

CHAPTER I

LIZARANN COUPLAND did not know what her father's employment was ; but she knew that, every morning, she saw him to the corner of Bladen Street, put his left hand on the palin's of number three, and left him to shift for himself. She was on honour not to watch him down Bladen Street, and she had a keen sense of honour. She also knew by experience that when her aunt, Mrs. Steptoe, said she would learn her a lesson she wouldn't easy forget, Mrs. Steptoe was not referring to teacher-book instruction like at school. And this lesson, Lizarann understood, would be imparted by her aunt with some blunt instrument, perhaps a slipper, in case she failed to observe her promise. She was not to go spyin' and starin' after Father no farther than where it was wrote up " Old Vatted Rum, fivepence-halfpenny " at the Green Man and Still. It was a compact, and Lizarann observed it—always running away as fast as possible to get out of reach of temptation as soon as ever her father's fingers closed on the knob of a particular low paling. It was a paling good to turn upside down over, which affirmed the territorial rights of the Green Man over a certain six-foot foreshore of pavement liable else to be claimed by the Crown, or the Authority.

Lizarann's father, James Coupland, was stone-blind, and the reason she was sent with him every morning was because he had to cross Cazenove Street, and Dartley Street, and Trott Street, before you come to pavement all the way, and it wasn't safe. As soon as you got to the Green Man, why, there you were ! Only like touchin' the wall, and your stick on the right, and on you kep' direck. But as to what Lizarann's father did, at some place on this side of the next bad crossing, his six-year-old daughter never could guess. All she knew was that she was useful, and assisted towards some public object, not easily under-