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The hero of the novel Oliver was born in a workhouse, which initially refers him to the class of destitute people. In the workhouses of the 30-40-ies of the XIX century, English law established a regime that turned them into a "Bastille for the Poor."

They grow stunted, exhausted, eternally hungry children, not living, but trying to survive. The fate of such weak children as Oliver was predetermined, and only a miracle could save them;

Every attempt at protest is brutally suppressed and punished by educators. "Obstinate" Oliver, for example, becomes one of the candidates for the gallows, as he dared to ask for additives of liquid slurry. He is subjected to solitary confinement, brutal flogging, and then they try to give the despotic chimney sweep, who already killed several boys to death, and the undertaker.

In the second part of the novel, Oliver, having escaped from his master, receives new life lessons in London, where he is surrounded by criminals - a gang of thieves. Education of young Oliver is now engaged in fence stolen Feigin, robber Sikes, prostitute Nancy and the sinister "gentleman" Monks. They try to force the boy to engage in thieves' craft, but Oliver showed a strong character and refused to participate in vile pursuits. However, brought up by the criminal world, Nancy retained a warm soul, she protects and helps Oliver.

By a lucky coincidence, the old good-natured Mr. Brownlow (he later turns out to be the friend of Oliver's father), who gives him shelter, meets the boy's life path. Without thinking of his own benefit, Mr. Brownlow helps a child who was hanged in a workhouse and then becomes his adopted father.

Dickens was aware of himself as a writer-preacher, so he somewhat idealized his characters. So, Oliver Twist is kind, truthful, virtuous, and no dirt of the surrounding world can spoil it. And the kind people who meet on his way are a kind of reward to the boy for devotion. So Mr. Brownlow is the first selfless rescuer of the orphan, whom Oliver later loved with all his heart.

Dickens himself is very interested in the fate of his hero and makes us worry, empathize with his misfortunes and joys. On the last pages of the novel there is a touch of sadness, although Oliver's life has improved, he has found his home and a loving family.