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The Vacancy.

BY HARRIET GAYLORD.



MAGGIE CASEY breathed a sigh of relief as she deposited the baby on the bed which served for the family of three in their little two-room tenement on

Third Avenue. He had been crying fretfully all day, and it was so good to have him asleep at last. She drew the baby quilt up close to his ears, made a tired attempt at adornment before the square of looking-glass; then tiptoed out and busied herself setting the table and frying the supper bacon.

From time to time footsteps sounded on the stairs and landing outside, but she gave no heed. It was nearly seven o'clock when she stood suddenly still, listening intently.

"That's Jim," she exclaimed, adding a moment later,

"No, he ain't got no job."

Maggie was keen in the diagnosis of footsteps. She met her husband at the door, saying gallantly,

"It's late ye are, Jim."

Maggie was still mostly dimples and curls, though the roses in her cheeks had gone out to help give the baby life three months before.

you an' the kid'll come from is more'n I'm knowin'. I'd niver paid th' rint Sunday if I'd knowed we'd have a fire."

"Sh-h-h!" cried Maggie, her teacup poised in her hand. That's father comin' up th' stairs."

She ran to the door and out on the landing.

"Hello, father!" she called. "Ye're just in time fur a bite o' supper."

Tim Casey hobbled cheerfully into the room. He was small and white-haired, and bent from rheumatism and a long life spent over a harness stitching machine.

"Niver a bite; but a kiss, darlin'! Th' ould woman's fed me foine!"

Maggie threw her fresh young arms about his neck, then drew him to her chair at the table and perched herself on Jim's knee. The old man looked troubled as he marked his son's disconsolate face.

"Jamsie, me b'y," he said, "ye're up against it fur the fust time, ain't ye? Niver ye mind! Yer ould father's got a schame in 'is head. Shure, ye c'd do the stitchin' ter our place, I'm thinkin' an' Maloney 'as tipped me th' wink as 'ow Joe Murphy is onter a bitter job nixt wake. To-morrer I'll git yer name on th' list, me b'y. Ould Hessler's bin a god boss ter me these



Ye'll pay fer yer supper before ye ate, wun't ye, Jim?"

Jim's face was not over strong, but his shoulders looked as if he might support a family. He was young, like Maggie—they were only children with a responsibility asleep in the next room, a sobering responsibility in the present crisis. To-night his face was sullen and his shoulders dropped.

"Not a damned job fur mine!" was his greeting as he threw his hat on the floor in the corner. Jim was plainly losing his nerve, though it was only two days since the burning of the factory where he had worked.

"Niver you care, darlin'!" said Maggie soothingly. "Ate a bit o' supper fust. It's hungry ye are."

He washed in the tin basin and dried his face. When he turned, Maggie was close behind.

"Ye'll pay fur yer supper before ye ate, wun't ye, Jim?" she asked roguishly—"now ye're all swate an' ciane?"

With a groan he snatched her in his arms and kissed her fiercely.

"If it wuzn't fur you, Maggie darlin', I'd niver care a damn; but if it wuzn't for you, I'd die shure!"

Over the supper he told her of his long day of many disappointments; of the miles he had tramped in the cold because he dared not waste car-fare.

"An' didn't ye 'ave a bite ter ate all th' day long?" she asked anxiously.

"No; an' where the next bite fur

tin year, an' he'll be a frind ter me son, shure. Ye think ye c'd do th' stitchin', don't ye, Jamsie, me b'y?" The thin old voice was fearsome in its appeal. Tim Casey yearned over the one son of his old age.

Jim's face gathered manliness.

"I'll do anything on airth fur Maggie'n th' kid," he said; "but'll Hessler tak' on a grane hand?"

"Shure! an' ye mus' come up the mornin' an' watch yer ol' dad. It's aisy! it's aisy! See how strong I am thin, an' I've bin at it these twinty year."

He got to his feet feebly and held out his shaking hand as proof. The quick tears rose to Maggie's eyes.

"Father darlin'," she said, "ye're none too strong, I'm thinkin'. Mebbe Jim kin do a bit o' yer work an' 'is own, too, whin he's workin' fur Hessler. Onyhow it's a blissin' ye air ter th' b'y; he wuz that downhearted before ye come! Ye'll be wantin' ter see little Tim, father, before ye go, shure. He's slapin', th' lamb! He niver wakes up whin th' trains go past ivry minit."

They tiptoed into the next room, and Maggie pulled down the quilt.

"Ain't he a picchur?" she asked. "Now, ain't he just? It's proud ye'll be o' him, you an' mother, I'm thinkin'." Kiss 'im, father; wun't ye? He's so used ter kissin' that it niver wakes 'im up."

She laughed as the old man fearful-

TRY

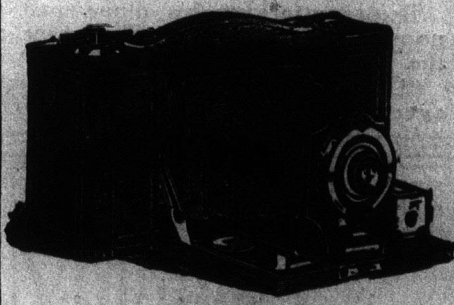
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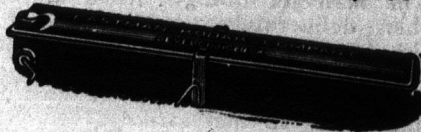
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