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Japhet, in Search of a Father

Frederick Marryat

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Prefatory Note

In the *Metropolitan Magazine*, where this novel originally appeared (Sep. 1834-Jan. 1836), Marryat prepared his readers for its reception in the following words:—

"And having now completed 'Jacob Faithful,' we trust to the satisfaction of our readers, we will make a few remarks. We commenced writing on our own profession, and having completed four tales, novels, or whatever you may please to call them" (viz., Frank Mildmay, The King's Own, Newton Forster, Peter Simple), "in 'Jacob Faithful' we quitted the *salt* water for the *fresh*. From the wherry we shall now step on shore, and in our next number we shall introduce to our readers 'The Adventures of *Japhet*, in search of his Father.'"

The promise was faithfully kept, and Japhet, with all his varied experience, never went to sea. There were indeed few companies on land to which he did not penetrate. Reared in a foundling hospital, and apprenticed to a Smithfield apothecary, his good looks, impulsive self-confidence, and unbounded talent for lying, carried him with *éclat* through the professions of quack doctor, juggler, and mountebank, gentleman about town, tramp, and quaker: to emerge triumphantly at last as the only son of a wealthy Anglo-Indian general, or "Bengal tiger," as his friends preferred to call him.

Japhet's "adventures," of course, are shared by a faithful friend and ally, Timothy Oldmixon, the Sancho to his Quixote, originally an orphan pauper like himself, composed of two qualities—fun and affection. He encounters villains, lawyers, kind-hearted peers, "rooks" and "pigeons," gipsies, leaders of fashion, fair maidens—enough and to spare. In a word, Marryat here makes use of well-worn material, and uses it well. He has constructed a tale of private adventure on the old familiar lines, in which the local colour—acquired from other books—is admirably laid on, and the interest sustained to the end. The story is well told, enlivened by humour, and very respectably constructed.

The reader will find *Japhet* thoroughly exciting, and will have no difficulty in believing that, while it was running in the pages of the *Metropolitan*, "an American vessel meeting an English one in the

broad Atlantic, instead of a demand for water or supplies, ran up the question to her mast-head, 'Has Japhet found his father yet?'"

Japhet, in search of a Father, is here re-printed, with a few corrections, from the first edition in 3 vols. Saunders & Otley, 1836. On page 360 a few words, enclosed in square brackets, have been inserted from the magazine version, as the abbreviated sentence, always hitherto reproduced from the first edition, is unintelligible.

R.B.J.

Chapter I

Like most other children, who should be my godfather is decided by Mammon—So precocious as to make some noise in the world and be hung a few days after I was born—Cut down in time and produce a scene of bloodshed—My early propensities fully developed by the choice of my profession

Those who may be pleased to honour these pages with a perusal, will not be detained with a long introductory history of my birth, parentage, and education. The very title implies that, at this period of my memoirs, I was ignorant of the two first; and it will be necessary for the due development of my narrative, that I allow them to remain in the same state of bliss; for in the perusal of a tale, as well as in the pilgrimage of life, ignorance of the future may truly be considered as the greatest source of happiness. The little that was known of me at this time I will however narrate as concisely, and as correctly, as I am able. It was on the—I really forget the date, and must rise from my chair, look for a key, open a closet, and then open an iron safe to hunt over a pile of papers—it will detain you too long—it will be sufficient to say that it was on *a* night—but whether the night was dark or moonlit, or rainy or foggy, or cloudy or fine, or starlight, I really cannot tell; but it is of no very great consequence. Well, it was on a night about the hour—there again I'm puzzled, it might have been ten, or eleven, or twelve, or between any of these hours; nay it might have been past midnight, and far advancing to the morning, for what I know to the contrary. The reader must excuse an infant of—there again I am at a nonplus; but we will assume of some days old—if, when wrapped up in flannel and in a covered basket, and, moreover, fast asleep at the time, he does not exactly observe the state of the weather, and the time by the church clock. I never before was aware of the great importance of dates in telling a story; but it is now too late to recover these facts, which have been swept away into oblivion by the broad wing of Time. I must therefore just tell the little I do know, trusting to the reader's good nature, and to blanks. It is as follows:—that, at the hour—of the night—the state of the weather being also—I, an infant of a certain age—was suspended by somebody or somebodies—at the knocker of the Foundling Hospital. Having made me

fast, the said somebody or somebodies rang a peal upon the bell which made the old porter start up in so great a hurry, that, with the back of his hand he hit his better half a blow on the nose, occasioning a great suffusion of blood from that organ, and a still greater pouring forth of invectives from the organ immediately below it.

All this having been effected by the said peal on the bell, the said somebody or somebodies did incontinently take to their heels, and disappear long before the old porter could pull his legs through his nether garments and obey the rude summons. At last the old man swung open the gate, and the basket swung across his nose; he went in again for a knife and cut me down, for it was cruel to hang a baby of a few days old; carried me into the lodge, lighted a candle, and opened the basket. Thus did I metaphorically first come to light.

When he opened the basket I opened my eyes, and although I did not observe it, the old woman was standing at the table in very light attire, sponging her nose over a basin.

"Verily, a pretty babe with black eyes!" exclaimed the old man in a tremulous voice.

"Black eyes indeed," muttered the old woman. "I shall have two to-morrow."

"Beautiful black eyes indeed!" continued the old man.

"Terrible black eyes, for sartain," continued the old woman, as she sponged away.

"Poor thing, it must be cold," murmured the old porter.

"Warrant I catch my death a-cold," muttered the wife.

"But, dear me, here's a paper!" exclaimed the old man.

"Vinegar and brown paper," echoed the old woman.

"Addressed to the governors of the hospital," continued the porter.

"Apply to the dispenser of the hospital," continued his wife.

"And sealed," said he.

"Get it healed," said she.

"The linen is good; it must be the child of no poor people. Who knows?"—soliloquised the old man.

"My poor nose!" exclaimed the old woman.

"I must take it to the nurses, and the letter I will give to-morrow," said the old porter, winding up his portion of this double soliloquy, and tottering away with the basket and your humble servant across the courtyard.

"There, it will do now," said the old wife, wiping her face on a towel, and regaining her bed, in which she was soon joined by her husband, and they finished their nap without any further interruption during that night.

The next morning I was reported and examined, and the letter addressed to the governors was opened and read. It was laconic, but still, as most things laconic are, very much to the point.

"This child was born in wedlock—he is to be named Japhet. When circumstances permit, he will be reclaimed."

But there was a postscript by Abraham Newlands, Esq., promising to pay the bearer, on demand, the sum of fifty pounds. In plain-er terms, there was a bank note to that amount inclosed in the letter. As in general, the parties who suspend children in baskets, have long before suspended cash payments, or, at all events, forget to suspend them with the baskets, my arrival created no little noise, to which I added my share, until I obtained a share of the breast of a young woman, who, like Charity, suckled two or three babies at one time.

We have preparatory schools all over the kingdom; for young gentlemen, from three to five years of age, under ladies, and from four to seven, under either, or both sexes, as it may happen; but the most preparatory of all preparatory schools, is certainly the Foundling Hospital, which takes in its pupils, if they are sent, from one to three days old, or even hours, if the parents are in such extreme anxiety about their education. Here it commences with their weaning, when they are instructed in the mystery of devouring pap; next, they are taught to walk—and as soon as they can walk—to sit still; to talk—and as soon as they can talk—to hold their tongues; thus are they instructed and passed on from one part of the establish-

ment to another, until they finally are passed out of its gates, to get on in the world, with the advantages of some education, and the still further advantage of having no father or mother to provide for, or relatives to pester them with their necessities. It was so with me: I arrived at the age of fourteen, and notwithstanding the promise contained in the letter, it appeared that circumstances did *not* permit of my being reclaimed. But I had a great advantage over the other inmates of the hospital; the fifty pounds sent with me were not added to the funds of the establishment, but generously employed for my benefit by the governors, who were pleased with my conduct, and thought highly of my abilities. Instead of being bound 'prentice to a cordwainer or some other mechanic, by the influence of the governors, added to the fifty pounds and interest, as a premium, I was taken by an apothecary, who engaged to bring me up to the profession. And now, that I am out of the Foundling, we must not travel quite so fast.

The practitioner who thus took me by the hand was a Mr Phineas Cophagus, whose house was most conveniently situated for business, one side of the shop looking upon Smithfield Market, the other presenting a surface of glass to the principal street leading out of the same market. It was a *corner* house, but not in a *corner*. On each side of the shop were two gin establishments, and next to them were two public-houses and then two eating-houses, frequented by graziers, butchers, and drovers. Did the men drink so much as to quarrel in their cups, who was so handy to plaister up the broken heads as Mr Cophagus? Did a fat grazier eat himself into an apoplexy, how very convenient was the ready lancet of Mr Cophagus. Did a bull gore a man, Mr Cophagus appeared with his diachylon and lint. Did an ox frighten a lady, it was in the back parlour of Mr Cophagus that she was recovered from her syncope. Market days were a sure market to my master; and if an overdriven beast knocked down others, it only helped to set him on his legs. Our windows suffered occasionally; but whether it were broken heads, or broken limbs, or broken windows, they were well paid for. Every one suffered but Mr Phineas Cophagus, who never suffered a patient to escape him. The shop had the usual allowance of green, yellow, and blue bottles; and in hot weather, from our vicinity, we were visited by no small proportion of bluebottle flies. We had a white horse in one window,

and a brown horse in the other, to announce to the drovers that we supplied horse-medicines. And we had all the patent medicines in the known world, even to the "all-sufficient medicine for mankind" of Mr Enouy; having which, I wondered, on my first arrival, why we troubled ourselves about any others. The shop was large, and at the back part there was a most capacious iron mortar, with a pestle to correspond. The first floor was tenanted by Mr Cophagus, who was a bachelor; the second floor was let; the others were appropriated to the housekeeper, and to those who formed the establishment. In this well-situated tenement, Mr Cophagus got on swimmingly. I will therefore, for the present, sink the shop, that my master may rise in the estimation of the reader, when I describe his person and his qualifications.

Mr Phineas Cophagus might have been about forty-five years of age when I first had the honour of an introduction to him in the receiving room of the Foundling Hospital. He was of the middle height, his face was thin, his nose very much hooked, his eyes small and peering, with a good-humoured twinkle in them, his mouth large, and drawn down at one corner. He was stout in his body, and carried a considerable protuberance before him, which he was in the habit of patting with his left hand very complacently; but although stout in his body, his legs were mere spindles, so that, in his appearance, he reminded you of some bird of the crane genus. Indeed, I may say, that his whole figure gave you just such an impression as an orange might do, had it taken to itself a couple of pieces of tobacco pipes as vehicles of locomotion. He was dressed in a black coat and waistcoat, white cravat and high collar to his shirt, blue cotton net pantaloons and Hessian boots, both fitting so tight, that it appeared as if he was proud of his spindle shanks. His hat was broad-brimmed and low, and he carried a stout black cane with a gold top in his right hand, almost always raising the gold top to his nose when he spoke, just as we see doctors represented at a consultation in the caricature prints. But if his figure was strange, his language and manners were still more so. He spoke, as some birds fly, in jerks, intermixing his words, for he never completed a whole sentence, with *um – um –* and ending it with "*so on,*" leaving his hearers to supply the context from the heads of his discourse. Almost always in motion, he generally changed his position as soon as he had

finished speaking, walking to any other part of the room, with his cane to his nose, and his head cocked on one side, with a self-sufficient tiptoe gait. When I was ushered into his presence, he was standing with two of the governors. "This is the lad," said one of them, "his name is *Japhet*."

"Japhet," replied Mr Cophagus; "um, scriptural—Shem, Ham, *um*—and so on. Boy reads?"

"Very well, and writes a very good hand. He is a very good boy, Mr Cophagus."

"Read—write—spell—good, and *so on*. Bring him up—rudiments—spatula—write labels—um—M.D. one of these days—make a man of him—and so on," said this strange personage, walking round and round me with his cane to his nose, and scrutinising my person with his twinkling eyes. I was dismissed after this examination and approval, and the next day, dressed in a plain suit of clothes, was delivered by the porter at the shop of Mr Phineas Cophagus, who was not at home when I arrived.

Chapter II

Like all Tyros, I find the rudiments of learning extremely difficult and laborious, but advance so rapidly than I can do without my Master.

A tall, fresh-coloured, but hectic looking young man, stood behind the counter, making up prescriptions, and a dirty lad, about thirteen years old, was standing near with his basket to deliver the medicines to the several addresses, as soon as they were ready. The young man behind the counter, whose name was Brookes, was within eighteen months of serving his time, when his friends intended to establish him on his own account, and this was the reason which induced Mr Cophagus to take me, that I might learn the business, and supply his place when he left. Mr Brookes was a very quiet, amiable person, kind to me and the other boy who carried out the medicines, and who had been taken by Mr Cophagus, for his food and raiment. The porter told Mr Brookes who I was, and left me. "Do you think that you will like to be an apothecary?" said Mr Brookes to me, with a benevolent smile.

"Yes; I do not see why I should not," replied I.

"Stop a moment," said the lad who was waiting with the basket, lookly archly at me, "you hav'n't got through your *rudimans* yet."

"Hold your tongue, Timothy," said Mr Brookes. "That you are not very fond of the rudiments, as Mr Cophagus calls them, is very clear. Now walk off as fast as you can with these medicines, sir—14, Spring Street; 16, Cleaver Street, as before; and then to John Street, 55, Mrs Smith's. Do you understand?"

"To be sure I do—can't I read? I reads all the directions, and all your Latin stuff into the bargain—all your *summen dusses*, *horez*, *diez*, cockly hairy. I mean to set up for myself one of these days."

"I'll knock you down one of these days, Mr Timothy, if you stay so long as you do, looking at the print shops; that you may depend upon."

"I keep up all my learning that way," replied Timothy, walking off with his load, turning his head round and laughing at me, as he quitted the shop. Mr Brookes smiled, but said nothing.

As Timothy went out, in came Mr Cophagus. "Heh! Japhet—I see," said he, putting up his cane, "nothing to do—bad—must work—um—and so on. Mr Brookes—boy learn rudiments—good—and so on." Hereupon Mr Cophagus took his cane from his nose, pointed to the large iron mortar, and then walked away into the back parlour. Mr Brookes understood his master, if I did not. He wiped out the mortar, threw in some drugs, and, showing me how to use the pestle, left me to my work. In half an hour I discovered why it was that Timothy had such an objection to what Mr Cophagus facetiously termed the *rudiments* of the profession. It was dreadful hard work for a boy; the perspiration ran down me in streams, and I could hardly lift my arms. When Mr Cophagus passed through the shop and looked at me, as I continued to thump away with the heavy iron pestle. "Good,"—said he, "by-and-bye—M.D.—and so on." I thought it was a very rough road to such preferment, and I stopped to take a little breath. "By-the-by—Japhet—Christian name—and so on—surname—heh!"

"Mr Cophagus wishes to know your other name," said Mr Brookes, interpreting.

I have omitted to acquaint the reader that surnames as well as Christian names, are always given to the children at the Foundling, and in consequence of the bank note found in my basket, I had been named after the celebrated personage whose signature it bore. "Newland is my other name, sir," replied I.

"Newland—heh!—very good name—every body likes to see that name—and have plenty of them in his pockets too—um—very comfortable—and so on," replied Mr Cophagus, leaving the shop.

I resumed my thumping occupation, when Timothy returned with his empty basket. He laughed when he saw me at work. "Well, how do you like the rudimans?—and so on—heh?" said he, mimicking Mr Cophagus.

"Not overmuch," replied I, wiping my face.

"That was my job before you came. I have been more than a year, and never have got out of those rudimans yet, and I suppose I never shall."

Mr Brookes, perceiving that I was tired, desired me to leave off, an order which I gladly obeyed, and I took my seat in a corner of the shop.

"There," said Timothy, laying down his basket; "no more work for me *hanty prandium*, is there, Mr Brookes?"

"No, Tim; but *post prandium*, you'll *post* off again."

Dinner being ready, and Mr Cophagus having returned, he and Mr Brookes went into the back parlour, leaving Timothy and me in the shop to announce customers. And I shall take this opportunity of introducing Mr Timothy more particularly, as he will play a very conspicuous part in this narrative. Timothy was short in stature for his age, but very strongly built. He had an oval face, with a very dark complexion, grey eyes flashing from under their long eyelashes, and eyebrows nearly meeting each other. He was marked with the small-pox, not so much as to disfigure him, but still it was very perceptible when near to him. His countenance was always lighted up with merriment; there was such a happy, devil-may-care expression in his face, that you liked him the first minute that you were in his company, and I was intimate with him immediately.

"I say, Japhet," said he, "where did you come from?"

"The Foundling," replied I.

"Then you have no friends or relations."

"If I have, I do not know where to find them," replied I, very gravely.

"Pooh! don't be grave upon it. I haven't any either. I was brought up by the parish, in the workhouse. I was found at the door of a gentleman's house, who sent me to the overseers—I was about a year old then. They call me a foundling, but I don't care what they call me, so long as they don't call me too late for dinner. Father and mother, whoever they were, when they ran away from me, didn't run away with my appetite. I wonder how long master means to

play with his knife and fork. As for Mr Brookes, what he eats wouldn't physic a snipe. What's your other name, Japhet?"

"Newland."

"Newland—now you shall have mine in exchange: Timothy Oldmixon at your service. They christened me after the workhouse pump, which had 'Timothy Oldmixon fecit' on it; and the overseers thought it as good a name to give me as any other; so I was christened after the pump-maker with some of the pump water. As soon as I was big enough, they employed me to pump all the water for the use of the workhouse. I worked at my *papa*, as I called the pump, all day long. Few sons worked their father more, or disliked him so much: and now, Japhet, you see, from habit, I'm pumping you."

"You'll soon pump dry, then, for I've very little to tell you," replied I; "but, tell me, what sort of a person is our master?"

"He's just what you see him, never alters, hardly ever out of humour, and when he is, he is just as odd as ever. He very often threatens me, but I have never had a blow yet, although Mr Brookes has complained once or twice."

"But surely Mr Brookes is not cross?"

"No, he is a very good gentleman; but sometimes I carry on my rigs a little too far, I must say that. For as Mr Brookes says, people may die for want of the medicines, because I put down my basket to play. It's very true; but I can't give up 'peg in the ring' on that account. But then I only get a box of the ear from Mr Brookes, and that goes for nothing. Mr Cophagus shakes his stick, and says, 'Bad boy—big stick—*um*—won't forget—next time—and so on,'" continued Timothy, laughing; "and it is *so on*, to the end of the chapter."

By this time Mr Cophagus and his assistant had finished their dinner, and came into the shop. The former looked at me, put his stick to his nose, "Little boys—always hungry—*um*—like good dinner—roast beef—Yorkshire pudding—and so on," and he pointed with the stick to the back parlour. Timothy and I understood him very well this time: we went into the parlour, when the housekeeper sat down with us and helped us. She was a terribly cross, little old woman, but as honest as she was cross, which is all that I shall say in her favour. Timothy was no favourite, because he had such a

good appetite; and it appeared that I was not very likely to stand well in her good opinion, for I also ate a great deal, and every extra mouthful I took I sank in her estimation, till I was nearly at the zero, where Timothy had long been for the same offence; but Mr Cophagus would not allow her to stint him, saying, "Little boys must eat—or won't grow—and so on."

I soon found out that we were not only well fed, but in every other point well treated, and I was very comfortable and happy. Mr Brookes instructed me in the art of labelling and tying up, and in a very short time I was very expert; and as Timothy predicted, the rudiments were once more handed over to him. Mr Cophagus supplied me with good clothes, but never gave me any pocket-money, and Timothy and I often lamented that we had not even a halfpenny to spend.

Before I had been many months in the shop Mr Brookes was able to leave when any exigence required his immediate attendance. I made up the pills, but he weighed out the quantities in the prescriptions; if, therefore, any one came in for medicines, I desired them to wait the return of Mr Brookes, who would be in very soon. One day, when Mr Brookes was out, and I was sitting behind the counter, Timothy sitting on it, and swinging his legs to and fro, both lamenting that we had no pocket-money, Timothy said, "Japhet, I've been puzzling my brains how we can get some money, and I've hit it at last; let you and I turn doctors; we won't send all the people away who come when Mr Brookes is out, but we'll physic them ourselves."

I jumped at the idea, and he had hardly proposed it, when an old woman came in, and addressing Timothy, said, "That she wanted something for her poor grandchild's sore throat."

"I don't mix up the medicines, ma'am," replied Timothy; "you must apply to that gentleman, Mr Newland, who is behind the counter—he understands what is good for every body's complaints."

"Bless his handsome face—and so young too! Why, be you a doctor, sir?"

"I should hope so," replied I; "what is it you require—a lotion, or an embrocation?"

"I don't understand those hard words, but I want some doctor's stuff."

"Very well, my good woman; I know what is proper," replied I, assuming an important air. "Here, Timothy, wash out this vial very clean."

"Yes, sir," replied Timothy, very respectfully.

I took one of the measures, and putting in a little green, a little blue, and a little white liquid from the medicine bottles generally used by Mr Brookes, filled it up with water, poured the mixture into the vial, corked, and labelled it, *haustus statim sumendus*, and handed it over the counter to the old woman.

"Is the poor child to take it, or is it to rub outside?" inquired the old woman.

"The directions are on the label;—but you don't read Latin?"

"Deary me, no! Latin! and do you understand Latin? What a nice clever boy!"

"I should not be a good doctor if I did not," replied I. On second thoughts, I considered it advisable and safer, that the application should be *external*, so I translated the label to her—*Hhaustus*, rub it in—*statim*, on the throat—*sumendus*, with the palm of the hand.

"Deary me! and does it mean all that? How much have I to pay, sir?"

"Embrocation is a very dear medicine, my good woman; it ought to be eighteen-pence, but as you are a poor woman, I shall only charge you nine-pence."

"I'm sure I thank you kindly," replied the old woman, putting down the money, and wishing me a good morning as she left the shop.

"Bravo!" cried Timothy, rubbing his hands; "it's halves, Japhet, is it not?"