

CHAPTER O

A CONNECTING-LINK BETWEEN THE WRITER AND THE STORY, AMOUNTING TO VERY LITTLE. THERE WAS A COURT SOME FIFTY YEARS SINCE IN LONDON, SOMEWHERE, THAT IS NOW NOWHERE. THAT'S ALL!

SOME fifty years ago there still remained, in a street reachable after inquiry by turning to the left out of Tottenham Court Road, a rather picturesque Court with an archway; which I, the writer of this story, could not find when I tried to locate it the other day. I hunted for it a good deal, and ended by coming away in despair and going for rest and refreshment to a new-born teashop, where a number of young ladies had lost their individuality, and the one who brought my tea was callous to me and mine because you pay at the desk. But she had an orderly soul, for she turned over the lump of sugar that had a little butter on it, so as to lie on the buttery side and look more tidy-like.

If the tea had been China tea, fresh-made, it might have helped me to recollecting the name of that Court, which I am sorry to say I have forgotten. But it was Ceylon and had stood. However, it was hot. Only you will never convince me that it was fresh-made, not even if you have me dragged asunder by wild horses. Its upshot was, for the purpose of this story, that it did not help me to recollect the name of that Court.

I have to confess with shame that I have written the whole of what follows under a false pretence; having called it out of its name, to the best of my belief, throughout. I know it had a name. It does not matter; the story can do without accuracy—commonplace matter of fact!

But do what I will, I keep on recollecting new names for it, and each seems more plausible than the other. Coltsfoot Court, Barretts Court, Chesterfield Court, Sapps Court! Any one of these, if I add seventeen-hundred-and-much, or eighteen-hundred-and-nothing-to-speak-of, seems to fit this Court to a nicety. Suppose we make it Sapps Court, and let it go at that!

Oh, the little old corners of the world that were homes and are gone! Years hence the Court we will call Sapps will still dwell in some old mind that knew its every brick, and be por-