

CHAPTER V

THE SICK TREE

The going of my old grandsire was pathetic, for towards the last he lost interest in the living, in everything except the great elm he had always loved because his mother had nursed him under it.

"And it is dying, Jack, just as I am going; but I do so want it to live until I am gone!"

"It shall, Grandfather," I said, "it is sick, but with a little surgery I can save it. It shall live twenty years longer."

The old tree, tall and beautiful even in death, was half rotted as it stood. Any violent wind was likely to snap it off. Any great storm would beat it to the earth.

Every morning the old man would rise and look first of all to see if his tree was still standing.

He was greatly interested in the way I cured it. I cut away the dead rot up the entire trunk; and when I had finished, little, except a shell, remained. Into this I drove a section of iron railing from a railway track, fully fifteen feet high, driven five feet into the ground, down among the old roots of the tree. Around this and entirely