

## *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*

'I believe I have room for one,' he said at length. 'But you're such an uncertain kind of chap. You don't seem to care much whether you work or not. You're too independent you know; one can't say two words to you but you must needs clear off.'

The man made no answer.

'We can't tolerate that kind of thing, you know,' Hunter added, 'If we were to encourage men of your stamp we should never know where we are.'

So saying, Hunter moved away and again proceeded on his journey.

When he arrived within about three yards of the gate he noiselessly laid his machine against the garden fence. The high evergreens that grew inside still concealed him from the observation of anyone who might be looking out of the windows of the house. Then he carefully crept along till he came to the gate post, and bending down he peeped cautiously round to see if he could detect anyone idling, or talking, or smoking. There was no one in sight except old Jack Linden, who was rubbing down the lobby doors with pumice stone and water. Hunter noiselessly opened the gate and crept quietly along the grass border of the garden path. His idea was to reach the front door without being seen, so that Linden could not give notice of his approach to those within. In this he succeeded and passed silently into the house. He did not speak to Linden; to do so would have proclaimed his presence to the rest. He crawled stealthily over the house, but was disappointed in his quest, for everyone he saw was hard at work. Upstairs he noticed that the door of one of the rooms was closed.

Old Joe Philpot had been working in this room all day, washing off the old whitewash from the ceiling and removing the old papers from the walls with a broad-bladed square-topped knife called a stripper. Although it was only a small room Joe had had to tear into the work pretty hard all the time, for the ceiling seemed to have had two or three coats of whitewash which had never been washed off, and there were several thicknesses of paper on the walls. The difficulty of removing these papers was increased by the fact that the dado had been varnished. In order to get this off it had been necessary to soak it several times with strong soda water, and although Joe was as careful as possible he had not been able to avoid getting some of this stuff on his fingers. The