

**THE HUMAN TOUCH:
WITH FANTASY AND
POEMS**

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The human touch: with fantasy and poems by L. A. Compton-Rickett

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BY

L. A. COMPTON-RICKETT

WITH A FOREWORD

BY

KATHARINE TYNAN

LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS

NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.

1921

FOREWORD

LEONARD COMPTON-RICKETT is a young poet who is not afraid of having convictions and publishing them to the world. "The Human Touch," put on for two matinees at the Ambassadors, deals with the problem of vivisection, an unpopular subject, as anything that troubles the lazy world and awakes that annoying thing, Conscience, is bound to be. After the great, and we fear the misdirected energy of the War, English people are more supine than ever about facing things difficult and disquieting. Mr. Compton-Rickett's play had an excellent reception, but one doubts that it would ever have a long run. The modern world is too anxious to be healed to be nice in asking at whose expense they are healed—and Death, who wore a familiar and even friendly face during the War, has now in the general demoralization been put back in his proper place. The same knight-errantry has prompted Mr. Compton-Rickett in the motif of "The King of Hearts," which might have had a more general title, since Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs, and Spades, and their personages all figure in it. It has the spirit of true fantasy. It has humour, poetry, wit, and it has also real philosophy. The City Company on its last legs, which is redeemed by learning to do its business according to the fairy-tale, is a very happy conception. There is plenty of spectacle, and from the charming opening, as primitive as a mystery-play, to the end, which might be in modern London, the allegory is complete. This would be a charming play, not for the theatres, but for pastoral players, or it might be played by children—there is a touch of Puck in it, if also of Titania and Mustard Seed and Peasblossom.

The lyrics that follow are true love-lyrics, for the greater part. They are frank, honest and dignified love-songs. If the *Only Fair* is a little elusive, if "For ever doth she fly and he pursue," well, that is all to the gain of the poetry. The spirit is hardly modern. This lover has his illusions, his aloofnesses, his despairs. But he knows how to praise woman delicately and with a knightly spirit. His lyrics are what lyrics ought to be—brief snatches, winged with feeling. He has an equal achievement. If he has not his great moments he has not his low moments. He is deeply read in English poetry, and he is not without the classical spirit. An earlier book of his, published in 1916, "The Divine Drama," was more ambitious than the new volume, but it was less near to humanity and less concerned with common human things. The fairy drama, "The King of Hearts," will delight even readers who will not guess at the philosophy of it. To the unimaginative and the worldling it might seem mad or even fantastical, but behind the floweriness and the real beauty of it there is wisdom and vision, and there is the fearlessness of the Don, who appeared in the guise of the madman, apparently an arrow cast at the old Spanish chivalry, but survives as the exemplar of all that chivalry and gentleness stand for in the heart of man.

KATHARINE TYNAN.

PRESS EXTRACTS

"The play ('The Human Touch') is interesting, its sincerity goes home. . . . As there are real human touches in the work, it may, with a little technical overhauling, make good in the provinces, and I feel certain that when the Author has learned his *métier* he will give us work of lasting value."

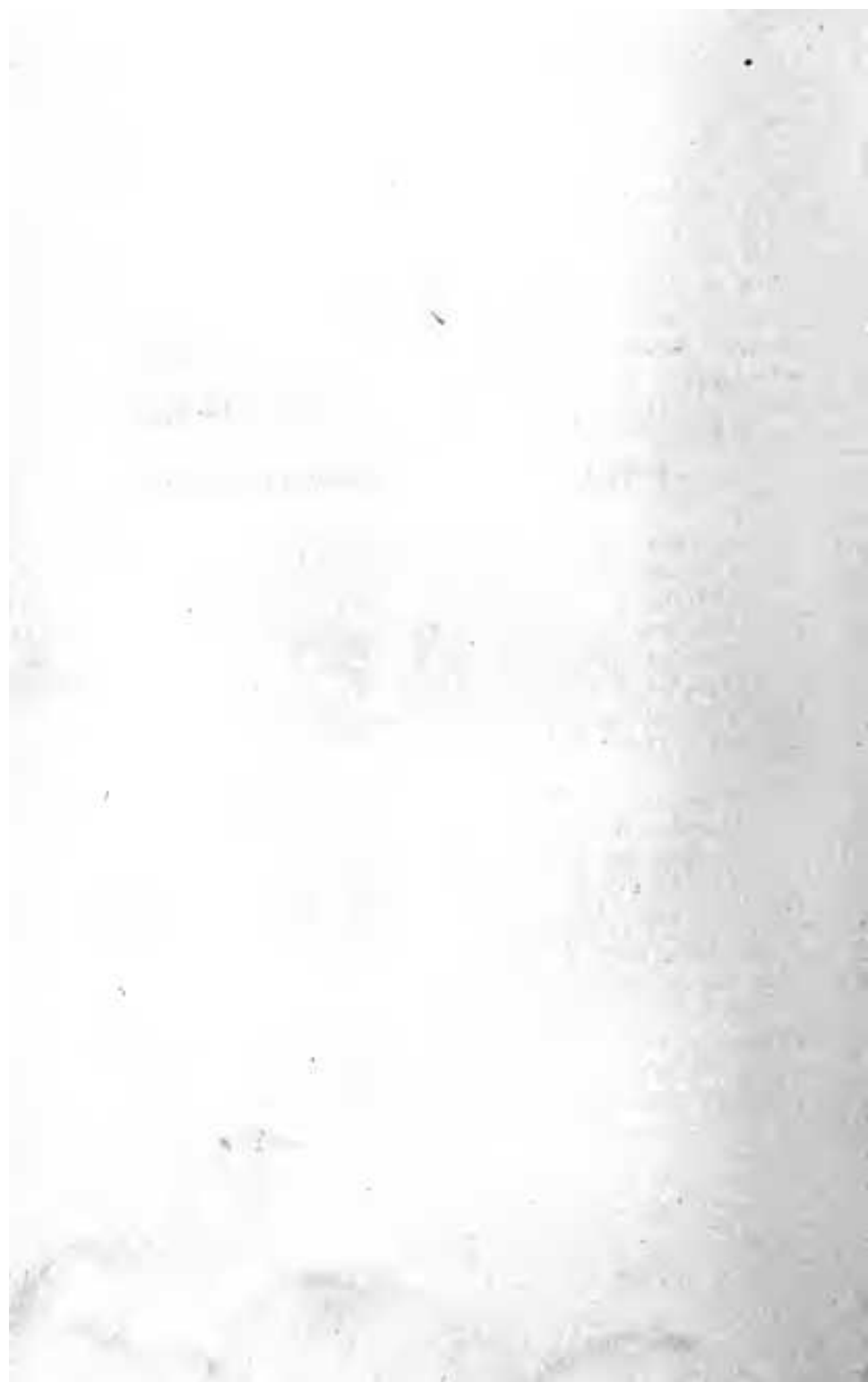
—J. T. GREIN, *The Illustrated London News*.

"When I am assured by a preliminary circular that a play is both humorous and dramatic, and centres round a strong love interest, I can as a rule feel confident that I am in for a flatulent and perfunctory affair. Much to my surprise, the promoters had some justification for their prospectus. The piece was fairly well written, reasonably constructed, and was quite full of interest."

—SYDNEY CARROLL, *Sunday Times*

"The Human Touch," by Mr. Leonard A. Compton-Rickett, produced at the Ambassadors Theatre, is a strong and vivid appeal in the cause of humanitarian principles in relation to animals. The lesson is interestingly taught in a well-constructed story which reaches its climax in a vivisection laboratory—a situation of such power as to tug at the very heart-strings of the most callous. On its merit alone, apart from the principle involved, the play is worthy of a run.

—*The Star*.



AN APPEAL

TO THE WOMEN OF ENGLAND TO
VOTE AT THE GENERAL ELECTION
FOR THE ABOLITION OF VIVISECTION

Reprinted from "The Abolitionist," 1918

Glorious Woman, imaging on Earth
The archetypal goddess of pure grace,
Through passion's travail, inspirer of the Race,
Thy beauty now is big with second birth ;
For loveliness is love, and careless mirth
Hearing the World's cry changes on thy face
To tender sweetness, flashing with a trace
Of stern resolve, and heightening thy worth.

Sister of Mercy, freed by life's new dower,
Helplessness to thy robe's protection clings ;
Immaculate Mother to all living things,
The fateful time draws near, the splendid hour,
By thine own wrongs, thy silent sufferings
Keen as the spear of Pallas, strike with power.