nicholas Nickleby* the purpose was to show what terrible wrongs were done to children in country schools, numbers of which at that time were managed by men almost as cruel and inhuman as was Squeers in the story. It is good to learn that, as a result of this novel, an end was made of many such boys' schools. True artist as he was, Dickens seldom wrote without having in his mind the thought of showing some defect in the law, or some wrong condition of affairs which might be righted. No one could read *Pickwick Papers* or *Little Dorrit* without realizing how much wrong and misery was caused by the law which made it possible to throw a man into prison for debt. Nor can one read *Bleak House* without seeing that the legal system which robbed quaint Miss Flite of her mind and kept poor Richard Carstone from his fortune till the fortune itself had disappeared, was a very wrong legal system indeed. Often, too, Dickens's stories are, in a sense, sermons against very human sins. In *The Old Curiosity Shop* it is the sin of gambling which brings about the death of Little Nell. In *Great Expectations* it is the sin of pride which Pip has to fight. In *Martin Chuzzlewit* the evil and folly of selfishness is what Dickens had in mind.

With his increasing wealth, Dickens had, of course, changed his manner of life. He lived part of the time in the country near London, in Brighton, in Dover, and in France and Italy. He liked best, however, a little English watering place called Broadstairs – a tiny fishing village, built on a cliff, with

the sea rolling and dashing beneath it. In such a place he felt that he could write best, but he greatly missed his London friends. He used to say that being without them was "like losing his arms and legs."

The first great grief of his life came to him at this time, in the death of his wife's sister, Mary Hogarth, a gentle, lovable girl of seventeen. No sorrow ever touched him as this did. "After she died," he wrote years afterward, "I dreamed of her every night for many weeks, and always with a kind of quiet happiness, so that I never lay down at night without a hope of the vision coming back." Hers was the character he drew in Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. When he came to the part of the story which tells of Little Nell's death, he could scarcely write the chapter. When he ended it he said, "It seems as though dear Mary died but yesterday."

When he was less than thirty, Dickens was invited to visit Scotland, and there he received his first great national tribute. A public banquet was given him in Edinburgh, and he was much sought after and entertained. Up to this time he had never seen the United States; he decided now to visit this country and meet his American readers face to face.

He landed at Boston accompanied by his wife, in 1842, and visited many of the greater cities of the Eastern states. Everywhere he was counted the guest of the nation, and the four months of his stay were one continual welcome. Unfortunately, however, Dickens had taken a dislike to American ways, and this dislike appeared in many things he wrote after his return to England. The pictures he drew of American life in *Martin Chuzzlewit* were both unjust and untrue, and made him for a time lose a large part of the good opinion which American readers had had for him. Dickens soon came to regret the writing of these chapters, and when, twenty-five years later, he visited the United States a second time, he did all in his power to show his kindly feeling, and America admired and loved him so much that it gradually forgot the incident in the great pleasure with which it read his stories.

Dickens was a very active man, and his life was simple and full of work and exercise. He rose early and almost every day might have been seen tramping for miles along the country roads, or riding horseback with his dogs racing after him. He liked best to wander along the cliffs or across the downs by the sea. When he was in London he often walked the streets half the night, thinking out his stories, or searching for the odd characters which he put in them. This natural activity and restlessness even led him sometimes to make political speeches, and finally to the establishment of a new London newspaper – the *Daily News* – of which he was the first editor. Before this, he had started a weekly journal, in which several of his stories had appeared, but it had not been very successful. It was not long before he withdrew also from this second venture.

In the meantime he had met with both joy and sorrow. Several children had been born to him. His much loved sister, his father, and his own little daughter, the youngest of his family, had died. These sorrows made him throw himself into his work with greater earnestness. He even found leisure to organize a theatrical company (in which he himself acted with a number of other famous writers of the time), which gave several plays for the benefit of charity. One of these was performed before Queen Victoria.

People have often wondered how Dickens found time to accomplish so many different things. One of the secrets of this, no doubt, was his love of order. He was the most systematic of men. Everything he did "went like clockwork," and he prided himself on his punctuality. He could not work in a room unless everything in it was in its proper place. As a consequence of this habit of regularity, he never wasted time.

The work of editorship was very pleasant to Dickens, and scarcely three years after his leaving the *Daily News* he began the publication of a new magazine which he called *Household Words*. His aim was to make it cheerful, useful and at the same time cheap, so that the poor could afford to buy it as well as the rich. His own story, *Hard Times*, first appeared in this, with the earliest work of more than one writer who later became celebrated. Dickens loved to encourage young writers, and would just as quickly accept a good story or poem from an unknown author as from the most famous.

It was while engaged in this work that Dickens wrote the best one of all his tales —*David Copperfield*, the one which is in so large a part the history of his own early life.

This book brought Dickens to the height of his career. He was now both famous and rich. He bought a house on Gad's Hill – a place near Chatham, where he had spent the happiest part of his childhood – and settled down to a life of comfort and labor. When he was a little boy his father had pointed out this fine house to him, and told him he might even come to live there some day, if he were very persevering and worked hard. And so, indeed, it had proved.

Perhaps it is in connection with this house on Gad's Hill that the world oftenest remembers Dickens now. Everyone, old and young throughout the neighborhood, liked him. Children, dogs and horses were his friends. His hand was open for charity, and he was always the champion of the poor, the helpless and the outcast. Everyone, he thought, had some good in him, and in all he met he was on the lookout to find it. The great purpose underneath all his writings was after all to teach that every man and woman, however degraded, has his or her better side. So earnest was he in this that he was not pleased at all when a person praised one of his stories, unless the other showed that he had grasped the lesson that lay beneath it. The text of Dickens's whole life and work is best expressed in his own words: "I hope to do some solid good, and I mean to be as cheery and pleasant as I can." The wrongs and sufferings of the young especially appealed to him, and perhaps the most beautiful speech he ever made was one asking for money for the support of the London Hospital for Sick Children. He spoke often in behalf of workingmen, and once he spoke for the benefit of a company of poor actors, when, unknown to him, a little child of his own was lying dead at home.

With such a tender heart for all the world, he was more than an affectionate father to his own children, and gave much thought to their happiness and education. In order that they should properly learn of their own country, he went to the labor of preparing a *Child's History of England* for them, and at another time he wrote out the story of the Gospels, to help them in their study of the New Testament. As the years went by, his letters to his oldest son told of his own work and plans. When his youngest son sailed away to live in Australia, he wrote: "Poor Plorn is gone. It was a hard parting at the last. He seemed to me to become once more my youngest and favorite child as the day drew near, and I did not think I could have been so shaken."

When he moved to Gad's Hill it seemed as though Dickens had gained almost all of the things men strive most for. But he was not to be happy there – nor, perhaps, was he ever again to be really happy anywhere. He and his wife were very different in all their tastes and habits, and had never loved each other as well as people should when they marry. Perhaps, after all, it would have been better if in his youth he had married his Dora – the one whom he had pictured in the love-story of *David Copperfield* and his child-wife. But, however this may be, Dickens and his wife had not lived happily together, and now decided to part, and from that time, though they wrote to each other, he never saw her again. It is sad to reflect that he who has painted so beautifully for others the joys and sorrows of perfect love and home, was himself destined to know neither.

The years that followed this separation were years of constant labor for Dickens. His restlessness, perhaps also his lack of happiness, drove him to work without rest. He wrote to a friend: "I am quite confident I should rust, break and die if I spared myself. Much better to die doing." The idea of giving public readings from his stories suggested itself to him, and he was soon engaged in preparation. "I must do *something*," he wrote, "or I shall wear my heart away." That heart his physician had declared out of order, and this effort was destined to wear it away in quite another sense, though for some time Dickens felt no ill effects.

He gave readings, not only in England, but also in Scotland and Ireland, and everywhere he met with enormous success. The first series was hardly over, when he was at work on a new story, and this was scarcely completed when he was planning more readings. The strain of several seasons of such work told on his health. A serious illness followed, and afterward he was troubled with an increasing lameness – the first real warning of the end.

In spite of his weakness, he decided on another trip to America, and here, in 1867, he began a series of readings which left him in a far worse condition. Often at the close of an evening he would become so faint that he would have to lie down. He was unable to sleep and his appetite entirely failed him. Yet his wonderful determination and energy made him able to complete the task. A great banquet of farewell was given to him in New York and he returned to England bearing the admiration and love of the whole American people.

Before leaving England he had promised to give one other course of readings there, and this promise, after a summer's quiet at home, he attempted to fulfil. But he was too ill. He found himself for the first time in his life feeling, as he said, "giddy, jarred, shaken, faint, uncertain of voice and sight, and tread and touch, and dull of spirit." He was obliged to discontinue the course and to rest.

This summer of 1869 – the last summer of his life – was a contented and even a happy one. At home, at first in London, and later in the house on Gad's Hill, surrounded by his children and by the friends he loved best, Dickens lived quietly, working at his last story which his death was to leave for ever unfinished – *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. He attempted one more series of readings, and with their close bade farewell for ever to his English audience.

He was seen in public but a few times more – once at the last dinner party he ever attended, to meet the Prince of Wales and the King of the Belgians, and once when the Queen invited him to Buckingham Palace. Soon after, the end came.

One day as he entered the house at Gad's Hill, he seemed tired and silent. As he sat down to dinner all present noticed that he looked very ill. They begged him to lie down. "Yes, on the ground," he said – these were the last words he ever uttered – and as he spoke he slipped down upon the floor.

He never fully recovered consciousness, and next day, June 9, 1870, Charles Dickens breathed his last. Five days later he was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, where are buried so many of the greatest of England's dead. For days, thousands came to visit the spot, and rich and poor alike looked upon his grave with tears.

Hallie Erminie Rives.

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

Published 1840

<i>Scene:</i>	London and Neighboring Towns
<i>Time:</i>	1840

CHARACTERS

'Little Nell'	An orphan girl
Mr. Trent	Her aged grandfather
Proprietor of "The Old Curiosity Shop"	
"The Stranger"	Mr. Trent's brother
Christopher Nubbles	Little Nell's friend and protector
Known as "Kit"	
Quilp	A dwarf
Mrs. Quilp	His wife
Mrs. Jarley	Proprietress of "Jarley's Waxwork"
Brass	A dishonest lawyer
Sally Brass	His sister
Dick Swiveller	Brass's clerk

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

I LITTLE NELL

In a narrow side street in London there once stood a shabby building called The Old Curiosity Shop, because all sorts of curious things were kept for sale there – such as rusty swords, china figures, quaint carvings and old-fashioned furniture.

A little old man named Trent owned the shop, and he looked as old as anything in it. He was thin and bent, with long gray hair and bright blue eyes, and his face was wrinkled and full of care. He had an orphan grandchild who lived with him – a pretty little golden-haired girl whom every one called Little Nell, who kept the shop clean and neat and cooked the meals just as a grown woman would have done. She slept in a back room in a bed so small it might almost have been a fairy's. She lived a very lonely life, but she kept a cheerful face and did not complain.

She had only one protector besides her grandfather, and that was a big, awkward boy named Christopher Nubbles, called Kit for short. He had a very large mouth and a turned-up nose, and when he spoke he had a habit of standing sidewise and twisting his head back over his shoulder. Everything he did seemed funny, and little Nell laughed at him all the while, though she loved him almost as much as she did her grandfather. He ran errands for them, and in the long winter evenings she used to teach him to read and write.

Kit liked to be taught and even liked to be laughed at, and always ended by laughing himself, with his mouth wide open and his eyes shut. He was the best-natured lad in the world, and would have given his life to make little Nell happy.

She was not as happy as she seemed to her grandfather's eyes. There was some mystery about the old man that she could not understand. Almost every night he left her to go to bed all alone in the shop, and went away and did not come back till sunrise, when the door-bell woke her and she let him in.

And, too, he always talked of the great fortune she was to have sometime – if only some mysterious plan he was working on turned out right – the carriages and fine frocks and jewels. But the plan seemed always to go wrong, and the poor old man grew sadder and sadder as he grew more feeble.

Often at night little Nell sat at the upper window, watching for him, crying, and fearing that he might die or lose his mind; she never knew that Kit used to stand in the shadow of an archway opposite and watch to see that no harm came to her, till she vanished and he knew she had gone to bed.

What troubled little Nell most of all was a strange visitor her grandfather used to have. This was a hideous man named Quilp, with the body of a dwarf and the head of a giant. His black eyes were sharp and cunning, his face was always covered with a stubby beard and he had a cruel smile that made him look like a panting dog. He had grizzled, tangled hair, crooked finger nails, and wore a dirty handkerchief tied around his neck, instead of a collar. He used to bring money to her grandfather, and little Nell more than once saw him look at her and at the contents of the shop in a gloating way that made her shiver.

Indeed, everybody who ever met Quilp was afraid of him, and most afraid of all was his wife. He had a habit of drinking scalding tea and of eating boiled eggs, shell and all, that quite terrified her. Besides, he treated the poor woman cruelly. Sometimes, for instance, when she displeased him, he made her sit bolt upright in a chair all night, without moving or going to bed, while he sat smoking and making faces at her.

Little Nell often had to carry messages from her grandfather to the dwarf, and came to know that he had somehow fallen into Quilp's power.

The fact was that the old man had been borrowing money from the dwarf for a long time, and had spent it on the great plan, which he had thought sure to succeed, and he now owed the other much more than all the shop and everything in it was worth.

Quilp had loaned the money because he thought when the wonderful plan succeeded he would make the grandfather give him back very much more than he had loaned him. But when the old man continually wanted to borrow more money and yet paid none back, the dwarf grew suspicious and tried hard to find out what the great plan was. To do this he used to question little Nell and try to persuade her to tell how her grandfather passed the time.

She would never tell him anything, but one day, when she had brought a message to his house, the dwarf hid in a closet and listened while the child told his wife how her grandfather, every night after Quilp had brought him money, went out and did not come home till daybreak, and always sadly then. You see, little Nell was in such trouble that she had to tell somebody about it and ask advice, and the dwarf's wife had always been very kind to her.

When Quilp heard the story he guessed the secret – that her grandfather, hoping to win more for little Nell, had gambled away all the money. He was full of rage and sent word that he would loan no more.

The old man was in great grief at this. His mind had not been strong for a long time, or this foolish and wrong plan would never have misled him, and now, at the thought that he would have no more chance to win the fortune for his grandchild, he fell ill. The child did her best to comfort him, but he told her that if Quilp deserted them they would be no better than beggars.

"Let us be beggars then, and be happy," said little Nell, putting her arms around his neck. "I would rather beg than live as we do now. If you are sorrowful now, let me know it. If you are weaker, let me be your nurse. It breaks my heart to see you so and not to know why. Let us leave this place and sleep in the fields in the country and never think of money again, and I will beg for us both."

Neither had heard the dwarf, who had stolen into the shop behind them. Little Nell shrieked when she saw him, and her grandfather sent her into her own room.

"So that is the way all the money I have loaned you has gone!" sneered Quilp. "Your precious scheme to make a fortune was the gaming-table!"

The old man cried out at this, trembling, that he had done it all for little Nell; that he had never staked a single penny for himself, or without praying that it might win for her good. He told how he had begun gambling months before, knowing he must soon die, hoping thus to leave her enough to live on; how, after losing all his own savings, he had borrowed and lost all that, too. And he begged the dwarf to loan him a little more so that he might tempt luck again.

Any one but Quilp would have pitied the poor old man, but not he. He refused, and thinking of a lie which would make the other yet more miserable, he told him as he left that it was Kit who had told him where the money was going.

The first Kit knew of this was that night when little Nell came to tell him her grandfather was very ill, and that he raved continually against Kit so that he must never come to the shop again. Kit was stupefied at this, but there was no help for it, so little Nell went sorrowfully back alone.

The Old Curiosity Shop belonged to the dwarf now and he at once moved into the parlor. He took little Nell's own bed for himself and she had to sleep on a pallet on the floor up stairs. She was busy nursing her grandfather, for he was very ill for some time, and she scarcely ever came down because she was so afraid of the dwarf.

Quilp was waiting for the old man to die, thinking that then he would have the shop for his own, and meantime he did a hundred disagreeable things, such as filling the house with strong tobacco smoke from a big pipe he used all the time and driving every one away who came to ask how the sick

man was. He even drove off Kit when he came below the window to beg little Nell to come and bring her grandfather to live at his own mother's house.

The old man would certainly have died if little Nell had not nursed him so faithfully, all alone, till he grew better and at length was able to sit up.

But it was a bitter thing to live as they did, and one day little Nell begged her grandfather to come away with her – to wander anywhere in the world, only so it was under God's sky and away from every one that pursued them – and he agreed.

So that night they dressed and stole down stairs very quietly in order not to waken the dwarf who was snoring frightfully in the back room, and went through the shop to the front door. The bolts were rusty and creaked loudly, and, worst of all, they found the key was not in the lock. Little Nell had to take off her shoes and creep into the back room to get it out of the dwarf's pocket.

She was terribly frightened at the sight of Quilp, for he was having a bad dream, and was hanging so far out of bed that he was almost standing on his head; his ugly mouth was wide open, and his breath came in a sort of growl. But she found the key at last, and they unlocked the door and came safely into the dark street.

The old man did not know where to go, but little Nell took his hand and led him gently away.

II THE WANDERERS

It was a bright June morning. They walked through many city streets, then through more scattered suburbs, and at last came to the open country. That night they slept at a cottage where the people were kind to them, and all the next day they walked on and on.

At sunset they stopped to rest in a churchyard, where two men were sitting patching a Punch-and-Judy show booth, while the figures of Punch, the doctor, the executioner and the devil were lying on the grass waiting to be mended.

The men were mending the dolls very badly, so little Nell took a needle and sewed them all neatly. They were delighted at this, and took the pair to the inn where they were to show the Punch-and-Judy, and there they found them a place to sleep in an empty loft.

The next day the wanderers went on with the showmen. Whenever they came to a village, the booth was pitched and the show took place, and they never left a town without a pack of ragged children at their heels. The Punch-and-Judy show grew tiresome, but the company seemed better than none. Little Nell was weary with walking, but she tried to hide it from her grandfather.

The inn at which they lodged the next night was full of showmen with trained dogs, conjurers and others, hurrying to a town where there was to be a fair with horse-races, to which the Punch-and-Judy partners were bound, and little Nell began to distrust their company.

To tell the truth, the others believed the child and the old man were running away from their friends, and that a reward might be obtained for giving them up. The way in which the men watched them frightened little Nell, and when they reached the scene of the fair she had determined to escape.

It was the second day of the races before a chance came, and then, while the showmen's backs were turned, they slipped away in the crowd to the open fields again.

These alarms and the exposure had begun to affect the old man. He seemed to understand that he was not wholly in his right mind. He was full of the fear that he would be taken from her and chained in a dungeon, and little Nell had great trouble in cheering him.

At evening when they were both worn out, they came to a village where stood a cottage with the sign SCHOOL in big letters in its window. The pale old schoolmaster sat smoking in the garden. He was a sad, solitary man, and loved little Nell when he first saw her, because she was like a favorite pupil he once had. He made them sleep in the school-room that night, and he begged them to stay longer

next day, but little Nell was anxious to get as far as possible from London and from the dwarf, who she was all the time in fear might find them. So they bade the schoolmaster good-by and walked on.

Another day's journey left them so exhausted they could scarcely keep moving. They had almost reached another village when they came to a tiny painted house on wheels with horses to draw it. At its door sat a stout lady wearing a large bonnet, taking tea with a big drum for a table.

The lady, as it happened, had seen them at the fair, and had wondered then to see them in company with a Punch-and-Judy show. Noticing how tired they were, she gave them tea and then took them into the wagon with her to help them on their way.

The inside of the wagon was like a cozy room. It had a little bed in one end, and a kitchen in the other, and had two curtained windows. As the wheels rattled on the old man fell asleep, and the stout lady made little Nell sit by her and talk. In the wagon was a big canvas sign that read:

JARLEY'S WAXWORK

ONE HUNDRED FIGURES

THE FULL SIZE OF LIFE

NOW EXHIBITED WITHIN

"I am Mrs. Jarley," the woman said, "and my waxwork is gone to the next town, where it is to be exhibited." She thought little Nell and her grandfather were in the show business, too, and when she found they were not, that they had no home, and did not even know where they were going, she held up her hands in astonishment.

But it was easy to see that they were not ordinary beggars, and she was kind-hearted and wanted to help them. So, after much thought, she asked little Nell if they would take a situation with her. She explained that the child's duty would be to point out the wax figures to the visitors and tell their names, while her grandfather could help dust them.

They accepted this offer very thankfully (for almost all the money they had brought was now spent), and when the wagon arrived at the place of exhibition and the waxwork had been set up, Mrs. Jarley put a long wand in little Nell's hand and taught her to point out each figure and describe it:

"This, ladies and gentlemen," little Nell learned to say, "is Jasper Packlemerton, who murdered fourteen wives by tickling the soles of their feet," or, "this is Queen Elizabeth's maid of honor, who died from pricking her finger while sewing on Sunday."

She was quick to learn and soon became a great favorite with the visitors. Mrs. Jarley was kind, and but for the fact that her grandfather's mind failed more and more every day little Nell would have been quite happy.

One evening the two walked into the country beyond the town and a sudden thunder-storm arose. They took shelter at an inn on the highroad, and while they waited there some rough men began a noisy game of cards behind a screen.

The talk and the chink of the money roused the old man's failing senses. He imagined himself still gambling to win the old fortune for little Nell. He made her give him the money she had earned from the waxwork, joined the gamblers and in a few hours had lost it all. His insanity had made him forget the presence of the child he so loved, and when the game was done it was too late to leave the inn that night.

Little Nell had now only one piece of money left, a gold piece sewed in her dress. This she had to change into silver and to pay a part for their lodging. When she was abed she could not sleep for fear of the wicked men she had seen gambling.

When at last she fell asleep she waked suddenly to see a figure in the room. She was too frightened to scream, and lay very still and trembled. The robber searched her clothing, took the rest of the money and went out. She was dreadfully afraid he might return to harm her. If she could get to her grandfather, she thought, she would be safe.

She opened the door softly, and in the moonlight saw the figure entering the old man's room. She caught a view of his face and then she knew that the figure was her own grandfather, and that, crazed by the gambling scene, he himself had robbed her!

All that night little Nell lay and cried. She knew, to be sure, that her grandfather was not a thief and that he did not know what he was doing when he stole her money; but she knew, too, that if people found out he was crazy they would take him away from her and shut him up where she could not be with him, and of this she could not bear to think.

The next day, when they had gone back to the waxwork, she was in even greater terror for fear he should rob Mrs. Jarley, their benefactress. So, to lessen the chance of this, each day she gave him every penny she earned. This, she soon knew, he gambled away, for often he was out all night, and even seemed to shun her; so she was sad and took many long walks alone through the fields.

One evening it happened that she passed a meadow where, beside a hedge, a fire was burning, with three men sitting and lying around it. She was in the shadow and they did not see her. One, she saw, was her grandfather, and the others were the gamblers with whom he had played at the inn on the night of the storm.

Little Nell crept close. They were tempting the poor daft old man to steal the money from Mrs. Jarley's strong box, and while she listened he consented.

She ran home in terrible grief. She tried to sleep, but could not. At last she could bear it no longer. She went to the old man's room and wakened him.

"I have had a dreadful dream," she told him, "a dream of an old gray-haired man like you robbing people of their gold. I can not stay! I can not leave you here. We must go."

To the crazy old man she seemed an angel. He dressed himself in fear, and with her little basket on her arm she led him out of the house, on, away from the town, into the country, far away from Mrs. Jarley, who had been so kind to them, and from the new home they had found.

They climbed a high hill just as the sun was rising, and far behind them little Nell caught a last view of the village. As she looked back and thought how contented they had been there at first, and of the further wandering that lay before them now, poor little Nell burst into tears.

But at length she bravely dried her tears lest they sadden her grandfather, and they went on. When the sun grew warm they fell asleep on the bank of the canal, and when they awoke in the afternoon some rough canal men took them aboard their dirty craft as far as the next town.

The men were well-meaning enough and meant the travelers no harm, but after a while they began to drink and quarreled and fought among themselves, and little Nell sat all night, wet with the rain, and sang to them to quiet them.

The place to which they finally came was a town of wretched workmen who toiled all day in iron furnaces for little wages, and were almost as miserable and hungry as the wanderers themselves. No one gave them anything, and they lived for three days with only two penny loaves to eat (for all their money was now gone), and slept at night in the ashes of some poor laborer's hut.

The fourth day they dragged themselves into the country again. Little Nell's shoes were worn through to the bare ground, her feet were bleeding, her limbs ached and she was deadly faint. They begged, but no one would help them.

The child's strength was almost gone, when they met a traveler who was reading in a book as he walked along. He looked up as they came near. It was the kind old schoolmaster in whose school they

had slept before they met Mrs. Jarley in her house on wheels. When she saw him little Nell shrieked and fell unconscious at his feet.

The schoolmaster carried her to an inn near by, where she was put to bed and doctored under his care, for she was very weak. She told him all the story of their wanderings, and he heard it with astonishment and wonder to find such a great heart and heroism in a child.

He had been appointed schoolmaster, he told her, in another town, to which he was then on his way, and he declared they should go with him and he would care for them. He hired a farm wagon to carry little Nell, and he and the old man walked beside it, and so they came to their new place.

Next door to the school-house was the church. A very old woman, nearly a hundred years old, had lived in a tenement near by to keep the keys and open the church for services. The old woman was now dead, and the schoolmaster went to the clergyman and asked that her place be given to the grandfather, so that he and little Nell could live in the house next to his own dwelling.

The child sewed the tattered curtains and mended the worn carpet and the schoolmaster trimmed the long grass and trained the ivy before the door. In the evening a bright fire was kindled and they all three took their supper together, and then the schoolmaster said a prayer before they went gladly to bed.

They were very happy in this new home. The old man lost the insane thirst for gaming and the mad look faded from his eyes, but poor little Nell grew paler and more fragile every day. The long days of hunger and nights of exposure had sowed the seeds of illness.

The whole village soon grew to love her. Many came to visit her and the schoolmaster read to her each day, so that she was content even when she could no longer walk abroad as she had always done.

As she lay looking out at the peaceful churchyard, where so many whose lives were over lay sleeping, it seemed to her that the painful past was only an ugly vision. And at night she often dreamed of the roof opening and a column of bright faces, rising far into the sky, looking down on her asleep. The quiet spot outside remained the same, save that the air was full of music and a sound of angels' wings.

So the weeks passed into winter, and though she came soon to know that she was not long for earth, she thought of death without regret and of heaven with joy.

III THE SEARCH

It is not to be supposed, of course, that the flight of little Nell and her grandfather from the Old Curiosity Shop was not noticed. All the time, while they were wandering about homeless and wretched, more than one went searching everywhere for them without success.

One of these was Quilp, the ugly dwarf. He had loaned the grandfather more money than the shop would bring, and he made up his mind now that the old man had a secret hoard somewhere, which might be his if he could find it. He soon learned that if Kit knew anything about it he would not tell, so he and his lawyer (a sleek, oily rascal named Brass) made many plans for finding them. But for a long time Quilp could get no trace.

Another who tried to find them was a curious lodger who roomed in Brass's house. He seemed to have plenty of money but was very eccentric. Nobody knew even his name and so they called him The Stranger.

He kept in his room a big box-like trunk, in which was a silver stove that he used to cook his meals. The stove had a lot of little openings. In one he would put an egg, in another some coffee, in another a piece of meat and in the fourth some water. Then he would light a lamp that stood under it, and in five minutes the egg would be cooked, the coffee boiled and the meat done – all ready to eat.

He was the queerest sort of boarder! The strangest habit he had was this: He seemed to be very fond of Punch-and-Judy shows, and whenever he heard one on the street he would run out without his hat, make the showmen perform in front of the house and then invite them to his rooms, where he would question them for a long time. This habit used to puzzle both Brass and Quilp, the dwarf, and they never could guess why he did it.

The truth was, the mysterious Stranger was a long-missing brother of little Nell's grandfather. A misunderstanding had come between them many years before when both were young men. The younger had become a traveler in many countries and had never seen his brother since. But he dreamed often of the days when they had been children and at last he forgot the thing that had driven them apart. He had come back now to England, a rich man, to find the other had vanished with little Nell, his grandchild. He had soon learned the story of their misfortune and how the fear of Quilp had driven them away. After much inquiry he had discovered they had been seen with a Punch-and-Judy show and now he was trying to find the showmen. And finally, in this way, he did find the very same pair the wanderers had met!

He learned from them all they could tell him – that the child and the old man had disappeared at the fair, and that since then (so they had heard) a pair resembling them had been seen with the Jarley waxwork exhibition. The Stranger easily discovered where Mrs. Jarley was, and determined to set out to her at once. But he remembered that his brother, little Nell's grandfather, could not be expected to know him after all the years he had been gone, and as for little Nell herself, she had never seen him, and he was afraid if they heard a strange man had come for them they would take fright and run away again. So he tried to find some one they had loved to go with him to show that he intended only kindness.

He was not long in hearing of Kit, who had found a situation as footman, and he gained his employer's leave to take the lad with him. When Kit learned that The Stranger had discovered where little Nell was he was overjoyed; but he knew he himself was not the one to go, because before they disappeared she had told him he must never come to the Old Curiosity Shop again and that her grandfather blamed him as the cause of their misfortune. But Kit promised the Stranger that his mother should go in his place, and went to tell her at once.

Kit found his mother was at church, but the matter was so urgent that he went straight to the pew and brought her out, which caused even the minister to pause in his sermon and made all the congregation look surprised. Kit took her home, packed her box and bundled her into the coach which the Stranger brought, and away they went to find the wanderers.

Now Quilp had all along suspected that Kit and his mother knew something of their whereabouts, and he had made it his business to watch either one or the other. The dwarf, in fact, was in the church when Kit came for his mother, and he followed. When she left with the Stranger he took another coach and pursued, feeling certain he was on the right track.

But they were all too late. When the Stranger found Mrs. Jarley next day she could only tell him that little Nell and her grandfather had disappeared again, and he had to return with Kit's mother, much discouraged, to London.

The part Kit had played in this made the dwarf hate him, if possible, more than ever, and he agreed to pay Brass, his rascally lawyer, to ruin the lad by making a false charge of theft against him.

One day, when Kit came to Brass's house to see the Stranger, who lodged up stairs, the lawyer cunningly hid a five-pound note in the lad's hat and as soon as he left ran after him, seized him in the street and accused him of taking it from his office desk.

Kit was arrested, and the note, of course, was found on his person. The evidence seemed so strong that the poor fellow was quickly tried, found guilty and sentenced to prison for a long time.

All might have gone wrong but for a little maid-servant of Brass's, whom the lawyer had starved and mistreated for years. He used to keep her locked in the moldy cellar and gave her so little to eat

that she would creep into the office at night (she had found a key that fitted the door) to pick up the bits of bread that Dick Swiveller, Brass's clerk, had left when he ate his luncheon.

One night, while this little drudge was prowling about above stairs, she overheard Brass telling his sister, Sally (who was his partner and colder and crueller and more wicked even than he was), the trick he was going to play. After Kit was arrested she ran away from Brass's house and told her story to Kit's employer, who had all along believed in his innocence.

Brass in the meantime had gone to Quilp to get his reward for this evil deed, but the terrible dwarf now only laughed at him and pretended to remember nothing at all about the bargain.

This so enraged the lawyer that, when he was brought face to face with the little maid's evidence and found that he himself was caught, he made full confession of the part Quilp had played, and told the whole story to revenge himself on the dwarf.

Officers were sent at once to arrest Quilp at a dingy dwelling on a wharf in the river where he often slept with the object of terrifying his wife by his long absences. Here he had set up the battered figurehead of a wrecked ship and, imagining that its face resembled that of Kit whom he so fiendishly hated, he used to amuse himself by screwing gimlets into its breast, sticking forks into its eyes and beating it with a poker.

A few minutes before the officers arrived the dwarf received warning from Sally Brass, but he had no time to get away. When he heard the knocking on the gates and knew that the law he had so long defied was at last upon him, he fell into a panic and did not know which way to turn. He tried to cover the light of the fire, but only succeeded in upsetting the stove. Then he ran out of the house on to the dock in the darkness.

It was a black, foggy night, and he could not see a foot before him. He thought he could climb over the wall to the next wharf and so escape, but in his fright he missed his way and fell over the edge of the platform into the swift-flowing river.

He screamed in terror, but the water filled his throat and the knocking on the gates was so loud that no one heard him. The water swept him close to a ship, but its keel was smooth and slippery and there was nothing to cling to. He had been so wicked that he was afraid to die and he fought desperately, but the rapid tide smothered his cries and dragged him down – to death.

The waves threw his drowned body finally on the edge of a dismal swamp, in the red glare of the blazing ruin which the overturned stove that night made of the building in which he had framed his evil plots. And this was the end of Quilp, the dwarf.

As for Kit, he found himself all at once not only free, but a hero. His employer came to the jail to tell him that he was free and that everyone knew now of his innocence, and they made him eat and drink, and everybody shook hands with him. Then he was put into a coach and they drove straight home, where his mother was waiting to kiss him and cry over him with joy.

And last, but by no means least of all his new good fortune, he learned then that the Stranger who had been searching so long for little Nell and her grandfather had found certainly where they were and that Kit was to go with him and his employer at once and bring them back again to London.

They started the next day, and on the long road they talked much of little Nell and the strange chance by which the lost had been found. A gentleman who lived in the village to which they were now bound, who had himself been kind to the child and to the old man whom the new schoolmaster had brought with him, had written of the pair to Kit's employer, and the letter had been the lost clue, so long sought, to their hiding-place.

Snow began falling as the daylight wore away, and the coach wheels made no noise. All night and all the next day, they rode, and it was midnight before they came to the town where the two wanderers had taken refuge.

The village was very still, and the air was frosty and cold. Only a single light was to be seen, coming from a window beside a church. This was the house which the Stranger knew sheltered those

they sought, but both he and Kit felt a strange fear as they saw that light – the only one in the whole village.

They left the driver to take the horses to the inn and approached the building afoot. They went quite close and looked through the window. In the room an old man bent low over a fire crooning to himself, and Kit, seeing that it was his old master, opened the door, ran in, knelt by him and caught his hand.

The old grandfather did not recognize Kit. He believed him a spirit, as he thought many spirits had talked to him that day. He was much changed, and it seemed as if some great blow or grief had crazed him. He had a dress of little Nell's in his hand and smoothed and patted it as he muttered that she had been asleep – asleep a long time now, and was marble cold and would not wake.

"Her little homely dress!" he said. "And see here – these shoes – how worn they are! You see where her feet went bare upon the ground. They told me afterward that the stones had cut and bruised them. She never told me that. No, no, God bless her! And I have remembered since how she walked behind me, that I might not see how lame she was, but yet she had my hand in hers and seemed to lead me still."

So he muttered on, and the cheeks of the others were wet with tears, for they had begun to understand the sad truth.

Kit could not speak, but the Stranger did: "You speak of little Nell," he said. "Do you remember, long ago, another child, too, who loved you when you were a child yourself? Say that you had a brother, long forgotten, who now at last came back to you to be what you were then to him. Give me but one word, dear brother, to say you know me, and life will still be precious to us again."

The old man shook his head, for grief had killed all memory. Pushing them aside, he went into the next room, calling little Nell's name softly as he went.

They followed. Kit sobbed as they entered, for there on her bed little Nell lay dead.

Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell! The schoolmaster told them of her last hours. They had read and talked to her a while, and then she had sunk peacefully to sleep. They knew by what she said in her dreams that they were of her wanderings, and of the people who had helped them, for often she whispered, "God bless you." And she spoke once of beautiful music that was in the air.

Opening her eyes at last, she begged that they would kiss her once again. That done, she turned to the old man with a lovely smile on her face – such, he said, as he had never seen – and threw both arms about his neck. They did not know at first that she was dead.

They laid little Nell to rest the next day in the churchyard where she had so often sat. The old man never realized quite what had happened. He thought she would come back to him some day, and that then they would go away together. He used to sit beside her grave and watch for her each afternoon.

One day he did not return at the usual hour and they went to look for him. He was lying dead upon the stone.

They buried him beside the child he had loved, and there in the churchyard where they had often talked together they both lie side by side.

None of those who had known little Nell ever forgot her story. After the death of the old man, his brother, the Stranger who had sought them so long, traveled in the footsteps of the two wanderers to search out and reward all who had been kind to them – Mrs. Jarley of the waxwork, the Punch-and-Judy showmen, he found them all. Even the rough canal boatmen were not forgotten.

Kit's story got abroad and he found himself with hosts of friends, who gave him a good position and secured his mother from want. So that his greatest misfortune turned out, after all, to be his greatest good.

The little maid whose evidence cleared Kit of the terrible charge against him lived to marry Dick Swiveller, the clerk of Brass, the lawyer, while meek Mrs. Quilp, after her husband's drowning, married a clever young man and lived a pleasant life on the dead dwarf's money.

The fate of the others, whose wickedness has been a part of this story, was not so pleasant. The two gamblers who tempted the old man to steal Mrs. Jarley's strong box were detected in another crime and sent to jail. Brass became a convict, condemned to walk on a treadmill, chained to a long line of other evil men, and dragging wherever he went a heavy iron ball. After he was released he joined his wicked sister, Sally, and the two sank lower and lower till they might even be seen on dark nights on narrow London streets searching in refuse boxes for bits of food, like twin spirits of wickedness and crime.

When Kit had grown to be a man and had children of his own, he often took them to the spot where stood what had been The Old Curiosity Shop and told them over and over the story of little Nell. And he always ended by saying that if they were good like her they might go some time where they could see and know her as he had done when he was a boy.

THE ADVENTURES OF OLIVER TWIST

Published 1837

<i>Scene:</i>	London and Neighboring Towns
<i>Time:</i>	1825 to 1837

CHARACTERS

Oliver Twist	A foundling
Mr. Bumble	The master of the poorhouse
Mrs. Bumble	The mistress of the poorhouse
Monks	Oliver's half-brother and his enemy
Mr. Brownlow	Oliver's benefactor
Mrs. Maylie	Oliver's benefactress
Miss Rose	Mrs. Maylie's adopted niece
In reality Oliver's aunt	
Fagin	A Jew
Leader of a gang of thieves in London	
Bill Sikes	A burglar
Nancy	Sikes's partner in crime
"The Artful Dodger"	A youthful pickpocket

OLIVER TWIST

I

HOW OLIVER CAME TO LONDON AND WHAT HE FOUND THERE

Oliver Twist was the son of a poor lady who was found lying in the street one day in an English village, almost starved and very ill. She had walked a long way, for her shoes were worn to pieces, but where she came from or where she was going nobody knew. As she had no money, she was taken to the poorhouse, where she died the next day without even telling her name, leaving behind her only a gold locket, which was around her neck, and a baby.

The locket fell into the hands of the mistress of the poorhouse, who was named Mrs. Bumble. It contained the dead mother's wedding-ring, and, as Mrs. Bumble was a dishonest woman, she hid both locket and ring, intending sometime to sell them.

The baby was left, with no one to care for it, to grow up at the poorhouse with the other wretched orphan children, who wore calico dresses all alike and had little to eat and many whippings.

Mr. Bumble, the master of the poorhouse, was a pompous, self-important bully who browbeat every one weaker than himself and scolded and cuffed the paupers to his heart's content. It was he who named the baby "Oliver Twist." He used to name all the babies as they came along, by the letters of the alphabet. The one before Oliver was named Swubble; then came Oliver with a T; the next would be Unwin, the next Vilkins, and so on down to Z. Then he would begin the alphabet all over again.

Little Oliver, the baby, grew without any idea of who he was. When he was a year old he was sent to the poor-farm where an old woman took care of orphan children for a very small sum apiece each week. This money, which was paid by the town, was hardly enough to buy them food, but nevertheless the old woman took good care to save the bigger share for herself.

He lived there till he was a pale, handsome boy of nine years, and then he was taken to the workhouse, where, with many other boys of his own age or older, he had to work hard all day picking oakum.

The boys had nothing but thin gruel for their meals, with an onion twice a week and half a roll on Sundays. They ate in a great stone hall, in one end of which stood the big copper of gruel which Mr. Bumble ladled out. Each boy got only one helping, and the bowls never needed washing, because, when the meal was through, there was not a drop of gruel left in them. After each meal they all sat staring at the copper and sucking their fingers, but nobody dared ask for more.

One day they felt so terribly hungry that one of the biggest boys said unless he got another helping of gruel he was afraid he would have to eat the boy who slept next him. The little boys all believed this and cast lots to see who should ask for more. It fell to Oliver Twist.

So that night after supper, though he was dreadfully frightened, Oliver rose and went up to the end of the room and said to Mr. Bumble, "Please, sir, I want some more."

Mr. Bumble was so surprised he turned pale. "What!" he gasped.

"Please, sir," said Oliver again, "I want some more."

Mr. Bumble picked up the ladle and struck Oliver on the head with it; then he pounced on him and shook him. When he was tired shaking him, he dragged him away and shut him up in a dark room, where he stayed a whole week, and was only taken out once a day to be whipped. Then, to make an example of him, a notice was pasted on the gate of the workhouse offering a reward to anybody who would take poor Oliver away and do what he liked with him.

The first one who came by was a middle-aged chimney-sweep, who wanted a boy to climb up the insides of chimneys and clean out the soot. This was a dangerous thing to do, for sometimes the boys who did it got burned or choked with the smoke, and when Oliver found what they were going to do with him and looked at the man's cruel face, he burst out crying, so that a kind-hearted magistrate interfered and would not let the chimney-sweep have him.

Mr. Bumble finally gave him to the village undertaker, and there he had to mind the shop and do all the chores. He slept under the counter among piles of empty coffins. The undertaker's wife beat him often, and whenever he was not at work he had to attend funerals, which was by no means amusing, so that he found life no better than it had been at the workhouse. The undertaker had an apprentice, too, who kicked him whenever he came near.

All this wretchedness Oliver bore as well as he could, without complaining. But one day the cowardly apprentice began to say unkind things of Oliver's dead mother, and this he could not stand. His anger made him stronger even than his tormentor, though the latter was more than a head taller and much older, and he sprang upon him, caught him by the throat and, after shaking him till his teeth rattled, knocked him flat on the floor.

The big bully screamed for help and cried that he was being murdered, so that the undertaker and his wife came running in. Oliver told them what the apprentice had said, but that made no difference. The undertaker sent for Mr. Bumble, and between them they flogged him till he could hardly stand and sent him to bed without anything to eat.

Till then Oliver had not shed a tear, but now, alone in the dark, he felt so miserable that he cried for a long time.

There was nothing to do, he thought at last, but to run away. So he tied up his few belongings in a handkerchief and, waiting till the first beam of sunrise, he unbarred the door and ran away as fast as he could, through the town into the country.

He hid behind hedges whenever he saw anybody, for fear the undertaker or Mr. Bumble were after him, and before long he found a road that he knew led to London. Oliver had never seen a city, but he thought where there were so many people there would certainly be something for a boy to do to earn his living, so he trudged stoutly on and before nightfall had walked twenty miles. He begged a crust of bread at a cottage and slept under a hayrick. The next day and night he was so very hungry and cold that when morning came again he could scarcely walk at all.

He sat down finally at the edge of a village, wondering whether he was going to die, when he saw coming along the queerest-looking boy. He was about Oliver's age, with a snub nose, bow legs and little sharp eyes. His face was very dirty and he wore a man's coat, whose ragged tails came to his heels.

The boy saw Oliver's plight and asked him what the matter was, mixing his words with such a lot of strange slang that Oliver could hardly understand him. When Oliver explained that he had been walking a number of days and was very hungry, the other took him to a shop near by, bought him some bread and ham, and watched him eat it with great attention, asking him many questions – whether he had any money or knew any place in London where he could stay. Oliver answered no.

"Don't fret about that," said the other. "I know a 'spectable old genelman as lives there wot'll give you lodgings for nothing if I interduce you."

Oliver did not think his new host looked very respectable himself, but he thought it might be as well for him to know the old gentleman, particularly as he had nowhere else to go. So they set off.

It was night when they reached London, and it was so big and crowded that Oliver kept close to his guide. He noticed, however, that the streets they passed through were narrow and dirty and the houses old and hideously filthy. The people, too, seemed low and wretched.

He was just wondering if he had not better run away when the boy pushed open a door, drew Oliver inside, up a broken stairway and into a back room.

Here, frying some sausages over a stove, was a shriveled old Jew in a greasy flannel gown. He was very ugly and his matted red hair hung down over his villainous face. In a corner stood a clothes-horse on which hung hundreds of silk handkerchiefs, and four or five boys, as dirty and oddly dressed as the one who had brought Oliver, sat about a table smoking pipes like rough, grown men.

Oliver's guide introduced him to the Jew, whose name was Fagin, and the boys crowded around him, putting their hands into his pockets, which he thought a queer joke. Fagin grinned horribly as he shook hands with him and told him he was very welcome, which did not tend to reassure him, and then the sausages were passed around. The Jew gave Oliver a glass of something to drink, and as soon as he drank it he became very sleepy and knew nothing more till the following morning.

The next few days Oliver saw much to wonder at. When he woke up, Fagin was sorting over a great box full of watches, which he hid away when he saw Oliver was looking. Every day the boy who had brought him there, whom they called "the Artful Dodger," came in and gave the Jew some pocketbooks and handkerchiefs. Oliver thought he must have made the pocketbooks, only they did not look new, and some seemed to have money in them. He noticed, too, that whenever the Artful Dodger came home empty-handed Fagin seemed angry and cuffed and kicked him and sent him to bed supperless; but when he brought home a good number everything was very jolly.

Whenever there was nothing else to do, the old Jew played a very curious game with the boys. This was the way they played it:

Fagin would put a snuff-box in one pocket, a watch in another and a handkerchief in a third; then he would walk about the room just as any old gentleman would walk about the street, stopping now and then, as if he were looking into shop-windows. All the time the boys followed him closely, sometimes treading on his toes or stumbling against him, and when this happened one of them would slip a hand into his pocket and take out either the watch or the snuff-box or the handkerchief. If the Jew felt a hand in his pocket he cried out which it was, and then the game began all over again. At last Fagin made Oliver try if he could take something out of his pocket without his knowing it, and when Oliver succeeded he patted his head and seemed well pleased.

But Oliver grew very tired of the dirty room and the same game. He longed for the open air and begged to be allowed to go out; so one day the Jew put him in charge of the Artful Dodger and they went upon the streets, Oliver wondering where in the world he was going to be taught to make pocketbooks.

He was on the point of asking, when the Artful Dodger signed to him to be silent, and slunk behind an old gentleman who was reading a book in front of a book-stall. You can imagine Oliver's horror when he saw him thrust his hand into the old gentleman's pocket, draw out a silk handkerchief and run off at full speed.

In an instant Oliver understood the mystery of the handkerchiefs, the watches, the purses and the curious game he had learned at Fagin's. He knew then that the Artful Dodger was a pickpocket. He was so frightened that for a minute he lost his wits and ran off as fast as he could go.

Just then the old gentleman found his handkerchief was gone and, seeing Oliver running away, shouted "Stop thief!" which frightened the poor boy even more and made him run all the faster. Everybody joined the chase, and before he had gone far a burly fellow overtook Oliver and knocked him down.

A policeman was at hand and he was dragged, more dead than alive, to the police court, followed by the angry old gentleman.

The moment the latter saw the boy's face, however, he could not believe it was the face of a thief, and refused to appear against him, but the magistrate was in a bad humor and was about to sentence Oliver to prison, anyway, when the owner of the book-stall came hurrying in. He had seen the theft and knew Oliver was not guilty, so the magistrate was obliged to let him go.

But the terror and the blow he had received had been too much for Oliver. He fell down in a faint, and the old gentleman, whose name was Mr. Brownlow, overcome with pity, put him into a

coach and drove him to his own home, determined, if the boy had no parents, to adopt him as his own son.

II OLIVER'S ADVENTURES

While Oliver was resting in such good hands, very strange things were occurring in the house of Fagin. When the Artful Dodger told him of the arrest the Jew was full of anger. He had intended to make a clever thief of Oliver and compel him to bring him many stolen things; now he had not only failed in this and lost the boy's help, but he was also afraid that Oliver would tell all about the wicked practices he had seen and show the officers where he had lived. This he thought was likely to happen at any time, unless he could get the boy into his power again.

Something had occurred, too, meantime, that made Fagin almost crazy with rage at losing him. It was this: A wicked man – so wicked that he was afraid of thunder – who went by the name of Monks, had come to him and told him he would pay a large sum of money if he could succeed in making Oliver a thief and so ruin his reputation and his good name.

It was plain enough that for some reason the man hated Oliver, but, cunning as Fagin was, he would never have guessed why. For Monks was really Oliver's older half-brother!

A little while before this story began, Oliver's father had been obliged to go on a trip to a foreign country, where he died very suddenly. But before he died he made a will, in which he left all his fortune to be divided between the baby Oliver and his mother. He left only a small sum to his older son, because he knew that he was wicked, and did not deserve any. The will declared Oliver should have the money only on condition that he never stain his name with any act of meanness, dishonor, cowardice or wrong. If he did do this, then half the money was to go to the older son. The dying man also wrote a letter to Oliver's mother, telling her that he had made the will and that he was dying; but the older son, who was with him when he died, found the letter and destroyed it.

So Oliver's poor mother, knowing nothing of all this, when his father did not come back, thought at last that he had deserted her, and in her shame stole away from her home, poor and ill-clad, to die finally in the poorhouse.

The older brother, who had taken the name of Monks, hunted and hunted for them, because he hated Oliver on account of their father's will, and wanted to do him all the harm he could. He discovered that they had been taken into the poorhouse, and went there, but this was after Oliver had run away. He found, however, to his satisfaction, that the boy knew nothing about his parentage or his real name, and Monks made up his mind to prevent his ever learning.

There was only one person who could have told Oliver, and that one was Mrs. Bumble. She knew through the locket she had kept, which had belonged to Oliver's mother and which contained the dead woman's wedding-ring with her name engraved inside it. When Mrs. Bumble heard that a man named Monks was searching for news of Oliver, she thought it a capital chance to make some money. She went, therefore, to Monks's house and sold the locket and ring to him. These, Monks thought, were the only proofs in the world that could ever show Oliver who he was, and to make it impossible for him ever to see them, he dropped them through a trap-door in his house down into the river, where they could never be found.

But Monks did not give up searching for Oliver, and at last, on the very day that Oliver was arrested, he saw him coming from Fagin's house with the Artful Dodger.

From his wonderful resemblance to their dead father, he guessed at once that Oliver was the half-brother whose very name he hated. Knowing the other now to be in London, Monks was afraid that by some accident he might yet find out what a fortune had been willed him. If he could only make Oliver dishonest, Monks reflected, half their father's fortune would become his own. With this thought in mind he had gone to Fagin and had made him his offer of money to make the boy a thief.

Fagin, of course, had agreed, and now, to find his victim was out of his power made the Jew grind his teeth with rage.

All these things made Fagin determined to gain possession of Oliver again, and to do this he got the help of two others – a young woman named Nancy and her lover, a brutal robber named Bill Sikes. These two discovered that Oliver was at Mr. Brownlow's house, and lay in wait to kidnap him if he ever came out.

The chance they waited for occurred before many days. Mr. Brownlow sent Oliver to take some money to the very book-stall in front of which the Artful Dodger had stolen the handkerchief, and Oliver went without dreaming of any danger.

Suddenly a young woman in a cap and apron screamed out behind him very loudly: "Oh, my dear little brother!" and threw her arms tight around him. "Oh, my gracious, I've found him!" she cried. "Come home directly, you naughty boy! For shame, to treat your poor mother so!"

Oliver struggled, but to no purpose. Nancy (for it was she) told the people that crowded about them that it was her little brother, who had run away from home and nearly broken his mother's heart, and that she wanted to take him back.

Oliver insisted that he didn't know her at all and hadn't any sister, but just then Bill Sikes appeared (as he had planned) and said the young woman was telling the truth and that Oliver was a little rascal and a liar. The people were all convinced at this, and when Sikes struck Oliver and seized him by the collar they said, "Serves him right!" And so Oliver found himself dragged away from Mr. Brownlow to the filthy house where lived Fagin.

The wily old Jew was overjoyed to see them. He smiled such a fiendish smile that Oliver screamed for help as loud as he could, and at this Fagin picked up a great jagged club to beat him with.

Now, Nancy had been very wicked all her life, but in spite of this there was a little good in her. She had already begun to repent having helped steal the boy, and now his plight touched her heart. She seized the club and threw it into the fire, and so saved him the beating for that time.

For many days Oliver was kept a prisoner. He was free to wander about the mildewed old house, but every outer door was locked and every window had closed iron shutters. All the light came in through small round holes at the top, which made the rooms gloomy and full of shadows. Spiderwebs were over all the walls, and often the mice would go scampering across the floor. There was only one window to look out of, and that was in a back garret, but it had iron bars and looked out only on to the housetops.

He found only one book to read: this was a history of the lives of great criminals and was full of stories of secret thefts and murders. For the old Jew, having tortured his mind by loneliness and gloom, had left the volume in his way, hoping it would instil into his soul the poison that would blacken it for ever.

But Oliver's blood ran cold as he read, and he pushed the book away in horror, and, falling on his knees, prayed that he might be spared from such deeds and rescued from that terrible place.

He was still on his knees when Nancy came in and told him he must get ready at once to go on a journey with Bill Sikes. She had been crying and her face was bruised as though she had been beaten. Oliver saw she was very sorry for him, and, indeed, she told him she would help him if she could, but that there was no use trying to escape now, because they were watched all the time, and if he got away Sikes would certainly kill her.

Nancy took him to the house where Sikes lived, and the next morning the latter started out, making Oliver go with him. Sikes had a loaded pistol in his overcoat pocket, and he showed this to Oliver and told him if he spoke to anybody on the road or tried to get away he would shoot him with it.

They walked a long way out of London, once or twice riding in carts which were going in their direction. Whenever this happened Sikes kept his hand in the pocket where the pistol was, so that Oliver was afraid to appeal for help. Late at night they came to an old deserted mansion in the country,

and in the basement of this, where a fire had been kindled, they joined two other men whom Oliver had seen more than once in Fagin's house in London.

The journey had been cold and long and Oliver was very hungry, but he could scarcely eat the supper that was given him for fear of what they intended to do with him in that lonely spot. He was so tired, however, that he finally went fast asleep and knew nothing more till two o'clock in the morning, when Sikes woke him roughly and bade him come with them.

It was foggy and cold and dark outside. Sikes and one of the others each took one of Oliver's hands, and so they walked a quarter of a mile to where was a fine house with a high wall around it. They made him climb over the wall with them, and, pulling him along, crept toward the house.

It was not till now that Oliver knew what they intended – that they were going to rob the house and make him help them, so that he, too, would be a burglar. His limbs began to tremble and he sank to his knees, begging them to have mercy and to let him run away and die in the fields rather than to make him steal. But Sikes drew his pistol with a frightful oath and dragged him on.

In the back of the house was a window, which was not fastened, because it was much too small for a man to get through. But Oliver was so little that he could do it easily. With the pistol in his hand, Sikes put Oliver through the window, gave him a lantern and bade him go and unlock the front door for them.

Oliver had made up his mind that as soon as he got beyond the range of Sikes's pistol he would scream and wake everybody in the house, but just then there was a sound from inside, and Sikes called to him to come back.

Suddenly there was a loud shout from the top of the stairs – a flash – a report – and Oliver staggered back with a terrible pain in his arm and with everything swimming before his eyes.

He heard cries and the loud ringing of a bell and felt Sikes drag him backward through the window. He felt himself being carried along rapidly, and then a cold sensation crept over his heart and he knew no more.

III

HOW EVERYTHING TURNED OUT RIGHT FOR OLIVER IN THE END

After a long, long time Oliver came to himself. The morning was breaking. He tried to rise and found that his arm was wounded and his clothes wet with blood.

He was so dizzy he could hardly stand, but it was freezing cold, and he knew if he stayed there he must die. So he staggered on till he came to a road where, a little way off, he saw a house. There, he thought, he might get help. But when he came closer he saw that it was the very house the men had tried to rob that night. Fear came over him then, and he would have run away, but he was too weak.

He had just strength left to push open the gate, totter across the lawn and knock at the door; then he sank in a faint on the steps.

In the house lived a lady named Mrs. Maylie, just as kind-hearted as was Mr. Brownlow who had rescued Oliver at the police station, and with her lived a beautiful girl whom she had adopted, named Rose. The servants, when they came to the door, made sure Oliver was one of the robbers, and sent at once for policemen to take him in charge; but Miss Rose, the moment she saw what a good face the boy had and how little he looked like a thief, made them put him to bed and send at once for the doctor.

When the good doctor arrived and saw Oliver, who was still unconscious, he thought Miss Rose was right, and when the boy had come to himself and told them how he had suffered, he was certain of it. They were both sorry the policemen had been sent for, because the doctor was sure they would not believe Oliver's story, especially as he had been arrested once before. He would have taken him away, but he was too sick to be moved.

So when the officers came the doctor told them that the boy had been accidentally shot and had come to the house for assistance, when the servants had mistaken him for one of the burglars. This was not exactly the truth, but it seemed necessary to deceive the policemen if Oliver was to be saved. Of course, the servant that had fired the pistol was not able to swear that he had hit anybody at all, so the officers had to go away without arresting anybody.

After this Oliver was ill for a long time, but he was carefully nursed, especially by Miss Rose, who grew as fond of him as if she had been his sister. As soon as he grew better she wrote a letter for him to Mr. Brownlow, the old gentleman who had rescued him from the police station, but to Oliver's grief she found that he had gone to the West Indies.

Thus the time passed till Oliver was quite well, and then Miss Rose (first carefully instructing the servant who went with them not to lose sight of him for a moment for fear of his old enemies) took him with her for a visit to London.

Meantime there had been a dreadful scene in Fagin's house when Bill Sikes got back to London and told the old Jew that the robbery had failed and that Oliver was lost again. They were more afraid than ever that they would be caught and sent to prison. Fagin swore at Sikes, and Monks cursed Fagin, and between them all they determined that Oliver must either be captured or killed.

While they were plotting afresh Nancy, who had been feeling sorrier and sorrier for what she had done, overheard them, and so found out that Monks was Oliver's half-brother and why he so hated him; and she made up her mind to save the boy from his last and greatest danger.

So one evening, when she was alone with him, she gave Sikes some laudanum in a glass of liquor, and when he was asleep she slipped away, found Miss Rose and told her all about it. Bad as Nancy was, however, she was not willing to betray Fagin or Bill Sikes, so she only told her of Monks.

Miss Rose was greatly astonished, for she had never heard of him before, but she pitied Nancy because she had tried to help Oliver, and, of course, she herself wanted very much to help him discover who he was and who his parents had been. She thanked Nancy and begged her to come to see her again. Nancy was afraid to do this, because Bill Sikes watched her so closely, but she promised that on the next Sunday at midnight she would be on a certain bridge where Miss Rose might see her. Then Nancy hurried back before Sikes should wake up.

Miss Rose was in trouble now, for there was no one in London with her then who could help her. But the same afternoon, whom should Oliver see at a distance, walking into his house, but Mr. Brownlow. He came back in great joy to tell Miss Rose, and she concluded that the old gentleman would be the very one to aid her. She took Oliver to the house, and, sure enough, there was the boy's old benefactor.

Very glad, indeed, he was to hear what she told him. For the old gentleman, when Oliver had disappeared with the money he had given him to take to the bookseller, had been reluctant to think the boy he had befriended was, after all, a liar and a thief. He had advertised for him, but the only result had been a call from Mr. Bumble, who told him terrible tales of Oliver's wickedness. To find now, after all this time, that Oliver had not run away, and that Mr. Bumble's tales were lying ones, was a joyful surprise to Mr. Brownlow.

After he had heard the whole, and when Oliver had gone into the garden, Miss Rose told him of Nancy's visit and of the man Monks who still pursued the boy to do him harm.

It was fortunate that she had come to Mr. Brownlow, for, as it happened, he knew a great deal about Monks and his evil life. Years before the old gentleman himself had been a friend of Oliver's father. He knew all about his death in a foreign country, and had watched his older son's career of shame with sorrow. The very trip he had made to the West Indies had acquainted him with a crime Monks had committed there, from which he had fled to England. But, while Mr. Brownlow knew of the curious will Oliver's father had made, what had become of the baby to which the latter referred he had never known. Now, from the story Miss Rose told him, he was assured that Oliver was, indeed, this baby half-brother of Monks.

But it was one thing to know this and quite another to enable Oliver to prove it. The old gentleman was quick to see that they must get possession of Monks and frighten him into confessing the fact – whose only proofs had been lost when he threw the locket and ring into the river. Mr. Brownlow, for this reason, agreed with Miss Rose that they should both meet Nancy on the bridge on the coming Sunday to hear all she had been able to find out.

They said not a word of this to Oliver, and when Sunday night came they drove to the spot where Nancy had promised to meet them. She had kept her word. She was there before them, and Mr. Brownlow heard her story over again from her own lips.

But some one else was there, too, hidden behind a pillar, where he could hear every word she said, and this listener was a spy of Fagin's.

Nancy had cried so much and acted so strangely that the old Jew had grown suspicious and had set some one to watch her. And who do you suppose this spy was? No other than the cowardly apprentice who had bullied Oliver until he ran away from the undertaker's house. The apprentice had finally run away, too, had come to London and begun a wicked life. He was too big a coward to rob any one but little children who had been sent to the shop to buy something, so Fagin had given him spying work to do, and in this, being by nature a sneak, he proved very successful.

The spy lay hid till he had heard all Nancy said; then he slipped out and ran as fast as his legs would carry him back to Fagin. The latter sent for Bill Sikes, knowing him to be the most brutal and bloodthirsty ruffian of all, and told him what Nancy had done.

The knowledge, as the Jew expected, turned Sikes into a demon. He rushed to where Nancy lived. She had returned and was asleep on her couch, but she woke as he entered, and saw by his face that he meant to murder her. Through all her evil career Nancy had been true to Sikes and would not have betrayed him. But he would not listen now, though she pleaded with him pitifully to come with her to some foreign country (as Miss Rose had begged her to do), where they might both lead better lives. Fury had made him mad. As she clung to his knees, he seized a heavy club and struck her down.

So poor Nancy died, with only time for a feeble prayer to God for mercy.

Of all bad deeds that Sikes had ever done, that was the worst. The sun shone through the window and lit the room where Nancy lay. He tried to shut it out, but he could not. He grew suddenly afraid. Horror came upon him. He crept out of the room, locked the door behind him, and plunged into the crowded street.

He walked for miles and miles, here and there, without purpose. Whichever way he went he could not rid himself of that horror. When night came he crawled into a disused shed, but he could not sleep. Whenever he closed his eyes he seemed to see Nancy's eyes looking at him. He got up and wandered on again, desperately lonely for some one to talk to.

He heard a man telling another about the murder as he read the account in a newspaper, and knew that he must hide. He hastened then to a den he knew in a house beside the river, dirty and dismal and the haunt of thieves. Some of his old companions were there, but even they shrank from him.

He had been seen to enter the place, however, and in a few minutes the street was full of people, all yelling for his capture. He barred the doors and windows, but they began to break down the shutters with sledge-hammers.

He ran to the roof with a rope, thinking to let himself down on the side next the river and so escape. Here he fastened one end of the rope to the chimney, and, making a loop in the other end, put it over his head.

Just at that instant he imagined he saw Nancy's eyes again looking at him. He staggered back in terror, missed his footing, and fell over the edge of the roof. He had not had time to draw the noose down under his arms, so that it slipped up around his neck, and there he hung, dead, with a broken neck.

Meanwhile Mr. Brownlow had acted very quickly, so that Monks had got no warning. He had had men watching for the latter and now, having found out all he wanted to know, he had him seized in the street, put into a coach and driven to his office, where he brought him face to face with Oliver.

The old gentleman told Monks he could do one of two things: either he could confess before witnesses the whole infamous plot he had framed against Oliver, and so restore to him his rights and name, or else he could refuse, in which case he would at once be arrested and sent to prison. Seeing that Mr. Brownlow knew all about the part he had played, Monks, to save himself, made a full confession – how he had planned to keep his half-brother from his inheritance. And he also confessed what no one there had guessed: that Miss Rose, who had been adopted in her infancy, was really the sister of Oliver's dead mother – his aunt, indeed. This was the happiest of all Oliver's surprises that day, for he had learned to love Miss Rose very dearly.

Monks thus bought his own freedom, and cheap enough he probably thought it, for before he had finished his story, word came that Fagin the Jew had been captured by the police and was to be tried without delay for his life.

Oliver no longer had anything to fear, and came into possession of his true name and his fortune. Mr. Brownlow adopted him as his own son, and moved to the village where Oliver had been cared for in the family of Miss Rose, and where they all lived happily ever afterward.

The company of thieves was broken up with Fagin's arrest. Fagin himself was found guilty, and died on the gallows shrieking with fear. Monks sailed for America, where he was soon detected in crime and died in prison.

The wicked apprentice, who had been the real cause of poor Nancy's murder, was so frightened at the fate of Fagin that he reformed and became a spy for the police, and by his aid the Artful Dodger, who continued to pick pockets, soon found himself in jail.

As for Mr. and Mrs. Bumble, they, of course, lost their positions, and sank from bad to worse till they finally became paupers and were sent to the very same poorhouse where they had tortured little Oliver Twist.

BARNABY RUDGE

Published 1841

<i>Scene:</i>	London and the Country
<i>Time:</i>	1775 to 1780

CHARACTERS

Barnaby Rudge	A half-witted boy
Rudge	His father
A murderer	
Mrs. Rudge	His mother
Geoffrey Haredale	A country gentleman
Emma Haredale	His niece
Sir John Chester	An enemy of Haredale's
Edward Chester	His son
In love with Emma Haredale	
Varden	A locksmith
Dolly Varden	His daughter
A friend of Emma Haredale's	
Simon Tappertit	Varden's apprentice
Joe Willet	The son of an innkeeper
In love with Dolly Varden	
"Maypole Hugh"	A giant hostler
In reality, the son of Sir John Chester	
Lord George Gordon	A dehded nobleman
Gashford	His secretary
Dennis	A hangman
"Grip"	Barnaby's tame raven

BARNABY RUDGE

I

BARNABY'S BOYHOOD

Many years ago a gentleman named Haredale lived at a house called The Warren, near London. His wife was dead and he had one baby daughter, Emma.

One morning he was found murdered in his house, which had been robbed. Both the gardener and the steward, Rudge, were missing, and some people thought one had done it and some thought the other. But some days later a disfigured body was found in a pond on the grounds which, by its clothes and a watch and ring, was recognized as that of Rudge, the missing steward. Then, of course, every one believed the gardener had murdered both, and the police searched for him a long time, but he was never found.

On the same day this cruel murder was discovered, a baby was born to Mrs. Rudge, the wife of the steward – a pretty boy, though with a birth-mark on the wrist as red as blood, and a strange look of terror on the baby face. He was named Barnaby, and his mother loved him all the more because it was soon seen he was weak-minded, and could never be in his right senses. She herself, poor woman! seemed never able to forget the horror of that day.

Geoffrey Haredale, the brother and heir of the murdered man, took up his abode at The Warren and adopted the little Emma, his niece, as his own daughter. He was kind to Mrs. Rudge also. Not only did he let her live rent-free in a house he owned, but he did many a kind deed secretly for her half-witted son as he grew older.

Barnaby Rudge grew up a strange, weird creature. His hair was long and red and hung in disorder about his shoulders. His skin was pale, his eyes bright and his clothes he trimmed most curiously with bits of gaudy lace and bright ribbons and glass toys. He wore a cluster of broken peacock feathers in his hat and girded at his side was the broken hilt of an old sword without a blade. But strangest of all was a little wicker basket he always carried on his back. When he set this down and opened it, there hopped out a tame raven who would cock its head on one side and say hoarsely and very knowingly:

"Hello! Hello! Hello! What's the matter here? Keep up your spirits. Never say die. I'm a devil, I'm a devil, I'm a devil! Hurrah!"

Then it would whistle or make a noise like the drawing of a cork out of a bottle, repeated a great many times, and flap its wings against its sides as if it were bursting with laughter. This raven was named Grip and was Barnaby's constant companion. The neighbors used to say it was one hundred and twenty years old (for ravens live a very long time), and some said it knew altogether too much to be only a bird. But Barnaby would hear nothing said against it, and, next to his mother, loved it better than anything in the world.

Barnaby knew that folks called him half-witted, but he cared little for that. Sometimes he would laugh at what they said.

"Why," he would say, "how much better to be silly than as wise as you! *You* don't see shadowy people like those that live in sleep – not you. Nor eyes in the knotted panes of glass, nor swift ghosts when it blows hard, nor do you hear voices in the air, nor see men stalking in the sky – not you. I lead a merrier life than you with all your cleverness. *You're* the dull men. *We're* the bright ones. Ha, ha! I'll not change with you, not I!"

Haredale, who had been so kind to Barnaby's mother, was a burly, stern man who had few acquaintances and lived much alone. When first he came to live at The Warren an enemy of his,

Sir John Chester, had circulated suspicious rumors about him, so that some came half to believe he himself had had something to do with his brother's murder.

These whispers so affected Haredale that as time passed he grew gloomy and morose and lived in seclusion, thinking only how he could solve the mystery of the murder, and loving more and more the little Emma as she grew into a beautiful girl. He neglected The Warren so that the property looked quite desolate and ruined, and at length superstitious people in the neighborhood came to mutter that it was haunted by the ghost of Rudge, the steward, whose body had been found in the pond.

The old bell-ringer of the near-by church even said he had seen this ghost once, when he went, late one night, to wind the church clock. But of course others, who knew there were no such things as ghosts, only smiled at these stories.

Sir John Chester, who so hated Haredale, was just as smooth and smiling and elegant as the other was rough. Haredale had been Sir John's drudge and scapegoat at school and the latter had always despised him. And as the years went by Sir John came to hate him.

His own son Edward had fallen in love with Emma, Haredale's niece, and she loved him in return. Sir John had been all his life utterly selfish and without conscience. He had little money and was much in debt and wanted his son to marry an heiress, so that he himself could continue his life of pleasure. Edward, however, gave his father to understand that he would never give up his love for Emma. Sir John believed that if Haredale chose, he could make his niece dislike Edward, and because he did not, Sir John hated Haredale the more bitterly.

Emma had a close friend named Dolly Varden, the daughter of a locksmith. Dolly was a pretty, dimpled, roguish little flirt, as rosy and sparkling and fresh as an apple, and she had a great many lovers.

One of these was her father's apprentice, who lived in the same house. His name was Simon Tappertit – a conceited, bragging, empty-headed young man with a great opinion of his own good looks. When he looked at his thin legs, which he admired exceedingly, he could not see how it was that Dolly could help worshipping him.

Tappertit had ambitions of his own and thought himself a great man who was kept down by a tyrannical master, though the good-natured locksmith was the kindest man in London. He had formed a society of apprentices whose toast was, "Death to all masters, life to all apprentices, and love to all fair damsels!" He was their leader. He had made them all keys to fit their masters' doors, and at night, when they were supposed to be asleep in bed, they would steal out to meet in a dirty cellar owned by an old blind man, where they kept a skull and cross-bones and signed high-sounding oaths with a pen dipped in blood, and did other silly things. The object of the society was to hurt, annoy, wrong and pick quarrels with such of their masters as happened not to please them. With such cheap fooleries Tappertit had convinced himself that he was fit to be a great general.

But with all his smirking, Dolly Varden only laughed at him. To tell the truth, she was very fond of young Joe Willet, whose father kept the Maypole Inn, very near The Warren where her friend Emma Haredale lived. Joe was a good, brave fellow, and was head over ears in love with Dolly, but Dolly was a coquette, and never let him know how much she cared for him. Joe was not contented at home, for his father seemed to think him a child and did not treat him according to his years, so that but for leaving Dolly Varden he would long ago have run away to seek his fortune.

Both Joe and Dolly knew how Edward Chester loved Emma Haredale, and they used sometimes to carry notes from one to the other, since the hatred of Sir John for Emma's uncle often prevented the lovers from meeting.

Sir John found this out, and bribed a hostler at the Maypole Inn to spy for him and prevent, if he could, these letters passing. The hostler was an uncouth, drunken giant that people called Maypole Hugh, as strong as an ox, and cruel and cunning. Hugh watched carefully, and from time to time would go to Sir John's house in London and report what he had seen.

II

THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER AND WHO HE WAS

About this time residents in the neighborhood of The Warren and the Maypole Inn began to tell tales of a mysterious man who roamed about the country-side.

He was seen often and by many persons, always at night, skulking in the shadow or riding furiously on a horse. He was fierce and haggard and discourteous to travelers, wore a slouch hat which he never took off, and generally kept the lower part of his face muffled in a handkerchief. He always went alone. Some said he slept in church-yards, others that he never slept at all, and still others that he was a wicked man who had sold his soul to the Evil One.

One night he rested at the Maypole Inn, and a little while after he had gone, Varden the locksmith, Dolly's father, as he drove home, found Edward Chester lying in the road, having been wounded and robbed of his money. Barnaby Rudge had seen the attack and was bending over him. He had been too frightened to give aid, but from his description Varden knew the robber was the stranger who had stopped at the inn.

The honest locksmith took Edward into his chaise, drove him to Barnaby's house, which was near by, and left him in care of Mrs. Rudge, where a doctor soon dressed the wound, which was not serious.

Next day Mr. Varden came to see how the wounded man was. As he sat talking with Mrs. Rudge a tapping came at the window. She went to the door. The locksmith heard her cry out, and sprang forward to find standing there, to his astonishment, the robber of the night before. He grasped at him, but the woman threw herself before him, clasped his arm and besought him, for her life's sake, not to pursue the man.

The locksmith had known Barnaby's mother all his life, but so strange was her action now (especially since she refused to answer any question, begging him to ask her nothing) that he almost wondered if she herself could be in league with a crime-doer. Her apparent agony touched him, however, and, raising no alarm, he went home in great puzzle of mind.

He would have been far more disturbed if he had known the whole truth. For the mysterious stranger he had seen, who by night had haunted the neighborhood, was none other than Mrs. Rudge's husband, Barnaby's father, the steward who everybody believed had been murdered with his master, and whose body had been found in the pond.

Rudge himself had committed that wicked deed. He had killed both master and gardener, and to cover the crime had put his own clothes, his watch and ring on the latter's body and sunk it in the pond. When, on the night of the murder, he told his wife what he had done, she had shrunk fearfully from him, declaring that, although being his wife she would not give him up to justice, yet she would never own him or shelter him. He had fled then with the money he had stolen, and that night, while she lay sick with horror, Barnaby had been born with his poor crazed brain, the look of terror in his baby face and the birth-mark of blood on his wrist.

For many years the guilty wretch had wandered the earth, but he could not escape the knowledge of his deed. And at last his conscience had driven him back to the scene of his crime, friendless, penniless, fearful of the sunlight, slinking by night like a ghost about the house in which he had murdered his master, and hounding his miserable wife for money with which to buy food and drink. The poor woman had kept her terrible secret, giving him every coin she could save, striving so that Barnaby, unhappily born as he was, should never know the shame of having his father suffer death on the gallows. When Rudge had come to her house that day he had thought her alone, and she had saved him from capture only by begging the locksmith to stay his hand.

After his hairbreadth escape from Varden, Rudge hid himself in a narrow street. When the next dawn came, as he searched for some dark den in which he might lie sheltered till another night,

he saw Simon Tappertit issuing with his noisy apprentice crew from the cellar in which they held their meetings. He entered its door, made friends with the villainous blind man who kept it and there established his headquarters.

Once more, one night after the wounded Edward had been taken to his own home, Rudge hunted out his trembling wife and demanded money, threatening to bring harm to Barnaby if she refused him, and she gave him all she had.

But this time dread of him made her desperate. When morning came she went to Haredale and told him that she and her son could no longer live on his bounty. The next day, with Barnaby, who carried on his back his beloved raven, Grip, she left the house afoot, telling no one where they were going lest her husband find her out, and pushed far into the country to find a home in some obscure village. And though Rudge, the murderer, and the blind man (who was much more crafty and cunning than many men with eyesight) searched for them everywhere, it was a long time before they found any trace.

Perhaps Joe and Dolly Varden missed poor cheery Barnaby more than did any one else. But several events occurred soon after this that gave them other things to think of.

Maypole Hugh, the savage hostler, had continued his spying work for Edward's father, and Sir John determined it was high time to break off his son's attachment for Emma Haredale.

One day Dolly was carrying a letter from Emma at The Warren to Edward, and as she passed through the fields, Hugh attacked her, throwing his arms around her and pretending to make coarse love to her. She was dreadfully frightened and screamed as loud as she could. Joe, as it happened, was walking within sound of her voice, and ran like the wind to her aid.

In another moment Hugh had leaped the hedge and disappeared and Dolly was sobbing in her rescuer's arms. She was afraid to tell Joe who had frightened her, for fear the hostler would take his revenge by harming him, so she only said she had been attacked by a man whom she had never seen.

In her scare she had forgotten all about the letter she had carried, and now she discovered it was gone. It was nowhere to be found.

This, of course, was because Hugh had stolen it. It was to get the letter that he had frightened her, and he was soon on his way to carry it to Sir John. Dolly did not guess this. She wrote to Emma telling her of the mishap, and this note Joe, to whom she intrusted it, knowing no reason to distrust the hostler, gave to Hugh to deliver. So Sir John got both missives in the end.

Emma Haredale, not understanding why Edward returned no answer to her letter, was hurt, and thought him cold. Sir John, seizing his opportunity, told her one day (pretending sorrow while he did so) that his son, naturally fickle, had fallen in love with some one else, to whom he was soon to be married.

Emma, not dreaming the father of the man she loved could be such a false liar, believed him, and when Edward wrote her, speaking of his poverty and telling her he was going to leave England to try to better his prospects, she thought his manly letter only an excuse to part from her.

Proud, though heartbroken, she did not answer it, and so, thanks to his father's selfish scheming, Edward sailed away to the West Indies, hopeless and despairing.

Another left England at the same time whose going meant far more to Dolly Varden. This was Joe. His father, the innkeeper, had been restraining him more and more, until his treatment had become the jest of the country-side, and Joe had chafed to the point of rebellion at the gibes that continually met him. One day, at the jeer of an old enemy of his, his wrath boiled over. He sprang upon him and thrashed him soundly in the inn before the assembled guests. Then, knowing his father would never forgive him, he went to his own room and barricaded the door. That night Joe let himself down from his window and before daylight was in London.

He went first to the locksmith's house to tell Dolly he had run away and that he loved her, but Dolly being a flirt, only laughed. To tell the truth, she was so very fond of Joe that she didn't like to show him how sorry she was. So the poor fellow went away thinking she cared very little (though as

soon as he was out of sight she nearly cried her eyes out), and enlisted as a soldier. That same night Joe started from London to fight in the war in America. And it was a long time before either he or Edward Chester was heard of again.

III

BARNABY GETS INTO TROUBLE

Five years went by, and Edward Chester remained in the West Indies and prospered. For five years Joe Willet fought in the war in America. And for five years Barnaby Rudge with his mother and Grip, the raven, lived unmolested in their little village and were happy.

At the end of the five years three things happened at about the same time: Edward started back to England from the West Indies with a fair fortune in his pocket; Joe was sent back from America with one arm gone, and Barnaby and his mother left their village home again, secretly, and set out for London, hoping to lose themselves in its hugeness. The wily blind man, the companion now of Rudge, the murderer, had found them out!

He came one day and made Mrs. Rudge give him all the money she had been able to lay by in these five years except a single gold piece. He told her he would return in a week for more and that if she had not got it then, he would entice Barnaby away to join in the evil life of his father. So she left the village the very next morning, and she and Barnaby trudged afoot all the weary way to the great city.

Though they knew nothing of it, there was great excitement in London. Lord George Gordon, a well-meaning but crack-brained nobleman, led astray by flatterers till he believed he had a God-given mission to drive all Catholics out of England, had, sometime before this, begun to hold meetings and to stir up the people with the cry of "No Popery!"

He declared that the religion of the country was in danger of being overthrown and that the Pope of Rome was plotting to make his religion supreme. And this idea he talked wherever he went. He was a slender, sallow man who dressed in severe black and wore his hair smoothly combed, and his bright, restless eyes and his look of uncertainty made it clear that he was no man to lead, but was rather himself the misled dupe of others.

One of these schemers who ruled him was his secretary, Gashford, a man of ugly face, with beetling brows and great flapped ears. He had been a thief and a scoundrel all his life, and had wormed himself into Lord George's confidence by flattery. He easily fooled his master into believing that the rabble who flocked to hear him, and the idle loungers who yelled themselves hoarse at what he said, were crowds of honest citizens who believed as he did, and were ready to follow his leadership. Gashford had added to his followers even Dennis, the hangman of London, and the foolish nobleman not knowing the ruffian's true calling, thought him a man to trust.

For many weeks this banding together of all the lawless ragamuffins of London had gone on, till one had only to shout "No Popery!" on any street corner to draw together a crowd bent on mischief. Respectable people grew afraid and kept to their houses, and criminals and street vagabonds grew bolder and bolder.

As may be guessed, Simon Tappertit, the one-time apprentice of Varden the locksmith, rejoiced at this excitement as at a chance to show his talent for leadership. His apprentice society had now become the "United Bulldogs," and he himself, helping the schemes of Gashford, strutted about among the crowds with an air of vast importance.

Sir John Chester watched the trouble gathering with glee. His old enemy Haredale, he knew, was a Catholic, and as this movement, if it grew bold enough, meant harm to all of that religion, he hoped for its success. He was too cunning to aid it publicly, but he sent Maypole Hugh, who was still his spy, to Gashford; and the brawny hostler, who savagely longed for fighting and plunder, joined with the secretary and with Dennis the hangman to help increase the tumult.

A day had been set on which Lord George Gordon had vowed he would march to Parliament at the head of forty thousand men to demand the passing of a law to forbid all Catholics to enter the country. This vast rabble-army gathered in a great field, under the command of these sorry leaders – the misguided lord, Dennis the hangman, Tappertit, Hugh the hostler, Gashford the secretary, and other rowdies picked for their boldness and daring. The mob thus formed covered an immense space. All wore blue cockades in their hats or carried blue flags, and from them went up a hoarse roar of oaths, shouts and ribald songs.

Such was the scene on which Barnaby and his mother came as they walked into London. They knew nothing of its cause or its meaning. Mrs. Rudge saw its rough disorder with terror, but the confusion, the waving flags and the shouts had got into Barnaby's brain. To him this seemed a splendid host marching to some noble cause. He watched with sparkling eyes, longing to join it.

Suddenly Maypole Hugh rushed from the crowd with a shout of recognition, and, thrusting a flagstaff into Barnaby's hands, drew him into the ranks.

His mother shrieked and ran forward, but she was thrown to the ground; Barnaby was whirled away into the moving mass and she saw him no more.

Barnaby enjoyed that hour of march with all his soul, and the louder the howling the more he was thrilled. The crowd surrounded the houses of Parliament and fought the police. At length a regiment of mounted soldiers charged them. Barnaby thought this brave work and held his ground valiantly, even knocking one soldier off his horse with the flagstaff, until others dragged him to a place of safety.

That night the drunken mob, grown bolder, tore down, pillaged and burned all the Catholic chapels within their reach, and, with Hugh and Dennis the hangman, poor crazed Barnaby ran at its head, covered with dirt, his garments torn to rags, singing and leaping with delight. He thought he was the most courageous of all, that he was helping to destroy the country's enemies, and that when the fighting was over he and his mother would be rich and she would always be proud that he was so noble and so brave.

The golden cups, the candlesticks and the money they stole from the burned chapels Hugh and the hangman buried under a heap of straw in the tavern which they had made their headquarters, and left Barnaby to guard the place. He counted this a sacred trust, and when soldiers came to arrest all in the building he refused to fly in time. He even fought them single-handed and felled two before he was knocked down with the butt of a musket and handcuffed.

While he had been resisting, Grip had been busily plucking away the straw from the hidden plunder; now his hoarse croak showed them the hoard and they unearthed it all. At length, closing ranks around Barnaby, they marched him off to a barracks, from which he was taken to Newgate Prison, where a blacksmith put irons on his arms and legs, and he and the raven were locked in a cell.

While Barnaby was guarding the tavern room, Hugh, egged on by his master, Sir John Chester, had proposed the burning of The Warren, where Haredale still lived with Emma, his niece, and Dolly Varden, now her companion.

The crowd agreed gladly, since Haredale was a Catholic and that same day in London had given evidence to the police against the rioters who had burned the chapels. They rushed away, marched hastily across the fields, tied the old host of the Maypole Inn to his chair, drank all the liquor they could find and then rushed to The Warren. There they put the servants to flight, burst in the doors, staved the wine-casks in the cellar, split up the costly furniture with hammers and axes and set fire to the building, so that it soon burned to the ground.

Haredale, in London, saw the red glare in the sky and rode post-haste to the place, but found on his arrival only ruins and ashes. He believed that Emma and Dolly had had time to escape to safety; but while he was searching the grounds for some sign of them he saw in the starlight a man hiding in a broken turret.

He drew his sword and advanced. As the figure moved into the light he rushed forward, flung himself upon him and clutched his throat.

"Villain!" he cried in a terrible voice, "dead and buried as all men supposed, at last, at last I have you! You, Rudge, slayer of my brother and of his faithful servant! Double murderer and monster, I arrest you in the name of God!"

Bound and fettered in his carriage, Haredale took Rudge back to London and had him locked in Newgate Prison.

IV BARNABY PROSPERS AT LAST

Haredale searched vainly next day for Emma and Dolly Varden. He could not believe they had lost their lives in the burning building, yet he was filled with anxiety because of their disappearance. Could he have known what had happened he would have been even more fearful.

Simon Tappertit had seen his chance at last to win for himself the lovely Dolly, who had scorned him when he was an apprentice of the locksmith. He had bribed Hugh and the hangman to aid him. While the mob was occupied at the front of the house this precious pair had entered from the back, seized the two girls and put them into a coach.

This they guarded at a distance till the burning was done; then, with Tappertit on the box and surrounded by his ruffians, the coach was driven into the city.

Emma had spent the day in the fear that her uncle had been killed with other Catholics in London, and at this new and surpassing fright she had fainted. Dolly, though no less concerned, had fought her captors bravely, though vainly. Often in that long ride she wished that Joe, her vanished lover, were there to rescue her as he had rescued her once from Maypole Hugh.

She had determined when she reached the London streets to scream as loudly as she could for help; but before they came to the city Hugh climbed into the carriage and sat between them, threatening to choke either if she made a noise.

In this wise they were driven to a miserable cottage, and in the dirty apartment to which they were taken Dolly threw herself upon the unconscious Emma and wept pitifully, unmindful of the jeers of Hugh and of the hangman.

When Tappertit entered the room suddenly, Dolly, not knowing his part in the plot, screamed with joy and threw herself into his arms crying:

"I knew it! My dear father's at the door! Heaven bless you for rescuing us!"

But she saw in an instant her mistake, when the ridiculous braggart laid his hand on his breast and told her, now that he no longer was an apprentice but a famous leader of the people, he had chosen to be her husband. With this announcement he left them.

Meanwhile Mrs. Rudge, day and night, had searched everywhere for Barnaby. In one of the riots she was injured, and was taken to a hospital, and while she lay there she heard with agony that her son had been so active in the disturbances that a price had been put by the Government on his head.

But in his present trouble Barnaby had unexpectedly found an old friend. Joe Willet, just returned with one empty sleeve from his five years of soldiering in America, had been with the soldiers in the barracks when Barnaby had been brought there on his way to prison. He soon discovered who the boy's rioting companions had been and took them word of his plight, for he knew it meant death to Barnaby unless he escaped.

Maypole Hugh, Tappertit and the hangman were all itching for more disorder, and this news gave them an excuse. They went out at once and gathered the mob together to attack Newgate Prison and to release all the prisoners. They themselves led the procession. The house of Varden, Dolly's father, was on their way; they stopped there, and, in spite of the lusty fight he made, carried the locksmith with them to compel him to open the prison gates with his tools.

This he refused to do, and they would doubtless have killed him, but for two men who dragged him from their clutches in the nick of time. These two men were the one-armed Joe and Edward Chester, just returned from the West Indies, whom the former had met by accident that day. They took the locksmith to his home, while the raging crowd brought furniture from neighboring houses and built a bonfire of it to burn down the great prison gate.

From this same mob Haredale himself had a narrow escape. He was staying at a house near by, which, belonging to a Catholic, was attacked. He tried to escape across the roof, but was recognized from the street by the giant Hugh. The cellar luckily had a back door opening into a lane, and with the assistance of Joe and Edward, who had hastened to the rear to aid him, he escaped that way.

Maypole Hugh, during this terrible time while the mob was burning houses everywhere and the soldiers firing on the rioters in every quarter of London, seemed to bear a charmed life. He rode a great brewer's horse and carried an ax, and wherever the fight was thickest there he was to be found.

Never had such a sight been seen in London as when the prison gate fell and the crowd rushed from cell to cell, smashing the iron doors to release the prisoners, some of whom, being under sentence of death, had never expected to be free again. Rudge, the murderer, knowing nothing of what the uproar meant, suffered tortures, thinking in his guilty fear that the hordes were howling for his life. When he was finally released and in the open street he found Barnaby beside him.

They broke off their fetters, and that night took refuge in a shed in a field. Next day Rudge sent Barnaby to try to find the blind man, his cunning partner, in whose wits he trusted to help them get away. Barnaby brought the blind man, and brought also Hugh, whom he found wounded in the street, but in so doing he was seen by Dennis, the hangman.

This villainous sneak, knowing that the daring of the rioters had reached its limit, and that they must soon be scattered and captured, and thinking to buy pardon for himself by a piece of treachery, without delay brought soldiers, who surrounded the shed. The blind man, attempting to run away, was shot dead, and the others, Rudge, Hugh and poor, innocent Barnaby, were captured.

Then, well satisfied with his work, Dennis set out for the house where Simon Tappertit had confined Emma Haredale and Dolly Varden. The hangman wanted them well out of the way, so they could not testify that he had helped to burn The Warren and to kidnap them. He had thought of a plan to have them taken to a boat in the river and conveyed where their friends would never find them, and to carry them off he chose Gashford, Lord George Gordon's secretary, who was the more willing as he had fallen in love with Emma's beauty.

But this wicked plan was never to be carried out. The very hour that Gashford came on this pitiless errand, while he roughly bade Emma prepare to depart, the doors flew open. Men poured in, led by Edward Chester, who knocked Gashford down; and in another moment Emma was clasped in her uncle's embrace, and Dolly, laughing and crying at the same time, fell into the arms of her father. Their place of concealment had been discovered a few hours before, and the three men had lost no time in planning their capture.

Dennis the hangman, in spite of his previous treachery, caught in the trap, was taken straightway to jail, and Simon Tappertit, wounded and raging, watched Dolly's departure from the floor, where he lay with his wonderful legs, the pride and glory of his life, broken and crushed into shapeless ugliness. The famous riots were over. Lord George Gordon was a prisoner, hundreds were being arrested, and London was again growing quiet.

Mrs. Rudge, poor mother! at last found Barnaby where he lay chained in his cell and condemned to death. Day after day she never left him, while Varden, the locksmith, and Haredale worked hard for his release. They carried his case even to the King, and at the last moment, while he rode on his way to execution, his pardon was granted.

Of the rest who died on the scaffold, Rudge, the murderer, was hanged, cursing all men to the last; Maypole Hugh died glorying in his evil life and with a jest on his lips, and Dennis, the hangman, was dragged to the gallows cringing and shrieking for mercy.

A few weeks later Emma Haredale was married to Edward Chester and sailed with him back to the West Indies, where he had established a flourishing business.

Before this, however, his father, Sir John Chester, was well punished for his hard heart and bad deeds by the discovery that Maypole Hugh, the hostler, was really his own unacknowledged son, whose mother he had deserted many years before. But even this blow, and the marriage of his son Edward to the niece of his lifelong enemy, did not soften him. He still hated Haredale with his old venom and loved to go to the ruins of The Warren and gloat over its destruction.

On one of these visits he met and taunted Haredale beyond all endurance. The two men drew their swords and fought a duel, which ended by Haredale's running Sir John through the heart. Haredale left England at once, entered a convent in a foreign country and spent his few remaining years in penance and remorse.

Lord George Gordon, the poor deluded noble who had been the cause of all this disorder, finally died, harmless and quite crazy, in Newgate Prison. Simon Tappertit, in spite of his active part in the riots, was luckier, for he got off with two wooden legs and lived for many years, a corner boot-black.

Joe, of course, married Dolly Varden, and the locksmith gave her such a generous marriage portion that he was able to set up in business, succeeding his father as landlord of the old Maypole Inn, and there they lived long and happily.

Barnaby Rudge, after the death of his father, gradually became more rational and was everywhere a great favorite with old and young. He and his mother lived always on the Maypole farm, and there were never two more contented souls than they.

As for Grip, the raven, he soon forgot his jail experience and grew sleek and glossy again. For a whole year he never uttered a word till one sunny morning he suddenly broke out with, "I'm a devil, I'm a devil, I'm a devil!" in extraordinary rapture. From that time on he talked more and more, and as he was only one hundred and fifty years old when Barnaby was gray headed (a mere infant for a raven) he is very probably talking yet.

THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF DAVID COPPERFIELD

Published 1849–1850

<i>Scene:</i>	London, Yarmouth, Dover and the Country
<i>Time:</i>	1812 to 1842

CHARACTERS

David Copperfield	A fatherless boy
Miss Betsy Trotwood	His aunt
Peggotty	His nurse
Mr. Murdstone	His stepfather
Miss Murdstone	Mr. Murdstone's sister
Mr. Peggotty	A fisherman
Peggotty's brother	
Ham	Their nephew
Mrs. Gummidge	The widow of Mr. Peggotty's dead partner
"Little Emily"	Peggotty's orphan niece
Barkis	A cart driver
Later, Peggotty's husband	
Mr. Creakle	Proprietor of a boys' school
Tommy Traddles James Steerforth	Schoolmates and friends of David's
Mr. Micawber	A London friend of David's
Always "waiting for something to turn up"	
"Mr. Dick"	A simple-minded relative of Miss Betsy Trotwood's
Mr. Wickfield	Miss Betsy's lawyer
Agnes	His daughter
Uriah Heep	His clerk
Later, his partner	
Doctor Strong	David's schoolmaster in Dover
Dora Spenlow	The daughter of David's employer and his "child-wife"

DAVID COPPERFIELD

I

DAVID'S EARLY UPS AND DOWNS

There was once a little boy by the name of David Copperfield, whose father had died before he was born. The night he was born his great-aunt, Miss Betsy Trotwood – a grim lady with a black cap tied under her chin and a great gold watch chain – came to the house to ask his mother to name the baby, which she took for granted was a girl, after her; but as soon as she found it was a boy she flounced out in anger and never came back again.

The first thing David remembered was living in a big country house in England with his pretty, golden-haired mother and with Peggotty, his nurse, a red-faced, kindly woman, with a habit of wearing her dresses so tight that whenever she hugged him some buttons would fly off the back. He loved his mother dearly – so dearly that when a tall, handsome man named Murdstone began to come to see her in the evenings David was jealous and sad. Mr. Murdstone acted as if he liked him, and even took him riding on his horse; but there was something in his face that David could not like.

One summer day David was sent off with Peggotty for a two weeks' visit to her brother's house in Yarmouth. Yarmouth was a queer fishing town on the sea-coast, and the house they went to was the queerest thing in it. It was made of an old barge, drawn up high and dry on the beach. It had a chimney on one side and little windows, and there were sea-shells around the door. David's room was in the stern, and the window was the hole which the rudder had once passed through. Everything smelled of salt water and lobsters, and David thought it was the most wonderful house in the world.

He soon made friends with the family – Mr. Peggotty, a big fisherman with a laugh like a gale of wind; Ham, his nephew, a big, overgrown boy who carried David from the coach on his back, and Mrs. Gummidge, who was the widow of Mr. Peggotty's drowned partner.

And, last of all, there was a beautiful little girl with curly hair and a string of blue beads around her neck whom they called Little Em'ly. She was an orphan niece of Peggotty's. None of these people belonged to Mr. Peggotty, but, though he was only a poor fisherman himself, he was so kind that he gave them all a home. David played with little Em'ly, and went out in the boat with Mr. Peggotty, and enjoyed his visit greatly, though he grew anxious to see his mother again.

He had no idea what had happened to her till he got back home with Peggotty. Then he found why he had been sent off on his visit. While he was away his mother had married Mr. Murdstone.

David found things sadly altered after this. Mr. Murdstone was a hard, cruel master. He cared nothing for the little boy and was harsh to him in everything. He even took away David's own cozy bedroom and made him sleep in a gloomy chamber. When he was sad Mr. Murdstone called him obstinate and locked him up and forbade his mother to pet or comfort him.

David's mother loved him, but she loved her new husband, too, and it was a most unhappy state of things. To make it worse, Mr. Murdstone's sister came to live with them. She was an unlovely old maid with big black eyebrows, and liked David no better than her brother did.

After this there were no more pleasant hours of sitting with his mother or walking with her to church, for Mr. Murdstone and his sister kept them apart. The only happy moments David spent were in a little upper room where there was a collection of books left by his dead father. He got some comfort from reading these.

Mr. Murdstone made David's mother give him hard tasks and lessons to do, and when David recited them he and his sister both sat and listened. To feel their presence and disapproval confused the little fellow so much that even when he knew his lesson he failed.

One day when he came to recite he saw Mr. Murdstone finishing the handle of a whip he had been making. This frightened him so that he could scarcely remember a word. Mr. Murdstone grasped him then and led him to his room to whip him.

Poor little David was so terrified that he hardly knew what he was doing, and in his agony and terror, while the merciless blows were falling, he seized the hand that held him and bit it as hard as he could. Mr. Murdstone then beat him almost to death and locked him in the room.

He was kept there for five days with only bread and milk to eat. Every day he was taken down for family prayers and then taken back again, and during prayers he was made to sit in a corner where he could not even see his mother's face. He had to sit all day long with nothing to do but think of Mr. Peggotty's house-boat and of little Em'ly and wish he was there. The last night Peggotty, his nurse, crept up and whispered through the keyhole that Mr. Murdstone was going to send him away the next day to a school near London.

The next morning he started in a carrier's cart. His mother was so much in awe of Mr. Murdstone that she hardly dared kiss David good-by, and he saw nothing of Peggotty. But as he was crying, Peggotty came running from behind a hedge and jumped into the cart and hugged him so hard that all the buttons flew off the back of her dress.

The man who drove the cart was named Barkis. He seemed to be very much taken with Peggotty, and after she had gone back David told him all about her. Before they parted he made David promise to write her a message for him. It was a very short message – "Barkis is willin'." David didn't know in the least what the driver meant, but he promised, and he sent the message in his very first letter.

Probably Peggotty knew what he meant, though, for before David came back again Mr. Barkis and she were courting. However, that has not much to do with this part of the story.

The school to which Mr. Murdstone had sent him was a bare building with gratings on all the windows like a prison, and a high brick wall around it. It was owned by a man named Creakle, who had begun by raising hops, and had gone into the school business because he had lost all of his own and his wife's money and had no other way to live. He was fat and spoke always in a whisper, and he was so cruel and bad-tempered that not only the boys, but his wife, too, was terribly afraid of him.

He nearly twisted David's ear off the first day, and he made one of the teachers tie a placard to David's back (this, he said, was by Mr. Murdstone's order) which read:

TAKE CARE OF HIM

HE BITES

To have to wear this before everybody made David sorrowful and ashamed, but luckily a good-natured boy named Tommy Traddles, who liked David's looks, said it was a shame to make him wear it, and as Tommy Traddles was very popular, all the other boys said it was a shame, too. So, beyond calling him "Towser" for a few days, and saying "Lie down, sir!" as if he were a dog, they did not make much fun of him while he wore it.

Besides Tommy Traddles, David liked best the head boy, James Steerforth – the oldest boy in the school, and the only one Creakle did not dare beat or mistreat. Steerforth took David under his wing and helped him with his lessons, while in return David used to tell him stories from the books he had read.

What with the beatings and tasks, David was glad enough when vacation time came. But his home-coming was anything but pleasant. He found his mother with a little baby, and she looked careworn and ill.

Mr. Murdstone, he saw at once, hated him as much as ever, and Miss Murdstone would not let him even so much as touch his baby brother. He was forbidden to sit in the kitchen with Peggotty, and when he crept away to the upper room with the books Mr. Murdstone called him sullen and obstinate. David was so miserable every day that he was almost glad to bid his mother good-by, and as he rode away, to look back at her as she stood there at the gate holding up her baby for David to see.

That was the last picture David carried in his heart of his pretty mother. One day not long after, he was called from the school-room to the parlor, and there Mr. Creakle told him that his mother was dead and that the baby had died, too.

David reached home the next day. Peggotty took him into her arms at the door and called his mother her "dear, poor pretty," and comforted him, but he was very sad. It seemed to him that life could never be bright again.

After the funeral Miss Murdstone discharged Peggotty and, probably not knowing what else to do with him, let David go with the faithful old servant down to the old house-boat at Yarmouth, where he had been visiting when his mother was married to Mr. Murdstone.

The wonderful house on the beach was just the same. Mr. Peggotty and Ham and Mrs. Gummidge were still there, with everything smelling just as usual of salt water and lobsters; and little Em'ly was there, too, grown to be quite a big girl. It seemed, somehow, like coming back to a dear old quiet home, where nothing changed and where all was restful and good.

But this happiness was not to last. David had to go home again, and there it was worse than ever. He was utterly neglected. He was sent to no school, taught nothing, allowed to make no friends. And at last Mr. Murdstone, as if he could think of nothing worse, apprenticed him as a chore boy in a warehouse in London.

The building where David now was compelled to work was on a wharf on the river bank, and was dirty and dark and overrun with rats. Here he had to labor hard for bare living wages, among rough boys and rougher men, with no counselor, hearing their coarse oaths about him, and fearing that one day he would grow up to be no better than they. He was given a bedroom in the house of a Mr. Micawber, and this man was, in his way, a friend.

There was never a better-hearted man than Mr. Micawber, but he seemed to be always unlucky. He had a head as bald as an egg, wore a tall, pointed collar, and carried for ornament an eye-glass which he never used. He never had any money, was owing everybody who would lend him any, and was always, as he said, "waiting for something to turn up." With this exception David had not a friend in London, and finally Mr. Micawber himself was put in prison for debt, and his relatives, who paid his debts to release him, did so on condition that he leave London. So at length David had not even this one friend.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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