

(For the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.)

UTCUMQUE PLACUERIT DEO.

I.

Summer, with all its loveliness, has fled—
Its mellow sunsets, rich with crimson fire—
Its early mornings, whose effulgence shed
A gilding tint on roof and graceful spire.
No more are seen green woods and fertile fields,
Nor verdure rustling on the gentle breeze,
No more the shaded lane enticing flows—
That sweet delight, each sighing couple sees
In secret walk beneath wide overreaching trees.

II.

For icy winter, with its stern array
Of freezing winds, and drifting blinding snows,
Relentlessly has driven from its way
Those changing glories blooming summer knows,
And man, to combat with this chilling foe,
Feels in his veins fresh energy supplied—
Enjoys the charms that from exertion flow—
Or seeks the shelter of his bright fireside,
That spot where comfort dwells, and winter is defied.

III.

Now romping children, wild with laughing glee,
Exultingly their little gifts display,
And in their hearty innocence see
Seasons at Christmas and at New Year's Day,
That sanguine youth to merriment invite!
Whose old time-honoured custom ever gleams
With new amusement and with fresh delight,
Two bright green spots, with which bleak winter
The theme of prattling tongues, the light of childish
[dreams, beams,

IV.

Oh, long gone by, but fondly cherished days!
Once more ye make me wish myself the boy,
As memories into existence raise
Departed faces and departed joys.
And now, although the hands of ripper years
Have filled, with pleasing cares, both heart and brain
Yet as each dear remembrance reappears,
Regrets arise, and I can scarce refrain
From wishing I could live my childhood's days again.

V.

Down sunken dells, up high ascending steep;
Wherever lies the lately fallen snow,
With gliding strides, and daring, agile, leaps,
On *les raquettes* our jovial tramps go,
Or on the blushing ice the skater cuts,
In curving lines, his graceful, devious way,
Or on the rink the canny curler puts
The whirling "stane," as only curler may,
While brandished brooms announce successful stroke
[of play.

VI.

Wise compensating power that entails
A healthy balance as each season flies—
When summer reigns, and lassitude prevails,
Spontaneously our choicest pleasures rise,
But when congealing winter in its hold
The yielding elements awhile secures,
The mind, invigorated by the cold,
Will bolder pastimes find, and thus assures
Itself that phase of bliss, a warmer clime abjures.

VII.

And so, events that men sometimes regard
As mischiefs that from sad misfortune flow,
Are wisely sent an evil to retard,
To counteract a more malignant woe;
As swelling storms that roll their loud alarm,
In angry thunders, on the frightened ear,
Seem big with ruin, but, instead, disarm
Of hurtful taint, the struggling atmosphere,
And fresher beauties rise, wherever they passed near.
JOHN BARRY.

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JACK.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY BARRY DANE.

They did, indeed, seem rather a careless, good-for-nothing lot, that knot of fellows who daily assembled at the Court House, to transcribe to paper the sins and misdoings of the public, that came under judicial notice.

No one knew where they all came from; but it almost seemed as if the reportorial profession was a refuge for outcasts.

Let me introduce one or two of these Bohemians to the reader. No! don't draw back, now that you have gone so far; if you don't wish a further acquaintance, you can bow distantly in the cold world fashion, though some of these fellows have a way of grasping a hand that makes one think there is a big heart beneath that shabby, thread-bare coat.

That tall, fine-looking fellow leaning against the pillar over yonder, twirling his hat on his hand and chatting with the policeman, is Phillip Richmond, or the "Duke," as he is familiarly called by those who know him.

He received this nick-name both on account of his fine appearance, and because it was believed that he came of a good English family who, tired of his pranks at home, sent him off to the new country to sink or swim.

There, sitting at the table, watching every movement made in the room, is the "Rat." Had he been in the habit of signing cheques or other documents of value, it is most probable that the name Walter Seath would have adorned the paper; but as neither he nor any of his profession were in the habit of thus exhibiting their names, he went by the *alias* "Rat," and would hardly have recognized his own, had he heard it from one of the boys.

He was called the Rat, because he knew every hole and corner of the city; and nothing seemed to escape his notice, from a Temperance Convention down to a dog fight. He knew, or professed to know, the sentiments of every public man upon every public question. In brief, he was the latest edition of the *Daily Inquirer* on legs; and certainly cheaper than that sheet, for the information could be got for nothing, and without the trouble of reading it either. The only drawback was, that to obtain one item, the questioner had to run the risk of having the whole edition launched upon him.

There is one, however, of the motly assemblage, not of the rough-and-ready order. There he is! That delicate looking lad with the pale thin face and large gray thoughtful eyes that wear almost a sad expression, as he sits dreaming to himself, entirely oblivious to all that is going on around him.

Jack—simply Jack—was all he was called. No one knew where he came from, and no one seemed inclined to ask, except the Duke. He had taken a liking to the delicate boy, perhaps because of the great dissimilarity between them, and constituted himself a sort of guardian over him. Often as they sat together in the room where they lived, the boy's heart would open to the only one that he could call friend.

It was strange, yet pleasant, to see the strong fellow link his arm into that of the frail boy, and saunter through the street, looking down affectionately every now and then as his companion made some remark.

One morning they all sat as usual, in Court, busily engaged scribbling away, some with the same precision that they would have used, had they been making entries in the day-book of a counting-house; while others with some vein of humour in their compositions, were jotting down any amusing phrase spoken, or portraying any ludicrous scene enacted, with which to tickle the reader's palate, in the next morning's issue.

Jack also sat as usual—dreaming. The stern practicality of the Police Court and its officials, had but little interest for him.

Suddenly he seemed to waken up as a case for drunkenness was called. The prisoner was a sailor, and his broad honest face over which came a blush of shame, as he stood up to answer to the charge, showed plainly that he was a stranger to the interior of such a place.

The sailor begged hard to be allowed to go, and pleaded his former good character in support of his prayer; but the voice of Evenhanded Justice sounded the stereotyped sentence, that has been the damnation of many a first offender, "One dollar or thirty days."

"Oh, Cap'n," pleaded the sailor. "I ain't got what'll buy a hap'worth o' baccy, just let us off this time. I never was in jail afore, an' couldn't abear the disgrace o' it: it's like runnin' a feller into dry dock for repairs, when only a bit o' the riggin's loose."

"Never been in jile afore! that's too thin," whispered one of the miserable red-eyed loafers standing near, and at the same time digging his elbow into the ribs of an equally red-eyed companion.

"That's so," replied the individual addressed, "the Beak don't swaller that."

Evenhanded Justice smiled on the two red-eyed gentlemen for the quick wit they had displayed, and then turning to the sailor said, "Well, my man, if you have n't got the money you must go down, that's all."

Jack was deeply interested in the case. He moved restlessly in his seat, looking first at the sailor and then at the magistrate, then back to the sailor again, while his large gray eyes were brimming over with tears, and his usually pale face flushed with indignation. When the voice of Evenhanded Justice ceased, he seemed unable to contain himself longer, and picking up his hat and papers, shoved his hand into his pocket and drew out something that he kept concealed in his palm.

The prisoner's dock was just above where Jack had been sitting, and as the sailor turned round, with a look of despair on his manly weather-beaten face, to be led away with a loathsome crowd of wretches whose only home for years had been the prison cells, Jack rose, and passing his hand over the rails, placed something in the sailor's hand and hurriedly left the Court.

A cry of joy broke from the sailor's lips as he looked down and found the amount of the fine in his hand. Down went the money, and hardly waiting to be discharged, he gave his trowers a hitch and started off after his benefactor.

The *habitués* of a Police Court, are not as a general thing, made of material easily affected by any touching sight; but that day a murmur ran through the room and rose to half a cheer, that was only quelled by the stentorian tones of the chief constable, calling out, "Order, Gentlemen!" (which the Duke said, was the only sarcasm he was ever known to utter,) and the frowning red face of Evenhanded Justice.

It has been said by some, and believed by many, that Bohemians have neither party nor principles, country nor creed, and that even their souls grow callous in the occupation that they follow.

It would, indeed, seem strange, had they any settled choice with regard to what is mentioned in the first portion of the charge, when the constant cry of the public, is for novelty, sensation and change; but even this is open to contradiction. The last is a lie.

Where, and in what class can men be found, who are more willing to share their last sixpence with a brother in distress? Their poverty and homelessness are bonds of union as strong as the secret signs of Freemasonry or Oddfellowship.

The sailor was not long in overtaking Jack.

"Hold hard there, Cap'n! You're a rum'un, you are, reskees a wreck an' axes no prize money. God bless ye fer it, Cap'n, an' if ye ever want a helpin' hand when there's a squall ahead, Dick Ratlin's the man to take his trick at the wheel." And the burly sailor drew himself up to his full height and tapped his broad chest with his thumb.

Jack looked more like one who had been caught stealing, than a benefactor, and saying something about not having done anything deserving of thanks, managed to slip away from the grateful tar.

Dick was not to be shaken off thus, for a few weeks afterwards he walked in the Court room, this time not as a prisoner.

He came, as he said himself, "just to see the skipper what towed him to port, when all hands was washed overboard." Time passed on, and every now and then, whenever his vessel was in port, Dick came round to the Court to have a chat with Jack, until, at last, he became quite a friend, and his visits were gladly welcomed.

A queer trio they made—the Duke, Jack and Dick; there was little in common between them but poverty, which seems to make firm friends.

One Monday morning, the Duke walked into the court room alone, his face looking very grave.

"Hello!" exclaimed half a dozen voices at once, "where's Jack?"

The Duke did not answer for a moment; but kicked over an offending chair; then throwing his hat upon the table, he planted his fist on the crown, in a manner that would have caused both surprise and a headache to anything less void of feeling than the deal board beneath it.

"Yes! that's just what's the matter. Where's Jack? No, he's not drowned, lost nor mislaid, nor strangled creeping through a knothole for an item," said the Duke, surveying the enquiring faces before him, "so you can ease yourselves upon that point; but he's sacked—yes, sacked; and I say it's a—confounded shame." The unfortunate hat received another blow.

"You, fellows, know how he worked his best day and night; but because he was n't made of cast-iron like their own hearts—confound'em, they've sacked him."

"I knew he'd be sacked," remarked the Rat calmly. "He never could pick up an item. Why, when the scaffolding fell at the new Baptist Church spire, killing a workman and leaving a wife and seven small children, he never had a word of it in the *Messenger*, nor about that—"

"Oh, give us a rest, will you for a moment; besides, who ever heard of a scaffold with a wife and seven small children. You'll be strangled in a knothole some day; but then everyone is not going to sacrifice himself that way for the benefit of his fellow creatures."

This speech from the Duke, was followed by roars of laughter which had the effect of silencing the Rat for a time.

"Well, what's he going to do?" said one of the boys.

"Do! why he says he's going to make literature his profession, and write for a living; but I fear he won't make much of that."

"Literature his profession!" exclaimed the Rat, who had by this time recovered and came up to the scratch as lively as ever. "Why Sergeant tried that, and died in the hospital over a year ago."

"Well he won't die in the hospital while I'm round; but I'll board you there if you have n't got something pleasanter to remark," said the Duke with a very ominous nodding of his head towards the Rat. For the third time it was fortunate that no head was beneath that hat.

"Well I wish him luck," replied the Rat, shrugging his shoulders and proceeding to arrange some papers that lay before him. "And that's not much," returned the Duke, and taking up his battered hat, he jammed it on the back of his head and sauntered out of Court.

"Well, Jack, my boy," said the Duke as he walked into the room, after the toil of the day was done, "how's literature; struck a theme for a new poem or story yet?"

Jack looked up and smiled, then shaking his head, said, "No, I can't say that I have; but by the way I have something to say to you," and the smile all fled from his face as he spoke.

"Duke, I'll have to leave you."

"Leave me!" exclaimed the Duke, starting up as if he had been shot. "Why what the deuce is up now?"

"Oh, Duke we'll still be friends, I hope,—I know we will; but I must go—I shall have to live more cheaply, until at least I can make money to pay for more."

"You just wont do anything of the kind; why hang the expense, I've got wealth," and the Duke drew his hand from his pocket where he had been fumbling unsuccessfully for some time; and then displayed two quarters, a ten cent piece and some coppers, at which he glanced sorrowfully as he slid them back into his pocket, one by one.

"And if you did go," he continued, "do you think Phil Richmond would let you go alone? Not much, my boy, I'm not that sort of a pippin. I'd be unworthy of my title if I deserted a friend in distress;" and with these words he put his arm affectionately round his friend's shoulder.

Jack said nothing; but took the strong hand that lay so tenderly there, in his and pressed it to his lips.

When the Duke withdrew his hand, a crystal drop glistened on it.

No tear had wet his eye since the day when he returned from school, to lean over a cold white form and pulseless heart, and kiss pale lips whose last words were a prayer for her boy; but now a great tear stole down his cheek and wedded itself with the crystal drop on his hand.

Only death could sever them now.

Jack was firm in his intention of seeking cheaper lodgings and the Duke eventually saw the necessity of such a step.

Late in the afternoon of the following day, the two friends walked arm in arm, to look at the new lodgings which Jack had engaged in the morning.

They walked on slowly, neither saying a word until they came upon a small square, on the other side of which stood a grand old stone church.

Jack stopped suddenly and stood speechless for a moment, and then almost whispered, "Oh Duke, how beautiful!" and it was indeed so. It had been a cold cloudy afternoon, and Jack's spirits seemed to have been clouded like the skies. But here, just as they were nearing their new home, (if four bare walls, a bed, a table, a white basin forced into unwilling matrimony with a coloured pitcher, and to or three imbecile chairs, could be called by such a name,) the clouds had broken, and the sinking sun shot his rays of crimson and gold up through the heavy bank, touching them everywhere with glory. And the old church stood up dark and clear-cut against the brilliancy behind, pointing upwards with its massive tower to the brightness and beauty above; saying mutely, so it seemed to the dreamer, "here all is dark and cold, trouble and toil; but press onward, upward, for yonder is the brighter, happier day."

"Yes, it is beautiful," said the Duke, looking down kindly on his companion. "'Tis a good omen; brighter days ahead, my boy."

"I fear it's rather oracular;" rejoined Jack, "easily read either way; what if it should represent what it really is, the fast declining glories of the present?"

They were both silent for a few minutes while they crossed the square and turned into a narrow street, or rather lane, that ran down behind the old church.

They stopped before the door of a large dilapidated looking structure, on the shaky panel of which Jack knocked with his knuckles. The door was opened and they were soon inspecting the interior of their new quarters. An hour or two later, they were sitting there, surrounded by all their worldly possessions; while the lamp flame was bravely endeavouring to dispel the gloom, by squinting cheerfully through two fingermarks on the smoked and greasy glass.

"Ah, master Jack," said Dick, the sailor, upon entering the room for the first time, "it wont never do arter lodgin' in the cap'n's cabin to bunk like this in the fo'c'sal."

Jack only laughed in his gentle way, and handed Dick a pipe; and as the sailor sat with his elbows on his knees, and his chin resting on his hands, peering through the fog of tobacco smoke that curled up from his lips; he said, "Well it aint such a bad sort of a craft arter all," though he continued, nodding his head towards the window that rattled and struggled as if anxious to free itself and join in the dance of the winds without, "That old port wants bat'nen up for the voyage."

It was but a poor living that Jack made with his pen, writing a little poem for this periodical or a short story for that, many of them with a touch of his quiet humor, intermingled at times, with a trace of sadness that half revealed some hidden chapter in his life, over which he dreamt and pondered, but never suffered other minds than his own to read.

At times a little reporting came in his way, by which he earned a few dollars, but his life was very unlike what he had pictured to himself should be the life of a literary man.

Poor Jack was never made to rough it.

How often the Duke said that he should never have been called Jack. That name conveyed to him, as to many more, the idea of a jolly sailor or rollicking soldier, and not the quiet plebeian student that he knew. But a time came when such a world of tenderness as could be sounded in those four simple letters, if breathed in sadness or in love, it seemed, to him impossible to utter in any other word.

One evening, a few weeks before Christmas, the Duke walked into the room and found Jack engaged writing.

"Well, old fellow," he said in his kindly, jolly way. "What's on the boards now, a new story or what?"

"I have been thinking of writing a Christmas poem, and I began to night; but I fear I shall have to give it up for the present, as the Muse is wayward," replied Jack, handing a few lines that he had just written, to the Duke.

He took them and read—

Sad songs are sweetest
Where joy is fleetest;
Oh sweet! so sweet, to the heart in sorrow,
E'en the low wailing knell
Of the sad Passing Bell,
Is sweeter than the Joy Bells of the morrow.

"It is a very pretty beginning; but don't you think it is rather sad for so joyful an occasion?"

"Ah that is my Christmas Carol, Duke, and perhaps some one else will be sad then as well as myself. Every one is not happy because the bells ring out so gladly. I can remember one terrible, terrible Christmas day for me," and the poor boy bent his head upon his hands and murmured "Mother! Mother!" Then looking up he continued, "yes! yes! there are many sad hearts at Christmas time, and why should not they be sung to as well as those who are blithe and happy."

The Duke only shook his head sadly, as he turned away to hide his troubled face; while Jack folded up his papers.

A week later than the evening just mentioned, Jack returned home, very much fatigued, having had rather a long walk in the cold night air for one so delicate, and the next morning he was unable to leave his bed.

At the same time the Duke was ordered away to a distant town, to make a report of some meetings being held there, and which would keep him absent for an indefinite period.

"Take good care of him, Dick, he's as frail as a girl," whispered the Duke as he left the door, on his way to the station.

"You're right; I will, Cap'n," replied the sailor.