



## THE LAST STEEPLE JACK.

Inspector Hooker had served his twenty-five years in the detective service, and his colleagues were entertaining him at a farewell dinner, in anticipation of his forthcoming retirement. The chairman having eulogized the guest of the evening to an extent that brought a blush to the face of the case-hardened official, the inspector arose to reply, and at the finish he said:

"The chairman has said that I never let a man slip through my fingers after I had once got on his track, but I am sorry to say he is wrong. I am bound to acknowledge that once an offender was too clever for me."

"Tell us about it!" arose spontaneously from almost every throat, and Inspector Hooker, in response to the request, gave the story.

"It was a good many years ago now when I had intrusted to me a case of a young woman, Eliza Thickbroom, who had been found dead (evidently murdered by having her throat cut) in some fields adjoining the canal, near a town in Lancashire. She had been a domestic servant, and was of a very retiring, staid disposition, and bore an irreproachable character. Her friends lived in quite another part of the country, and her mistress had no knowledge of her keeping company or any mistress of that kind. For some time I had considerable difficulty in fixing the crime or any reason for it upon anyone, but at last, after a lot of inquiry, I ascertained that she had been walking with a man named Lamprey, who lived near Stockport, in Cheshire, some 30 miles from where Eliza Thickbroom resided."

"It seemed that the girl had been in the habit of spending her holiday, when she had a day off, in going to Stockport, where Lamprey met her, and that she had become engaged to him, but that, hearing something to his discredit, she had refused to have anything more to do with him, and, so far, nothing further was known to implicate Lamprey in the crime, but I, of course, at once took the train to Stockport, and proceeded to hunt up Lamprey, and to make inquiries in the town where he resided."

"I knew nothing about him except his name, but from the local police and curious questions of one and another I ascertained that he had been a sailor, and was then a 'steeple jack,' and one of the best I had known."

"Jack Lamprey!" cried one man to whom I had spoken. "Ah, he can climb for sure, Jack can! Why, he climbed up to the very top of yon steeple (pointing to the church hard by, which had a spire remarkably tall and slender, and very hard to mount). After the storm had damaged the weather-cock Jack climbed up and fixed it all alone for the parson, and he refused to be paid for it."

"This man seemed to look upon Lamprey's refusing payment as more wonderful than his climbing the steeple, and perhaps he was right. Well, bit by bit, I found things which, when placed together, pointed unmistakably to Jack Lamprey as the murderer. He had until recently been seen frequently in and about Stockport, with the girl, but for the last two or three months she had not been observed in his company. He had been a jolly sort of fellow, but since the girl had ceased her visits, it had been noticed that he had become moody and silent, and he had taken to drink a good deal, although he had previously been a most abstemious man. He was away from his lodgings on the night of the murder, and on his return early the next day, he was travel-stained, as if he had walked a long way. His landlady remembered he had told her he had fallen down in some chemical works where he had been on a job, and had stained his clothes, and she recollected that immediately after his arrival home he had busied himself brushing and sponging his garments."

"There was something about him, no one knew where exactly, except that it was somewhere near Liverpool—and it was useless for me to leave Stockport, where I had the best chance of catching him, on a wild goose chase to Liverpool without better information. My only course was to wait and keep quiet until he came back, which he was expected to do the following day."

"I took every precaution to prevent anyone knowing that he was wanted, but some 'pal' must have got to suspect it, and given him warning. The police in Liverpool had been wired to, and had kept watch of all trains in the direction of Stockport, and toward the evening of the second day I received the intimation that a man resembling his description had taken the train, and was on his way. Assisted by a local detective, who knew the man, I watched every passenger out of the train on its arrival at Stockport, and on to the town the road, we walked back to Stockport and on to the town where he lived, which was a few miles the other side, but our tramp was in vain."

"We had left instructions at Stockport for Lamprey's lodgings to be watched, but by some blunder a man had not been sent there for some time, and, much to my anger and disgust, when I arrived at his house, I found that he had been there just five minutes, his landlady said, and had been there with a bag of clothes."

"I was mighty savage, you may guess, both with myself and with the police of the place, for not keeping a better look out, but it was no use losing my head over it, and I at once set out, to work dodging his footsteps after he had left his lodgings. In the public house which he frequented I came across a man to whom I had previously spoken, who seemed to know Lamprey in a very distinct sort of way, and I turned the conversation on the man I wanted."

"Ah! I've just seen him," said the fellow. "About an hour ago, or mayhap a little more. He was going to Macclesfield, he said, to catch the early train in the morning into Staffordshire, where he's got another job."

"I had reason afterward to think that this man was the one who had given Lamprey warning, but whether that was so or not, his information that night appeared to be correct, for I met several people who had seen Jack going across the fields toward the place he lived in; but when I arrived at Macclesfield I was at fault again, for no train had been out for quite two hours, and although I waited till the last train to Macclesfield left, Lamprey did not show up."

"Tired and vexed beyond question, I tramped back and got what rest I could, hoping that something might turn up in the morning to assist me in recovering the ground I had lost. But I was not afraid that for once I had let my quarry slip, and that I might never catch him now that he was aware he was being tracked."

"Sure enough, the something did turn up in the morning, and something which confirmed my fears, though I felt that I

had got my man dead if I missed him alive. The postman came around soon after seven, before it was quite light, and I had only just got up when a boy came running with a letter which had been delivered at the police station. It bore the Marple postmark, and was addressed to 'The Detective from London.'

"Tearing it open, I read something like this: 'From John Lamprey. I know you are after me, and I know what for. I managed to keep out of your way to-night, and I meant to try and get down south, but you are sure to have me sooner or later, so I've determined to make an end of it. Look at the church steeple when you get this, to-morrow evening.'

"The church steeple was a tall and prominent feature whichever way you turned, and I had only to go to the end of the street to get a full view of it. When I got there and looked up I saw something that gave me a start. In the uncertain light of the early morning I could discern against the gray sky, hanging by the neck to one of the iron loops of which served for a ladder on the side of the spire, the figure of a man!"

"So much for Jack Lamprey!" I said to myself, as I hurried to the police station. 'He has saved me any more trouble!'

"By the time I had been to the station and back to the church it was broad daylight, and, of course, the body hanging aloft had been seen, and a crowd already collected, every one recognizing it as that of Jack Lamprey."

"A strange freak," I remarked to the sergeant who was with me.

"I don't think so," he replied. 'Jack had made himself a sort of hero over going up the spire to repair the vane, and there was nothing more likely to occur to his mind than to finish his career at the same place.'

"There was no one around Stockport who would venture up the spire, and a telegram had to be sent to Stalybridge for a man to come and get the body down. It was past midday before the steeple jack arrived, and by that time half Stockport had heard of the affair. Work was discarded, and an immense crowd collected to witness the sight. Every foot of the man's way up the steeple was watched by thousands of eyes, and when at last he approached the eaving body of Jack Lamprey the tongues which had been loudly wagging were hushed as by common consent."

"I shall never forget the few minutes that followed, while the steeple jack (now looking the size of a little child) made his way very cautiously close up to the body, and fixing a rope to its middle preparations for lowering it to his assistant, who was waiting on the top of the square tower to receive it. There was something awfully sad and solemn about it all!"

"In due time the assistant received the corpse, which he let down to the ground, and everyone around me remarked that he had swung it roughly to the earth, without showing the respect which might have been looked for. In fact, some actually called out 'shame!'

"But all at once the hush which had fallen upon the crowd was broken by a storm of jeers and laughter. The thing which had given us all this trouble was nothing but a guy. And I never felt such a fool in all my life."

"So that he might get nearly a day's start, Lamprey had cleverly misled me the night before. While I had been wasting my time at Marple he had been employed in stuffing the suit of clothes, which he had taken from his lodgings, with straw, making a very passable representation of himself; and in the middle of the night he had climbed the steeple (which was child's play for him) and left his effigy there to deceive me and lull me into inaction."

"I need not dwell upon the chaff I received. It is too painful even now for me to recall without annoyance, but you may be sure that I quickly made myself scarce."

"Did the fellow get clear away?" asked someone.

"Yes. He took the train to the east coast and succeeded in getting to Holland unnoticed," replied Inspector Hooker. "But he hanged himself in real earnest some considerable time afterward, leaving a letter behind, admitting his guilt and stating that his conscience troubled him so that he could not bear to live."—From *Tell-Tales*.

## A Cathedral Roof Moving Like an Earthworm.

Nature's law respecting the expansion and contraction of metals works sometimes in very curious ways:

The choir of Bristol Cathedral was covered with sheet-lead, the length of the covering being 60 feet, and its depth 19 feet 4 inches. It had been laid on in the year 1851, and two years afterwards it had moved down bodily for a distance of 18 inches. The descent had been continually going on from the time the lead had been laid down, and an attempt to stop it by driving nails into the rafters had failed, for the force with which the lead descended was sufficient to draw out the nails. The roof was not a steep one, and the lead would have rested on it forever without sliding down by gravity. What, then, was the cause of the descent? Simply this: the lead was exposed to the varying temperatures of day and night. Had it lain upon a horizontal surface it would have expanded all round, but as it lay upon an inclined surface it expanded more freely downwards than upwards. Its motion, indeed, was exactly that of a common earthworm; it pushed its lower edge forward during the day, and it drew its upper edge after it during the night, and thus by degrees it crawled through a space of 18 inches in two years.

## THE QUIET HOUR.

## A Pauper's Funeral.

BY G. NORRISH.

No deacon, priest or parson led the way;  
No plumed hearse was hired to bear his clay;  
No train of mourners' carriages in sight,  
Or bearers' sashes, either black or white.  
A horse, a cart, a laborer and his spade,  
A rough pine box some unskilled hand had made;  
This and no more, it's quite enough to tell  
It's nothing but a pauper's funeral.  
They lowered him in, but not a tear was shed,  
Or funeral service offered for the dead;  
They covered up the coffin with the clay,  
And left the pauper till the Judgment Day.  
Sleep on, poor son of toil, no pain or care,  
Or pinch of hunger e'er can reach thee there,  
For death doth surely to a pauper bring  
A rest as sweet as if he were a king.  
What were his crimes that he was thus rejected,  
Forsaken, ostracized and disrespected?  
His crimes, forsooth, the crime of being poor;  
Unlike "the fool," he had no goods in store.  
He gave to others more than was their share,  
Took in return just what their greed could spare;  
To him who took his coat, he gave his cloak,  
And turned his cheek towards the hand that smote.  
He never sacrificed his soul for pelf,  
But loved his neighbor equal with himself;  
Much like a Christian judged by Gospel rule;  
By modern Christians only called a fool.  
Unskilled, poor fellow, in the game of grab,  
He lost anon the little all he had;

Has nothing left, why make a fuss about him?  
The world will move along, no doubt, without him.  
While living there was none to take him in;  
When dead none care to claim him as a kin;  
No granite, bronze or marble marks the spot;  
He sickened, died, was buried, and is not.  
And yet, perchance, a record has been kept,  
Of all the pangs he suffered, tears he wept;  
And when the seal that binds that book is broken,  
And Gabriel's mighty trumpet shall have spoken,  
When God shall take His sceptre in His hand,  
And rich and poor before their Judge shall stand,  
With Him who once was poor to plead his cause,  
The pauper may become a prince—who knows?

## Why?

Why do we often bestow our gifts to the poor in such a manner that the recipients must sacrifice all self-respect in accepting them, never thinking that the next turn of the wheel of fortune may make us the recipients and them the givers?

Why do we store away outgrown garments, thinking they are "most too good to give away," until, as in the writer's experience, the fire fiend comes and burns all else but the chest filled with the "out-grown and too-good," which is found under the debris? Though we may not look upon this as a special providence, still it is an experience lesson with a very pointed moral, the point being made more harrowing by the thought that if that chest had been filled with the next season's wearing apparel, we should have had something where-withal to clothe ourselves after the fire fiend had done his work.

Why do we send our little ones to Sunday school bedecked in silks and satins, knowing that it will cause many a heartache to less fortunate little ones? Then to crown our unkindness, make a Christmas tree for the scholars, giving each a bag of candy, an orange, or some little toy, but hanging upon the tree for our own more fortunate little ones all the gifts which should come to them the next morning in their own home.

## "He Went About Doing Good."

"He went about doing good." The highest and the greatest good which He did was done for the souls of men. To have done everything for man's bodily frame, and leave his spiritual being untouched, would have been a poor and worthless kind of doing good in the estimation of Jesus Christ. It would have been such a good as man would have needed, and would have been satisfied with, had he been only an animal with no assured destiny beyond the tomb, with no conscience within him, with no judgment awaiting him. The lessons by which our Lord brought men to know and love the Father and Himself, the pardon which He won for them on the cross, the grace which He promised them after His ascension, were His chiefest benefactions. But besides this He did abundant good in the physical, material, social sense. He relieved the pain of hunger, He enabled the poor and suffering to fight the battle of life as they could not have fought it without Him. It has been said that Christ our Lord was the first social reformer. If by social reform He meant the doing away with all inequalities between classes, or even the removal from human life of the permanent cause of a great deal of physical suffering, it cannot be said that this description of Him is accurate. He showed no wish whatever in any sort of way to interfere with the existing structure of society. He insisted upon Caesar's claims to tribute. He prescribed obedience to Scribes and Pharisees who sat in Moses' seat. He found a great deal of distress in the world, and He left a great deal of distress; He found a great deal of poverty, and He left a great deal of poverty. He predicted, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." He announced, "The poor ye have always with you." His real work was to point to truths and to a life which made the endurance of poverty and distress for a short time here so easy as to be in the estimate of real disciples comparatively unimportant; but, at the same time, He relieved so much of it as would enable human beings to make a real step forward towards the true end of their existence. If our Lord was not, in the restricted modern sense, the first social reformer, He was, undoubtedly, in the true and ample sense of the word, the first philanthropist. He loved man as man, He loved not one part, but the whole of man, He loved man as none had ever loved him before or since. He died for the being He loved so well.—Canon Liddon.

## Speak Praises Now.

Oh, how the praises, but the hundredth part,  
Poured out upon the clay,  
Would have fed full the eager, hungry heart  
In need of naught to-day!

Why do we keep as silent as the grave,  
Till in it, free from care,  
Is reckless dust that nothing else can crave  
Than silence and the dark!

Are we so weak, we do not dare commend  
What others have passed by?  
Are the warm praises that our judgments tend  
Cooled by a captious eye?

Yes; and too often through a selfish fear,  
Or negligence alone,  
We keep its dues back from the asking ear  
Till it be dull as stone.

Quick be the recognition of all worth;  
So sweet the timely word,  
Praise may be dear in heaven, and here on earth  
Is sure of being heard.