

CHAPTER I

THE FINDING OF SMITHERS

BUT for the light of kindness that shone on his calm face, my substantially-built companion might easily have been mistaken for a detective, or, let us say, a tea merchant. His calling, however, was out of the common. He was an investigator, though not in the interests of either law and order or commerce. It was as the paid servant of compassion that daily he went to and fro in a congested population, carrying a large notebook in his overcoat pocket.

For my wish was to see a Barnardo boy who had not yet become a Barnardo boy ; to which end I was accompanying one of the Barnardo officials who, experienced and resourceful in sifting truth from falsehood, go forth to inquire into the new cases of alleged destitution of which, by every morning's mail, tidings are received at Stepney Causeway.