

supposed to exist, although in form he varied slightly—made an inquiry as to what was going on, to be beforehand with Anarchy. He said:—"What are you young customers about, taking the Company's water?" That seemed to embody an indictment without committing the accuser to particulars. But he took no active steps, and a very old man with a fur cap, and no teeth, and big bones in his cheeks, said:—"It don't make no odds to we, I take it." He was a prehistoric navvy, who had become a watchman, and was responsible for red lanterns hooked to posts on the edge of chasms to warn carts off. He was going to sleep in half a tent, soothed or otherwise by the unflagging piston of that donkey-engine, which had made up its mind to go till further notice.

The men were knocking off work, and it was getting on for time for those children to have their suppers and be put to bed. But as Aunt M'riar had some trimming to finish, and it was a very fine evening, there was no harm in leaving them alone a few minutes longer. As for any attractive influences of supper, those children never come in of themselves, and always had to be fetched.

An early lamplighter—for this was in September, 1853—passed along the street with a ladder, dropping stars as he went. There are no lamplighters now, no real ones that run up ladders. Their ladders vanished first, leaving them with a magic wand that lighted the gas as soon as you got the tap turned; only that was ever so long, as often as not. Perhaps things are better now that lamps light themselves instinctively at the official hour of sunset. At any rate, one has the satisfaction of occasionally seeing one that won't go out, but burns on into the daylight to spite the Authorities.

They were cold stars, almost green, that this lamplighter dropped; but this was because the sun had left a flood of orange-gold behind it, enough to make the tune from "Rigoletto" an organ was playing think it was being composed in Italy again. The world was a peaceful world, because Opulence, inflated and moderate, had gone out of town: the former to its country-house, or a foreign hotel; the latter to lodgings at the seaside to bathe out of machines and prey on shrimps. The lull that reigned in and about Sapps Court was no doubt a sort of recoil or back-water from other neighbourhoods with high salaries or real and personal estate, whose dwellings were closed and not being properly ventilated by their caretakers. It reacted on business there, every bit as much as in Oxford Street; and that was how