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THE HUMAN SIDE

By ARCHIE P. McKISHNIE

DAWN.

Adown the sky-sea, where the night has lain,
Dawn throws her golden bars;
God drags across the world His crimson seine,
And gathers in the stars.

* * *

THE SURVIVOR.

THE alley behind the decrepit shacks was choked with snow. Slum pollution had infected it as it fell so that it lay grimy and cold like death; no brightness, no beauty, only choking chill. Through it, stretching like a narrow ribbon on dirty sand, a path had been trodden as far as the great ash-heap. This path had been made by little Lu, the hunch-back queen of Slum-Land. Lu reigned by Divine ordinance. Her domain was the blind, unused alley. Her subjects were the starving and despised of God's creatures, for which a great city had no sympathy. Her palace was a draughty, broken-down hovel, her ministers the beast-like parents who held high carnival from a big bottle when Lu's pennies from her sale of papers permitted, and who beat her maimed form unmercifully when she returned from the streets empty-handed. But her loves were the few subjects who had thus far survived the fight of cold and starvation. Only three remained now. Shabb, the one-eyed cat, Jeff, the aged setter dog and Gyp. Gyp was a tame crow, a sad, degenerate bedraggled crow that had sometime held a high position. He had a slender band of gold welded about one leg to prove that he had once lived in pleasant places.

All queens must have favourites, and of her subjects Gyp was the favourite of queen Lu. Perhaps it was because he was black, black like her own little despised self, or it may be that the superstitious nature of her kind attached itself the more firmly to him because he could mutter gutterally a few words in the English tongue.

The winter day was just closing down when Lu passed along the black path toward the ash-heap. There was a long red gash in the sky, just above the high smoky buildings, and there was almost a kiss of warmth in the slender gleam of sunlight that slanted through the rent and touched Lu's face. Half way down the path, her subjects met her, Gyp fluttering to her shoulder first of all with a hoarse "Hip Hip Hurray," and lean Shabb, arching her back and purring a welcome. Jeff, the aged setter, came last, stiffly and gleefully. Back to the great pile of ashes queen Lu led her subjects speaking to each one and calling it by some endearing name. There they nestled down close together and from beneath her thin, worn jacket Lu took some hard crusts of bread and divided them amongst the famished creatures. As she watched them devour the crusts, a deep beautiful light came from another world into her little black face and beautified it, and she talked to them as a queen should talk to those depending upon her.

"It'll be spring right soon now," she told them, "an' none ob you all 'll feel de cold any more soon. Maybe"—and she glanced back toward the palace in the shadow, "maybe we'll all jest nat'ully light out fo' de kentry den, de kentry whar de birds an' de trees am."

"God save the King," muttered Gyp, edging toward the cat, his

beady eye on her portion of the crust.

A flock of wild crows passed high over the city, directly above them. Gyp hopped to the fence and watched them, his head on one side.

"Ef you all wanten go, Gyp, why jes' go'long." Lu spoke, a catch in her voice. From the blackline, high in air came a cry of welcome to the tame crow. But he simply watched the line vanish and then came back to his queen, nestling up against her and muttering unintelligible sounds.

That night came the great frost that gripped so many of the sluggish life-streams in the slums. At noon, the following day, the heavy clouds drew back and the sun came out and kissed away the grey snow, and the black path Lu's little feet had made. Gyp, who had crouched all night between the ash-pile and Jeff's protecting, shaggy coat, shook off his stupor and staggered out into the warmth. But Jeff, poor old toothless Jeff, did not stir. Neither did grey Shabb. Gyp sat a long time upon the ash-heap and watched for them to awake. At last he gave a low cry and fluttered down. He fluttered along where the narrow path had been and by and by found himself outside the palace walls. He remembered how cruelly he had been chastised by the ministers, once upon a time, for daring to approach this palace, but love was calling him. Up on the narrow sill he hopped and peered into the bare room through an unglazed window. The ministers were gone. A big bottle lay on the floor, and over in a corner on a pile of rags his little black, hunch-back queen was sleeping sweetly. Gyp hopped down and across to where she lay. But he could not waken her, although he rubbed his head against her cheek and croaked softly as he had done often before.

When Gyp came out of the palace a wide flame of gold and purple illumined the skies. The grimy snow had vanished from the alley. The narrow, black path was gone.

From the north, flying low over the city, came a flock of Gyp's kind. Then Gyp with a low cry that might have either been joy or sorrow leaped to air and followed the flock southward.

* * *

LIL' BABY CLO.

My weenty lam' she fine de fold
'Hind hills ob gold,
'Hind hills ob gold;
De shepherd's know dat she done stray
From me away,
From me away;
He seek her fro de chilly snow,
Li'l' baby Clo,
Li'l' baby Clo.
No baby voice, no baby song,
De night am long,
De night am long;
Dese ole arms empty am t' night
Wifout a weenty gal in white;
See mammy rockin' to an' fro,
A-croonin' t' a shadder Clo.
A-holdin' jest a lil' dress,
Close t' her breas',
Close t' her breas',
A lil' nighty-gown ob white,
Is all ole mammy hab t' night;
She dream a-rockin' to an' fro,
She hol' her Clo,
Her baby Clo.

Dear, weenti lammie gone from home,
De night am lone,
De night am lone;
De moon-light tech a empty cha'r,
An' kiss a dolly sleepin' dar;
Hush, don' you wake her, she cry so
Fer baby Clo,
Li'l' baby Clo.



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