

A GIRL OF THE PEOPLE.

CHAPTER I.

"You have kept us waiting an age! Come along, Bet, do."

"She ain't going to funk it, surely!"

"No, no, not she,—she's a good 'un, Bet is,—come along, Bet. Joe Wilkins is waiting for us round the corner, and he says Sam is to be there, and Jimmy, and Hester Wright: do come along, now."

"Will Hester Wright sing?" suddenly demanded the girl who was being assailed by all these remarks.

"Yes, tip-top, a new song from one of the music halls in London. Now then, be you coming or not, Bet?"

"No, no, she's funking it," suddenly called out a dancing little sprite of a newspaper girl. She came up close to Bet as she spoke, and shook a dirty hand in her face, and gazed up at her with two mirthful, teasing, wicked black eyes. "Bet's funking it,—she's a mammy's girl,—she's tied to her mammy's apron-strings, he-he-he!"

The other girls all joined in the laugh; and Bet, who was standing stolid and straight in the centre of the group, first flushed angrily, then turned pale and bit her lips.

"I ain't funking," she said; "nobody can ever say as there's any funk about me,—there's my share. Good-night."