



*Illustrated by K. Hutton.*

**I**N Professor Mallock's orchard the plums were ripe. The harvest moon was in the sky, and showed the well-kept plum trees bending with the weight of ripe and juicy fruit.

All was calm, and no sound broke the stillness save the gentle rustling of the professor's cabbage palms, the soft, sighing of the sea waves on the sandy shore, and the howling of the next neighbour's bull pup.

A cloud passed across the moon, and while its shadow rested upon the scene, a ragged urchin struggled through a hole in the hedge, and after assuring himself that the coast was clear, crept stealthily towards the plum trees with greedy eyes and watering mouth.

Again the moon shone forth, and its clear silver light revealed the nocturnal thief filling the bosom of his shirt with the biggest plums from the choicest tree. His cap had been left behind in the hedge, his ragged clothes were much too large, even the patches had been patched, and the tattered scarecrow beside him, placed there to scare away those imported thieves, the blackbirds and thrushes, was almost better dressed than he.

Although his ears were keen, he heard

not the sound of carpet slippers on the well-mown turf, but his nostrils sniffed the aroma of tobacco, and glancing quickly round, he saw a scarlet smoking cap over the tops of some intervening bushes. In a few moments the wearer would be in sight. It was too late to fly, but he was seized with a brilliant inspiration.

In a moment the tattered hat of the scarecrow was on his head, the dummy figure itself was tossed behind some tall potato tops, and when, a moment later, Professor Mallock glanced towards his beloved plum trees, there was nothing unusual to attract his attention as he settled himself down on a garden seat.

Professor Mallock was writing a book, and to-night, wearied with long hours of work, he had come to enjoy his pipe in the cooler air, and meditate under the moon and stars.

The soft beauty of the scene, and the influence of tobacco, soothed and tranquillized his mind, and he fell to thinking of the fame that would be his when his great work, the fruits of years of study and thought, should be given to the world.

It would lay the foundations of a new and beautiful philosophy of life, which