

Nimrod: A Mighty Hunter Before the Lord

to such an extent that it was highly improbable that any of them would employ him, and even if they would, Misery's heart failed him at the thought of having to meet on an equal footing those workmen whom he had tyrannised over and oppressed. It was for these reasons that Hunter was as terrified of Rushton as the hands were of himself.

Over the men stood Misery, ever threatening them with dismissal and their wives and children with hunger. Behind Misery was Rushton, ever bullying and goading him on to greater excesses and efforts for the furtherance of the good cause—which was—to enable the head of the firm to accumulate money.

Mr Hunter, at the moment when the reader first makes his acquaintance on the afternoon of the day when the incidents recorded in the first chapter took place, was executing a kind of strategical movement in the direction of the house where Crass and his mates were working. He kept to one side of the road because by so doing he could not be perceived by those within the house until the instant of his arrival. When he was within about a hundred yards of the gate he dismounted from his bicycle, there being a sharp rise in the road just there, and as he toiled up, pushing the bicycle in front, his breath showing in the frosty air, he observed a number of men hanging about. Some of them he knew; they had worked for him at various times, but were now out of a job. There were five altogether, three were standing in a group, the other two stood each by himself, being strangers to the rest. The three men who stood together were nearest to Hunter and as the latter approached, one of them advanced to meet him.

'Good morning, sir.'

Hunter replied by an inarticulate grunt, without stopping. The man followed.

'Any chance of a job, sir?'

'Full up,' replied Hunter, still without stopping. The man still followed, like a beggar soliciting charity.

'Be any use calling round in a day or so, sir?'

'Don't think so,' Hunter replied; 'can if you like; but we're full up.'

'Thank you, sir,' said the man, and turned back to his friends.

By this time Hunter was within a few yards of one of the other two men, who also came to speak to him. This man felt there