

CHUBB JACKSON.

[CONTINUED.]

Chubb hadn't been at Lincoln's last; the housekeeper, whom I roused out of her first sleep, was sure of that. I must go on to Enfield street, to the shop of the eminent wood engraver, where Chubb was employed. The premises were locked up; an iron bar across the door, with a great padlock securing it, showed that no one slept in the house. What should I do next? In my perplexity, I found my way to the police-office. The inspector smiled at my grave air when he heard my tale.

"There's a good many young gents as don't get home as soon as their ma's would like, sir. But I'll send a sergeant with you, sir. The man on the beat will know where the foreman of the shop lives, no doubt, sir."

The police-sergeant, a grizzled careworn man, started with me to the beat. The officer on duty knew where the foreman of English & Jardine lived; it was in a street off the Tottenham road. A knocking at the door, and there was a bachelor and a lodger. He was evidently giving a night to the front room, was lighted up, and there was a piano going, and a song with a thundering chorus. My heart felt a great relief; Chubb was here, of course; this was the very sort of thing in which he delighted, for which he'd give up any kind of civilized society. Wouldn't he be wild at being fetched home by a police-sergeant and a friend!

White came to the door in his shirt sleeves; he had a long clay pipe in his hand, with which he was beating time to the chorus. He seemed too perfectly happy to feel any surprise at the sight of two strangers at his gate, although one of them was a police-constable. A rich, low voice inside was singing.

"Hard times come again no more," "Chubb Jackson here?" No, he isn't! "It's a song, a sign of a friend of mine, come in and join us." Again he was led away by the chorus. "Around my cabin door—come again, no more!" "Chubb Jackson here?" No, he isn't! "It's a song, a sign of a friend of mine, come in and join us." Again he was led away by the chorus. "Around my cabin door—come again, no more!"

"Can you give us a few minutes' conversation on a matter of importance?" "Certainly; only don't interrupt the song. Come in, then." "Hard times, hard times, come again no more!" Now chorus all!"

We stood there in the hall under the lamp; Mr. White waving his pipe to the time, and the police-sergeant joining gruffly in the strain.

"Bravo! thank ye, gentlemen. Now, then, what have you got to say to me?" I told him briefly of Chubb being missing, and I asked him what clue he had to give me.

"Why, let's see. Chubb went away the first thing this morning; he wasn't a quarter of an hour at the shop. He'd been drawing some tin, and he'd been don't often show much at the shop on such occasions. Where he went to I don't know. Yes, I do, though. I can tell you where he started from, at least. He went to the Essex street pier, for he was asking Brown if it was open again, as it had been repairing lately, and Brown said it was. But where he went after that, I know no more than the dead. But bless you, he'll turn up all right."

We took our leave sadly; it didn't seem a very hopeful trail.

"I don't like it, sir, and in the river, sir. You don't often get any farther. We didn't get any farther than that. At the early dawn, I found myself wearily walking along Albany street, with a feeble hope that Chubb might have come home in the meantime. But there was only Mrs. Chubb, sitting up, and waiting for her husband, ten years older in that single night."

"My poor boy, my poor boy!" she could only cry, quite broken down, quite past comfort. Letty took her up stairs, and I didn't venture to see her for a month after.

I had the direction of all the inquiries which were made. Spurred on by the reward of £250, the police started themselves most vigorously. But not the faintest trail could they find of Chubb Jackson. One of the notes he had received from his aunt was forwarded to a low public-house in the Wandsworth road; but although the house was watched for months, and the haunts of all the doubtful characters who resorted there thoroughly searched, they failed to get a glimpse of the late poor Chubb.

The atteller on the second floor in Albany Street was shut up from that time, and Chubb would not let one enter it but himself; once a week, she would be in and dust it with her own hands. Poor Letty thought herself almost a widow, and was deep mourning for her lost sweetheart.

It was years after Chubb's ultimate fate that I ventured one day—she was sewing a button on my sleeve at the time; the sight of her sweet patient face and downcast eyes, and the smile for me, and I took her in my arms and asked her if she'd let me take the vacant place in her heart. She was dreadfully shocked, and wouldn't forgive me for a long time; but at last she was my friend, and told me the details of the time for grief was past, and it was her dearest wish now that we two should be married; and then Letty released, and gave me all her heart.

To be continued.

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