



A MEMORY OF THE THAMES TUNNEL.

BY VAGABUNDUS.

WHILST I was wandering in the Dock region the other day, some boards that were new to me caught my eye—drab boards stuck up here and there, and pointing with a black-seamed drab glove towards the Wapping station of the East London Railway. I thought I should like to see how the Thames Tunnel looked now that it has been converted into a railway tunnel, and so I obeyed the pointing forefingers. But instead of describing it in its present state, I will rather give a reminiscence of it as it was when I knew it first.

It is no business of anybody's how it was that on the night in question I found myself without a roof to cover me, and with precisely one penny in my pocket. However it came about, that was the fact. On the other side of the world as well as this I have once or twice found myself wandering at night with even less in my pocket, but, so far as my memory serves, I had never before, and have never since, been left when homeless in possession of that exact amount.

It was in the palisaded path running between the then frozen reservoirs of the Kent Water Company that I found myself, as winter's dusk was changing into winter's darkness, in possession of the capital I have named. As I fingered it in my waistcoat pocket, the thought, keen as the east wind, shot through me, that that was all I had in the world to depend upon for bed and board. If I had had nothing at all, I do not think I should have felt so dismal. *Then I should have*

known the worst, but so long as I possessed a penny, I was still a "gentleman of limited means," oppressed with the anxiety of making cash go some way towards satisfying cravings. I wanted something to eat, but I remembered also that I wanted somewhere to sleep. A penny was all that I could make sure of as a provision for the rest of my earthly existence—if it lasted beyond the night; but how could I make that penny supply me with bed and board even for the night? So far as I was aware, the "two-penny rope" of the tramps' lodging-houses in the neighbouring Mill Lane was the cheapest sleeping accommodation that I could procure for money. A penn'orth of food of any kind would be but a mouthful for a hungry man, but if I spent *all* my penny on my supper to-night, what was I to do for a breakfast to-morrow? and, in the meantime, how, under any circumstances, was I to get a night's lodging?

I paced up and down the palisaded path in dire perplexity. The only idea that I could distinctly form was of the inexpressible value of that penny. A hulking tramp reeled out of a public-house at the bottom of Ravensbourne Hill, and came along the path on his way to his Mill Lane lodging-house. I envied him, and yet I suspected him. Affluent as were his circumstances, probably, in comparison with mine, he might yet be covetous of my loose cash. I buttoned up my coat to the throat (two more buttons came off as I did so), and prepared to fight to the