

# The Victorians

## The Trapper - Jimmy falls sick

By Gordon Lamont

- JAMES: My name is Jimmy Turton. I'm eleven years old and I'm a trapper. I work in the mine, opening and closing the heavy air doors to keep the mine safe. Or I did until one morning...
- MARY: Jimmy, Jimmy lad. Come on now, time to get up. Come on, lad. You must be away to the pit.
- JAMES: I usually wake up in an instant and on even the darkest, coldest morning I can get myself quickly off to the pit. But today I cannot seem to move.
- MARY: Benjamin. I can't shift him. You try.
- JAMES: My grown up brother Benjamin makes good money down the pit because of his strength.
- BENJAMIN: Let's be having you, lad. Come on, Jimmy – open those eyes...
- JAMES: But with me he is always gentle.
- BENJAMIN: Oh, Ma!
- MARY: What, what is it?
- BENJAMIN: He's hot – burning up.
- MARY: Let me see. Oh saints, Jimmy, you poor lad.





- BENJAMIN: It's a fever. You must let him be, Ma. He can't go down the pit today.
- MARY: But he must.
- JAMES: I must get up. I'll be alright, I just... Where's me Da? Da...help me.
- BENJAMIN: Jimmy, you know our Dad died in the mine fire – 'twere over a year ago now.
- JAMES: I just want to ask him summit.
- MARY: Dear God, the lad can't think straight, he's lost his mind.
- BENJAMIN: You sleep, Jimmy, and get your strength back.
- JAMES: Mind the rats, open the door to let them through.
- MARY: Rats? There aren't any rats, Jimmy.
- BENJAMIN: He's in a fit ma, he don't know what he's saying.
- MARY: But how are we going to manage without his wage? We need food and there's not a penny to buy any, and with my poor boy sick...
- BENJAMIN: Hush now mother. Look I've got to get to the pit.
- MARY: Yes, Ben, you go.
- BENJAMIN: We'll think of summit, we always do.





- MARY: Sleep now, Jimmy. Your ma and your brother will think of summit...though heavens know what.
- JAMES: I lay there, the fever raging through me, only just taking in what was being said. I remember at one time I heard my Mum talking close to my ear...but it was like she was miles away...
- MARY: You just rest, Jimmy. I'm going to see Mrs Hollings over at Spinney Crag. She'll know the herbs and poultices you need.
- JAMES: Spinney, spinney herbs...
- Then later, I seemed to be moving, as if I were floating across the fields and to the pit, into the cage and down into the mine...
- Must earn my shillings.
- I seemed to drift along the dark passages. I had no light but I didn't seem to need one. It was like a journey in a dream...
- Find my trap, this way...
- BENJAMIN: Come on William, put your back into it. Come on...let's get some speed up. Pull man. There, she's moving...don't let up now. That's better... build your speed now ready for the next slope... Whoa - what's that?
- WILLIAM: Some fool on the track. Hey, you, get out of the way man!
- BENJAMIN: Stop it, stop the cart!





- WILLIAM: I can't, it's too heavy. Too fast. Hey you, get out of the way!
- BENJAMIN: Look out! No! Look, its Jimmy, me brother. He's meant to be at home...
- JIMMY: Got to get to the trap door.
- WILLIAM: Is he hurt?
- BENJAMIN: He's half buried in coal. Here, help me...
- JAMES: In my illness I had staggered down into the mine on my own...and then had nearly been killed by William and Benjamin pushing their cart. Benjamin had to get me out of the mine and that cost him time and money. So now we were poorer than ever...and I took longer to get back to work because of my injuries. I didn't know any of this 'til I started to get better of course.
- MARY: There's one spoonful of nettle broth left. Come on, Jimmy, you sup it up.
- JAMES: Thanks, ma. So did I really wander off to the mine when I had the fever?
- BENJAMIN: You did, lad, and you caused no end of problems.
- JAMES: I'm sorry.
- MARY: 'Tis all in the past now, pet. And thanks to our friends giving us some food and me taking in a bit of extra washing and your brother helping out at Ladstock farm, we've managed.





- BENJAMIN: Aye we've managed - but I'm looking forward to having more than nettle soup and stale bread to eat.
- JAMES: I'm ready to go back to the pit now, Mum. Tomorrow I'll be up with the sun and work my full twelve hours.
- MARY: Aye, lad, I think you will, thank the Lord, I think you will.
- JAMES: I had to. We had managed to scrape by but we couldn't go on much longer. That's our life: no work means no money and no money, sooner or later means no food. I had to go back into the darkness or our family would soon face a darkness worse than any mine.

