

mancers who held beaut'ful princesses captive—to say nothing of full-blown dragons and alluring syrens. These lons took in one case, the form of a butcher-boy, who said untruthfully:—“Now, young hobstacie, clear out o’ this! Boys ain’t allowed on bridges;” and in another that of Michael Ragstroar, who said, “Don’t you let the Company see you carryin’ off their property. They’ll rip you open as soon as look at you. You’ll be took afore the Beak.” Dave was not yet old enough to see what a very perverted view of legal process these words contained, but his blue eyes looked mistrustfully at the speaker as he watched him pass up the street towards the Wheatsheaf, swinging a yellow jug with ridges round its neck and a full corporation. Michael had been sent to fetch the beer.

If the blue eyes had not remained fixed on that yellow jug and its bearer till both vanished through the swing-door of the Wheatsheaf—if their owner’s mistrust of his informant had been strong enough to cancel the misgivings that crossed his baby mind, only a few seconds sooner, would things have gone otherwise with Dave? Would he have used that beautiful lump of clay, as big as a man of his age could carry, on the works that were to avert Noah’s flood from Sapps Court? Would he and Dolly not probably have been caught at their escapade by an indignant Aunt M’riar, corrected, duly washed and fed, and sent to bed sadder and wiser babies? So few seconds might have made the whole difference.

Or, if that heap of clay had been thrown on the other side of the trench, on the pavement instead of towards the traffic—why then the children might have taken all they could carry, and Old Sam would have countenanced them, in reason, as like as not. But how little one gains by thinking what might have been! The tale is to tell, and tells that these things were not otherwise, but thus.

Uncle Moses was in the room on the right of the door, called the parlour, smoking a pipe with the old friend whose advice had probably kept him from coming on the parish.

“Aunt M’riar!” said he, tapping his pipe out on the hob, and taking care the ashes didn’t get in the inflammable stove-ornament, “I don’t hear them young customers outside. What’s got ’em?”

“Don’t you begin to fret and werrit till I tell you to it, Moses. The children’s safe and not in any mischief—no more than usual. Mr. Alibone seen ’em.” For although the world

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