

## THE EVENING NEWS.

Friday, May 4, 1871.

CHUBB JACKSON.

Does anybody, I wonder, know Trogmorton? It is in the west of Kent; and yet not exactly in the world, but on a little-onlying spur of it which projects into the great plain of Romney. There the tough clay has marred the white earth, a bottomless offspring of the blessed sun. There flourish noble oaks, broad-leaved chestnuts, aspens elms in rich luxuriance of leaf; and emerald pastures are set amongst their shades, and rich corn-fields and smiling hop-gardens chequer the sides of the gently swelling slopes.

Loter with me on the pleasant field path winding in and out among the hedges and cornfields, look back on the red-roofed town crowded by massive gothic tower—the evening chimes are tinkling in the still air with a lowing lingering cadence, suggesting I know not what subtle pathos of long forgotten days—and own with me that England can show few fairer nooks than fair Trogmorton town.

My story hasn't much to do with Trogmorton; but there it was I first knew Chubb Jackson. He wasn't unlike me in looks, though his mouth was mouthed, with little teeth set far back in his head, and freckles, so brown that you might take them for scales. He was a school-fellow of mine at the Manor house school. Old Hookey (not thirty then) our head master, had taken him in as an incorrigible, at a double fee, to try and make something of him. Possibly the attempt might have been successful, money, but, at any rate, it didn't succeed. Passed through the regulation mill, Chubb came out more ink-and-tear-tainted, more sulky and more wary, than ever. Dragged through the mud, he tumbled over *Arma virumque cano*; showed into logarithms, he couldn't even get through the multiplication table. His life was a constant round of expiation; of impositions which he never got through, of unearnest tasks which he never could force himself to learn; only the hollies dried him from this ever accumulating load of punishment.

And yet I think he enjoyed himself. I fancy, as he sat by the open window looking over the rambling old-fashioned garden to the pleasant apple and cherry orchards beyond, his eyes and lexicon, and silence, told his secret that the bees as they hummed, and the birds as they twittered, and the hushed sounds of country life, said a say for him which they uttered not for us, as we swiped, and bowled, and dabbled, and kept wicket in the cricket field over beyond the Oast House.

I was the only chum he had! Perhaps a corresponding vein of idleness made us good friends at every turn. We were great friends; and when his aunt, Miss Chubb—he was an orphan poor fellow, and under the care of a maiden aunt—when she came to take him home for the midsummer holidays, she had a liking for me for her nephew's sake, and wanted me to come and see them at Fulham—presently Hastings. But I never went; and I saw no more of Chubb Jackson, for I don't know how many years.

I was serving out my articles with Bump and Podgers of Lincoln's Inn, living in Swanhouse street; Hampstead road, when, coming from Charing Cross one evening by a yellow bus, I recognized the image of Chubb Jackson. I could hardly believe my eyes; my school days for this was a painful swell in lavender gloves, most shiny hat, and shirt collar of white silk. Now Chubb as a lad had a most inveterate stammer. So when the youth turned to me intending, I think, to ask for a light, having an ugly cigar in his mouth, and fumbling vainly in his waistcoat pocket, and I saw his mouth working in painful throes to deliver itself of the embryo words, I knew that he must be my former school-fellow, and cried, unconsciously imitating his stammer, "W-w-w-y, you must be Chubb Jackson!"

He was living, I found, still with his aunt Chubb, in Albany street, close by; and we renewed our school friendship forthwith.

Miss Chubb was always delighted to see me. I was a good boy, I thought; I fear, rather from my antiseptic than from any actual habits; and she always felt comfortable when Chubb was with me. But there was another attraction: at 284 Albany street, Letitia Cuthbertson was there on a visit—a protracted visit, having no apparent commencement or ending, but which was always to end at some time or other—but never did.

The second time I went to see them, Mrs. Chubb told me a great secret, that she hoped Letitia and Chubb would come together. Letitia was the orphaned daughter of the deceased friend she ever had—she gave a little sigh as she said it, which made me think perhaps, there was some womanly romance hidden below her frankness; but the dear wish of her heart that the two should be married; but she was Chubb to make something of himself first. He was now apprised to a wondering graver, and he really seemed to have found his particular hole; for he had a wonderfully neat and careful hand, and considerable talent for design. He worked a good deal at home in a little apartment in the second floor; and you would hear him as he chopped away, hammering sometimes at a small violin, when you came to the half-door in quiet Albany street.

To be continued.

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