

THE NICE GARDENER AND A PROBLEM 31

of bad people. It was uncomfortable enough to be so near them as this; he did not want to see their wicked faces.

"An empty cell," said Uncle Hector—"wouldn't you like to see that?"

But Rudd shrank from that too.

After lunch he was thrown on his own resources, and he would have found the time a little heavy but for Uncle Hector's garden, to which he took an old volume of *Punch*.

He had not long been reading, or rather looking at the pictures, when the gardener came in with a can and began to water the flowers.

He was a strong, stout man with a short grey beard. He looked at Rudd now and then and smiled. Rudd found himself looking at the gardener oftener than at *Punch*.

Gradually the watering brought the gardener close to Rudd's seat. "Hullo, sonny!" he said.

"Hullo!" said Rudd.

"What do you think of life?" the gardener asked.

Rudd had never thought of life, so he merely smiled perplexedly.

"A rum business, isn't it?" said the gardener.

"Is it?" Rudd asked.

"Not to you—yet," said the gardener. "Tell me, sonny, you do pretty much as you like, I suppose? Go where you will, with your hands in your pockets, don't you?"