

death for my priceless penny. He merely lurched up against me, however, and then gave me a beer-and-tobacco-scented inverted blessing for getting in his way. He disappeared in the frost-fog that was rising, and I was again left to chew the cud of bitter fancies.

A very unpleasant place that dreary New Town Deptford looked when I followed the tramp over the little water-works bridge. I did *not* follow him down dark Mill Lane—dark in spite of the tantalising gleams which some of the lodging-house windows threw out upon the frost-bound roadway. I wandered about in that dim, squalid New Town, which looked as if it had been built seedy ready-made to suit the circumstances of its melancholy inhabitants. Hard-up as they were, however, they were better off than I. Their landlords, at any rate, did not mean to turn them out *that* night; I saw blinks of fire-light, and women and children coming home from the chandler's with loaves, and red herrings, and rashers of bacon partially wrapt up in newspaper. Home! where was *my* home? I had no fire to go to. I could not buy a loaf, and if I bought a roll or a red-herring (which I should have had to eat without cooking), my fortune would be squandered.

New Town Deptford soon became *too* oppressive, and I rushed down into the brawling Broadway. The people standing and passing loomed like phantoms through the fog. The street lamps, the shop lamps, the flaring lights of the street-sellers smudged it with bilious blotches. One street-seller, clapping one arm across his breast, was shouting at the top of his voice, as if *that* would warm him, "A penny a lot! a penny a lot!" As I passed him he pushed into my face a penholder, half a dozen pens, and a pen-wiper. "All that lot for a penny!" he shouted. "If it's the last penny you've got, you'll buy 'em. Blowed if I think you've *got* a penny," he growled, as I hurried past him. I *had* a penny, you know, but I was not going to spend it in that way. I could not eat the pens, and roll myself up in the pen-wiper.

More and more puzzled as to the best mode of investing my large capital, I plodded on to the New Cross gate, and through it along that dismal Old Kent Road. I had started with a vague intention of walking on to London, but when I reached the canal-bridge, the thought occurred to me that a penny would be of no more use to me in London than elsewhere; and so I turned off from the road, and wandered about purposelessly in the flat region of railway-arch, canal, dyke, docks, rope-walk, timber-yard, taverns, tea-gardens, marsh, and market-garden, that lies between Peckham New Town and the

river. The black dykes were frozen, or I might have got some nasty duckings, in spite of the warning white finger-posts upon their banks. The moon had come up, and was trying hard to send its light through the frost-fog, but very weak moonshine-and-vapour was all that it could manage to mix. As I passed the market-gardens, however, I could make out the bony-stalked cabbages wigged with frozen snow, and in one of the market-gardens I saw an empty market-waggon. I saw also others high piled with cabbages, in readiness for their journey to Covent Garden or Spitalfields in the early morning. The full ones would have been softer to lie on, and more sheltering to lie against; but I knew that I should be disturbed long, long before daybreak if I made my couch in or near one of these, so I scrambled into the empty waggon. I found an old sack in it, and two or three bruised cabbage leaves. I curled myself up in the sack, in the snugest corner of the waggon I could find; I munched the bruised cabbage leaves for my supper (boiled cauliflower stalk, I think, is as nice as asparagus almost, but I cannot conscientiously recommend uncooked cabbage-leaves), and then I tried hard to go to sleep. I was tired enough, but to sleep I could not get, and presently the faint moonlight faded quite away, and the wind awoke keener than ever, and stinging hail rattled on my face, and thick snow came down in flakes as broad as crown pieces. If I had stayed in it, the waggon would soon have become a white hearse. I had to get up and begin again my weary wanderings. Hither and thither I wandered, half blinded by the snow, and at last found myself stumbling about in the quaint, dark, winding streets of Rotherhithe. It was nearly midnight as I went along one of the narrow little lanes. The lower windows of all the squat houses, except one, were shuttered. I stopped to look into the dimly-lighted little shop window. A bill headed "Drowned—Ten Shillings Reward" lay upon a wooden tray full of marbles. An old man, who had been sitting in a back room smoking over a cheerful little fire, laid down his pipe as I stood looking in, and came through the shop, and up its barge-cabin-like steps into the street, to close *his* shutter. He eyed me suspiciously as I moved on, and seemed to do all his fastening with anxiously ostentatious care. Very lonely did I feel when I heard his top bolt shot behind me. I was altogether shut out then, in the cold, silent street. The wind had gone down again, but the soft snow was falling faster than ever. I began to think that it was useless for me to walk any farther;