

SCENE THREE

MR SOWERBERRY:, (a gaunt man, attired in a suit of black, with darned cotton stockings to match and shoes to answer. His features are not naturally intended to wear a smiling aspect, but he is in general rather given to professional jocosity. His step is elastic and his face inward pleasantry.)

Enter MR BUMBLE with OLIVER

MR.BUMBLE

Liberal terms, Mr Sowerberry. .. Liberal terms? Three pounds!

SOWERBERRY

Well, as a matter of fact, I was needing a boy ...

MR.BUMBLE

Good! Then it's settled. One porochial 'prentis. Three pounds please!

SOWERBERRY

If you don't mind! Cash upon liking, Mr Bumble! Cash upon liking!

He calls out to MRS SOWERBERRY

Mrs Sowerberry!

MRS SOWERBERRY

(Off)

What is it?

MRBUMBLE

(To Oliver)

Oliver! Stand over there boy and hold up your head, sir!

MRS SOWERBERRY enters. A thin squeezed up woman with a vixenish countenance.

MRS SOWERBERRY

Well! What do you want? What is it? Oh, Mr Bumble!

SOWERBERRY

My dear, I have told Mr Bumble that we may consider taking in this boy to help in the shop.

MRS SOWERBERRY

Dear me! He's very small.

OLIVER! SOWERBERRY CASTING SIDES

OLIVER goes onto tip-toe

MRBUMBLE

Yes, he is rather small - there's no denying it. But he'll grow, Mrs Sowerberry - he'll grow.

MRS SOWERBERRY examines OLIVER doubtfully.

MRS SOWERBERRY

Ah, I dare say he will, on our vittles and our drink. They're a waste of time, these workhouse boys. They always cost more to keep than what they're worth. Still, you men always think you know best.

She gives a short hysterical laugh.

SOWERBERRY

But there's an expression of melancholy on his face, which is very interesting. He would make a delightful coffin-follower. I don't mean a regular coffin-follower to attend the grown-ups, but only for the children's practice. It would be very novel to have a follower in proportion my sweet

They all eye OLIVER speculatively