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# THE VOICE IN THE FOG

HAROLD MacGRATH

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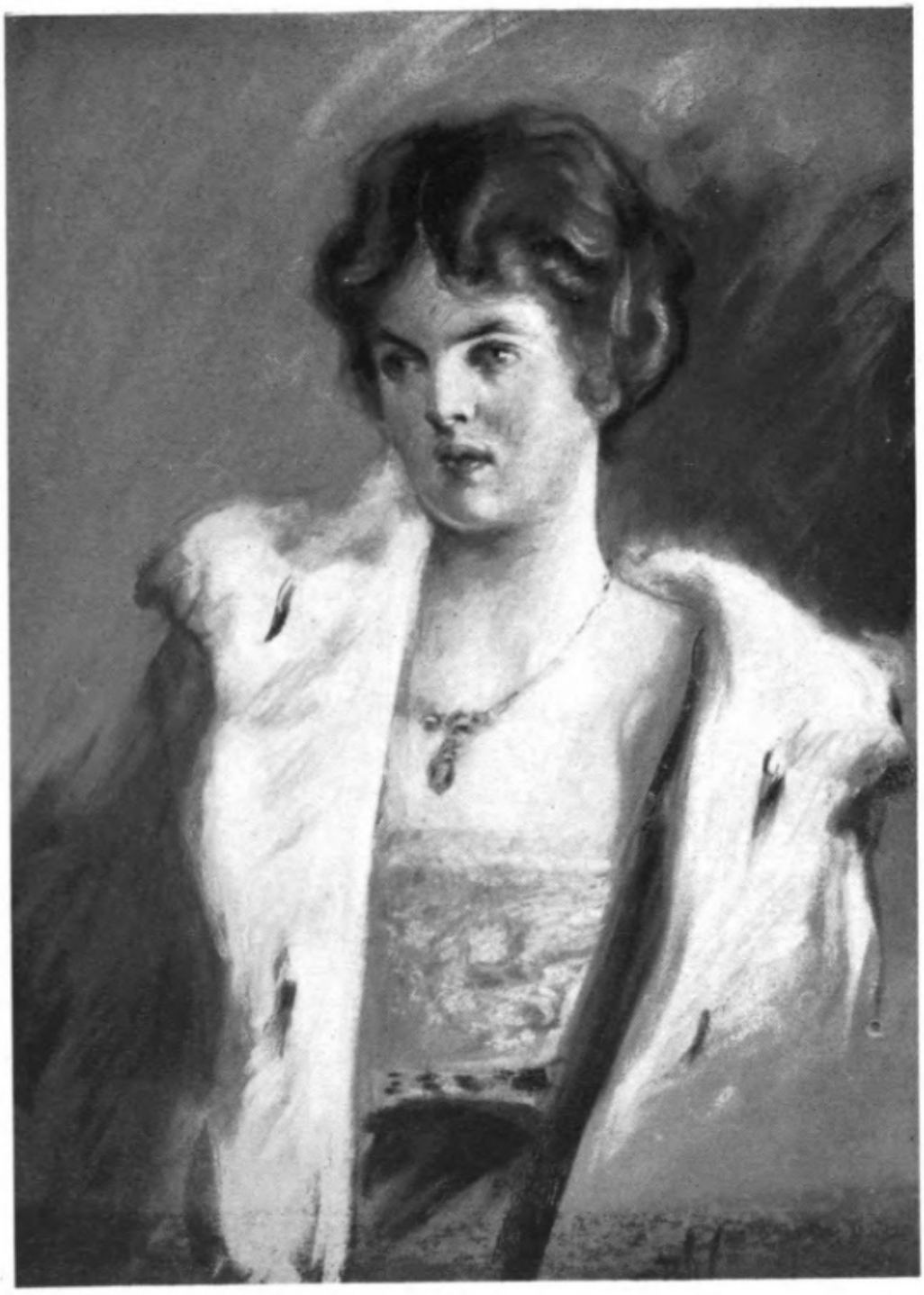

Kitty Killigrew

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# THE VOICE IN THE FOG

*By*

HAROLD MAC GRATH

*Author of*

THE MAN ON THE BOX, HEARTS AND MASKS,
DEUCES WILD, ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

A. B. WENZELL

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TO
CAV. GIOVANNI PICCININI
IN MEMORY OF MANY HAPPY
FLORENTINE DAYS

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# THE VOICE IN THE FOG

## CHAPTER I

FOG.

A London fog, solid, substantial, yellow as an old dog's tooth or a jaundiced eye. You could not look through it, nor yet gaze up and down it, nor over it; and you only thought you saw it. The eye became impotent, untrustworthy; all senses lay fallow except that of touch; the skin alone conveyed to you with promptness and no incertitude that this thing had substance. You could feel it; you could open and shut your hands and sense it on your palms, and it penetrated your clothes and beaded your spectacles and rings and bracelets and shoe-buckles.



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# THE VOICE IN THE FOG

It was nightmare, bereft of its pillows, grown somnambulistic; and London became the antechamber to Hades, lackeyed by idle dreams and peopled by mistakes.

There is something about this species of fog unlike any other in the world. It sticks. You will find certain English cousins of yours, as far away from London as Hong-Kong, who are still wrapt up snugly in it. Happy he afflicted with strabismus, for only he can see his nose before his face. In the daytime you become a fish, to wriggle over the ocean's floor amid strange flora and fauna, such as ash-cans and lamp-posts and venders' carts and cab-horses and sandwich-men. But at night you are neither fish, bird nor beast.

The night was May thirteenth; never mind the year; the date should suffice: and a Walpurgis night, if you please, without any Mendelssohn to interpret it.



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That happy line of Milton's—"Pandemonium, the high capital of Satan and his peers"—fell upon London like Elijah's mantle. Confusion and his cohort of synonyms (why not?) raged up and down thoroughfare and side-street and alley, east and west, danced before palace and tenement alike: all to the vast amusement of the gods, to the mild annoyance of the half-gods (in Mayfair), and to the complete rout of all mortals a-foot or a-cab. Imagine: militant suffragettes trying to set fire to the prime minister's mansion, *Siegfried* being sung at the opera, and a yellow London fog!

The press about Covent Garden was a mathematical problem over which Euclid would have shed bitter tears and hastily retired to his arbors and citron tables. Thirty years previous (to the thirteenth of May, not Euclid) some benighted beggar invented the Chinese puzzle; and to-



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night, many a frantic policeman would have preferred it, sitting with the scullery maid and the pantry near by. Simple matter to shift about little blocks of wood with the tip of one's finger; but cabs and carriages and automobiles, each driver anxious to get out ahead of his neighbor! —not to mention the shouting and the din and discord of horns and whistles and sirens and rumbling engines!

"It's hard luck," said Crawford, sympathetically. "It will be half an hour before they get this tangle straightened out."

"I shouldn't mind, Jim, if it weren't for Kitty," replied his wife. "I am worried about her."

"Well, I simply could not drag her into this coupé and get into hers myself. She's a heady little lady, if you want to know. As it is, she'll get back to the hotel quicker than we shall. Her cab is five



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up. If you wish, I'll take a look in and see if she's all right."

"Please do;" and she smiled at him, lovely, enchanting.

"You're the most beautiful woman in all this world!"

"Am I?"

Click! The light went out. There was a smothered laugh; and when the light flared up again, the aigrette in her copper-beech hair was all askew.

"If anybody saw us!"—secretly pleased and delighted, as any woman would have been who possessed a husband who was her lover all his waking hours.

"What! in this fog? And a lot I'd care if they did. Now, don't stir till I come back; and above all, keep the light on."

"And hurry right back; I'm getting lonesome already."

He stepped out of the coupé. Harlequin, and Colombine, and Humpty-



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Dumpty; shapes which came out of nowhere and instantly vanished into nothing, for all the world like the absurd pantomimes of his boyhood days. He kept close to the curb, scrutinizing the numbers as he went along. Never had he seen such a fog. Two paces away from the curb a headlight became an effulgence. Indeed, there were a thousand lights jammed in the street, and the fog above absorbed the radiance, giving the scene a touch of Brocken. All that was needed was a witch on a broomstick. He counted five vehicles, and stopped. The door-window was down.

"Miss Killigrew?" he said.

"Yes. Is anything wrong?"

"No. Just wanted to see if you were all right. Better let me take your place and you ride with Mrs. Crawford."

"Good of you; but you've had enough trouble. I shall stay right here."



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"Where's your light?"

"The globe is broken. I'd rather be in the dark. It's fun to look about. I never saw anything to equal it."

"Not very cheerful. We'll be held up at least half an hour. You are not afraid?"

"What, I?" She laughed. "Why should I be afraid? The wait will not matter. But the truth is, I'm worried about mother. She would go to that suffragette meeting; and I understand they have tried to burn up the prime minister's house."

"Fine chance! But don't you worry. Your mother's a sensible woman. She'll get back to the hotel, if she isn't there already."

"I wish she had not gone. Father will be tearing his hair and twigging the whole Savoy force by the ears."

Crawford smiled. Readily enough he



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could conjure up the picture of Mr. Killigrew, short, thick-set, energetic, raging back and forth in the lobby, offering to buy taxicabs outright, the hotel, and finally the city of London itself; typically money-mad American that he was. Crawford wanted to laugh, but he compromised by saying: "He must be very careful of that hair of his; he hasn't much left."

"And he pulls out a good deal of it on my account. Poor dad! Why in the world should I marry a title?"

"Why, indeed!"

"Mrs. Crawford was beautiful tonight. There wasn't a beauty at the opera to compare with her. Royalties are frumps, aren't they? And that ruby! I don't see how she dares wear it!"

"I am not particularly fond of it; but it's a fad of hers. She likes to wear it on state occasions. I have often wondered



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if it is really the Nana Sahib's ruby, as her uncle claimed. Driver, the Savoy, and remember it carefully; the Savoy."

"Yes, sir; I understand, sir. But we'll all be some time, sir. Collision forward is what holds us, sir."

Alone again, Kitty Killigrew leaned back, thinking of the man who had just left her and of his beautiful wife. If only she might some day have a romance like theirs! Presently she peered out of the off-window. A brood of *Siegfried* dragons prowled about, now going forward a little, now swerving, now pausing; lurid eyes and threatening growls.

Once upon a time, in her pigtail days, when her father was going to be rich and was only half-way between the beginning and the end of his ambition, Kitty had gone to a tent-circus. Among other things she had looked wonderingly into the dim, blurry glass-tank of the "human



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fish," who was at that moment busy selling photographs of himself. To-night, in searching for comparisons, this old forgotten picture recurred to her mind; blithely memory brought it forth and threw it upon the screen. All London had become a glass-tank, filled with human pollywogs.

She did not want to marry a title; she did not want to marry money; she did not want to marry at all. Poor kindly dad, who believed that she could be made happy only by marrying a title. As if she was not as happy now as she was ever destined to be!

Voices. Two men were speaking near the curb-door. She turned her head involuntarily in this direction. There were no lights in the frontage before which stood her cab, which intervened between the Brocken haze in the street, throwing a square of Stygian shadow against the



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fog, with right and left angles of aureola. She could distinguish no shapes.

"Cheer up, old top; you're in hard luck."

"I'm a bally ass."

"No, no; only a ripping good sport, game all the way through."

Oddly enough, Kitty sensed the irony. She wondered if the speaker's companion did.

"Well, a wager's a wager."

"And you're the last chap to welch a square bet. What's the odds? My word, I didn't urge you to change the stakes."

"Didn't you?"

The voice was young and pleasant; and Kitty was sure that the owner's face was even as pleasant as his voice. What had he wagered and lost?

"If you're really hard pressed. . . ."

"Hard pressed! Man, I've nothing in God's world but two guineas, six."



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"Oh, I say now!"

"It's the truth."

"If a fiver will help you. . . ."

"Thanks. A wager's a wager. I've lost. I was a bally fool to play cards. Deserve what I got. Six months; that's the agreement. A madman's wager; but I'll stick."

"Six months; twelve o'clock, midnight, November thirteenth. It's the date, old boy; that's what hoodooed you, as the Americans say."

Kitty wasn't sure that the speaker was English; if he was, he had lost the insular significance of his vowels. Still, it was, in its way, as pleasant a voice as the other's. There was no doubt about the younger man; he was English to the core, English in his love of chance, English in his loyalty to his word; stupidly English.

That he was the younger was a trifling matter to deduce: no young man ever led



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his elder into mischief, harmful or innocuous.

"Six months. It's a joke, my boy; a great big laugh for you and me, when there's nothing left in life but toddies and churchwardens. Six months."

"I dare say I can hang on till that time is over. Well, good night! No letters, no addresses."

"Exact terms. Six months from date I'll be cooling my heels in your anteroom."

"Cavenaugh, if it's anything else except a joke. . . ."

"Oh, rot! It was your suggestion. I tell you, it's a lark, nothing more. A gentleman's word."

"I'll start for my diggings."

"Ride home with me; my cab's here somewhere."

"No, thanks. I've got a little thinking to do and prefer to be alone. Good night."



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"And good luck go with you. Deuce take it, if you feel so badly. . . ."

There was no reply; and Kitty decided that the younger man had gone on. Silence; or rather, she no longer heard the speakers. Then a low chuckle came to her and this chuckle broadened into ironic laughter; and she knew that Mephisto was abroad. What had been the wager; and what was the meaning of the six months? It is instinctive in woman to interpret the human voice correctly, especially when the eyes are not distracted by physical presentations. This man outside, whoever and whatever he was, deep in her heart Kitty knew that he was not going to play fair. What a disappointing world it was!—to set these human voices ringing in her ears, and then to take them out of her life forever!

Still the din of horns and whistles and sirens, still the shouting. Would they



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A match sparkled and flared

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never move on? She was hungry. She wanted to get back to the hotel, to learn what had happened to her mother. Militant suffragettes, indeed! A pack of mad witches, who left their brooms behind kitchen doors when they ought to be wielding them about dusty corners. Woman never won anything by using brickbats and torches: which proved on the face of it that these militants were inefficient, irresponsible, and unlearned in history. Poor simpletons! Had not theirs always been the power behind the throne? What more did they want?

Her cogitations were peculiarly interrupted. The door opened, and a man plumped down beside her.

"Enid, it looks as if we'd never get out of this hole. Have you got your collar up?"

**Numb and terrified, Kitty felt the man's hands fumbling about her neck.**



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"Where's your sable stole? You women beat the very devil for thoughtlessness. A quid to a farthing, you've left it in the box, and I'll have to go back for it, providing they'll let me in. And it's midnight, if a minute."

Pressing herself tightly into her corner, Kitty managed to gasp: "My name is not Enid, sir. You have mistaken your carriage."

"What? Good heavens!" Almost instantly a match sparkled and flared. His eyes, screened behind his hand, palm outward (a perfectly natural action, yet nicely calculated), beheld a pretty, charming face, large Irish blue eyes (a bit startled at this moment), and a head of hair as shiny-black as polished Chinese blackwood. The match, still burning, curved like a falling star through the win-
dow. "A thousand pardons, madam! Very stupid of me. Quite evident that I



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am lost. I beg your pardon again, and hope I have not annoyed you."

He was gone before she could form any retort. Where had she heard that voice before? With a little shudder—due to the thought of those cold strange fingers feeling about her throat—her hands went up. Instantly she cried aloud in dismay. Her sapphires! They had vanished!

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# CHAPTER II

DANIEL KILLIGREW, of Killigrew and Company (sugar, coffee and spices), was in a towering rage; at least, he towered one inch above his normal height, which was five feet six. Like an animal recently taken in captivity he trotted back and forth through the corridors, in and out of the office, to and from the several entrances, blowing the while like a grampus. All he could get out of these infernally stupid beings was "Really, sir!" He couldn't get a cab, he couldn't get a motor, he couldn't get anything. Manager, head-clerk, porter, doorman and page, he told them, one and all, what a dotty old spoof of a country they lived in; that they were all dead-alive persons, fit



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to be neither under nor above earth; that they wouldn't be one-two in a race with January molasses—"Treacle, I believe you call it here!" And what did they say to this scathing arraignment? Yes, what did they say? "Really, sir!" He knew and hoped it would happen: if ever Germany started war, it would be over before these Britishers made up their minds that there was a war. A hundred years ago they had beaten Napoleon (with the assistance of Spain, Austria, Germany and Russia), and were now resting.

Quarter to one, and neither wife nor daughter; outside there, somewhere in the fog; and he could not go to them. It was maddening. Molly might be arrested and Kitty lost. Served him right; he should have put his foot down. The idea of Molly being allowed to go with those rattle-pated women! Suffragettes! A' "Bah!" exploded with a loud report.



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Hereafter he would show who voted in the Killigrew family. Poor man! He was made of that unhappy mental timber which agrees thoughtlessly to a proposition for the sake of peace and then regrets it in the name of war. His wife and daughter twisted him round their little fingers and then hunted cover when he found out what they had done.

He went out again to the main entrance and smoked himself headachy. He hated London. He had always hated it in theory, now he hated it in fact. He hated tea, buttered muffins, marmalade, jam, toast, cricket, box hedges three hundred years old, ruins, and the checkless baggage system, the wet blankets called newspapers. All the racial hatred of his forebears (Tipperary born) surged hot and wrathful in his veins. At the drop of a hat he would have gone to war, indi-



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vidually, with all England. "Really, sir!" Nothing but that, when he was dying of anxiety!

A taxicab drew up before the canopy. He knew it was a taxicab because he could hear the sound of the panting engine. The curb-end of the canopy was curtained by the abominable fog. Mistily a forlorn figure emerged. The doorman started leisurely toward this figure. Killigrew pushed him aside violently. Molly, with her hat gone, her hair awry, her dress torn, her gloves ragged, her eyes puffed! He sprang toward her, filled with Berserker rage. Who had dared.

"Give the man five pounds," she whispered. "I promised it."

"Five. . . ."

"Give it to him! Good heavens, do I look as if I were joking? Pay him, pay him!"



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Killigrew counted out five sovereigns, perhaps six, he was not sure. The chauffeur swooped them up, and set off.

"Molly Killigrew. . . ."

"Not a word till I get to the rooms. Hurry! Daniel, if you say anything I shall fall down!"

He led her to the lift. Curious glances followed, but these signified nothing. On a night such as this was there would be any number of accidents. Once in the living-room of the luxurious suite, Mrs. Killigrew staggered over to the divan and tumbled down upon it. She began to cry hysterically.

"Molly, old girl! Molly!" He put his arm tenderly across her heaving shoulders and kneeled. His old girl! Love crowded out all other thoughts. Money-mad he might be, but he never forgot that Molly had once fried his meat and peeled his potatoes and darned his socks. "Molly,



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what has happened? Who did this? Tell me, and I'll kill him!"

"Dan, when they started up the street for the prime minister's house, I could not get out of the crowd. I was afraid to. It was so foggy you had to follow the torches. I did not know what they were about till the police rushed us. One grabbed me, but I got away." All this between sobs. "Dan, I don't want to be a suffragette." Sob. "I don't want to vote." Sob.

And for the first time that night Killigrew smiled.

"Where's Kitty?"

He started to his feet. "She hasn't got back from the opera yet. She'll be the death of me, one of these fine days. You know her. Like as not she's stepped out of her cab to see what's going on, and has lost herself."

"But the Crawfords were with her."



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"Would that make any difference with Kitty if she wanted to get out? I told her not to wear any jewels, but she wouldn't mind me. She never does. I haven't any authority except in my offices. You and Kitty. . . ."

"Don't scold!"

"All right; I won't. But, all the same, you and the girl need checking."

"Daniel, it was only because I wanted something to occupy myself with. It's no fun for me to sit still in my house and watch everybody else work. The butler orders the meals, the housekeeper takes charge of the linen, the footman the carriages. Why, I can't find a button to sew on anything any more. I only wanted something to do."

Killigrew did not smile this time. Here was the whole matter in a nutshell: she wanted something to do. And there were thousands of others just like her. Man-



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like, he forgot that women needed something more than money and attention from an army of servants. He had his offices, his stock-ticker, his warfare. Not because she wanted to vote, but because she wanted and needed something to do.

"Molly, old girl, I begin to see. I'm going to finance a home-bureau of charity. I mean it. Fifty thousand the year to do with as you like. No hospitals, churches, heathen; but the needy and deserving near by. You can send boys to college and girls to schools; and Kitty'll be glad to be your lieutenant. I never had a college education. Not that I ever needed it,"—with sudden truculence in his tone. "But it might be a good thing for some of the rising generations in my tenements. I'll leave the choice to you. And when it comes to voting, why, tell me which way to vote, and I'll do it. I'll be a bull moose, if you say so."



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"You're the kindest man in the world, Dan, and I'm an old fool of a woman!"

Kitty burst into the room, star-eyed, pale. "Mother!" She sped to her mother's side. "Oh, I felt it in my bones that something was going to happen!"

"Think of it, Kitty dear; your mother, fighting with a policeman! Oh, it was frightful!"

"Never mind, mumsy," Kitty soothed. She rang for the maid, a thing her father had not thought to do. And when her mother was snug in bed, her head in cooling bandages, her face and hands bathed in refreshing cologne, Kitty returned to her father. "Dad, you mustn't say a word to mother about it, but I've been robbed."

"What?"

"My necklace. And I could not identify the thief if he stood before me this very minute. The interior light was out of order. He entered, pretending he had



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made a mistake. He called me Enid and told me to put up my collar; touched my neck with his hands. I was so astonished that I could not move. Finally I managed to explain that he had made a mistake. He apologized and got out; and it is quite evident that the necklace went with him."

"Can't you remember the least thing about him?"

"Nothing, absolutely nothing."

"Where were the Crawfords?"

"I did not wait to see them. My cab was ahead of theirs. What shall we do?"

"Notify the police; it's all we can do. They cost me an even ten thousand, Kitty. And I told you not to wear them on a night like this. I'm discouraged. I want to get out of this blasted country. I'm hoodooed." Killigrew walked the floor. He took out a cigar, eyed it thoughtfully, and returned it to his pocket. "Because



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they happen to be born in this smoke, they think the way they do things is the last word on the subject. I'd like to show them."

"Dad,"—with a bit of a smile,—"I know what the trouble is. You want to go home."

"And that's the truth. This is the first trip abroad I ever took with you and your mother, and it's going to be the last. I can't live out of my element, which is hurry and bustle and getting things done quickly. I'm a fish out of water. I want to go home; I want to see the Giants wallop the Cubs; and I want my two-weeks' bass fishing. But I'll hang on till the end of June as I promised. Ten thousand in sapphires you couldn't match in a hundred years, and Molly coming in banged up like a prize-fighter! . . . Some one at the door."

It proved to be Crawford.



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"Glad you got back safely," he said relievedly.

"Had her necklace stolen," replied Kiligrew briefly.

"You don't mean to say. . . ."

Kitty recounted her amazing adventure.

"And my wife's ruby is gone." Crawford made the disclosure simply. He was a quiet man; he had learned the futility of gestures, of wasting words in lamentation.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Kitty.

"The windows of the cab were down. I stood outside, smoking to pass the time. Suddenly I heard Mrs. Crawford cry out. A hand had reached in from the off side, clutched the pendant, twisted it off, and was gone. All quicker than I can tell it. I tried to give chase, but it was utter folly. I couldn't see anything two feet away. Mrs. Crawford is a bit knocked up over



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it. Rather sinister stone, if its history is a true one: the Nana Sahib's ruby, you know. For the jewel itself I don't care. I never liked to see her wear it."

Killigrew threw up his hands. "And this is the London you've been bragging about to me! How much was the ruby worth?"

"Don't know; nobody does. It's one of those jewels you can't set a price on. He will not be able to dispose of it in its present shape. He'll break it up and sell the pieces, and that's the shame of it. Think of the infernal cleverness of the man! Two or three hundred vehicles stalled in the street, fog so thick you couldn't see your hand before your face. Simple game for a man with ready wit. And the police busy at the two ends of the block, trying to straighten out the tangle. Mrs. Crawford says that the hand was white, slender and well kept. It came in swiftly



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and accurately. The man had been watching and waiting. She was so unprepared for the act that she didn't even try to catch the hand. I have notified Scotland Yard. But you can't hunt down a hand. I'm willing to wager that we'll neither of us ever see the gems again."

"He must have come directly from your carriage to mine," said Kitty. "I am heart-broken."

"One of the tricks of fate. Glad you got back all right. We were mightily worried. Come over across the hall at nine to-morrow, all of you, for breakfast. Don't fuss up. And we'll talk over the affair and plan what's to be done. Good night."

"I like that young man," declared Killigrew emphatically. "He's the real article. American to the backbone; a millionaire who doesn't splurge. Well," sighing regretfully, "he was born to it,



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and I had to dig for mine. But I can't get it through my head why he wants to excavate mummies when he could dig up potatoes with some profit."

"Dad, find me an earl or a duke like Mr. Crawford, and I'll marry him just as fast as you like."

"Kittibudget, I'm not so strong for dukes as I was. Your mother will have a black eye in the morning, or I don't know a shindy when I see it. Now, hike off to bed. I'm all in."

"You poor old dad! I worry you to death."

She threw her lovely arms about his neck and kissed him.

"Well, you're worth it. Kitty, I've had a jolt to-night. You marry whom you blame please. I've been doing some tall thinking. Make your own romance, duke or dry-goods clerk. You'd never hook up with anything that wasn't a man. You're



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Irish. If he happens to be made, all well and good; if not, why, I'll undertake to make him. And that's a bargain. I don't want any alimony money in the Killigrew family."

She kissed him again and went into her bedroom. Kind-hearted, impulsive old dad! In a week's time he would forget all about this heart-to-heart talk, and shoo away every male who hadn't a title or a million, or who wasn't due to fall heir to one or the other. Nevertheless, she had long since made up her mind to build her own romance. That was her right, and she did not propose to surrender it to anybody. Her weary head on the pillow, she thought of the voices in the fog. "A wager's a wager."

The next morning the fog was not quite so thick; that is, in places there were holes and punctures. You saw a man's face and torso, but neither hat nor legs. Again,



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you saw the top of a cab bowling along, but no horse: phantasmally.

Breakfast in Crawford's suite was merry enough. Misfortune was turned into jest. At least, they made a fine show of it; which is characteristic of people who bow to the inevitable whenever confronted by it. Crawford was passing his cigars, when a page was announced. The boy entered briskly, carrying a tray upon which reposed a small package.

"By special messenger, sir. It was thought you might be liking to have it at once, sir." The page pocketed the shilling politely and departed.

"That's the first bit of live work I've seen anybody do in this hotel," commented Killigrew, striking a match.

"I have stopped here often," said Crawford, "and they are familiar with my wishes. Excuse me till I see what this is."

The quartet at the table began chatting



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again, about the fog, what they intended doing in Paris, sunshiny Paris. By and by Crawford came over quietly and laid something on the table before his wife's plate.

It was the Nana Sahib's ruby, so-called.

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# CHAPTER III

THAT same morning, at eleven precisely (when an insolent west wind sprang up and tore the fog into ribbons and scarves and finally blew it into smithereens, channelward) there stood before the windows of a famous haberdashery in the Strand a young man, twenty-four years of age, typically English, beardless, hair clipped neatly about his neck and temples, his skin fresh colored, his body carefully but thriftily clothed. Smooth-skinned he was about the eyes and nose and mouth, unmarked by dissipation; and he stood straight; and by the set of his shoulders (not particularly deep or wide) you would infer that when he looked at you he would look straight. Pity, isn't it, that



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you never really can tell what a man is inside by drawing up your brief from what he is outside. There is always the heel of Achilles somewhere; trust the devil to find that.

Of course you wish to know forthwith who returned the ruby, and why. As our statesmen say, regarding any important measure for public welfare, the time is not yet ripe. Besides, the young man I am describing had never heard of the Nana Sahib's ruby, unless vaguely in some Sepoy Mutiny tale.

His expression at this moment was rather mournful. He was regretting the thirty shillings the week he had for several years drawn regularly in this shop. Inside there he had introduced the Raglan shirt, the Duke of Westminster four-in-hand, and the Churchill batwing collar. He longed to enter and plead for reinstatement, but his new-found pride re-



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fused to budge his legs doorward. Thirty shillings, twelve for his "third floor back," and the rest for clothes and books and simple amusements. What a whirl he had been in, this past fortnight!

He pulled at his chin, shook his head and turned away. No, he simply could not do it. What! suffer himself to be laughed at behind his back? Impossible, a thousand times no! At the first news stand he bought two or three morning papers, and continued on to his lodgings. He must leave England at once, but the question was—How?

It was a comfortable room, as "third floor backs" go. He read the "want" advertisements carefully, and at length paused at a paragraph which seemed to suit his fancy perfectly. "Cabin stewards wanted—White Star Line—New York and Liverpool." He cut out the clipping, folded it and stored it away. Then he



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proceeded to pack up his belongings, not a very laborious affair.

Manuscripts. He riffled the pages ruefully. Sonnets and chant-royals and epics, fine and lofty in spirit; so fine indeed that they easily sifted through every editorial office in London. There was even a bulky romance. He had read so much about the enormous royalties which American authors received for their work, and English authors who were popular on the other side, that his ambition had been frenetically stirred. The fortunes such men as Maundering and Piffle and Drool made! And all he had accomplished so far had been the earnest support of the postal service. Far back at the beginning he had been unfortunate enough to sell a sonnet for ten shillings. Alack! You sell your first sonnet, you win your first hand at cards, and then the passion has you.

Poetry was a drug on the market. No-



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body read it (or wrote it) these days; and any one who attempted to sell it was clearly mad. Oh, a jingle for *Punch* might pass, you know; something clever, with a snapper to it. But epic poetry? Sonnets? Why, didn't you know that there wasn't a magazine going that did not have some sub-editor who could whack out fourteen lines in fourteen minutes, whenever a page needed filling up? These things he had been told times without number. And Maundering, Piffle and Drool had long since cornered the romance market. The King's Highway had become No Thoroughfare.

America. He would go to the land of the brave (when occasion demanded) and the free (if you were imaginative). Having packed his trunk and valise, he departed for Liverpool. Besides, America was all that was left; he was at the end of his rope.



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What a rollicking old fraud life was! Swung out of his peaceful orbit, by the legerdemain of death; no longer a humble steady star but a meteor; bumping as yet darkly against the planets; and then this monumental folly which had returned him to the old orbit but still in meteoric form, without peace or means of livelihood! An ass, indeed, if ever there was one.

He eventually arrived at his destination, lied blithely to the chief steward, and was assigned to the first-class cabins on the promenade deck, simply because his manner was engaging and his face pleasing to the eye. The sea? He had never been on it but once, and then only in a rowboat. A good sailor? Perhaps. Chicken and barley broths at eleven; the captain's table in the dining-saloon, breakfast, luncheon and dinner; cabin housekeeper and luggage man at the ports; and



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