

post—had so far produced no fatal consequences; so that Aunt M'riar's and Uncle Mo's warnings to the children to keep within bounds had not the same convincing character.

But a time was at hand for the passion of exploration to seize upon these two very young people, and to become an excitement as absorbing to them as the discovery of America to Paolo Toscanelli and Christopher Columbus. At first it was satisfied by the *cul-de-sac* recess on which Sapps Court opened. But this palled, and no wonder! How could it compete with the public highway out of which it branched, especially when there was a new shore—that is to say, sewer—in course of construction?

To stand on the edge of a chasm which certainly reached to the bowels of the earth, and to see them shovelled up from platform to platform by agencies that spat upon their hands for some professional reason whenever there came a lull in the supply from below, was to find life worth living indeed. These agencies conversed continually about an injury that had been inflicted on them by the Will of God, the selfish caprice of their employers, or the cupidity of the rich. They appeared to be capable of shovelling in any space, however narrow, almost to the extent of surrendering one dimension and occupying only a plane surface. But it hadn't come to that yet. The battens that kept the trench-sides vertical were wider apart than what you'd have thought, when you come to try 'em with a two-fut rule. And the short lengths of quartering that kep' 'em apart were not really intersecting the diggers' anatomies as the weaver's shuttle passes through the warp. That was only the impression of the unconcerned spectator as he walked above them over the plank bridge that acknowledged his right of way across the road. His sympathies remained unentangled. If people navigated, it was their own look out. You see, these people were navvies, or navigators, although it strains one's sense of language to describe them so.

The best of it was to come. For in time the lowest navvy was threatened with death by misadventure, unless he come up time enough to avoid the water. The small pump the job had been making shift with was obliged to acknowledge itself beaten, and to make way for one with two handles, each with room for two pumpers; and this in turn was discarded in favour of a noisy affair with a donkey-engine, which brought up the yellow stream as fast as ever a gutter of nine-inch plank, nailed up to a V, would carry it away. And it really was a most extraordinary thing that of all those navigators there was not one