

II

As he went down the narrow staircase, covered with its dingy and threadbare carpet, he found the house so full of dirty yellow haze that he realized that the fog must be of the extraordinary ones which are remembered in after-years as abnormal specimens of their kind. He recalled that there had been one of the sort three years before, and that traffic and business had been almost entirely stopped by it, that accidents had happened in the streets, and that people having lost their way had wandered about turning corners until they found themselves far from their intended destinations and obliged to take refuge in hotels or the houses of hospitable strangers. Curious incidents had occurred and odd stories were told by those who had felt themselves obliged by circumstances to go out into the baffling gloom. He guessed that something of a like nature had fallen upon the town again. The gas-light on the landings and in the melancholy hall burned feebly--so feebly that one got but a vague view of the rickety hat-stand and the shabby overcoats and head-gear hanging upon it. It was well for him that he had but a corner or so to turn before he reached the pawnshop in whose window he had seen the pistol he intended to buy.

When he opened the street-door he saw that the fog was, upon the whole, perhaps even heavier and more obscuring, if possible, than the one so well remembered. He could not see anything three feet before him, he could not see with distinctness anything two feet ahead. The sensation of stepping forward was uncertain and mysterious enough to be almost

appalling. A man not sufficiently cautious might have fallen into any open hole in his path. Antony Dart kept as closely as possible to the sides of the houses. It would have been easy to walk off the pavement into the middle of the street but for the edges of the curb and the step downward from its level. Traffic had almost absolutely ceased, though in the more important streets link-boys were making efforts to guide men or four-wheelers slowly along. The blind feeling of the thing was rather awful. Though but few pedestrians were out, Dart found himself once or twice brushing against or coming into forcible contact with men feeling their way about like himself.

"One turn to the right," he repeated mentally, "two to the left, and the place is at the corner of the other side of the street."

He managed to reach it at last, but it had been a slow, and therefore, long journey. All the gas-jets the little shop owned were lighted, but even under their flare the articles in the window--the one or two once cheaply gaudy dresses and shawls and men's garments--hung in the haze like the dreary, dangling ghosts of things recently executed. Among watches and forlorn pieces of old-fashioned jewelry and odds and ends, the pistol lay against the folds of a dirty gauze shawl. There it was. It would have been annoying if someone else had been beforehand and had bought it.

Inside the shop more dangling spectres hung and the place was almost dark. It was a shabby pawnshop, and the man lounging behind the counter

was a shabby man with an unshaven, unamiable face.

"I want to look at that pistol in the right-hand corner of your window,"
Antony Dart said.

The pawnbroker uttered a sound something between a half-laugh and a grunt. He took the weapon from the window.

Antony Dart examined it critically. He must make quite sure of it. He made no further remark. He felt he had done with speech.

Being told the price asked for the purchase, he drew out his purse and took the money from it. After making the payment he noted that he still possessed a five-pound note and some sovereigns. There passed through his mind a wonder as to who would spend it. The most decent thing, perhaps, would be to give it away. If it was in his room--to-morrow--the parish would not bury him, and it would be safer that the parish should.

He was thinking of this as he left the shop and began to cross the street. Because his mind was wandering he was less watchful. Suddenly a rubber-tired hansom, moving without sound, appeared immediately in his path--the horse's head loomed up above his own. He made the inevitable involuntary whirl aside to move out of the way, the hansom passed, and turning again, he went on. His movement had been too swift to allow of his realizing the direction in which his turn had been made. He was

wholly unaware that when he crossed the street he crossed backward instead of forward. He turned a corner literally feeling his way, went on, turned another, and after walking the length of the street, suddenly understood that he was in a strange place and had lost his bearings.

This was exactly what had happened to people on the day of the memorable fog of three years before. He had heard them talking of such experiences, and of the curious and baffling sensations they gave rise to in the brain. Now he understood them. He could not be far from his lodgings, but he felt like a man who was blind, and who had been turned out of the path he knew. He had not the resource of the people whose stories he had heard. He would not stop and address anyone. There could be no certainty as to whom he might find himself speaking to. He would speak to no one. He would wander about until he came upon some clew. Even if he came upon none, the fog would surely lift a little and become a trifle less dense in course of time. He drew up the collar of his overcoat, pulled his hat down over his eyes and went on--his hand on the thing he had thrust into a pocket.

He did not find his clew as he had hoped, and instead of lifting the fog grew heavier. He found himself at last no longer striving for any end, but rambling along mechanically, feeling like a man in a dream--a nightmare. Once he recognized a weird suggestion in the mystery about him. To-morrow might one be wandering about aimlessly in some such haze. He hoped not.

His lodgings were not far from the Embankment, and he knew at last that he was wandering along it, and had reached one of the bridges. His mood led him to turn in upon it, and when he reached an embrasure to stop near it and lean upon the parapet looking down. He could not see the water, the fog was too dense, but he could hear some faint splashing against stones. He had taken no food and was rather faint. What a strange thing it was to feel faint for want of food--to stand alone, cut off from every other human being--everything done for. No wonder that sometimes, particularly on such days as these, there were plunges made from the parapet--no wonder. He leaned farther over and strained his eyes to see some gleam of water through the yellowness. But it was not to be done. He was thinking the inevitable thing, of course; but such a plunge would not do for him. The other thing would destroy all traces.

As he drew back he heard something fall with the solid tinkling sound of coin on the flag pavement. When he had been in the pawnbroker's shop he had taken the gold from his purse and thrust it carelessly into his waistcoat pocket, thinking that it would be easy to reach when he chose to give it to one beggar or another, if he should see some wretch who would be the better for it. Some movement he had made in bending had caused a sovereign to slip out and it had fallen upon the stones.

He did not intend to pick it up, but in the moment in which he stood looking down at it he heard close to him a shuffling movement. What he had thought a bundle of rags or rubbish covered with sacking--some tramp's deserted or forgotten belongings--was stirring. It was alive,

and as he bent to look at it the sacking divided itself, and a small head, covered with a shock of brilliant red hair, thrust itself out, a shrewd, small face turning to look up at him slyly with deep-set black eyes.

It was a human girl creature about twelve years old.

"Are yer goin' to do it?" she said in a hoarse, street-strained voice.

"Yer would be a fool if yer did--with as much as that on yer."

She pointed with a reddened, chapped, and dirty hand at the sovereign.

"Pick it up," he said. "You may have it."

Her wild shuffle forward was an actual leap. The hand made a snatching clutch at the coin. She was evidently afraid that he was either not in earnest or would repent. The next second she was on her feet and ready for flight.

"Stop," he said; "I've got more to give away."

She hesitated--not believing him, yet feeling it madness to lose a chance.

"MORE!" she gasped. Then she drew nearer to him, and a singular change came upon her face. It was a change which made her look oddly human.

"Gawd, mister!" she said. "Yer can give away a quid like it was nothin'--an' yer've got more--an' yer goin' to do THAT--jes cos yer 'ad a bit too much lars night an' there's a fog this mornin'! You take it straight from me--don't yer do it. I give yer that tip for the suvrink."

She was, for her years, so ugly and so ancient, and hardened in voice and skin and manner that she fascinated him. Not that a man who has no To-morrow in view is likely to be particularly conscious of mental processes. He was done for, but he stood and stared at her. What part of the Power moving the scheme of the universe stood near and thrust him on in the path designed he did not know then--perhaps never did. He was still holding on to the thing in his pocket, but he spoke to her again.

"What do you mean?" he asked glumly.

She sidled nearer, her sharp eyes on his face.

"I bin watchin' yer," she said. "I sat down and pulled the sack over me 'ead to breathe inside it an' get a bit warm. An' I see yer come. I knowed wot yer was after, I did. I watched yer through a 'ole in me sack. I wasn't goin' to call a copper. I shouldn't want ter be stopped meself if I made up me mind. I seed a gal dragged out las' week an' it'd a broke yer 'art to see 'er tear 'er clothes an' scream. Wot business 'ad they preventin' 'er goin' off quiet? I wouldn't 'a' stopped yer--but w'en the quid fell, that made it different."

"I--" he said, feeling the foolishness of the statement, but making it, nevertheless, "I am ill."

"Course yer ill. It's yer 'ead. Come along er me an' get a cup er cawfee at a stand, an' buck up. If yer've give me that quid straight--wish-yer-may-die--I'll go with yer an' get a cup myself. I ain't 'ad a bite since yesterday--an' 't wa'n't nothin' but a slice o' polony sossidge I found on a dust-'eap. Come on, mister."

She pulled his coat with her cracked hand. He glanced down at it mechanically, and saw that some of the fissures had bled and the roughened surface was smeared with the blood. They stood together in the small space in which the fog enclosed them--he and she--the man with no To-morrow and the girl thing who seemed as old as himself, with her sharp, small nose and chin, her sharp eyes and voice--and yet--perhaps the fogs enclosing did it--something drew them together in an uncanny way. Something made him forget the lost clew to the lodging-house--something made him turn and go with her--a thing led in the dark.

"How can you find your way?" he said. "I lost mine."

"There ain't no fog can lose me," she answered, shuffling along by his side; "'sides, it's goin' to lift. Look at that man comin' to'ards us."

It was true that they could see through the orange-colored mist the

approaching figure of a man who was at a yard's distance from them. Yes, it was lifting slightly--at least enough to allow of one's making a guess at the direction in which one moved.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Apple Blossom Court," she answered. "The cawfee-stand's in a street near it--and there's a shop where I can buy things."

"Apple Blossom Court!" he ejaculated. "What a name!"

"There ain't no apple-blossoms there," chuckling; "nor no smell of 'em. 'T ain't as nice as its nime is--Apple Blossom Court ain't."

"What do you want to buy? A pair of shoes?" The shoes her naked feet were thrust into were leprous-looking things through which nearly all her toes protruded. But she chuckled when he spoke.

"No, I 'm goin' to buy a di'mond tirarer to go to the opery in," she said, dragging her old sack closer round her neck. "I ain't ad a noo un since I went to the last Drorin'-room."

It was impudent street chaff, but there was cheerful spirit in it, and cheerful spirit has some occult effect upon morbidity. Antony Dart did not smile, but he felt a faint stirring of curiosity, which was, after all, not a bad thing for a man who had not felt an interest for a year.

"What is it you are going to buy?"

"I'm goin' to fill me stummick fust," with a grin of elation. "Three thick slices o' bread an' drippin' an' a mug o' cawfee. An' then I'm goin' to get sumethin' 'earty to carry to Polly. She ain't no good, pore thing!"

"Who is she?"

Stopping a moment to drag up the heel of her dreadful shoe, she answered him with an unprejudiced directness which might have been appalling if he had been in the mood to be appalled.

"Ain't eighteen, an' tryin' to earn 'er livin' on the street. She ain't made for it. Little country thing, allus frightened to death an' ready to bust out cryin'. Gents ain't goin' to stand that. A lot of 'em wants cheerin' up as much as she does. Gent as was in liquor last night knocked 'er down an' give 'er a black eye. 'T wan't ill feelin', but he lost his temper, an' give 'er a knock casual. She can't go out to-night, an' she's been 'uddled up all day cryin' for 'er mother."

"Where is her mother?"

"In the country--on a farm. Polly took a place in a lodgin'-'ouse an' got in trouble. The biby was dead, an' when she come out o' Queen

Charlotte's she was took in by a woman an' kep'. She kicked 'er out in a week 'cos of her cryin'. The life didn't suit 'er. I found 'er cryin' fit to split 'er chist one night--corner o' Apple Blossom Court--an' I took care of 'er."

"Where?"

"Me chambers," grinning; "top loft of a 'ouse in the court. If anyone else 'd 'ave it I should be turned out. It's an 'ole, I can tell yer--but it's better than sleepin' under the bridges."

"Take me to see it," said Antony Dart. "I want to see the girl."

The words spoke themselves. Why should he care to see either cockloft or girl? He did not. He wanted to go back to his lodgings with that which he had come out to buy. Yet he said this thing. His companion looked up at him with an expression actually relieved.

"Would yer tike up with 'er?" with eager sharpness, as if confronting a simple business proposition. "She's pretty an' clean, an' she won't drink a drop o' nothin'. If she was treated kind she'd be cheerfler. She's got a round fice an' light 'air an' eyes. 'Er 'air's curly. P'raps yer'd like 'er."

"Take me to see her."

"She'd look better to-morrow," cautiously, "when the swellin's gone down round 'er eye."

Dart started--and it was because he had for the last five minutes forgotten something.

"I shall not be here to-morrow," he said. His grasp upon the thing in his pocket had loosened, and he tightened it.

"I have some more money in my purse," he said deliberately. "I meant to give it away before going. I want to give it to people who need it very much."

She gave him one of the sly, squinting glances.

"Deservin' cases?" She put it to him in brazen mockery.

"I don't care," he answered slowly and heavily. "I don't care a damn."

Her face changed exactly as he had seen it change on the bridge when she had drawn nearer to him. Its ugly hardness suddenly looked human. And that she could look human was fantastic.

"Ow much 'ave yer?" she asked. "Ow much is it?"

"About ten pounds."

She stopped and stared at him with open mouth.

"Gawd!" she broke out; "ten pounds 'd send Apple Blossom Court to 'eving. Leastways, it'd take some of it out o' 'ell."

"Take me to it," he said roughly. "Take me."

She began to walk quickly, breathing fast. The fog was lighter, and it was no longer a blinding thing.

A question occurred to Dart.

"Why don't you ask me to give the money to you?" he said bluntly.

"Dunno," she answered as bluntly. But after taking a few steps farther she spoke again.

"I 'm cheerfler than most of 'em," she elaborated. "If yer born cheerfle yer can stand things. When I gets a job nussin' women's bibies they don't cry when I 'andles 'em. I gets many a bite an' a copper 'cos o' that. Folks likes yer. I shall get on better than Polly when I'm old enough to go on the street."

The organ of whose lagging, sick pumpings Antony Dart had scarcely been aware for months gave a sudden leap in his breast. His blood actually

hastened its pace, and ran through his veins instead of crawling--a distinct physical effect of an actual mental condition. It was produced upon him by the mere matter-of-fact ordinariness of her tone. He had never been a sentimental man, and had long ceased to be a feeling one, but at that moment something emotional and normal happened to him.

"You expect to live in that way?" he said.

"Ain't nothin' else fer me to do. Wisht I was better lookin'. But I've got a lot of 'air," clawing her mop, "an' it's red. One day," chuckling, "a gent ses to me--he ses: 'Oh! yer'll do. Yer an ugly little devil--but ye ARE a devil.'"

She was leading him through a narrow, filthy back street, and she stopped, grinning up in his face.

"I say, mister," she wheedled, "let's stop at the cawfee-stand. It's up this way."

When he acceded and followed her, she quickly turned a corner. They were in another lane thick with fog, which flared with the flame of torches stuck in costers' barrows which stood here and there--barrows with fried fish upon them, barrows with second-hand-looking vegetables and others piled with more than second-hand-looking garments. Trade was not driving, but near one or two of them dirty, ill-used looking women, a man or so, and a few children stood. At a corner which led into a black

hole of a court, a coffee-stand was stationed, in charge of a burly ruffian in corduroys.

"Come along," said the girl. "There it is. It ain't strong, but it's 'ot."

She sidled up to the stand, drawing Dart with her, as if glad of his protection.

"'Ello, Barney," she said. "'Ere's a gent warnts a mug o' yer best. I've 'ad a bit o' luck, an' I wants one mesself."

"Garn," growled Barney. "You an' yer luck! Gent may want a mug, but y'd show yer money fust."

"Strewth! I've got it. Y' aint got the chinge fer wot I 'ave in me 'and 'ere. 'As 'e, mister?"

"Show it," taunted the man, and then turning to Dart. "Yer wants a mug o' cawfee?"

"Yes."

The girl held out her hand cautiously--the piece of gold lying upon its palm.

"Look 'ere," she said.

There were two or three men slouching about the stand. Suddenly a hand darted from between two of them who stood nearest, the sovereign was snatched, a screamed oath from the girl rent the thick air, and a forlorn enough scarecrow of a young fellow sprang away.

The blood leaped in Antony Dart's veins again and he sprang after him in a wholly normal passion of indignation. A thousand years ago--as it seemed to him--he had been a good runner. This man was not one, and want of food had weakened him. Dart went after him with strides which astonished himself. Up the street, into an alley and out of it, a dozen yards more and into a court, and the man wheeled with a hoarse, baffled curse. The place had no outlet.

"Hell!" was all the creature said.

Dart took him by his greasy collar. Even the brief rush had left him feeling like a living thing--which was a new sensation.

"Give it up," he ordered.

The thief looked at him with a half-laugh and obeyed, as if he felt the uselessness of a struggle. He was not more than twenty-five years old, and his eyes were cavernous with want. He had the face of a man who might have belonged to a better class. When he had uttered the

exclamation invoking the infernal regions he had not dropped the aspirate.

"I 'm as hungry as she is," he raved.

"Hungry enough to rob a child beggar?" said Dart.

"Hungry enough to rob a starving old woman--or a baby," with a defiant snort. "Wolf hungry--tiger hungry--hungry enough to cut throats."

He whirled himself loose and leaned his body against the wall, turning his face toward it. Suddenly he made a choking sound and began to sob.

"Hell!" he choked. "I'll give it up! I'll give it up!"

What a figure--what a figure, as he swung against the blackened wall, his scarecrow clothes hanging on him, their once decent material making their pinning together of buttonless places, their looseness and rents showing dirty linen, more abject than any other squalor could have made them. Antony Dart's blood, still running warm and well, was doing its normal work among the brain-cells which had stirred so evilly through the night. When he had seized the fellow by the collar, his hand had left his pocket. He thrust it into another pocket and drew out some silver.

"Go and get yourself some food," he said. "As much as you can eat. Then

go and wait for me at the place they call Apple Blossom Court. I don't know where it is, but I am going there. I want to hear how you came to this. Will you come?"

The thief lurched away from the wall and toward him. He stared up into his eyes through the fog. The tears had smeared his cheekbones.

"God!" he said. "Will I come? Look and see if I'll come." Dart looked.

"Yes, you'll come," he answered, and he gave him the money. "I 'm going back to the coffee-stand."

The thief stood staring after him as he went out of the court. Dart was speaking to himself.

"I don't know why I did it," he said. "But the thing had to be done."

In the street he turned into he came upon the robbed girl, running, panting, and crying. She uttered a shout and flung herself upon him, clutching his coat.

"Gawd!" she sobbed hysterically, "I thort I'd lost yer! I thort I'd lost all of it, I did! Strewth! I 'm glad I've found yer--" and she stopped, choking with her sobs and sniffs, rubbing her face in her sack.

"Here is your sovereign," Dart said, handing it to her.

She dropped the corner of the sack and looked up with a queer laugh.

"Did yer find a copper? Did yer give him in charge?"

"No," answered Dart. "He was worse off than you. He was starving. I took this from him; but I gave him some money and told him to meet us at Apple Blossom Court."

She stopped short and drew back a pace to stare up at him.

"Well," she gave forth, "y' ARE a queer one!"

And yet in the amazement on her face he perceived a remote dawning of an understanding of the meaning of the thing he had done.

He had spoken like a man in a dream. He felt like a man in a dream, being led in the thick mist from place to place. He was led back to the coffee-stand, where now Barney, the proprietor, was pouring out coffee for a hoarse-voiced coster girl with a dragged feather in her hat, who greeted their arrival hilariously.

"Hello, Glad!" she cried out. "Got yer suvrink back?"

Glad--it seemed to be the creature's wild name--nodded, but held close to her companion's side, clutching his coat.

"Let's go in there an' change it," she said, nodding toward a small pork and ham shop near by. "An' then yer can take care of it for me."

"What did she call you?" Antony Dart asked her as they went.

"Glad. Don't know as I ever 'ad a nime o' me own, but a little cove as went once to the pantermine told me about a young lady as was Fairy Queen an' 'er name was Gladys Beverly St. John, so I called mesself that. No one never said it all at onct--they don't never say nothin' but Glad. I'm glad enough this mornin'," chuckling again, "'avin' the luck to come up with you, mister. Never had luck like it 'afore."

They went into the pork and ham shop and changed the sovereign. There was cooked food in the windows--roast pork and boiled ham and corned beef. She bought slices of pork and beef, and of suet-pudding with a few currants sprinkled through it.

"Will yer 'elp me to carry it?" she inquired. "I'll 'ave to get a few pen'worth o' coal an' wood an' a screw o' tea an' sugar. My wig, wot a feed me an' Polly'll 'ave!"

As they returned to the coffee-stand she broke more than once into a hop of glee. Barney had changed his mind concerning her. A solid sovereign which must be changed and a companion whose shabby gentility

was absolute grandeur when compared with his present surroundings made a difference.

She received her mug of coffee and thick slice of bread and dripping with a grin, and swallowed the hot sweet liquid down in ecstatic gulps.

"Ain't I in luck?" she said, handing her mug back when it was empty.

"Gi' me another, Barney."

Antony Dart drank coffee also and ate bread and dripping. The coffee was hot and the bread and dripping, dashed with salt, quite eatable. He had needed food and felt the better for it.

"Come on, mister," said Glad, when their meal was ended. "I want to get back to Polly, an' there's coal and bread and things to buy."

She hurried him along, breaking her pace with hops at intervals. She darted into dirty shops and brought out things screwed up in paper. She went last into a cellar and returned carrying a small sack of coal over her shoulders.

"Bought sack an' all," she said elatedly. "A sack's a good thing to 'ave."

"Let me carry it for you," said Antony Dart

"Spile yer coat," with her sidelong upward glance.

"I don't care," he answered. "I don't care a damn."

The final expletive was totally unnecessary, but it meant a thing he did not say. Whatsoever was thrusting him this way and that, speaking through his speech, leading him to do things he had not dreamed of doing, should have its will with him. He had been fastened to the skirts of this beggar imp and he would go on to the end and do what was to be done this day. It was part of the dream.

The sack of coal was over his shoulder when they turned into Apple Blossom Court. It would have been a black hole on a sunny day, and now it was like Hades, lit grimly by a gas-jet or two, small and flickering, with the orange haze about them. Filthy, flagging, murky doorways, broken steps and broken windows stuffed with rags, and the smell of the sewers let loose had Apple Blossom Court.

Glad, with the wealth of the pork and ham shop and other riches in her arms, entered a repellent doorway in a spirit of great good cheer and Dart followed her. Past a room where a drunken woman lay sleeping with her head on a table, a child pulling at her dress and crying, up a stairway with broken balusters and breaking steps, through a landing, upstairs again, and up still farther until they reached the top. Glad stopped before a door and shook the handle, crying out:

"S only me, Polly. You can open it." She added to Dart in an undertone: "She 'as to keep it locked. No knowin' who'd want to get in. Polly," shaking the door-handle again, "Polly's only me."

The door opened slowly. On the other side of it stood a girl with a dimpled round face which was quite pale; under one of her childishly vacant blue eyes was a discoloration, and her curly fair hair was tucked up on the top of her head in a knot. As she took in the fact of Antony Dart's presence her chin began to quiver.

"I ain't fit to--to see no one," she stammered pitifully. "Why did you, Glad--why did you?"

"Ain't no 'arm in 'IM," said Glad. "'E's one o' the friendly ones. 'E give me a suvrink. Look wot I've got," hopping about as she showed her parcels.

"You need not be afraid of me," Antony Dart said. He paused a second, staring at her, and suddenly added, "Poor little wretch!"

Her look was so scared and uncertain a thing that he walked away from her and threw the sack of coal on the hearth. A small grate with broken bars hung loosely in the fireplace, a battered tin kettle tilted drunkenly near it. A mattress, from the holes in whose ticking straw bulged, lay on the floor in a corner, with some old sacks thrown over

it. Glad had, without doubt, borrowed her shoulder covering from the collection. The garret was as cold as the grave, and almost as dark; the fog hung in it thickly. There were crevices enough through which it could penetrate.

Antony Dart knelt down on the hearth and drew matches from his pocket.

"We ought to have brought some paper," he said.

Glad ran forward.

"Wot a gent ye are!" she cried. "Y' ain't never goin' to light it?"

"Yes."

She ran back to the rickety table and collected the scraps of paper which had held her purchases. They were small, but useful.

"That wot was round the sausage an' the puddin's greasy," she exulted.

Polly hung over the table and trembled at the sight of meat and bread. Plainly, she did not understand what was happening. The greased paper set light to the wood, and the wood to the coal. All three flared and blazed with a sound of cheerful crackling. The blaze threw out its glow as finely as if it had been set alight to warm a better place. The wonder of a fire is like the wonder of a soul. This one changed the

murk and gloom to brightness, and the deadly damp and cold to warmth. It drew the girl Polly from the table despite her fears. She turned involuntarily, made two steps toward it, and stood gazing while its light played on her face. Glad whirled and ran to the hearth.

"Ye've put on a lot," she cried; "but, oh, my Gawd, don't it warm yer! Come on, Polly--come on."

She dragged out a wooden stool, an empty soap-box, and bundled the sacks into a heap to be sat upon. She swept the things from the table and set them in their paper wrappings on the floor.

"Let's all sit down close to it--close," she said, "an' get warm an' eat, an' eat."

She was the leaven which leavened the lump of their humanity. What this leaven is--who has found out? But she--little rat of the gutter--was formed of it, and her mere pure animal joy in the temporary animal comfort of the moment stirred and uplifted them from their depths.