

AUGUSTUS MILLER'S TRIALS.

A Story of New York Tenement House Life.

By Malcolm Thackery Ross

CHAPTER I.

Dr. Johnson, the *ursa major* of literature, was accustomed to maintain that the only ills of life, worthy of consideration, were lack of food, and clothing, and shelter. So much of his early life in London had been a struggle against hunger and absolute want, that he had no sympathy for those who suffered merely from wounded feelings or mental distresses. No doubt this view of existence is a low one and but little calculated to flatter the proud spirit of man; yet it must be confessed that it is not without some justification. Most of the time of the average worker is expended in efforts to obtain the necessaries of life, and, in great cities especially, the struggle for mere existence is every year becoming harder. It is a race in which the weak and faint fall by the way and only the strongest are able to maintain their place. Behind the dull walls of the New York tenement houses are concealed tragedies as dark as any that have been written, and enough poverty and misery to furnish a whole library of novels with pathetic

incidents. It is just as well that some of us are not apt to feel for distress that we do not witness or we would hardly enjoy our meals, while others around us are hungry for the want of a crust of bread.

It is now more than two years since I was brought into contact with a singular case of suffering which made a strong impression upon me at the time. It was in December on the eve of Christmas season that I was walking one evening on one of the downtown streets of the city of New York, on the east side. The weather was chilly and raw and the sky gloomy with indications of a snow storm. Most of the people I met seemed to be hurrying home to enjoy the warmth of the fire and a hearty meal.

As I passed the corner my attention was attracted to the figure of a little girl who was standing before the window of a restaurant gazing wistfully at the tempting food that was displayed. This child did not seem to be more than seven years of age, and it hardly needed a second glance to tell me that she was very thinly clad and had hunger written on her face. People who traverse the side street of New York see every day