

# A YOUNG MAN FROM THE COUNTRY.

*" . . . scourged by famine, from the smiling land  
The mournful peasant leads his humble band;  
And while he sinks without one arm to save,  
The country blooms—a garden and a grave."*

## CHAPTER I.

"What more do you want, 'Lijah?" asked the squire, reining in his bay mare, and taking a pull from his silver brandy-flask. "There's thirteen shillings a week you have; a nice handy cottage with two rooms, one up and one down, for only three shillings a week; then there's water from the village well, now it's re-opened; and tips in harvest-time. Why, what more on earth can a man want?"

Doctor Marcus Gargoyle, who was standing by, shook his head, and agreed that it was monstrous ingratitude to Providence to expect more.

"But then," he remarked to the squire, "these low people are getting more and more discontented, and nothin' seems to satisfy 'em. The more wages they get, the more they want, forgetting the prior right of the educated classes to whatever goods the world gives. I remember well how, in the good old days, a labouring-man brought up his family on eight shillings a week, sir; aye, and all lived on bread and fat, and slept in one room, as best they could, and as happy as a lot of pigs, sir! But look at you and I to-day, sir; why, respect for both of us is dead—downright defunct. Who thinks any the better of me for being a true Gargoyle of the old Westmoreland Gargoyles? Eh, sir, eh?" And the choleric little red-faced man took a pinch of snuff, tipped his hat on one side of his head, and waved a silver-topped cane ferociously, to the detriment of Sammons, the village draper, who, attracted by the sight of the two local notabilities, had sallied out to see what was the matter.

"If I might make so bold, Dr. Gargoyle," quoth Sammons, "it's the duty of we, whose education is superior, to think for the rest."

Sammons, by the way, was a sort of spiritual tea-taster, having joined, at various times, every religious body he knew, from the High Church to the Plymouth Brethren. Having been recently ejected from the Strict Baptists, he now lent his powerful aid to that influential body, the Original Little Peddlington Universalists.

"Well," said the squire, "I've no doubt you gentlemen are right, but what I object to most is grumbling. It's very bad of 'Lijah to carry on in this fashion, and unless he alters, I shall have to take severe measures, which, considering his family, I should be sorry to—whew, what a keen wind blows up from the sea!—sorry to do," and so saying, the squire lit a cigar, and rode off to the hunt-dinner, leaving his two commiserators to thrash the question out.

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It was a dismal concern altogether, was 'Lijah Rattle's cottage, especially on a cold night, when the keen winds found out the bad places in the walls, and blew in at the crazy window-casement. 'Lijah sat, closely hugging little four-year-old Sarah Ann, the youngest of the eight Rattle's children, by the place where there ought to have been a fire in such chilly weather.

"Poor, little Sarah!" quoth 'Lijah; "let me rub the little blue hands, and make 'em warm, shall I?"

Little Sarah nodded; she was too weary to speak, and snuggled close to her father for warmth.

"Where's th' old coat o' mine, Mary?" asked 'Lijah; "I doubt we'd better wrap Sarah in it, to warm her poor little body!"

Mrs. Rattle shook her head.

"Sold, 'Lijah, sold," she said in a tremulous voice; "'twas all in holes, and only fetched a copper or two at best!"

Mrs. Rattle turned away, and choked something that was very like a sob. Little Sarah was her youngest, and to see the child pine away before her eyes was more than she could bear; but what could they expect to have in the house on Friday night? That meant six whole days since pay-night.

"Poor little Sarah; she must have something to eat, musn't she?" said 'Lijah, pacing the little room, and holding the child close to him. "What is there in the cupboard, mother? The poor child's all but clemmed."

"Hark!" cried Susan Jane. "There's Adam comin' up the front garden; p'r'aps he's brought somethink for Sarah."

"Aye, aye," said 'Lijah, cheerily, "p'r'aps he has. One of you open the door for him!"

There was a rush to the door, and a wild hurrah as Adam, with a ruddy face, jogged into the room, at the trot he had maintained all the way across the allotment fields and down Barnard's Lane.

Adam, a blithe young fellow of eighteen or nineteen, was a fair sample of the good-natured, honest, half-School-Board-taught country youths, who, having slightly more enterprise and spirit than their fellows, and chafing under the pettiness and poverty of the village aim, above all things, at making their way to London, and not only making enough money to support their kind in decency, but indulge in a secret, daring hope



of achieving a position in which they will be able to sweep away the rotten foundations of Society, and re-build it on the lines of righteousness and truth.

Adam ran in, and right round the room, with some comic antics, by way of interesting the youngsters, and threw down a bundle of turnips on the floor. Catching sight of the wearied little Sarah Ann, he stopped short, and cutting a little piece of raw turnip, placed it in the tiny blue hands.

"Why," he cried, "she's uncommon cold, father!"

"Aye, lad," said 'Lijah, "that she is, poor child; can we get a fire, Adam, thinkee?"

Adam glanced round the bare room in search of a few sticks, but there were none to be seen. He raked the corner of the room which did duty for a coal cellar, but found nothing but dust.

"Is there no rubbish in the garden that we could burn?" he asked.

"Not a bit!" replied 'Lijah. "We scraped up every morsel; and besides, 'tis raining hard."

'Lijah was right. The wind had risen, and the heavens were black with mighty clouds that swept down their pitiless rain in furious gusts, which beat against the wretched cottage as though they would tear it from the ground, and toss it in the air. Runnels of water began to make their way through the crevices in the thatch, underneath the door, and through the casement, and the children began to cry with utter wretchedness.

"Have faith in God," muttered Adam to himself, "for there's nothing else to believe in, that's certain."

"I think, 'Lijah," said Mrs. Rattle, "that we'll put the children to bed; they'll keep warm that way best!"

So to bed they went, each with a slice of turnip, to get such rest as could be got from a few old bed-clothes ranged upon a wooden framework which served to raise them above the stone floor.

"Why should we live in this fashion, father?" cried Adam, hotly, "haven't we a right to a decent existence?"

"Well," replied 'Lijah, "I dunno, Adam, it don't seem right, do it? Yet squire says I be a grumbler; and I were talkin' to farmer Oaks to-day, and he said we mustn't go in front o' Providence. Yes, that's what he said, Adam."

"What did he mean by Providence?"

"Well," replied 'Lijah, "I suppose he—I think he—I should say—well, Adam, to tell ye the truth, I don't quite know what he did mean, now we come to take it to pieces."

"Does he call starvation a blessing of Providence?" said Adam fiercely. "Is cold, are bad dwellings that a decent hog would abominate, dispensations of God? Or do old Oaks and the squire invent a god of their own that suits their grasping selfishness? They cut their providence according to their deeds, eh, father?"

'Lijah wasn't certain. He hadn't sat up by night and studied books by the light of a farthing rushlight, like Adam. Still, he would like a better cottage, and enough wages to live on, he said, "Not as I'm greedy, you know, Adam."

"Greedy!" moaned Adam; "greedy! What supper have you had, father?"

"None, lad; they ben't good for me."

"What tea, then?"

"None, lad, none; it's the sober truth," said the old man, with a trembling voice.

"Greedy!" muttered Adam, "greedy! Now, look here, father, we must end this somehow. I'm not much, perhaps, compared to these book-learned chaps; I haven't money or influence or a convenient habit of truckling to my superiors, and vowing they are the most perfect creatures the world ever saw; but, there, I've got a willing heart, a strong arm, and a faith in God."

Adam's teeth chattered with the cold, and he tried to speak lower, as one of the children in the next room woke up, and cried with the cold.

"Why, what's come over ye, Adam?" cried 'Lijah; "what are ye goin' to do?"

"I'm going to London, father," said Adam steadfastly. "I can no longer see you starving and shivering here; I must go and earn some money to keep you all alive, and, by the help of God, try and benefit my class, and all such poor creatures as are starving."

"Adam, Adam," cried 'Lijah, "surely ye're goin' daft, lad; what'll ye do in Lunnon, wi'out a trade, or knowin' a soul there nor nothink. They'll only laugh at ye, and sneer at yer country-like ways, and call ye——"

"Call me what?" said Adam.

"Why," replied 'Lijah; "a young man from sh' country."

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## CHAPTER II.

Adam restlessly walked to and fro in the miserable room. The floor was now dabbled with dirty pools of water, and the incessant drip, drip of the rain was galling in its dreary monotony. Adam was desperate, and the continual patter irritated him. He sat down on the floor, leaning his back against the wall, but a chilly trickling rillet drove him once more to pacing up and down the room. Physically overwrought, ready to drop into an intense sleep if the cold and his excitement would only allow him, he was haggard and trembling, with clenched fists and blood-shot eyes.

"Don't look like that, Adam," said 'Lijah, "maybe 'twon't allus be so; they do say as them Parliament folks is going to pass fresh lawers wot'll give us all good 'lotments.

"Three acres an' a cow, it used to be," added 'Lijah, meditatively; "but they've dropped that, and now it's only 'lotments. It's wonderful how they—Lor', aint it shivery, must be nigh twelve o'clock, too—how they do drop it, after they gets you to wote for 'em. There's that big lawyer chap from Sarlsbry, you mind him, Adam?"

"The ginger whiskers and big gold chain man?" queried Adam,

'Lijah nodded. Yes, that was the identical gentleman. "Well," said he, "I thinks I sees him standin' by the pond, wavin' his umbrella, which he allus carried, bein' religious."

"What's the umbrella got to do with it?" interrupted Adam.

'Lijah looked indignant. "Did you ever," he asked, "see a religious gent without an umbrella? not you, 'cept he were a poor Salvation Army chap. Well, this chap says, 'Men o' Pedlington, you must each have your own house and farm; the 'onist lab'rer must be remembered at last with the uniwersal acclamation of the nation.' Then we woted the chap in, and when old Simon Slammins, the shepherd, wrote him a letter for all the rest on us axin when them farms wus goin' to be got ready, he never so much as got an answer. That's the way it goes, Adam lad, so don't trouble yeself, my lad; we folks can't do nothing; we must jest make the best of it, after all," and 'Lijah's teeth chattered as he spoke, "it might be wuss with us."

Adam shook his head, "Poor old father," he cried, "you try hard enough to bring us all up decently; but the fact is, things will *have* to be different. Do you think that either Divine intention or man's common sense could ever plan that human misery could reach such depths? Do you believe in God Almighty at all, father?"

"Hist, lad," said 'Lijah, "let us speak of the great Maker with reverence. Aye, I believe in God."

The wind blew with redoubled fury, and the wretched apology for a house seemed to rock again as the tempest caught it. When the gust ceased for a time, all was perfectly still but for the occasional moan of one of the children in the adjoining room. The rushlight, that not lit up but rather glimmered sufficiently to indicate the bareness of the room, flickered preparatory to going out.

"Yes," repeated 'Lijah, reverently bowing his white head, "I believe in God, our Father."

"And therefore, father," said Adam, "believing in God, as you do, with all the natural trust of your simple heart, you would think it a blasphemous suggestion that you could plan a better world than God?"

"Certainly I should," said 'Lijah. "Uncommon blasphemous; likewise loonatick, and also silly."

"Yet," continued Adam, "you would precious



soon alter plenty o' things that's wrong and put 'em right, if you had the power, eh, father? Well then, if the world's wrong, man has put it wrong and altered it from God's way, so it's our business to help put it right again. Hark! what's that?"

The light was all but out, only the merest gleam remained, and the two stood in the semi-darkness, listening intently. It was a mournful sound that rose and fell, like the cadence of a summer gale.

"Taint the wind," whispered 'Lijah, grasping Adam's hand, "sounds as if it comes from the children's room, I'll ——."

A sudden scream, appalling in its intensity, burst from the room, and resounded with nerve-piercing shrillness. 'Lijah rushed into the room, crying, "What is't, mother? Wot is't?"

Poor Mrs. Rattle only answered with a groan. She was kneeling by the pallet of rags which, spread on the floor, was the children's bed, and, with head buried in the covering, was sobbing over the cold form of little Sarah. "See, 'Lijah," she cried, "she cannot speak."

'Lijah gently lifted the child up, and after wrapping her in his old waistcoat, held up the only remaining rushlight to get a glimpse of her face. The tiny form, weak and ailing at the best, had come to its final struggle for life. The light was dim and flickering, and the draught from the window threatened to extinguish it at any moment; but 'Lijah realised, as he glanced at the waxen, death-like face, that the child was fading out of existence.

"My little girl," whispered 'Lijah, as the warm tears ran down his furrowed cheeks, "my little girl. She's dying; oh, God, she's dying," he thought.

Adam stood listening, half distracted. What could he do? If his romantic ideas were any practical use, surely they should show it now. Money he had none; food there was none, except a couple of Swede turnips. Stay though, there was a little fancy wooden box, decorated with nine green and scarlet views of impossible rustic bridges and Swiss sunsets. It was a birthday present of years ago from a neighbouring old lady, who thought Adam reminded her of her own shipwrecked lad. "It isn't much, but it's all I can do," thought Adam, as he smashed the box with a few blows from his boot-heel, and kindled a small fire with the sticks. "Bring her close to the fire," he said; "close to the fire!"

'Lijah did so, and heating his scarred and horny hands over the flame, laid it on little Sarah's cold face. But the frail little form was too exhausted for the lips to utter a word. Once, as the sensation of warmth caught her face, her eyes opened and she smiled at Adam. Then they closed for ever.

So the children of the poor die, and nobody cares. The black angel of famine spreads his wings and broods over the haunts of poverty, where the sordid meanness of the well-fed few grinds the starving many into desperation. There the offspring of the poor drag out a weary existence for a few months or years, until some exceptionally bitter winter or fever epidemic brings in its train the attendant sprites, bronchitis and typhoid, and then the feeble little spark of life sinks and expires, and all that remains is the little blue coffin, the cheap funeral, and the hurried burial.

Adam turned away from the weeping parents and strode to and fro in anguish of spirit. The death of little Sarah came as the last blow necessary to drive him to an extremity. "Good-bye, father," he cried, "Good-bye, mother; directly I earn some money you shall have it. I can stay here no longer. Hark! there's old Davis the carrier going through; very likely he'll give me a lift. Hi, Harry," he cried, rushing to the door, "wilt give me a lift?"

"How far, Adam?" asked the carrier.

"How far do you go?"

"'Rat and Three Cats,' in Bishopsgate."

"And wilt take me all the way?"

"Aye, lad," said the carrier; "as far as ye like."

Adam jumped in, and the cart jogged on, and was soon lost in the darkness.

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## CHAPTER III.

"He's a queer young chap," said Harry Davis, "a kinder put everybody right, and chop orf their 'e'ds wot won't. Wot d'ye think he sez comin' along? Why, sez he, there ain't ought ter be no poor people at all! Why, I sez, Adam, you'll land in the loonytick Bethleam at this rate. Don't the Scriptures say the poor is allus to be with us? W'y, suttonly, they do; and a man don't want it no different, if he's a true religion. I wor brought up to know my cattykism from five year old, and that's enuf. Howsever, he's waitin' in the shop, and if you think he'll suit ye at carryin' coke, maybe, he'll be glad of the job. He thought, p'r'aps, thirty bob a week might be got, but I tells him, he must be glad o' anythink in these 'ere days."

"Poor chap!" replied Mrs. Saunders; "bring him in; he'll be perished wi' cold; I know what carriers' carts are in cold weather, well enough!"

"Adam!" cried the ponderous Davis in a fearfully hoarse voice that seemed to evolve itself from somewhere in the depths of his breast pocket; "come in, lad; it's all right; ye'll be well treated here! Every carrier as plies Bishopsgate way knows Mrs. Saunders as a good old soul."

Adam answered the call by groping his way through piles of savoy cabbages, and baskets of English onions in the shop, down a dark little passage, blocked up with sacks of coke and coal, and so into the ten-feet-by-eight parlour, which was the peculiar sanctum of Mrs. Saunders, the proprietress of the establishment. There *was* a Mr. Saunders, but he was an individual who, though gaunt and grim of appearance, was not equal, in point of business management, to the common-sense mistress. Men commonly spoke of him in a doubtful sort of way, as "Jake." "A good sort is Jake," they would say. "Oh, ah; a good sort; but not over bright, don't you know."

Jake sat in the chimney-corner, and greeted Adam with a cheerful stare, which the young man, anxious to please, reciprocated with a vigorous and affectionate handshaking.

"Sit down, young man," said Mrs. Saunders; "you're welcome to stay here for the night, if you like; I don't take people in as a rule, you know, but—bless me, what a young chap you are, to be sure; whatever possessed you to come to London? But there, warm yourself at the fire, while I take the Irish stew up; will you stay and have a bit, Mr. Davis?"

The carrier declined. He had, it seemed, a parcel of rabbits to deliver down at a West End poulterer's; so, wrapping himself in multifarious neck-wraps and comforters with something of the agility of a snake-charmer, he withdrew.

"Good-bye, Mr. Davis!" cried Adam, shaking his hand fervently. "Good-bye! You've brought me to London, and I'm sure, by the help of God, I shall live to repay you!"

"Say nothin' about it, lad," quoth the deep voice of Davis, which, now that the comforters were on, sounded more remote in its source than ever. "God bless ye!"

Adam turned away as the carrier disappeared into the foggy street, and caught the eye of Mrs. Saunders, as she stopped in the midst of dishing up the stew, and smiled at Adam's transparent simplicity.

"Poor lad," she muttered; "he thinks he's come to make his way, and help the old folks, does he? Poor lad, poor lad!"



Adam, cold and weary with the long ride, was heartily thankful for the savoury stew, but, no sooner was it despatched, than he recurred to the topic of work, and spoke with enthusiasm of his determination to bring in a better state of things for the agricultural labourer, until Jake, regarding him with wonder and delight, produced for Adam's special encouragement, a mysterious-looking almanac, whereon, in the midst of a strange hieroglyphic, composed of three bayonets, a Maxim gun, a three-headed cat, and a smoky chimney, was plainly to be traced a spade.

"I allus said 'twas so," remarked the usually taciturn Jake, "the Old Smith's almanac is allus right; a spade, that stands for agricult'rals, don't it? Course it does! Why, then, you go on, young man, you go on!"

Having delivered himself of this rapturous discourse, Jake ate his dinner, and then fell fast asleep, stumbling from his chair, at intervals, almost into the fire, much to Adam's discomfiture.

"Don't mind poor Jake," whispered Mrs. Saunders to Adam, "he's a good husband, if a little eccentric, and they're scarce commodities nowadays, I can tell you. Now, what do you really want? I told Mr. Davis we were needing a young fellow to open and shut the shop, take out coals, weigh up the potatoes, and such like; but it strikes me you're not likely to settle down to a life of that sort, eh? Now, take my advice; if you've gifts above the ordinary, no doubt you'll make your way; but, be careful not to mistake a good intention for a lofty genius. I'm a little bit of a philosopher, though I do but keep a little greengrocer's shop, and many's the young chap I've seen make shipwreck of his chances, just because he was guided by imagination, rather than by reason. You should look at the matter straightforwardly, and settle what you're going to do, for, depend upon it, where one man rises by sheer force of indomitable will and great talent, ten thousand have to be content to plod their way through life, and gain an existence by continual and inveterate industry. Now, that's so; I know it, and your common sense will show you the truth of it. Apply it to yourself, and settle whether you will start work on sixteen shillings a-week, at coal-weighing and trolley-pushing, or—plunge out into darkness and join the workless army, in the sincere conviction that you're bound to come to the top.

"I talk thus, out of consideration for the aims you have, of which the good old carrier was telling me, of keeping the poor little ones at home."

Adam sat speechless. The very whirlwind of his quarrel with the principles of nineteenth-century sham civilisation had sustained him till now, but, strange as the warning sounded in coming from the old-dame-looking, if common-sense tradeswoman, he was bound to concede the necessity for facing the question. What was he to do? In the meantime, another person had quietly and unnoticed in the conversation, entered the room. The new-comer was a strange-looking man, brawny and vigorous, and with a certain rough-and-ready, careless style that took off from the gimlet look of his small, piercing eyes.

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## CHAPTER IV.

"This is Mr. Rawson, of the trade union," explained Mrs. Saunders.

Adam glanced at Rawson, and was immediately interested in his appearance. There was a nervous energy about Rawson that bespoke a man far above the level of the ordinary eating and drinking biped. He had the rapid look and calm precision of a man accustomed to control numbers, and his collarless neck was confined by a common blue cotton handkerchief tied in such an effectively careless knot as to add a dash of the picturesque to the vigorous figure of the labour agitator.

"Well, young fellow," said Rawson, eyeing Adam closely, "if you've come to London to make a fortune you'll find all your work is cut out."

"I've no such vain-glorious ideas," retorted Adam. "A fortune is not my ambition; give me some higher aim in life than that, or else let me be buried in the nearest pauper's grave."

Rawson smiled, half wonderingly and half incredulously.

"Well," he cried at length, "you are a queer fish, a young man from the country I expect. Ah, I thought so. You must excuse my putting you down as a fortune-hunter; but the fact is, most people who come up raw reckon to come into London *à la* Dick Whittington, Johnson or Garrick, with twopence in their pockets. A friend of mine once emptied his pockets, and walked out as far as Highgate; then turning and re-entering London on the off chance of the usual experience coming off. But it never did. But you're a noble exception to the rule; your soul soars above the paltriness of £ s. d. and bank balances."

"Don't laugh at me, please," replied Adam; "kindly allow me to be —."

"Genuine, if quixotic? Certainly, but if you want to live you must work, and where will you find



it? It's no easy matter to get into a decent job, I can assure you. Here have I spent twelve mortal hours to-day interviewing big men of all parties, to see if I could get no better arrangements made for the employment of the four thousand odd men who are 'out' in my union, and what's the result? An utter waste of time! 'No!' in a score of ways, varying from the oily, unctuous, deprecatory to the surly, wolfish blank denial. I begin to despair!

"Mrs. Saunders," continued Rawson, turning to her, "the perpetual grind of selfishness against a fellow's spirit is galling in its very monotony. The frigid hatred of the high-and-dry aristocrat, the amused contempt of the dull, average party man, the dreadful horror of the sleek professional classes at any matters that concern starving people, are enough to change a man's energy on behalf of the wretched into a downright war with Society. And yet, the merest word one may let slip, that can be construed into an incentive to action, is seized on by every well-dressed, luxuriously-fed member of the classes, as a sweet morsel, and you have paragraphs in the evening papers about this uncalled-for language of the notorious Rawson."

"Never mind," replied Mrs. Saunders, "get some stew. I've warmed a little for you, and you'll feel better. Men get on better terms with the world when they have something to eat. It's only a woman that's always consistent and sees things as they really are, I fancy."

"Ah, Mrs. Saunders," cried Rawson, "have mercy on us, we get uncommonly tried sometimes, and you must forgive us being a little wild occasionally. And yet there is a better time coming for the poor; one can, as it were, sniff it in the very air as a hound scents his quarry. Did you ever cross the sea sands on a dark night and bend down to hear the ripple of the rising tide murmur through the darkness? Quite a slight noise, no more pronounced than the rustling of the first falling leaves that speak of departing summer, and yet the sweep of the great Atlantic is behind it."

"So it is with the cause of the workless toilers. In the dense darkness of crass ignorance and prejudice, over the shifting sands of public opinion, the tide is gently trickling in and must eventually sweep all before it."

Adam drank it all in with avidity. How thankful he was that at the very start of life he had chanced on a high-souled man who was in for putting the world right! And yet there was the starving family at home, they must be helped; he must not sacrifice at the very start the aim that had brought him to his Ultima Thule, where so much work and wealth was to have been found, so, confiding in Steven Rawson, he told his whole history.

"What am I to do?" he continued, "I can see already that even to support myself will mean a stern struggle, but retreat means death. I have burned my bridges and must needs advance."

Rawson listened sympathetically to the recital, and shaking Adam warmly by the hand, bade him "fight the battle through. I must be going now," he added, "for it's late, and you're all tired, I know. We've a big affair on to-morrow, however, if you like to come, young man. Very possibly there will be a bit of difficulty with the police. I warn you of that in advance!"

Adam inwardly resolved to be there, but made no reply. One thing, however, had forced itself on his mind, that Rawson might be a very good humanitarian, but yet did not manifest much personal reliance on God. So quietly, and before Rawson had time to say good-night and withdraw, Adam had drawn a little leather-covered book from his pocket and was reading from it.

It was an old edition of the Psalms, marked with many a stain and pencil mark, and inscribed within the cover with the name of Adam's grandmother, a worthy old soul, who, in the teeth of prejudice and intolerance, had defied all the powers that would have interfered with those little meetings with neighbours by her own fireside, when she was wont to expound the Scriptures with such zest and fervour that many were converted by the old ingle nook.

*"My heart is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. And I said, Oh that I had wings as a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest."*

Rawson bowed his head. The experience of the old Psalmist was up-to-date history.

*"As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me."*

"Amen," said Adam, "let us pray."

*(To be continued.)*



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## CHAPTER V.

Early in the next afternoon groups of men began to assemble in Trafalgar Square. It is amazing how the British public are drawn by anything approaching the spectacular; a drum-and-fife band from an aggressive ragged school, a squad of youthful mechanics in the garb of rifle volunteers, or a procession of characteristic British working-men, in all the glory and stateliness of the Ancient Order of Foresters, will draw a crowd anywhere, while a Lord Mayor's show suffices to bring crowds from all parts of the country, to surge and struggle for hours in the midst of a Strand pandemonium, in the earnest anticipation of beholding the shivering *figurantes* and shabby Dutch metal chariots that represent the ancient pomp of the City Fathers. The spectacular boasts of Trafalgar Square are, however, of a vastly different type. There assembles the ragged out-of-work, lean of body and shaking with the raw cold, the keen-featured artisan, and the inveterate trade unionist, while the alert pickpocket and professional beggar reap an unwonted harvest from the Pall Mall club loungers, who, with an expression of extreme boredom, have languished into the square to see the fun.

As the dull day's clouds deepened into evening, the crowds thickened; groups of fiery and dirty-looking foreigners, well-known to the police, raised an occasional shout, and the sturdy representatives of law and order kept on the move the ever-increasing mob, which surged in the direction of the Nelson column. Enterprising individuals in various parts of the square started to lecture the public on topics varying from the extinction of the rich by electrocution, to the battle of Armageddon, but each orator was quickly removed by a dexterous shove of the vigilant police.

Adam was, with Rawson, in the centre of a group of men who kept quietly watching their chance to commence the meeting. "Keep close to me," whispered Rawson, "there'll be a rush directly," and, as he spoke, a gang of some twenty pickpockets, intent on plunder, and not particular as to posing as patriots, came by with a mad whirl, gathering in their close embrace a stout gentleman whose gold watch was subsequently missing and a tall swell whose silver-mounted stick disappeared in the *emete*. A score of police quickly ran to the spot, and while attention was fixed on the squabble, Adam's party made for the column, and a vigorous docker, surrounded by a compact mass of stalwarts, launched into a trenchant criticism of the prospects of Society as illustrated by the increasing extremes of poverty and wealth. But the speech did not last long; the police rallied, and swooped down on the stalwarts, some of whom resisted strenuously. In a moment, the whole of the great square was in a turmoil of hysterical excitement; impromptu meetings were started, only to be rudely scattered in a moment; hand-to-hand fights and a combined movement of the police to clear the square made the confusion still more confounded, and the screams of the women, some with infants, who had ventured into the centre of trouble, added to the madness of the scene.

"It's all up," said Rawson, to Adam, quietly, "they'll clear us off in three minutes; if you miss me, make your way to Mrs. Saunders' and——"

Just above, on the pedestal of the column, an anarchist enthusiast, who had climbed there, unfolded a red flag, and jabbered away in German, with intense vociferations. A sharp Englishman, possibly a detective, clambering over Landseer's colossal lions, struck the foreigner across the face with a walking-stick. The blood rushed from a great wound on his forehead, and, turning dizzy, he stumbled and dropped the flag, which came toppling down, the pole striking Rawson senseless.

At that moment, the police came with a double rush, and with a cry that the Horse Guards were coming, there was a wholesale flight from the square.

Rawson lay bleeding and helpless, and Adam vainly endeavoured either to arouse or carry him off. Standing over him in an attitude of defence, Adam was a mark for the police, who naturally thought he meant fighting. Batons were used pretty freely, and situated as Adam was, in the centre of the prostrate leaders, he could scarcely move.

"Keep off," cried Adam; "can't you see the man's hurt?"

But expostulations were useless, and in a few moments, Adam was hurled to the ground, where, crushed and bleeding, he lay beneath a heap of struggling men.

When he recovered consciousness, Rawson was gone, and the square empty, but for the police, who continually patrolled it.

"Ye'd better get on, lad," said a burly, good-natured policeman; "are ye hurt?"

"No, thank you," replied Adam; "no, I—I think not," and dizzy and exhausted, he staggered away down the Strand towards the little green-grocer's shop at the East End.

(To be continued.)

# A YOUNG MAN FROM THE COUNTRY.

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## CHAPTER VI.

Adam awoke the next morning with a heavy heart and a sore head. The philosophic Mrs. Saunders made some strong tea and dry toast, and sent up those welcome refreshments by the hand of the excellent Jake.

Jake placed them by the bedside, and then sat down, silently regarding Adam's emergence from a state of dreaminess, where, in the golden land of fancy, all men were unselfish, and he, Adam, was supporting 'Lijah and all the family in comfort. He was, in fact, just murmuring something about fetching some little "pearl" biscuits for Mary to feed the swans in the river, when a long-drawn sigh from Jake recalled him to the miseries of life as it is.

"Thank you, Mr. Saunders!" said Adam. "Why you should take such trouble with an entire stranger as me, I can't make out, but God will certainly reward you!"



Jake, as we have remarked, was not a man of many words. He made no reply, except to stare at Adam, who, looking enquiringly back, noticed a tear fall down the old man's cheek.

"You are ill, Mr. Saunders?" cried Adam, starting up.

Jake shook his head, and without relaxing a muscle of his face, or ceasing his ghostly stare, opened one of a little toy chest of drawers that stood on a table by the bedside. He drew out a plain, white envelope, and then, looking round to make sure they were alone in the room, drew from it a tiny curl of light brown hair.

"Our little un's," whispered Jake, "died at five year old; such a boy. Ah! such a boy! The missus never says nothin' about it, only we go up to the cimit'ry once a year, ye know. They do say as I ain't never been the same man since, through it affectin' my brain—Jake with a feeble smile pointed to his head—poor little Hugh; blue eyes, lad; yes, blue eyes!"

"And?"

"Yes," nodded Jake, "that's it! We thought you was a bit like him. Yes, that's it! But my head's better, a lot better! I read in the almanac as how fish was good for the brain, so I've fed up mostly on fresh haddocks these two year or more. Yes, I'll put that envelope back!"

"However," thought Adam, "if I'm to do anything for father and the children, I must wake up, and get to work. Politics are all every well, if one understands them, but they're not satisfying to the hungry, nor do they pay the rent. At any rate, not at the start of a political career like mine, which begins with a row and ends with a broken head."

Accordingly, after eating his breakfast, and getting ready, Adam proceeded, under the guidance of Mrs. Saunders, to study the advertisement columns of the "Daily Chronicle."

"There seems to be a lot of places vacant," said Adam, brightening up, as he surveyed the long columns of "Wanted." "Let me see, here's a nice one, thirty shillings a week, for a first-class cook; but I can't cook; that's one drawback of not having anything to cook. Barber wanted; splendid pony for sale, £1 10s.; dripping bought; agent for Blank's Horse Powders, must have an aristocratic connection—not much in my line. Stay! Handy man wanted, from country preferred, to help gardener; good chance for steady youth. Apply, 24, Slaughter Square, S.W."

"The very thing!" ejaculated Adam.

"Says nothing about wages," remarked Mrs. Saunders; "I don't like the look of that. Still, it's worth trying."

"New moon to-morrow at 3.24 a.m.," interjected Jake, oracularly. Evidently he thought there was some connection, but Adam looked up enquiringly.

"Queer thing about these moons," added Jake, growing confidential; "they allus comes in at queer times: 4.21 a.m., and 5.32 a.m., and such like, as if they kep' late hours. If I was the almanac, I'd——"

Mrs. Saunders frowned.

"Good mornin', young man, and heaven prosper you!"

Eager to obtain the job, Adam soon reached Slaughter Square, a shabby-genteel spot on the confines of Pimlico. It was like many similar spots in London, probably called a square for the very British reason that it was an oval enclosure. It had about it an odour of fallen greatness. The trees were tall, but almost leafless, the railings badly needed painting, and the small, occasional tufts of grass only sprang forth here and there, and in a shamefaced way as though they did not care to be seen in company with the old sardine tins and scraps of dirty paper with which the ground was variegated. No. 24, a grim, ghostly-looking place, surrounded by wooden palings in a more or less advanced state of decay, was evidently a source of interest to the rest of the square. At No. 21, a young lady in curl-papers was keenly scrutinising Adam as he passed, and retailing her criticisms to an older lady who sat by the fire, reading from a large book, like a family Bible, whilst at No. 24, two slatternly-looking servants, ostensibly sweeping the steps, giggled, and one remarked, *sotto voce*, "He-he! there's another!"

Adam stopped short and looked at them, but they were sweeping with intense earnestness, as much as to say, "Not me, young man!" so he passed on.

Ringling the bell at No. 24, he was admitted by a bibulous-looking gardener, who, with an aristocratic air, bade him "Wait in the tool-house, young feller!"

Stepping within the dirty shed indicated, Adam found himself greeted with an outburst of suppressed laughter. Standing round the shed, and leaning against the wall, was an array of, Adam thought, the most miserable wrecks of humanity, he had ever seen. Some were old, some were young; a few clean, but most dirty, and all half-starved.

"Oh, don't go away, matey," as Adam instinctively drew back, said a tall, bony individual, who, in an ancient chimney-pot hat, and pair of trousers several sizes too small, and a rusty coat, which was badly out-at-elbows, seemed to be acting as the comic man of the company. "Don't go back! It's a rare big gardin', and all on us put together don't make one decent man, so they may take on the lot. Besides, you're only the forty-first——"

(To be continued.)



# A YOUNG MAN FROM THE COUNTRY.

## CHAPTER VII.

Adam stood aghast for a moment, and then took his place amongst the rest of the waiting crowd. Presently, a solemn-looking gentleman, of imposing appearance, walked slowly into the shed.

"Evidently," thought Adam, "the master of the concern; I must put on my best appearance."

"Well, men," began the gentleman in question, "it would be a long matter to interview you all personally, and, indeed, would be an impossibility, as my services are due to my country."

"He's wun of these 'ere spekilatin' stock-brokers," whispered a little one-armed man just behind Adam.

"Aye," quoth another, "belongs to the South Bermondsey Copper Mine, what bust."

"What I require is a man who can work well and conscientiously. Such a man will find here a good home, plenty to eat—(cheers)—plain, perhaps—(expressive "Ahs!")—but, still, I hope sufficient! (Murmurs.) The advantages of permanent work are obvious, and the wages I give are, not to mention, of course, the prestige of working in the midst of aristocratic surroundings, why, food and lodging, and—sixpence a week pocket-money."

The worthy gentleman—his name was Tinks, Preston Tinks, Esquire—here produced a red silk handkerchief, blew his nose, and struck the position in which his portrait had been painted by Blobbs, R.A., for the Boardroom of the Telescopic Walking-stick Company. The attitude was forcible, being, in fact, imitated from the Peel statue in Cheapside, but it failed, somewhat, in its effect. There was a general discussion amongst the worthy applicants, and one burly man, very ragged, holding a battered hat in his hand, and speaking with difficulty owing to a severe attack of bronchitis, which made his breathing rather pronounced, ventured to ask,

"How many meals a day, guv'nor, if I may make so bold?"

Mr. Preston Tinks, with a calm smile, waved the speaker to be silent, and proceeded,

"Those are the terms. The work consists, as you may have observed, of assisting the gardener with both the kitchen and flower gardens, especially—here Mr. Tinks was seized with a cough—especially the former."

It was, indeed, a very large garden. "Quite a field," thought Adam, "there's work enough for three men at least."

"Then," proceeded Mr. Tinks, gracefully waving his hand in the direction of the house, "then there are necessarily such little matters as boot and window-cleaning, waiting at table occasionally, and——"

"'Ow much a week, did you say, guv'nor?" enquired the man with bronchitis. "Sixpence, hay? Is it a bloomin' workus you're a-startin', hay? 'Ow can a cove keep a wife and——"

The thought and the bronchitis combined were too much for him, and in a fit of coughing and indignation he placed his crownless hat on his head, and, with arms akimbo, in an attitude of defiance, staggered out, expressing as much contempt as his malady would allow.

"Those men who are content with my, I will not say philanthropic, but liberal offer, can stay and I will select one from the number; the rest may—ahem—leave," and Mr. Tinks waited, in his most important manner.

"It's nothink but a starvation shop," murmured the little one-armed man, "and I don't have nothink to do with it," and out he walked.

The rest looked expressively at each other, and with various grimaces that might be taken as suggestive of acquiescence in the little man's remarks, they, one by one, left the tool-house and the premises.

Adam slowly followed them out, and wandered listlessly through the neighbourhood. What could he do? The miserable crowd of work-seekers had wearily tramped away, all but a white-haired old fellow, who, limping along with the help of a stick, nodded to Adam, and sat down on the kerb-stone to rest.

"Ye're a young fellow to be out o' work, where do ye come from?" he asked.

"I—I came up to get a job, and help the old folks at home," replied Adam, beginning to feel about as miserable as it was possible for a man to feel, "but there seems little enough work in London."

The old man looked wistfully at Adam. "Ah!" he said; "poor lad, poor lad! I came up here fra' Not'n'amsheer, p'raps ye know w'eer that be? Well, five-and-thirty year ago, I cum up heer. What a pile o' things I were goin' to do, to be sure, but—it's a queer place is this yer world, fur look at me to-day, not a 'a'p'ny, not a bite o' bread, bar a crust in my pocket for dinner, an' yet, I niver drunk in my life, no, niver!"

"And do you believe in God?" asked Adam. The old man shivered, and shook his head vacantly. Gathering himself together, he shuffled away muttering, "Mad, poor chap; mad! 'Believe in God,' says he? Ha, ha! he's mad, sure eno'!"

The drizzle that had been gradually increasing in volume, was, by this time, almost developed into a drenching rain, and Adam, physically exhausted, and utterly disappointed, burst into tears.

*(To be continued.)*



# A YOUNG MAN FROM THE COUNTRY.

## CHAPTER VII.—CONTINUED.

The damp and dismal surroundings of Slaughter Square were not exactly calculated to inspire anyone who chanced to be down-hearted, and Adam, mustering his failing courage, turned Eastwards again. His coat was none of the thickest, and the hob-nailed boots, bought from a cheap dealer at a ridiculous price, so as to spare the more money for the children's shoes, were beginning to gape open at the soles.

Adam stood for a moment, leaning against the square railings, pondering on the miseries of the poor, and the apparent hopelessness of attempting any practical remedy, when a well-dressed lady who was leading two pretty children dressed in æsthetic peacock blue, slipped on the wet pavement, and the three fell headlong to the ground. Adam, darting forward, rapidly assisted them to rise. The younger child, with a smear of mud right across her nose, began to cry, and Adam, speaking as he would to little Susan Jane at home, cried,

"Cheer up, little one, you'll be better soon; your mother will kiss you and make it well!"

The crying ceased at once, not by reason of the comfort, but in utter astonishment at anybody with such shabby clothes on addressing them.

"Oh, mamma!" cried the elder, with an intensely-contemptuous curl of the lip, "this nasty man spoke to Maudie!"

The lady addressed, having divested her fashionable attire of some of the mud, quickly came to the rescue.

She was not disinclined to acknowledge Adam's little service, but that such a common fellow should have the intense impudence to speak to her children in such a familiar way was unbearable, and gathering them to her side, she greeted Adam with a pulverising stare, and passed on without a word.

"The pride of wealth," murmured Adam, "'How hardly shall they that have riches enter in.' Here is a woman evidently educated, of some little refinement and taste, who, no doubt, loves her children sincerely and heartily. Probably, she goes to church every Sunday as regularly as clockwork, and is a well-bred, Christian woman—according to the world's standard; yet, because I am just a common-looking fellow, I am beneath notice. I may have the statesmanship of Pitt, or the poetry of Shelley, or the mind of Newton, but—if my coat is rusty, all Bayswater is my sworn enemy. The poorer I get, the greater is the barrier between Society and me, and when I am penniless, I might as well withdraw quietly from the world, so far as the respectable classes are concerned. And what puzzles me is that these folks are so eminently religious, and, in a way, benevolent. Probably, it's a formalist way they've got into. Their Christianity is a frozen concern, and they are frozen into it like the fern-leaves in the ice-blocks at yonder fishmonger's window. But philosophy won't find me work, so I had better drop it and look about me once more."

The rain now came down in torrents, and Adam, wet through, tramped on through the City, back to Mrs. Saunders' shop. "Useless to go after a place in such a condition as this," thought Adam; "clothes make the man nowadays, and wet clothes are an abomination."

Mrs. Saunders looked at him with an air of pity. "Poor child, you're wet through," she cried; "get some of Mr. Saunders' things and put your wet clothes to dry."

Adam did so, and sat down to a little warm food with a relish, only mitigated by the thought that he had not earned it, and that look at it as he might, it was practically charity. He detailed his adventures to the worthy Mrs. Saunders and the interested Jake, the latter of whom, after consulting the almanack, came to the conclusion that it was owing, so the author seemed to think, to a conjunction of Mars and Neptune. Poor Jake was, indeed, as Adam had noticed, quickly growing much more feeble. He scarcely moved now, and usually sat in the seat by the fireside, in a sort of mental haze, that did not, however, obscure his perception of God. For the poor old man, though strangely superstitious from childhood, was of a kindly nature, and believed, with the simplicity that characterised him altogether, in God. As he sat at the table Jake gave a little cry, and fell forward on the table, with his right side paralysed, and although Adam sprang forward to lift him, the dreadful ashen-grey look on the old man's face showed only too clearly that the end was drawing near.

Adam gently raised the drooping form, and placed it on the old sofa by the fireside, as Mrs. Saunders hastened to prepare some homely remedies. But poor Jake's time had come; he battled hard to utter a few last words of farewell to his wife. The mental clouds seemed to rise for a few moments and leave his mind clear, as he took his wife's hand for the last time, and a gleam of intelligence flashed from his eyes.

"My poor husband!" cried Mrs. Saunders, "My poor husband!" as she knelt weeping by the side of the sofa, and kissed the pale brow that was now growing cold in death.

"Do you know me, Jake?" she cried, seizing his hand.

He could only reply by one speaking look, and then the eyes feebly closed for ever.

(To be continued.)

# A YOUNG MAN FROM THE COUNTRY.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

Three months had passed away, and the little violet crocuses on the high, green banks opposite 'Lijah's cottage were beginning to peep into flower. The brimming brook poured its rushing waters under the rustic bridge and on to the flood-gates of the mill, and the sun's warm radiance flashed on the blossoms and gleamed across the wavelets with the promise of coming summer. By the window of the little upstairs room, in an old broken-down chair, sat 'Lijah, slowly recovering from a severe illness. The room was all bare, but for a simple pallet on which the old man had lain, and one or two of those old-fashioned, commonly-printed lithographs of Scripture-subjects, with which the rural districts of England were formerly flooded. 'Lijah's white face and drawn features told very plainly of the battle with hunger and death through which he had gone.

"You must have more to eat, 'Lijah!" cried Dr. Gargoyle, "I'm a vegetarian myself—'No flocks that range upon the hills, to slaughter I condemn'—Porridge is good enough for any man, I maintain, and porridge will do you good; got any in the house?"



'Lijah shook his head. There was nothing in the house. But for the little help Adam had been able to send and the kindness of neighbours they must all have starved, he said.

The doctor paused a minute and then cried, "No, no! they've not much to live on, *they* can't support you, poor creatures."

Dr. Gargoyle was coming round. A continual course of attendance on the poor cottagers, the helots of British country life, had convinced him of the utter misery of the hand-to-mouth struggle for existence which constitutes the career of the modern descendants of the medieval yeoman.

"Send one of the children up to the Lodge, and I'll send you plenty down," said the doctor, as he went slowly downstairs. "Poor old 'Lijah," he muttered, "he's not fit to work again in this world; but what's to become of him? The old man has quietly and patiently plodded on, sacrificing his health and half-starving himself for the sake of his family, and now there's nothing before him but death and a pauper's funeral!"

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"I've saved a bit o' money," said Mrs. Saunders, "enough to enable me to spend the rest of my days in peace, and p'raps a bit over to do good with. I've loved the old shop, but to stay here without poor Jake is almost more than I can bear."

The poor widow quickly made up her mind to hand over the business which, though not large, meant a fair living, to Adam.

"I shan't give it to you," she said, "that would not be good for you, perhaps; so you shall buy it and pay me by instalments."

\* \* \*

'Lijah lay once again on the little pallet, and the children stood by his side. Susan Jane, who mothered the rest to a surprising degree, took charge of 'Lijah, and came forward with a rice pudding. "Adam said, when he wrote and sent the money, you was to have rice pudding with eggs in it," said Sarah Jane, "and so you must. Adam will be here soon, won't he?"

'Lijah smiled at the child, and feebly tried to swallow the food; but his strength was gone, and with a shaking hand he put down the dish. "No, no, Susan," he said; "your father's old before his time, and can't take it; nevertheless, thanks be to God for His goodness, the children can have it, bless 'em!"

"We've got plenty, father," replied Susan Jane; "there's bread-and-butter, and cheese, and—oh, all sorts."

"What's all sorts, Susie?"

"Why, little fishes in tins, with oil on 'em, and things like blackbeetles, but mother says they're French plums, and is good for us. And the squire, he's sent down a rabbit for you and says it's to be stewed, and he's sorry you're so bad, but he didn't know."

'Lijah listened to the child's prattle with a keen delight. To see them all with sufficient to eat was an unwonted sight, and gladdened his heart. "But I shall not live to see them long," he thought, and the weariness of his movements confirmed it. He asked his wife, "What time would Adam come?" and was told, "By the eight o'clock train." Then he quietly fell asleep.

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Adam was greeted with a universal shout of glee, suppressed as much as possible in view of the fact that 'Lijah was asleep.

"Hurrah," he whispered, "Johnnie! hurrah, little Susan! I'm going to take you all away. Just wait till I've seen father, just wait, and then we'll put all the old things together, and be off in the morning. Hurrah!" And they all danced round the rickety old table, and shouted, "Hurrah!"

Adam quickly made his way upstairs to 'Lijah's room.

"Are you awake, father?" whispered Adam. "I've come to fetch you all away. Asleep," thought Adam, "fast asleep, tired out, no doubt. It's almost a shame to wake him; but how glad he'll be to know that his battle with poverty is over, "Father," said Adam, speaking louder, "father!"

But 'Lijah did not speak. The worn face, always peaceful, wore an expression of perfect calm; the thin hair, white with trouble and sorrow, was lit up by the rays of the sun that glanced athwart the elm trees and sparkled into the little room like the halo of another world. Yet his lips moved, and Adam, bending over, caught the words of the soft whisper,

"Going—going home—to God."

THE END.