

The Dodger suddenly stopped. "See that old cove at the book-stall?"

"The old gentleman over the way?" said Oliver. "Yes, I see him."

"He'll do," said Charley Bates.

The two boys walked stealthily across the road, then to Oliver's horror, he saw the Dodger plunge his hand into the old gentleman's pocket, and draw forth a handkerchief!

In an instant the whole mystery of the handkerchiefs, and the jewels, rushed upon the boy's mind. He stood for a moment, then, confused and frightened, he took to his heels, and made off as fast as he could.

In that very instant when Oliver began to run, the old gentleman turned round, and missing his handkerchief, naturally thought him to be the thief. "Stop thief!" he shouted. The cry was taken up by a hundred voices, and the chase was on.

Oliver lay, covered with mud and dust and bleeding from the mouth, and the crowd eagerly gathered round him. "Make room there for the gentleman! Is this the boy, sir?"

"Poor fellow!" said the old gentleman. "He has hurt himself."

A police officer arrived on the scene and seized Oliver by the ear.

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

"Oh, no, I won't hurt him," replied the officer, tearing his jacket half off his back. "Come, I know you; it won't do. Will you stand upon your legs, you young devil?"

Oliver, who could hardly stand, made a shift to raise himself on his feet, and was at once lugged along the streets by his jacket-collar at a rapid pace. The gentleman walked on with them by the officer's side; and as many of the crowd as could achieve the feat got a little ahead, and stared back at Oliver from time to time. The boys shouted in triumph, and on they went.