

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen  
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo  
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm  
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller  
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall  
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis  
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac  
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch  
Homer Tolstoy Whitman  
Darwin Thoreau Twain  
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott  
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte  
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse  
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke  
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chambers Irving  
Bunner Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse  
Doré Dante Pushkin Alcott  
Swift Chekhov Newton



tredition was established in 2006 by Sandra Latusseck and Soenke Schulz. Based in Hamburg, Germany, tredition offers publishing solutions to authors and publishing houses, combined with worldwide distribution of printed and digital book content. tredition is uniquely positioned to enable authors and publishing houses to create books on their own terms and without conventional manufacturing risks.

For more information please visit: [www.tredition.com](http://www.tredition.com)

## TREDITION CLASSICS

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series. The creators of this series are united by passion for literature and driven by the intention of making all public domain books available in printed format again - worldwide. Most TREDITION CLASSICS titles have been out of print and off the bookstore shelves for decades. At tredition we believe that a great book never goes out of style and that its value is eternal. Several mostly non-profit literature projects provide content to tredition. To support their good work, tredition donates a portion of the proceeds from each sold copy. As a reader of a TREDITION CLASSICS book, you support our mission to save many of the amazing works of world literature from oblivion. See all available books at [www.tredition.com](http://www.tredition.com).



The content for this book has been graciously provided by Project Gutenberg. Project Gutenberg is a non-profit organization founded by Michael Hart in 1971 at the University of Illinois. The mission of Project Gutenberg is simple: To encourage the creation and distribution of eBooks. Project Gutenberg is the first and largest collection of public domain eBooks.

# **The Missing Link**

Edward Dyson

# Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: Edward Dyson

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8424-8337-8

[www.tredition.com](http://www.tredition.com)

[www.tredition.de](http://www.tredition.de)

Copyright:

The content of this book is sourced from the public domain.

The intention of the TREDITION CLASSICS series is to make world literature in the public domain available in printed format. Literary enthusiasts and organizations, such as Project Gutenberg, worldwide have scanned and digitally edited the original texts. tredition has subsequently formatted and redesigned the content into a modern reading layout. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the exact reproduction of the original format of a particular historic edition. Please also note that no modifications have been made to the spelling, therefore it may differ from the orthography used today.

## CHAPTER I.

### DR. CRIPS'S HEALING MIXTURE.

HIS Christian name was Nicholas but his familiars called him Nickie the Kid. The title did not imply that Nicholas possessed the artless gaiety, the nimbleness, or any of the simple virtues of the young of the common goat. Kid was short for "kidder," a term that as gone out recently in favour of "smoodger," and which implies a quality of suave and ingratiating cunning backed by ulterior motives.

The familiars of Mr. Nicholas Crips were a limited circle, and all "beats," that is to say, gentlemen sitting on the rail dividing honest toil from open crime. They were not workers, neither were they thieves, excepting in very special circumstances, when the opportunity made honesty almost an impertinence. The sobriquet coming from such a source acquires peculiar significance. The god-fathers of Nickie the Kid were all experts, and obtained bed and board mainly by exercising the art of dissimulation. To stand out conspicuously as a specialist in such company one needed to possess very bright and peculiar qualities.

Mr. Nicholas Crips was blonde, bony man perhaps five feet nine in height, but looking taller because of the spareness of his limbs. This spareness was not cultivated, as Nickie the Kid was partial to creature comforts, but was of great assistance to him in a profession in which it was often necessary to profess chronic sickness and touching physical decrepitude. Mr Crips despised whiskers, but, as shaving was an extravagant indulgence, his slightly cadaverous countenance was often littered with a crisp, pale stubble, not unlike dry grass.

To-day Nickie wore a suit of black cloth. It had once been a very imposing suit, and had adorned a great person, but having fallen on evil days, was dusty and rusty, while the knees of Mr. Crips poked familiarly through a long slit in each leg of the stained trousers. The frock coat went badly with the damaged tan boots and the moth-eaten rag cap Nicholas was wearing.

Mr. Crips was making back-door call, and telling housewives what the doctors at the hospital had said about his peculiar ailment which, it appears, was an interesting heart weakness.

"Above all, I must be careful never to over-exert myself, madam—those are the doctor's orders," said Nickie, in his sad, calm way. "The smallest excitement, the slightest strain, and my life goes out like that." Nickie puffed an imaginary candle with dramatic significance.

This was the preliminary to a mild appeal for creature and medical comforts, and it had two objects—to open the soul to compassion, and bar all considerations of manual labour.

Our hero's manner with women was a gentle manly deference; his begging showed no trace of servility, but he was always polite. He accepted failure with good grace, and did not resent scorn, abuse, or even violence from intended victims. He was rarely combative. Fighting was not his special gift; he met misfortune with patient passivity. Resistance he found a mistake. But for all this a certain sense of superiority was, never wanting in Nickie the Kid; the shabbiest clothes, a deplorable hat, fragmentary boots, shirtlessness, the most distressing situations all failed to wholly eliminate a touch of impudent dignity, a trace of rakish self-satisfaction which as a rule escaped the attention of his clients; but, here and there, a student of human nature found it delightfully whimsical. Sometimes it appeared that this spice of egotism sprang from a blackguardly sense of humour that found joy in the abounding weaknesses and simplicity of the people he imposed upon, but, on the other hand, it would be sufficient to show that Mr. Crips was inspired only with gross selfishness or to comprehend that the stability of society depends upon fair dealing and faithful labour.

Nevertheless there were occasions when Nickie the Kid deliberately undertook to earn his daily bread. For a week he served as waiter in a six penny restaurant. He had been a "super" in drama and a practical crocodile in pantomime and was long in the employ of a fashionable undertaker as second in command on the hearse. In this latter billet he had to keep his hair dyed a presentable black, but otherwise the duties were light, and Nickie might still have been useful mute, only that he had the misfortune to get drunk at the

funeral of an eminent politician and behaved himself in a way obnoxious to the other mourners.

Some credit must be given to Crips for the above in view of the fact that he had long, since discovered how unnecessary work was to a man free of prejudices and unhampered with conscience. Every man should be master of his own conscience, and the exactions of conscience should be subordinate to the needs of the body. That was a large part of Nickie's philosophy, and he had acted up to it with marked success, but this morning housewives were incredulous and tough, and our hero was faring badly.

He entered the yard of Ebonwell, the chemist, and was about to knock, when his eye fell upon a well-worn Gladstone bag full of small bottles. In the course of long experience as a beat, Nickie had learned the value of prompt action. He gently snapped up the bag, and jauntily to the gate. Here he collided with a female entering in a hurry.

"Was yeh wantin' anythin', mister?" said the woman suspiciously.

"Good morning, madam," said Nickie, with unctiousness. "Can I tune your piano this morning?" His manner was most courteous, he smiled kindly, but he did not invite attention to the bag.

"No yeh can't," snapped the woman, "an' a good reason why—coz we ain't got a pianner to toon."

"A pity," said Nickie, suavely, "a pity, madam. No home should be without the refining influence of good music."

The woman passed in as Nickie passed out, and the latter looked back over the gate, and said, "Good morning, lady," with profound respect.

Nickie must have forgotten all about his weak heart; the dash he made out of that right-of-way, across the street, down a second right-of-way, and into a public garden, would not have discredited a trained pedestrian. An hour later Mr. Crips was seated in a secluded spot on the river bank, taking stock. He possessed one very second-hand black bag and four dozen four-ounce bottles. The Kid's intention in the first place had been to dispose of the loot at the nearest marine store, but Nickie was a man of ideas, and one had

come to him there in his loneliness. He hid his bag of bottles, and wandered into the city. After several misses he succeeded in begging sixpence to buy cough drops for his influenza.

He paid threepence for the cough drops at a convenient hotel, and took them in bulk. With his change he purchased threepence worth of small corks. Back at the Yarra Nickie the Kid dissolved one of three gingernuts he had taken from the bar lunch in a two pound jam tin of river water, and started to fill his bottles. He filled one dozen.

Having explained to a small knot of brother professionals that he needed change of air and scenery, Nickie the Kid started out of town that afternoon. We next discover him seated under a spreading gum in a pleasant sweep of sunny landscape at Tarra, with his trousers in his hands, carefully and systematically repairing and renovating the same. The frock coat had been "restored," the rag cap was abandoned in favour of a limp bell-topper, contributed by the family of a benevolent clergyman, and the tan boots were artistically blacked with stove polish. Nickie the Kid warbled at his work with the innocent gaiety of a bird.

It was not yet sundown, and Nicholas Crips was clothed, and stood with his black Gladstone in his right hand, prepared for the campaign. He had had a clean shave, and his face had a sort of calm dignity touched with benevolence. He turned round, examining himself, and the coat-tails floated gracefully in the breeze.

"Eminently satisfactory," said Mr. Crips. "And now for business." He cleared his throat, as if about to commence an oration, and set off at a smart pace towards the farm-house whose chimneys peeped over the hill.

A dog barked surlily as Nickie passed up the garden walk, but Nickie knew the character and quality of dogs, no beat better, and he recognised this one as harmless to man. A woman came to the door, wiping her fat, red arms on a canvas apron.

"A very good day to you, madam," said Mr. Crips, lifting his belltopper with some grace, and bowing slightly. "I have taken the liberty of calling upon you to bring under your attention my cele-

brated medicine—Dr. Crips's Healing Mixture, for coughs, colds, consumption indigestion, biliousness and all bronchial complaints."

He took a bottle from his bag and shook it invitingly, his voice was respectful and very persuasive, but by no means subservient. Nickie's voice was his most valuable possession; it had a note so winning, so appealing, that it was only with strong effort that ordinary people could resist it.

"No," said the woman, "we ain't got any o' them complaints."

"Headache, earache, toothache, lumbago, Bright's disease?" said Nickie, suggestively.

"No." The woman shook her head. "We ain't got nothin' in the 'ouse but rhoumertism in me ole man's back. He's bin laid up three weeks with it."

"Dr. Crips's Rheumatic Balm!" exclaimed Nickie, with decision, restoring the first bottle to the bag, and producing another of exactly the same mixture. "Cures rheumatism in two hours. Gives instant relief in cases of neuralgia and sciatica. A little to be rubbed on the affected parts night and morning."

The woman took the bottle, examined it closely, shook it up, and said,  
"It looks good."

"It's invaluable, madam," replied Nickie, with quiet conviction. "No family should be without it. Two shillings, if you please."

The woman took a bottle, and when leaving, Nickie the Kid turned and said, "I shall be back this way in a week, and shall do myself the honour of calling on you for a testimonial, if I may?"

At the next farm-house Nickie had a man to deal with. The man began by wanting to throw Dr. Crips over the fence, and ended by buying a bottle of his Infallible Hair Restorer, and paying him half-a-crown for professional advice in the case of a brown cow afflicted with mumps.

Nickie the Kid had put in the busiest day of his varied career, and here he rested from his labours. With six and six in his pocket he could afford luxuries. That night he slept in a bed at the Harrow

Hotel, and next morning breakfasted on grilled bacon and boiled eggs. Before leaving, he sold the publican two bottles of the world-famous Healing Mixture as a pick-me-up.

On the second day the doctor set out to cover as much ground as possible. He was astute enough to recognise the wisdom of moving on before his customers had time to compare notes. Before noon, he sold six bottles of the Healing Mixture for influenza, two bottles of the Rheumatic Balm, and one bottle of the same as a certain cure for a peculiar disorder in pigs.

Nickie was going along the main road, heading north, branching off to the farm-houses by the way to sell his cure-all. He sold one guileless housewife a bottle, assuring her that it would convert brass spoons into real silver. A little mercury in a rag helped this trifling deception. On the third day Nickie had to buy some ginger-nuts to make a fresh supply of the Healing Mixture, and bottles were running short. He saw fortune staring him in the face.

It was about eleven, and Mr. Crips was trudging contentedly along, the road, swinging his bag and singing his tender lay, at peace with the world, and buoyed with great hopes, when a trap drove up and a voice out of the accompanying dust said: —

"That's 'im. That's the bloke!" A man jumped down and advanced to Nickie, and laid hands on him.

"You're that doctor bloke what's selling the Rheumatic Balm, ain't yeh?" he asked.

Nickie said nothing. Retribution had overtaken him. He knew that. His fair dreams fell from him, he sighed deeply, and philosophically, as was his wont, abandoned himself to the inevitable.

There were two young men in the trap. They hoisted Nickie to the seat behind, and drove on. No explanation was offered, and Mr Crips expected none. They would come, he imagined, along with the familiar penalties. One of the young men did remark, with cheerful enthusiasm: "You're in fer it all right, blokie," but Nickie the Kid only sighed.

Crips recognised the farm-house they drove to as that of the farmer with rheumatism in the back, his first customer. One young

man ran in with the news, and presently reappeared in company with a large, elderly, energetic man, who was crying, excitedly: "Where is he? Bring him to me!"

This large man dashed at Nickie the Kid, and fell on him bodily. He was followed by the housewife who purchased the Rheumatic Balm, and she also fell upon Nickie, who put up a short prayer. But to the doctor's immense surprise he found presently that he was not being assaulted, but hugged, that it was not curses, but blessings the old couple were showering upon his head.

"Lor love yeh, I'll never forget yeh fer this," cried the farmer.

"Come inside an' have a bit to eat," exclaimed his wife.

The pair literally dragged Nickie into the house and dumped him down at a loaded table. He was waited upon by a rather nice-looking girl of twenty.

"This is him, Millie," said the farmer, with enthusiasm. "This is Dr. Crips what cured yer old dad. Gord bless you, sir."

The girl shook Nickie by the hand, and smiled on him sweetly, and said she could never forget the man that cured her dear pa, and all Nickie's happiness and his great content came back to him like refreshing waters. Dr. Crips stood up straight, he shook hands enthusiastically with farmer Dickson.

"So the Rheumatic Balm has set you up again?" he said, heartily.

"Hasn't it, by gum! Look at this." The farmer capered about the room.

"Every bit o' pain's gone. I'll buy every drop of that balm you've got. That's why I had you brought back. But sit down, and eat, man—eat!"

They simply squandered hospitality on Nickie the Kid that night; they had neighbours in to see him; they had music, and Dr. Crips sang, and danced, and drank, and made love to Miss Dickson out under the elderberries. Out under the elderberries, for the edification of Millie Dickson, Nicholas Crips was a medical man of high attainments, but the victim of extraordinary vicissitudes. It was very

touching, most romantic. Nickie lied with great splendour. He displayed no little aptitude in the character of Don Juan too. Miss Dickson thought him a perfect dear.

Returning to the house for supper, Nickie and the ingenuous Millie loitered by the open kitchen window, and Nickie saw and heard things of no little interest to him professionally. Farmer Dickson and three neighbours were comparing bottles of Dr. Crip's Celebrated Healing Mixture.

"Anyhow," said one, "I'll swear his nibs sold me this ez a cure fer pip in chickens."

"And he told me this was a dead sure cure fer corns 'n' ingrowin' toe-nail," ejaculated another.

"I bought this bottle fer me diabetes," explained Coleman. "He said it ud root out diabetes in nine hours."

Farmer Dickson shook his bottle, and looked at it very dubiously. "It seems t' me it's all the same mixture," he said. "It looks like it, tastes like, 'n' it smells like. Now I come t' think iv it, I ain't too sure 'bout these blanky rheumatics o' mine." He reached down his back and rubbed himself anxiously.

"I thought my diabetes was a-movin', but they're all back at me agin," said Coleman.

"The chicken died what I gave the mixture to," explained Anderson.

Dickson scowled and felt himself, for as far as he could reach up and down his spine. "I'm pretty certain the rheumatics 're comin' back," he murmured. "Wow!" he gasped, as a bad twinge took him. "It is back!"

"Tell yeh what," Anderson remarked plaintively, "we've been done."

"He's a blanky fraud!"

"A robber!"

"Let's look him up, 'n' 'ave a word or two."

The farmers seized their sticks. They moved towards the door, but already Nickie had begged to be excused, and passed into the night. The stillness and mystery of the bush enveloped him.

Next day the neighbours compared notes and bottles, and found that the medicine for influenza, consumption, liver disease, indigestion and cold feet, the embrocation for rheumatism, sprains, corns, bruises and headaches, the cure for pigs, the wash for silvering spoons, and the hair-restorer were all the same mixture. Then a great popular demand for Dr. Crips set in at Tarra, but by this time Nickie the Kid was back in town, amazing his friends with his lavish hospitality in threepenny bars.



## CHAPTER II.

### A FAMILY MATTER.

EVEN Nickie's intimates of the wharves and the river banks knew nothing of his ancestors or relations. Nickie was naturally reticent about his own business; On the point of family connections he was dumb. It was assumed that he had had a father and mother at some stage of his career, but the evolution of Nickie the Kid from a schoolboy, with shining morning face, to a homeless rapsallion, living on his impudence, was never dwelt upon by our hero, which is a great pity, as the process of degeneration must have been highly interesting.

Certainly, Nickie did not regret his respectable past, if he were ever respectable, and it is equally certain that he had no craving for high things in the way of tall hats and two-storey houses. He appreciated the value of money, since it enabled him to gratify his tastes, but it must be admitted his tastes were scandalous in the main.

However, at Banklands Nickie solicited work, laborious and painful work. Moreover, he went to the job of his own free will, when sober and in his right mind. This seemed to imply an awakening of conscience, a dawning sense of his utter uselessness to the body politic, and a desire to figure as a useful member of society. On the other hand, it may have been a symptom of brain-softening. But it happened to be neither; it was in fact a means to a wicked end. On the fading end of a superior suburb, where the streets of fine villas and mansions thinned off and dwindled, and were lost among the gum trees of the original wilderness, Nickie found his billet.

The suburb was coming ahead. The motor-car had made it easy and accessible to the rich. Splendid dwellings were going up all over the place, the road makers were exceedingly busy, and hammers of the stone-knappers rattled an incessant fusillade.

Nickie the Kid came to Banklands one pleasant summer day, watched the busy people with a desultory sort of interest, and moralised within himself.

"Do these people expect to live a thousand years?" mused Mr. Crips, "that they build such solid houses? Or do they regard them as monuments? Look at that palace, and I sleep well on a potato sack under four boards!"

Nickie was examining a fine, white house, ornate as a wedding cake, with plentiful cement, and balconies as frivolous as those of a Chinese pagoda. It stood within capacious grounds, and proclaimed aloud the fact that its proprietor was a rich man, ostentatious of his riches.

"I expect there's a matter of thirty rooms in that house," mused Nicholas Crips, "and after all, a man can get just as drunk in a threepenny bar."

Nickie put in a couple of days skirmishing at Banklands, and fared well, but as there was no hotel in the suburb Nicholas did not contemplate making a lengthy stay. Something he saw on the second afternoon induced him to change his mind, and threw him into a state of profound reflection lasting for nearly an hour; then he sauntered over to the man working on the pile of stones before the gates of the cemented mansion, and seating himself on the broken metal, entered into conversation with the two-inch mason wielding the hammer.

"Pretty hard work this," ventured Nicholas.

"Blanky hard," assented the stonebreaker.

"Did you ever try the softening influence of beer?" asked Nickie, drawing a bottle from his pocket.

"Well, I won't make yeh force it on me," said the stonebreaker.

They divided the liquor like brothers dear, and the stonebreaker developed a sudden affection for Nicholas Crips, who after twenty minutes casual conversation, introduced his plea.

"Must be splendid exercise for the liver, stoneknapping," he said. "I've been troubled with liver complaint lately. Living too high. Could you give a man a job?"

"Well," said the breaker, "I got a sorter contrac' t' break so many yards. If you'll do it at bob a yard you can get gain' on the other end iv th' 'eap."

The price was far below current rates for cutting metal, but Nickie was not penurious and grasping. He threw off his tattered coat, and, draped in fragments of a shirt, in a pair of trousers, half of which fluttered in the breeze, and boots that looked like a collection of fragments, he set to work.

Certainly Nicholas Crips did not show any disposition to work himself to death. After an hour his employer told him he wasn't likely to earn enough to keep a rag-gatherer in toilet soap, but Nickie explained again that he was merely exercising his liver, and had no intention of making an independence as a breaker of road metal.

Nickie's heap was right opposite the great, fanciful iron gates of the cemented residence. He could see the well-kept garden and the showy house from where he worked, and he frequently ceased his half hearted rapping at the tough stone to watch children playing on the lawn. He was particularly interested in a tall, `severe-looking, fair-haired woman, who appeared on the balcony for a moment.

Mr. Crips had been at work for about three hours, during which time he had perspired a good deal and gathered much dust, for Nickie was habitually easy going, and his task, although pursued with no diligence, had "taken it out of him" to some extent. He was certainly a deplorable scarecrow. A fine, polished carriage, with rubber tyres, drawn by a splendid pair of chestnuts, was driven down the side drove by a livened menial. It drew up near the centre gates, and Nickie leaned on his hammer and waited.

The tall, dignified lady, accompanied by a short, important man in immaculate black, came along the path, and approached the open door of the vehicle. Nickie advanced carelessly, and intercepted them. He bowed grotesquely.

"Good day, Billy," he said, familiarly. He lifted his hat pointedly to the lady. "'Ow's yerself Jinny?" he asked.

The lady and gentleman stared at him in utmost astonishment for a moment, then consternation seized them, and they made a dive for the vehicle. Nickie followed to the door.

"So long, if yer mus' be goin', Willyum," he said, pleasantly. "So long, Jinny. How's the old man's fish business?"

"Drive on!" gasped the gentleman. He had the scared expression of one who had seen a spectre.

The liveried menial whipped up, and the carriage was swept away. Nickie returned to his heap, and for fully two minutes Stub McGuire, his employer, gazed at him in speechless, open-mouthed amazement.

"Well, of all the blarsted cheeks!" gasped McGuire, when speech came to him.

"Don't mention it," said Nickie.

"Don't mention it!" yelled Stub. "No, iv course not, but what price his ribs in the noble belltopper mentionin' it t' th' Johns, an' gettin' you seven days fer disgustin' behaviour?"

Nickie smiled inscrutably, and continued his work. When the carriage returned, he made an adroit movement, and courteously opened the door.

"Low me, Jinny, my dear," he said, offering his grimy hand.

The lady stepped down, and passed him disdainfully. The gentleman brushed him aside.

"Ope yeh 'ad er pleasant ride in yer cart, Billy?" said Nicholas.

He followed them to the gate, and called through the bars.

"Very sorry, Jinny, but I carn't haccept yer pressin' invitation ter dinner, havin' er previous engagement."

He returned to his work again, smiling sweetly. He seemed to enjoy Stub McGuire's horror.

"'Ere, 'ere," said McGuire, "off this job you go if you don't know better than to insult people that way. You'll be gettin' me inter mischief."

"Not at all," said Nickie, "not at all. Surely a man may offer ordinary civilities to his friends. Bless my soul, you wouldn't have me cut old Billy in the streets, would you? If I didn't speak to Jinny she'd think I was angry with her, and cry her eyes out. She has a tender heart, poor girl. She is a sensitive soul, and craves for social distinction. She looks to me to secure them a footing in exclusive circles, Mr. McGuire."

"I don't know what y're talkin' about," Stub grumbled, "but that's enough of it, see?"

Nickie took no notice of his employer's admonitions, however, and when a clergyman drove up in a buggy an hour later, our hero intercepted him at the gate.

"Good afternoon, sir," he said. "Would you mind tellin' Willyum inside there how Nickie sends him his compliments, and 'opes Jinny's quite well."

"My good fellow, you must not be insolent," ejaculated the minister.

"They won't take it as hinsolence," Nicholas explained. "They've er very touchin' regard fer me. Tell them. I arsked after 'em, won't yer?"

Even Stub McGuire noticed that Nickie, whose speech was usually excellent, adopted the vulgar tongue in addressing the man he called Billy, or any of his friends or relations.

Next day, Nickie inveigled three children, who were playing on the lawn, and entertained them at the gate with frivolous conversation for nearly ten minutes, when the state of affairs was discovered by their dignified mamma, who sent a maid flying to the rescue. Nickie took off his hat to the maid.

"Tell Willyum," he said, "that bein' 'andy, I'll drop in ter lunch t' day, but Jinny's not on no account t' put up a big spread fer me. I'll jist take what's goin'."

He finished these remarks at the top of his voice, the girl being half-way back to the house.

When the important man in immaculate black came out a little later, Nickie saluted him gravely, as between gentlemen, but without deference.

"Ow's it, Billy?" he said. "You might drop in an' see me this evenin'. I'm livin' under th' blackberry hedge back o' your stables."

The stout man passed in silence, and with a great show of dignity. Nickie had a busy afternoon. Evidently it was the dignified lady's "day." Quite a crowd of people drove up to the gates during the afternoon, and Nickie entrusted each with an affectionate and familiar message to Jinny. All were horrified at the insolence of the disgusting man, and one young fellow kicked Mr. Crips, but our hero did not seem to mind. He merely warned his assailant that he would issue a County Court writ for any damages done to his trousers.

On the following morning at about 11 o'clock Nickie entered the grounds, his rags fluttering in the breeze, marched to the door and rang the bell. To the Napoleonic man-servant who opened to him, he gravely presented a tomato can half-full of water, and said:

"Will yer please arsk Bill or Jinny if they'll be so good as to bile my billy at the drorin'-room fire. Tell 'em it's Nicholas Crips what makes the request. No, thanks, I won't come in, I'm afraid my motor car might bolt."

The Napoleonic man-servant threw Nickie off the verandah, and threw his billy after him, but this did not deter Nicholas from an attempt to enter into familiar conversation bearing on family matters, when he found the dignified lady in a summer house.

The lady glared at him in stony horror. "How dare you?" she ejaculated.

"How dare you?"