



BILL JUDGE.



WO small boys were scuffling and fighting in the gutter of a dirty street in the neighbourhood of a great thoroughfare, in the heart of London. A third boy, with his fingers jammed into his eyes, stood yelling at the top of his voice, pausing

at intervals to sob forth his complaint:

"I didn't do nothink to 'im! I'll tell my father!"

Nobody heeded him. At last, in his extremity he devised another method of extricating himself from his unpleasant position. "'Ere's the copper a-comin'!" he roared, pulling hold of the nearest boy, who had just succeeded in knocking his adversary down, and taking away from him a little old basket with a broken handle.

"'Ere's the copper a-coming!" shouted boy three again. Upon which the enemy, without a word, picked himself out of the gutter and set off down the street as fast as he could run.

"Where is 'e?" asked the conqueror, coughing and gasping for breath. He had a certain jaunty way of skipping about, with his chin in the air, that was strangely out of keeping with his tattered clothes. His face was scratched, and there was a great swelling on his forehead, but he scorned to notice such trifles. In the whole region of Crook Court, where he lived, there wasn't a pluckier boy of his size than Bill Judge—his size was lamentably small considering his seven years! This, for once, was a righteous quarrel; he had fought for the basket which had been ruthlessly stolen from its owner by

the court bully, he had gained the victory by fair means, and he wasn't going to turn coward now, not even for a policeman, at least, not till he was well in sight.

"Where is 'e?" he asked again, looking round. It was a dirty narrow street, with here and there a little den of a shop, with broken windows and old clothes flying from the doorway. A few yards farther down there were some half-dozen stalls, brightly lighted with jets of flaming naphtha. Round the stalls was collected a mass of men and women, screaming and bargaining, but the place where the children stood was comparatively deserted.

"I don't see nothink of the copper!"

"'Cos he ain't a-comin'!" answered the other boy. He was quite as big as Bill in stature, but miles behind him in courage and dexterity. Though he was still crying, his face was clean compared to his companion; his clothes were decently patched, while Bill's trousers and jacket hung about him in rags, and his feet were encased in a pair of old boots—much too big—through the soles of which the mud and rain penetrated with will.

"Wot did yer say so for?"

"To git rid of 'im."

Bill shoved his hands deep into his trouser pockets, or at least the holes where the pockets should have been, and whistled. The stranger was rising fast in his estimation.

"You're a nice young shaver, ain't yer?" he said reflectively. "Wot's yer name?"

"'Gustus Yeatman."

"Well, yer'd better git back to yer mother, wot yer 'ave been screechin' for, 'Gustus' and don't come hout' no more with the valuables."

"It's my dinner," said 'Gustus, looking at his new friend with eyes that were round with curiosity.

"Eat it up quick, and 'a done with it!" was Bill's advice, with a view to the probable return of the enemy. So saying, he turned away and sauntered across the street.

"I sa--ay," cried 'Gustus, prolonging the word after the manner of a true cockney, and Bill halted promptly; "father sent me on a errand, so mother give me my dinner. Ain't yer 'ungry? Come on and I'll give yer 'alf."

Bill's eyes glistened; in very truth, he had had no dinner that day, and but little the day before. Now that he came to reflect upon it, he was very hungry, and cold and sore and wet into the bargain. He made no objection to sharing the contents of the basket (for which he had valiantly struggled) and he and his new friend sat down on a sheltered doorstep, screwing up their feet so as to avoid the dripping from the ledges overhead, and made a gorgeous meal off a slice of currant dumpling that careful Mrs. Yeatman had prepared for her only child.

It was getting dusk, the fog crept up, and the lights on the stalls began to look blurred. The doorstep was wet and muddy, but the boys were well satisfied with their retreat, and remained talking long after Bill had picked the last crumb from the newspaper in which the pudding had been packed. By this time they had become very intimate, and Bill knew that 'Gustus's father was a steady workman in good wages—a bit strict, and that 'Gustus lived in mortal fear of displeasing him, though mother always took his part when things went wrong.

"Where's yer mother gone?" asked 'Gustus, as he prepared to take leave of his champion.

Bill blushed his grimy little hand in the air. "On the loose," he said; "she ain't been to work this week no' more. It was father wot druv 'er to it," he added, confidentially.

"Druv 'er to wot?"

"Drink," replied Bill, with composure; "and he ain't been nigh us since I was a little 'un, that 'igh," measuring about two feet up the door-post.

Augustus Yeatman was too well used to his state of affairs to be astonished at Bill's statement. However, he was seized with an uncomfortable feeling that perhaps his father mightn't take kindly to his new acquaintance. But he didn't like to say so, and he parted from Bill with many promises that they should meet again.

Bill hung about the streets till he was

tired out, and then he crept back to the house in the court, where his mother rented a back attic. The only entrance to Crook Court was through a low archway; to-night it was close and damp. Indeed, the place was always shrouded in a cloud of unwholesome fog, which even in summer no sunbeam pierced and no breeze lifted. The court was very narrow; it swarmed with half-starved ragged children, playing and fighting in the gutter from morning to night. The houses stood round, grim and high; they may have seen better days, it would have been hard to say. One or two of them had some battered remains of carving over the doorways; but now they were given over to lodgers of the lowest class. For years and years their windows had been broken, their woodwork rotten, their walls and ceilings discoloured with dirt and ill-usage, and their roofs saturated with wet. Their very floors were crumbling away bit by bit under the weary footsteps of the tenants—men and women who spent their lives crowded and huddled together, without joy and without hope. Two or three untidy women were gossiping on the door-step as Bill slunk by, anxious to escape notice; for one of them was the landlady, and in the absence of his mother she might fall to and abuse him because a week's rent was owing. The staircase was exceedingly dark, the damp was oozing through the walls; every now and then there was a hole in the boards. The stairs were particularly rickety after you had passed the second floor, but Bill knew his way; he escaped one pit-fall after another, and the more imminent peril of having a pail of dirty water thrown at his head by the landlady's mother, who was seldom strictly sober at this time of the evening. He reached his destination at last, it was nothing but a slip of a garret, almost empty, with a sloping roof, through which the rain leaked in several places. Small as it was, the Judges often took in a lodger. At present, however, the farther half of the room was to let, owing to the fact of the last tenant having left in a fury, after a wordy war with Bill's mother, which terminated in a broken head on one side and a black eye on the other. There was a mattress in one corner, and a stool and a few cracked plates and cups were on the floor. Bill had never known anything happier or better than this home. He was of a contented disposition; he kicked off his old boots, threw himself on the mattress, and was soon fast asleep, regardless of the yelling and swearing of the neighbours in the court beneath.

Mrs. Judge worked at a great paper manu-

factory. She was a quick hand, and had she been steady might have earned a decent living for herself and her child. Unfortunately she was not that way inclined, and the greater part of her wages went in gin. Sometimes work was so slack that she and half a dozen others would be turned off at a moment's notice. On these occasions Mrs. Judge would go on the tramp, hay-making or hop-picking, as the case might be. Just now, of course, there was no hay to make, and no hopping to be done; but she had gone off, nevertheless, with a man who sold earthenware in the suburbs, and Bill had seen nothing of her for three days. She had left him with half a loaf, which (being hungry) he had devoured the first day. Since then he had picked up a living as best he could, earning a penny now and then, begging at shop doors, and carefully collecting cabbage-leaves and other refuse from the dust-heaps, wherever he could find them. He was not particularly unhappy; he enjoyed more freedom when his mother was away. He was only afraid that when she did come back, if she was flush of money, she'd drink harder than ever, and then woe betide him if he fell out of favour! When she was working at the factory she was forced to keep sober, at least for the last days of the week—Sunday and Monday didn't count. It was a grievous life to live; to be beaten, and neglected and half starved. Seven years old! and he had never had as much dinner as he could eat, or worn a decent jacket. Worse still, he had never had any one to love him, or to care what befell him. He went to board-school irregularly, and learnt to read, giving the inspector an immensity of trouble, owing to his numerous, and (in the inspector's eyes) unnecessary absences. And he picked up vague notions on the subject of speaking the truth, and being honest, which were quite incompatible with his experiences of this work-a-day world. After all, school was but an episode, the reality was drunkenness and swearing and squalor and hunger, which last appeared to him the hardest to be borne.

So the long winter months rolled by. Mrs. Judge came back and went to the factory, she took less notice of Bill than ever, but he managed to scrape along somehow and be happy, though his cough grew worse and worse and the pain in his chest kept him awake at night. His friendship for Augustus Yeatman thrived steadily in spite of hindrances. The boys met at odd corners and at odd times, and 'Gustus, who had told his mother part of Bill's history, often brought him scraps of food, though he dared not ask

him home, not till he got some tidy clothes. Yet, he was exceedingly proud of his new acquaintance up to a certain point. Himself a dull, cowardly kind of boy, he appreciated Bill's readiness to the full, and regarded his knowledge of the London streets with admiration that would have horrified his father had he known of it. On the day when the friends had feasted together in some out-of-the-way corner, and Bill was equal to the exertion, he would perform the most wonderful extemporary dances for 'Gustus's benefit, singing and clapping his hands, and finally standing on his head till he was stopped by a violent fit of coughing. And Augustus believed him to be the greatest acrobat that the world had yet produced. Now and then, as the weather began to mend, they strolled together as far as the park, where they lay on the damp grass staring up into the sky—of which they ordinarily saw so little—as happy as two young princes. And here it was, watching the labours of a gardener who was planting crocus bulbs, that the love of flowers and the desire to possess a plant of his own first found a place in Bill's heart. Just to have one little bright-coloured flower in a pot to carry home and water and look after! The new idea took so firm a hold of him that he would wander about the streets for hours, looking at the flower shops and stalls, and envying their fortunate possessor. One day he was dawdling along as usual, feeling chilly in spite of the bright sunshine, when he found himself in the immediate neighbourhood of a barrow full of plants he did not know the names of any of them, but he stopped to gaze, open-eyed.

"Uullo! Young shaver, you moind to barrer a minute!" cried the coster, and a Bill ran towards him he recognised the man he lived in Crook Court. "I'm agoin' in t'ave a drop o' beer," continued the coster in a very hoarse voice; "you just look after them pots, and don't take yer h'eyes off o' 'em till I comes back."

Bill nodded a joyful assent, and the man disappeared through the swing door of the magnificent-looking public house. Whether it was five minutes that he stayed, or ten, Bill did not know, but the coster returned long before he had done walking round the truck and admiring its contents.

"Oh, mo-y!" he said at last, "ain't they growin' lovely?"

The coster was a kindly-natured person whose voice belied him; he searched among the small plants at the back of the barrow and brought out a sturdy geranium cutting in a four-inch pot. "You can 'ave tha

geranium, Bill, if yer loike," he said huskily, "cos as you was kind to my little 'un t'other day, my missis said. And you ain't but a little 'un yourself!" he continued, looking at Bill's white face and the thin hands that were eagerly stretched towards him; "put it in the sun and it'll git as big as a bush and flower beautiful loike a gen'lman's conservatory."

He took up the handles of the truck and went his way without waiting to be thanked, calculating how he could make the first customer he met with pay for the cutting, in addition to his own purchase. Bill heard him shouting, "Fine flowers! all a-growin' and a-blowin'!" as he went up the street.

Hiding the little plant under his ragged jacket, tenderly nursing it, as if it were some live animal, Bill ran home with a joyful heart. Luckily his mother was out, and he had no one to interfere with him as he examined the cutting minutely, counting its leaves, and, finally, in his raptures, embracing the four-inch pot! Having made up his mind that the bud (there was but one, so far) must blossom in a day or so, he looked about him for a safe hiding-place for his treasure. There was no table to stand it on, besides, so many of the window-panes were broken, and the gaps filled up with rags and paper, that the room was far too dark. It must have sun, the man had said, and light and air. He pushed up the rickety window-sash, and looked out, there was a gutter choked with rubbish, and a narrow stone coping, broken in many places. Bill had often crept along here in chase of cats, and he knew that it led to a steep roof that he could not climb. But a little way along the gutter there was a chimney-pot, which had got lodged there long ago, during a storm, and no one had troubled to put it in its place again. Here, in the shelter of the chimney, so that nobody looking out of a window could observe it, was the hiding-place he wanted. With trembling hands clutching his burthen, he stole along the gutter and placed it safely between the wall and the chimney-pot, where it would be screened from the wind and the smuts, and where—yes! he thought so—it would get the morning sun. He retraced his steps, fetched a cracked jug and watered the geranium. Then he tore himself away, fearful that his mother would come and discover his secret.

From that time forth Bill stayed more at home. On the days when he knew he should be alone, he pulled the stool against the door by way of a barricade (there was no handle

and no key) and sallied out in search of his plant. Never did a little geranium flourish better than this one of Bill's! Whether the costermonger had really lighted upon the best in his stock, or whether it was owing to its careful tending, there was nobody to tell, but before many weeks were over, it was a mass of scarlet blossom, and its stalks were putting forth strong green leaves in every direction. Then Bill lay in wait for the friendly coster and begged a little mould and a larger pot; and the geranium continued to prosper, even after this promiscuous re-planting.

Bill had confided his secret to Augustus Yeatman, and had gone so far as to bring him surreptitiously up to the garret to gaze upon his treasure. After this, Augustus also became anxious to possess a flower; one day he met Bill in triumph and told him how his father knew a man at Covent Garden market, who had brought *him* a geranium, and father had paid for it, and it was as big, oh! quite as big as Bill's, and much more beautiful, and mother wanted him to try for a prize later on in the summer when prizes were given away at the school, for the best plants that had been reared by the children of the parish. Bill listened and sympathised but he did not venture to ask if he might go back and see the rival geranium, and Augustus (knowing that his parents were against his speaking to ragged boys) did not invite him to come. Sometimes he almost wished that he had never met Bill at all; it would be so awkward if he ever came across him when his father was anywhere about. And Bill sat alone in the garret, and forgot his hunger—indeed, he never felt very hungry now as he used to do—in the contemplation of his beautiful plant. Sometimes the sparrows came and hopped on the broken parapet, but they never fancied scarlet geranium blossoms for their dinner, so Bill let them be. Once a magnificent pigeon with a green and violet neck, came by mistake and spent the afternoon on the very top of the dislodged chimney pot, cooing and puffing himself out, to Bill's intense delight! He was glad, too, at night when the stars shone, he never noticed them before (he used to sleep better, to be sure) and there was one bright star that seemed to shine right down on to his plant and watch it till the sun rose. It was a very hot summer, there was hardly a breath of air to breathe in the stuffy court. Bill's cough grew worse, and even his mother began to notice that he didn't get about as usual. It was hard on a poor woman, she said, who was used shameful and deserted by

her 'usband, to have a whining sick child into the bargain. But the landlady was sorry for the bright-faced boy and brought him tea and scraps of bread, she even went the length of saying that she would take him to the hospital one of these days, but she always forgot.

Bill had by this time thoroughly considered the subject of the flower-show, and after much meditation had come to the conclusion that he would take his geranium there. It followed as a matter of course that it would win a prize, and then his mother might be pleased, and it would not be necessary any longer to make a mystery of his gardening propensities. The thing to be done now was to find 'Gustus, and through him to learn all particulars. He knew that the prizes were to be given away on the following Monday afternoon, 'Gustus had said so, but the question was, would they let him in, all those grand gentlemen, in his ragged jacket, without more ado? He must certainly get 'Gustus to tell him more about it; but in vain he loitered at the corners of the streets where he had been wont to meet his friend, there was no 'Gustus to be seen. The days slipped by, at last it was Saturday, and he was still as far off as ever from finding out what he wanted to know. None of the neighbours cared anything about flower-shows, and his mother, who might, under the circumstances, have helped him, had gone hay-making, and he didn't know when she would be back. He had passed a very bad night; but he got up early, toiled down stairs to the pump in the court, and filled the cracked jug with water; it would not do to neglect his charge now that the prize day was so near at hand. He turned the pot round and round; was there ever such a well-grown plant, or one that had so many blossoms for its size? He was only a little uneasy because the large bud in the middle was rather slow in coming out. Saturday, Sunday, Monday; it had still nearly three days to grow, and it *could* do a great deal in three days, as he knew from experience.

There was nothing for his breakfast that morning, and he went out feeling faint and giddy. He had not even attempted to climb the parapet a second time, he would leave his geranium on the floor. At the door he turned to take a parting look; there it stood, a bright-coloured patch in the dingy room, and Bill went away perfectly satisfied.

The day seemed very long, the streets were hot and noisy, and he found no trace of Augustus. At last, in desperation, he went close to the house where the Yeatmans lived,

and lingered about till a woman on the door-step inquired what he wanted. Driven to an extremity, he asked if Augustus Yeatman lived anywhere near.

"Yes, he do, and he's hout. I see 'im go along of his father, not an hour ago."

"Which way did 'e go?" asked Bill eagerly.

"'Ow should I know!" answered the woman crossly; but a child playing with oyster shells in a gutter looked up and pointed in the direction of a large red-brick building at the end of the street, and whispered, "I seed 'em go in there, I did."

Glad to get any information as to his friend's whereabouts, Bill went on to the house to which the child had pointed. Here he found a small crowd of boys and girls waiting to be let in. On a board was written up in large letters, "Entrance free." Just at that moment some one opened the door, and Bill got carried inside by the crowd, before he well knew what had befallen him.

It was a large room, one part of it was full of forms arranged in rows; at the farther end was a platform decorated with red cloth, where sat some half-a-dozen gentlemen. On a table behind them was a quantity of flowers in pots; fuschias, roses, calceolarias, and a great many others that Bill had never seen before. It was a lovely sight! The front benches were already filled, but Bill got a seat some little distance from the door. "Wot's up?" he asked of his neighbour, a boy about as big as himself.

"The flower-show, you stupid," returned the boy, "and my brother's agoin' to git foive bob!"

Bill was glad that he'd come now. 'Gustus had never told him that there were to be *two* flower-shows; he felt rather dazed (the room was so hot) as he sat on the bench waiting to hear what the gentlemen would say. There was among them an old, grey-haired parson; Bill liked the look of him, he said a few kind words, and another gentleman made a speech, which Bill couldn't hear properly for the swimming in his head, and then the prizes were given away. One child after another walked up to the platform and received a prize, some ten shillings, some five shillings, and some half-a-crown.

Bill was at the end of a bench; he leant his head against the wall in his attempt to stifle a fit of coughing, he didn't notice much that was going on; but at last he heard the gentleman call out in a clear voice, "Augustus Yeatman. Second prize for the best-grown scarlet geranium."

With a mighty effort Bill sat up and

oked about him. He saw 'Gustus in his unday jacket and clean collar, his hair all at and shining, make his way in the direction of the platform. "'Gustus might 'ave told me 'e was going in for it to-day!" thought Bill, though he was delighted after that his friend was so lucky.

The gentleman took a small geranium from the table, and held it in one hand while he made a little speech. "It does you great credit, my lad," he said. "I hope that we shall see you again another year. In the meantime, Augustus Yeatman, I have much pleasure in handing over to you your well-earned prize and your flower."

A shriek rang through the room. "It's moine; 'tain't his at all. It's mine!"

Augustus turned pale, and stood stock still, while the gentleman looked with astonishment at a ragged little street Arab, who was forcing himself a passage through the crowd.

"What is the meaning of all this," he asked. "Augustus Yeatman (referring to the slip of paper), is not this geranium your plant?"

Augustus was crying violently by this time; he had caught sight of his father, standing bolt upright close to the platform. "Yes, sir, yes!" he sobbed.

"Then what do you mean by interfering with him, boy?" demanded the gentleman, turning an eye of scorn on Bill, who was indeed a most unsightly object, with his crooked head of hair and his dirty face.

"It's moine," he shouted, beside himself with rage, casting looks of longing on the plant that had been so cruelly stolen from him. He had counted its leaves that very day; shouldn't he know his own geranium even in a strange place?

"This won't do at all," said the gentleman, turning to consult the old clergyman. In that brief moment, when the two boys were left confronting each other, Augustus whispered through his tears: "Don't yer tell on me, Bill, don't tell? Father'd kill me if he knowed. He's coming; don't tell, *don't!*"

By this time a man who was in charge of the flowers had seized hold of Bill, while Augustus Yeatman's father strode up to the platform, demanding that the boy should be made to speak out. The plant belonged to his son; he had given it to him himself. The young scamp should be made to speak out, or he'd know the reason why.

All Bill's sharp wits were to the fore now. In his excitement he had forgotten his pains and his giddiness. Quick as a flash of light-

ning, he saw and understood what had happened. His friend had deceived him, it was clear enough; but that was no reason why he should turn traitor too. Immediately his determination was taken; he would give up his rights for the sake of Augustus.

"Now, boy," said the gentleman, after endeavouring very unsuccessfully to appease the wrath of Augustus Yeatman, senior, "do you still say that the plant is yours?"

"No, sir," faltered Bill, and Augustus stopped crying at once.

"What made you say that his property was yours?"

Bill hung his head. "'Twas a loie," he muttered.

"Then you give up all claim to it?"

Bill did not seem to understand, so the gentleman reconstructed his question: "Then you *now* say (tapping the geranium pot roughly, so that a leaf fell to the ground), you now say that this belongs to Augustus Yeatman, and not to you?"

"Yes, sir," muttered Bill. He made a feint of dropping his cap, and as he picked it up he picked up the fallen leaf, and hid it up his sleeve. "'Twas a — loie," he added, making use of an adjective that he heard a hundred times a day in Crook Court.

"Then you are a most wicked, unprincipled lad!" shouted the gentleman, waxing hot with virtuous indignation, "and you can consider yourself fortunate that I do not send you before a magistrate. How do you dare to come here, using improper language, and attempting to thieve? Burtinshaw, remove the boy at once, and see him off the premises."

"Stay, stay a moment," whispered the old clergyman; "the child looks very ill."

"Nothing of the sort; he is a regular wicked, bad boy. You are too easily imposed upon, my dear sir. Remove the boy, Burtinshaw."

So Bill was removed, and not very tenderly, by Burtinshaw, who gave him a good shaking, and put him down outside the door, with a caution that if he didn't look out he'd come to the gallus some day.

Still the old clergyman was not satisfied, and on the way home he imparted his doubts to his nephew, a young barrister, who had been a witness of the scene.

"Indeed, uncle, it's all right," said the nephew, a square-chinned, grey-eyed man. He was rich and clever, and strong and young, and he naturally thought a great deal of his own opinion. "Don't distress yourself. I know something about that class of boy, and I can tell you that I never saw a

more thoroughgoing young reprobate in all my experience. It's a regular plant his coming here and trying to get the prize, and I do believe that he has been successful in making you, at least, sympathise with him!"

"I do not see why he should have volunteered such a statement without any reason," observed the old man, "and he looked sadly ill."

"Oh, he's all right, uncle. Set your mind at rest. *That* boy ill! Not he!" laughed the nephew; and if it had not been that he cherished a considerable amount of affection for his uncle, he would have added, "Stuff and rubbish, I can't imagine how you can be so foolish."

In the meantime, Bill Judge staggered along without clearly knowing where he was going. His first idea was to get away from the schoolroom and the angry gentleman and the porter as soon as possible. Before he had gone many yards distant thunder rumbled, heavy rain began to fall, and in a few minutes he was wet through to the skin. Shivering with cold, stopping every now and then to gasp for breath when his cough came on with violence, he went on till he found himself at the entrance of the court. For once it was deserted; the pelting rain had dispersed the knot of idlers that generally hung about the house doors. It was a weary, weary way up stairs! More than once he had to sit down and rest. At last he reached the top. The attic door stood wide open; there was no one there. He had been afraid that his mother might have come back unexpectedly. In the dim light he could see the exact place where he had last stood to look at his plant. 'Gustus must have stolen up here and fetched it away soon after he went out. He took the faded leaf that he had picked up from the schoolroom floor, and put it to his face. How good it smelt, even that one little dead leaf! He hoped that 'Gustus would take care of his geranium now that he knew what it was worth. Up to this time he had kept back his tears manfully, but now they burst forth all at once, nearly choking him with their violence. His head ached, his eyes ached. Still holding the leaf tight in his fingers, he tottered to the mattress, and stretched himself full length on the floor. Once or twice he started up screaming, Was that 'Gustus? He was fast losing consciousness; his teeth chattered; then he sank down again on the floor, insensible. Meanwhile, the storm broke overhead with renewed fury, and the lightning flashed.

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On Sunday evening the old clergyman and his nephew were taking supper with the intimate friend, the parish doctor. Before the meal was half over the doctor was cal away; a child in Crook Court was dangerously ill, and the doctor's assistant was gone for his holiday.

"Shocking bad neighbourhood," said the doctor as he rose from his chair. "I had case there a few weeks ago. I must ask you to excuse me."

"I will come with you," said the clergyman.

"No, no; not at this time of night," remonstrated the doctor. But the old clergyman, gentle as he was, insisted upon accompanying the doctor: if he went, why his nephew must go too, if only to see him safe home again. So the three sallied forth together, the doctor taking the precaution to look if his stethoscope was in his hat before he started.

Arrived at Crook Court they were led by a dilapidated staircase (reeking with darkness and foul odours) by their guide, a ragged child of six or seven years old.

With some difficulty they toiled to the very top, the doctor uttering maledictions on the heads of the landlord and the parish authorities at every step: and the old clergyman thinking that he had spent seventy years in London, and had never seen the like of this before!

At the door they were met by the landlady. She seemed to recognise the doctor by instinct, and she put up with the other gentlemen as being his friends.

"He's mortal bad, sir," she said, and drew back.

The doctor and his friends entered; the paraffin lamp was flaring: on a mattress at a corner lay a little boy, breathing heavily, supported by a decent-looking woman in a shabby bonnet and shawl. By her side crouched another boy, his face was white with terror; clutched tight in his grasp, he held a scarlet geranium in a pot.

The doctor approached the group, and the woman looked up with an expression of relief, eagerly answering his few direct questions to the best of her ability. The examination was soon over, the doctor gave his directions and helped the woman tenderly to put the dying child in a more comfortable position.

"Can he not be moved from this terrible place to the hospital or to my house?" asked the old clergyman anxiously.

"It's too late," was the brief answer; "he won't live through the night."

"It's the same lad!" muttered the old clergyman in despair. A few words to the barrister and he prepared to set off in search of certain remedies that the doctor said must be tried at once. At the door he paused. Just then the boy opened his eyes.

"'Gustus!" he whispered; "'Gustus, is that you?"

"Bill!" cried 'Gustus, trembling, "I've brought it back! Look, mother and me 'ave brought it. I never thought as you'd go and take on so—'ere it is, and 'ere's the five bob. I ain't kep nothink back."

He thrust the flower right in front of his friend; the woman would have interfered, but the doctor motioned to her to be silent.

Bill raised himself on the mattress, an expression of great happiness lighted up his

poor little thin face. "I knowed as 'ow you'd come," he said with intense content. Then turning his eyes slowly towards the geranium, he stretched forth his hands, crying joyfully, "Look, look, 'Gustus! The big bud's hout at last!" and so fell back into the doctor's arms and died.

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"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," prayed the old clergyman with bowed head in the silence of the attic. The barrister went his way, with tears in his eyes, stumbling down the broken staircase; in his heart he registered a vow that henceforward he would devote some part of his life, at least, to labouring among the children of the London poor.

God help him in his work!

MARY E. HULLAH.

O OLIVE TREE, with grey green leaves,
That shimmer silver as they dance
Unto the west wind from the eaves
Of snow-capped mountains—like the glance
Of him I love—a loyal knight.
Methinks thy counterpart is he,
Rooted to earth, but crowned with light,
And staunch as thou, grey olive tree.

Thy stubborn branches image me
The independent mind that goes
Its own way on, though flattery
Of the world's charm-charged sunshine flows.
Tho' gnarled by age, heart cleft, one thing
Will hold his memory green, for he
Shall to the scattered nations bring
Rich fruits, like thou, grey olive tree.

O lover mine, be true to me;
In youth, in age, whatever weaves
The Weaver Life for us to wear,
Be like this grey green olive tree.
I look, they wave those silvery leaves;
I wake from dreaming by the sea.
Thou *hast been* as this olive tree,
And now, it's silver's in thy hair.

H. A. H.