

land linen-bag of hers, and began to hippety-hoppet down Hythe Hill. I went a roundabout way to throw father off the scent. 'Where are you goin', Bob?' says a woman. 'For a walk,' says I, 'and I shall be hungry before I come back.' She looks hard at me, but then she says, 'Poor little chap,' and goes in and cuts me a slice of bread and butter.

"The machine man took me up at the milestone, and I came up to London, bumpin' in a sack on the top o' Colchester natives. He gave me something to eat on the road, and next mornin' he dropped me at an early coffee-house in the Mile-En' Road, and gave me a shilling, and said 'Good-bye, Bob: luck go with ye;' and ever since then, sir, I thank God, I've been able to earn my own living—'cept when I've been laid up in hospital, and that's about ten times in forty years. They're good Christian places, those hospitals, when you're once inside; and the doctors, and the nurses, and the ladies—sisters they call 'em—there weren't any o' them when I used to be laid first—are as kind as kind can be. The doctors speak a bit brisk now and then, and the nurses make you mind 'em; but then what a lot they've got to look after! and the ladies are always so gentle, bless 'em! It's a pity, though, that the porters and such-like should be so bumptious: they might have, you'd think, more feeling for poor folk.

"Of course, you understand, sir, I'd rather pay a doctor, if I could; but then I can't, and, besides, how could I keep a nurse? So when I'm bad, I go to a kind gentleman I know, and he always manages to get me an order somewhere or other. I declare to you, sir, I've been downright happy in hospital when I've been gettin' a bit well again. So clean and quiet, no bad smells, and no bad language, and time to think good thoughts—it's like a week o' Sundays—very different from the Sundays here, sir. It was in Guy's, sir, that poor mother's words first really come home to me. Just before I was laid up, I'd been getting cocky—sacrificin' unto my net, and cripple as I was, I'd manage to get my livin', and keep myself respectable, and pick up a bit of book-learnin' about beasts, and birds, and flowers, and mechanics, and such-like, better than some big fellows who could make a mouthful of me. It was real good for me to be laid on the flat o' my back that time—it took the nonsense out of me. I was lyin' in my bed one night, feelin' very small, when all of a sudden I thought of poor mother lying on her bed, and of what she'd said to me, 'Try to be of some good, Bob.' And, thinks I, if you'd been the fine feller you fancied yerself, after all, wasn't you only workin' for yerself? If you was to die to-night, who'd be worse off but yerself? I'd given up saying my prayers and going to church for a bit, but I said a prayer that night, and made up my mind that, if ever I got about again, God helpin' me, I'd try to do somebody besides myself some good. But what good could a chap like me do to anybody? I thought again.

"However, the first Sunday I was out, I went to church—the one that stands back in the Blackfriar's Road—and the sermon was just as if the parson knew what I was thinking. It was