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**"Seated in a big arm-chair, Sandy Jenkins read his poetry."**

(See page 41.)





The  
**BLACK  
CAT  
CLUB**



Negro  
humor  
& folk-  
lore .a.

By

JAMES D.  
CORROTHERS



Illustrated  
By J. K. BRYANS

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## PREFACE

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THIS book is intended as a series of character studies of Negro life as it may be observed in the great cities of the North. The scene has been laid in Chicago because there—more than anywhere else in the North—may be found every type of the American Negro and nearly every phase of his social life. For the Negro is *himself* everywhere, whether educated or uneducated.

Believing that the world needs smiles instead of tears, it has been my desire to present the humorous side of Negro life, as I have observed it. I have endeavored, from a humorist's point of view, to paint the Negro as he is. I have neither apologized for his shortcomings nor exaggerated them. I have tried, as it were, to make a window into

## Preface

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Negro life so that the reader may see and hear for himself. Many quaint Negro expressions, droll sayings, and peculiar by-words, used by Negroes universally, have, to the best of my ability, been set down at just such times and places as a Negro would naturally make use of them. Some of the stories used are old Negro folk-lore tales which I heard from my grandfather, uncles, and others. Nearly every Negro knows them in some form or other. They have been told around Negro cabin-fires for hundreds of years; but, so far as I know, have never before appeared in print. Believing them worthy of preservation, I have endeavored to retell them faithfully through the medium of the "Black Cat Club," a setting which, I hope, will give the reader a clearer insight into certain phases of Negro life and character, not only as they appeared on Southern plantations in ante-bellum times, but as they may be observed under certain conditions



## Preface

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to-day. Connecting with these folk-lore tales a few thoughts which are my own, I send them forth in the earnest hope that, where'er they may go, they will bring sunshine and good-cheer, and, offending nobody, win friends and well-wishers for themselves.

It is proper to explain that, since in Chicago are Negroes from all portions of the South, the dialect spoken in the "Black Cat Club" naturally embraces and commingles nearly all of the Negro dialects in Dixieland.

Beginning at the third chapter of the book, a love-story winds through the work, culminating at the close.

One of the poems used in the work has appeared in the *Century Magazine*; two others have appeared in *Truth*. To the management of both magazines grateful acknowledgment is made.

THE AUTHOR.





# THE BLACK CAT CLUB

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## CHAPTER I

### **The Club Introduced**

SANDY JENKINS, alias "Doc," president of the "Black Cat Club" and poet-laureate of the Chicago levee, strolled contentedly along Clark Street one sunny afternoon—the proudest and happiest mortal in the universe.

Sandy was "dressed to kill": His linen was spotless; his clothing faultless; his cane, chrysanthemum, diamonds, and "patent leathers" matchless; while his "Jockey Club" perfume proclaimed his presence quite as much as they. Sandy was satisfied.

## **The Black Cat Club**

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Under one arm he carried an immense black cat with which to "hoodoo" his enemies, while in his inside coat pocket reposed securely his precious rabbit's foot, together with the manuscript of his famous poem, "De Cahvin'" — an effusion which never failed to delight his Negro constituents of the levee, whenever the poet condescended to read it to them.

But Sandy had still other reasons to be proud.

It had been indeed a great day for him. He had perfected the organization of the "Black Cat Literary Club" on the night before, and the morning papers had all published glowing accounts of the affair, in which Sandy came in for the lion's share of the glory. Five morning papers had each devoted a column of space to an elaborate description of the club, and Sandy's name had appeared with amazing frequency in each report. The thought of it overcame




"DOO"

## The Black Cat Club

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the poet, and he repaired to the nearest saloon and called for "whisky straight."



"You black people bin raisin' san' wid yo' Shakespeare ack!" observed "Billy" Spooks, the bartender, pouring out Sandy's drinks, as a number of the great man's admirers filed into the place. "See whut de papahs said 'bout you dis mo'nin', Doc?"

"Nevah pays no 'tention to sich small mattahs," answered Sandy; "might, ef I wuz raised pickin' cotton in de backwoods down South, lak you. I'se a genamun, mase'f."

"You'll be gen'ler 'n' dat 'fo' I gits th'u' wid you," replied the bartender with a laugh.

Sandy drew his razor.

"Come on wid yo' cutlery; but foh de Laud sake hol' dat cat!" exclaimed Spooks, with feigned excitement. "I thought you could take a *joke!*"

"G'way!" said Sandy hotly; "I 'member when you rid into town on a hay-wagon, too hongry to cas' a shadder, an' struck me fur

## The Club Introduced

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two bits to git yo'se'f somethin' t'eat wid!  
Don't tell *me*! Knowed you when de mice  
built nests in yo' wool!"

"Doan' let me down so hahd, Doc," said Spooks, with a laugh. Then he prepared the drinks, and, while the crowd was enjoying the treat, picked up a morning paper that lay behind the counter, and read the following, punctuating his monologue with an occasional laugh and witticism:



## DE BLACK CAT CLUB

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### ALL SORTS OF WEIRD NOTIONS HAUNT ITS MEMBERS

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**Sandy Jenkins, Poet-Laureate of the Levee,  
Writes Stirring Epics which have Made Him  
Famous "Down de Line," and Gained Him  
the Presidency of the New Society.**

"Sandy Jenkins, the colored poet-laureate of the levee, and his friends have organized a literary society which will henceforth be known to fame as the 'Black Cat Club.'