

BLACK JAKIE'S CHRISTMAS

Charles Arthur Leslie

THE soft, fleecy snow, floating down straight from the heavens, melted as quickly as it struck the sidewalks and turned into mud under the hurrying feet of the thousands of late Christmas shoppers.

Black Jakie stood in the shelter afforded by the elevated road pillar, his threadbare raincoat drawn tightly about him, his hands thrust deeply into his pockets, as he gently tapped first one foot and then the other on the wet pavement. Not that Jakie was cold, but his shoes had worn quite thin, and the dirty, brown slush had sought out all the little cracks through which it might seep and find a comfortable haven.

"S' going to be a lean Christmas for me," Jakie sighed reflectively to the gleaming lights of Broadway. "Awful lean."

In his pocket he jingled his one lone quarter against the key of his cheap Sixth avenue room and smiled as he thought of the days when he had jingled gold coins. In those days the racing game had been good, and Jakie was one of the best-known bookies at Sheephead. Then he had been affluent. He had dressed in the height of ultra-fashion and radiated with that ready-money look.

The dying out of the racing sport and too frequent trips to the bar had left Jakie stranded, without a friend in the world.

Silently and moodily Jakie reflected on his hard lot. His chin, with its two-day growth of heavy black beard, that same heavy beard which had al-



Yes, It Must Be She.

ways shone through his pallid skin and had earned for him his cognomen of Black Jakie, trembled a little, and the thin, blue lips pulsed with low-muttered maledictions heaped upon the world in general. The sporting element soon forgets old pals down on their luck, he reflected.

Nervously scanning the faces of shoppers emerging from the doorway of a department store, Jakie's face lighted up as he saw a petite figure laden with many bundles start across the sidewalk. Marie Lecourt! Yes, it must be she. Marie, the prettiest girl in the Follies chorus. Should he speak to her? Perhaps she would have at least a kind word for the fellow who had bought her many dinners at swell cafes and had lavished his money on her when he had it. Instinctively he started forward, his hand on his ancient velvet hat, the one relic of palmy days.

But almost as he started he checked himself. No, it would be better not to speak to Marie, for she, like all the rest of the old crowd, would turn him down, would refuse to speak to a bum.

He stepped back to the shelter of the elevated pillar just as Marie turned to cross the street. Her bright eyes twinkling with good cheer, she came up quite close to Jakie. Suddenly a flash of recognition crossed her countenance and she almost dropped her packages as she rushed forward.

"Jacie," she cried, "is it really you? Where have you been? What are you doing here and where are you going?"

Before Jakie could think of an answer to the questions which called for a recital of almost his entire life's history, she went on:

"For goodness' sake, Jakie, you look a sight! What's the idea of all this poor-folk make-up? Is it a stall or are you really forced to wear them?"

"Forced is right," replied Jakie, "I broke. I saw you as you came

out of the store, but I didn't know whether you would want to speak to me or not."

"Silly," laughed Marie. "Went to speak to my old pal? Of course I do. And now that I have seen you I'm going to have a good, old-fashioned chat, but we can't stand here in this wet and talk. I am living with my married sister now and just came downtown for a few things to hang on the kiddies' tree. Come on up and help us fix the things."

Jacie thanked her, but remonstrated that his attire was scarcely suitable for an evening call. Marie insisted that his clothes made no difference to her and that her sister would surely think the same. Anyway, no matter what her sister might think, Jakie was her friend, and that settled it.

They walked to Fourth avenue and took the subway to Harlem, Jakie insisting on spending ten cents of his precious quarter for the carfare, although Marie had tried to shove a dime into his hand.

On the way up Jakie told his story, laying the blame on hard luck and the state officials who had put racing on the bum.

Marie listened with quiet attention, nodding her head here and there and interjecting a question now and then as the ex-bookie seemed about to drift away from his story.

Jacie was introduced to Maude and John, her husband. They were either too busy decorating a tiny Christmas tree on a stand in the corner of the room or else they didn't care, for neither evinced disapproval of Jakie.

He was made to feel at home in the little family circle, and entered with keen enjoyment the work of trimming the tree and arranging the presents for the two children fast asleep in the next room.

The final arrangement completed, Maude and her husband took a last peek at the sleeping kiddies and called Jakie to see them.

As the little group stood in the doorway Jakie noticed that John put his arm about Maude's waist and that the light in Maude's eyes shone with peculiar brilliance as she snuggled closer. It was a picture of domestic love and felicity and it touched Jakie deeply.

John and Maude having retired for the night, Jakie and Marie were left alone in the parlor.

Seated before the fireplace, where the gas log was throwing forth a cheery heat, Jakie asked Marie about herself.

She had left the chorus and all her former gay companions and was now employed in a millinery establishment. "What's the matter with the show game?" asked Jakie. "Too fast for you?"

"Yes, Jakie. Somehow or other I couldn't let myself drift like the others had, and when I came up here to live with Maude and John and the kids, well, they didn't think it was the best thing for the kids to have their aunt in the chorus. Not that they objected to the chorus part of it, but then there are so many other things that go with it. The gay company, the loose way of living and things of that sort."

"So you cut it out for the sake of the kids?"

"Yes, for the kids and for my own sake. I was becoming tired of the life, and the home life here seemed to touch something in me and make me want to live right. There is nothing in that fast life, Jakie; the right way is the only way. You may prosper for a time on the wrong road, but sooner or later you come to grief."

Yes, she was right. Jakie knew. The wrong way had dragged him down. Drink and loose companions had brought him to his present level.

For a long time he sat and gazed at the fire. When next he spoke there was a tenderness in his voice such as had never been there before.

"Say, Marie," he said, "do you think you could help me get on the right track, the honest road? I want to try. I see how happy you are and what a change it has made in you. I am going to try."

Tenderly she put her hand on his arm. "I am glad that you will try. You know I always liked you, Jakie. Somehow you were different from the rest of the old crowd, for you were always a gentleman in your manner. You would never stand for the real rough stuff."

"That's the kindest thing I have heard for two years," said Jakie slowly, as he patted the small hand that still lay on his arm.

Suddenly he stiffened in his chair as a thought seized him.

"Marie," he asked tenderly, "is there any fellow, right now, that you think a lot of? You know the way I mean."

"No, Jakie, not now," she answered slowly, as she understood why he asked. Then she added, "but there might be if—"

"If he were a right-living sort of fellow?" broke in Jakie.

"Yes."

The clock on the mantelpiece struck twelve.

"Gee, it's Christmas morning," sighed Jakie.

"Yes, Christmas," breathed Marie softly.

"Could you—do you think, will you wait until—well, until I can get on the right track?"

She nodded her head in silence. Jakie put his arm around her waist and drew her head to his shoulder.

"You do care, Marie?" he whispered.

Again she nodded and then turned her lips to his.

"My Christmas present," said Jakie softly, "the best little girl in the world."

"And mine," added Marie, "is the man that is to be."

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Dominion Government Will Send a Copy of This Historic Book to All Applying for It.

Montreal, Dec. 20.—Many citizens here have received a copy of the report of the Commission on Alleged German Outrages appointed by the British Government and presided over by Lord Bryce. Accompanying this report is the following statement:

"It is the desire of the Dominion Government that this official report on the German outrages in Belgium should be circulated widely and read with care so that the causes for the determined prosecution of the war by the Allies may be well understood. The recipient should read and pass it on to a friend with a request to do the same. Further copies may be had on application, addressed to the Under Secretary of State, Ottawa, Ont. Letters so addressed do not require postage. A limited number of copies of the evidence upon which the report is based have been printed, and may also be had on application."

The report is a perfectly amazing revelation of the treatment to which Belgians have been subjected. It reveals a reign of frightfulness and of cruelty unparalleled since the Dark Ages.

The members of the Central Belgian Relief Committee here are hopeful that Canadians all over the Dominion will take advantage of the opportunity of getting free copies of this report from the government, for it will open their eyes to the pressing need of the work of the committee in bringing succor to this stricken people.

Send all contributions to your local Belgian Relief Committee, or to the Central Belgian Relief Committee, 59 St. Peter street, Montreal.

POOR BOY FROM MINES GREATEST FOOTBALL STAR

(Boston Record.)

A poor boy from the coal mines, son of a coal miner, is heralded throughout the land today as the greatest football player of the 1916 season.

Elmer Oliphant of West Point is to football of 1916 what Mahan was in 1915, Brickley in 1914, Ted Coy in 1907, Eckersall in 1905, and Heston in 1903. Oliphant is Uncle Sam's greatest gridiron star of all time. As half-back on the Cadet eleven this year he out-classed all players on his team and was the greatest scoring machine of the year.

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Oliphant's football career has been remarkable. He is playing in his fifth year of college ball and has two more years to play. This is because he was appointed to West Point after he had graduated at Purdue, where he was the mainstay of athletics for three years.

In was in the coal mines of southern Indiana that Oliphant built up the magnificent physique which has made him the most feared man in football, and earned money so he could go to college.

As the son of a coal miner, with ambition to secure an education, Oliphant had to work to earn his way when he decided to enter Purdue University.

Goes to West Point.

After his graduation at Purdue, Oliphant received the appointment from his district to West Point.

At Uncle Sam's school he has achieved honors never before attained by a West Pointer. He has won four athletic letters, the first time this has ever been done at the army school, taking honors in football, baseball, basketball and track.

He is now preparing to try for the hockey team this winter.

Most of the old saws have lost their teeth.

A man who lives up to his ideals is apt to stay poor.

Somehow one can't help feeling sorry for an ex-hero.

Ignorance might be bliss if someone did not think it his duty to put us wise.

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