

**LUCIAN
THE DREAMER**

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Lucian the dreamer by J. S. Fletcher

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J. S. FLETCHER

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This is the Story

THIS is the study of an artistic temperament in a generation not so far removed from our own as the hurried events of the last two decades would make it appear—the generation which fought in the Boer War. Mr. Fletcher has told us the life story of a boy, a “thinker” rather than a “doer”—Lucian the Dreamer. We follow with great interest his many love affairs while under the care of his uncle and aunt in the country. We enjoy with him the simple rustic beauties of Wellsby, and from the moment he arrives at the little village station until that final tragic scene in the dry-bed of a South African river we are held as in a vice.



Also by J. S. Fletcher

THE DIAMONDS

THE KANG-HE VASE

THE TIME-WORN TOWN

THE GOLDEN VENTURE

THE MILL OF MANY WINDOWS

THE CARTWRIGHT GARDENS MURDER

THE RAVENSWOOD MYSTERY AND OTHER STORIES

LUCIAN THE DREAMER

by

J. S. FLETCHER

Author of "The Cartwright Gardens Murder,"
"The Kang-He Vase," etc.

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TO
SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
IN SOME SLIGHT RECOGNITION
OF A KINDLY SERVICE
KINDLY RENDERED

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CHAPTER I

THE railway station stood in the midst of an apparent solitude, and from its one long platform there was no sign of any human habitation. A stranger, looking around him in passing that way, might well have wondered why a station should be found there at all; nevertheless, the board which figured prominently above the white palings suggested the near presence of three places—Wellsby, Meadhope, and Simonstower—and a glance at a map of the county would have sufficed to show him that three villages of the names there indicated lay hidden amongst the surrounding woods, one to the east and two to the west of the railway. The line was a single one, served by a train which made three out-and-home journeys a day between the market-town of Oakborough and the village of Normanford, stopping on its way at seven intermediate stations, of which Wellsby was the penultimate one. These wayside stations sometimes witnessed arrivals and departures, but there were many occasions on which the train neither took up passengers nor set them down—it was only a considerable traffic in agricultural produce, the extra business of the weekly market-day, and its connection with the main line, that enabled the directors to keep the Oakborough and Normanford Branch open. At each small station they maintained a staff consisting of a collector or station-master, a booking-clerk, and a porter, but the duties of these officials were light, and a good deal of spare time lay at their disposal, and was chiefly used in cultivating patches of garden along the side of the line, or in discussing the news of the neighbourhood.

On a fine April evening of the early eighties the staff of this particular station assembled on the platform at half-past six o'clock in readiness to receive the train