

# **THE LIGHT OUT OF THE EAST**

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The light out of the east by S. R. Crockett

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**S. R. CROCKETT**

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OF THE EAST**



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BY

S. R. CROCKETT

AUTHOR OF "THE STICKIT MINISTER,"  
"THE RAIDERS," ETC., ETC.



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**THE LIGHT OUT OF THE EAST**



# THE LIGHT OUT OF THE EAST

## CHAPTER I: HIS COMING

I, LUCAS CARGILL, once of Cargillfield in Scotland, the unworthy scion of a good house, sometime not wholly unknown as a London journalist and man of letters, but now only a servant of the Servant, write these things.

I saw him first (a long while ago as it seems) standing on the mountain Trastevere, just where Abruzzi breaks down towards the green plain of Apulia. Not that at the moment, there was any green thing to be seen. For it was the time of late September, after the vintage, and all Apulia was sunbaked and cracked like the mud in a dry reservoir bottom.

What I did there is no one's business. Indeed, when I come to think of it, it was hardly my own. I had no business. God's fiery index-finger had drawn itself across my life, effacing the past, searing and blistering the future. To this followed a long blank, dim, wistful, filled with alternate numbness and pain as of a gangrened limb, and the

strange bewildered anger which follows a great misfortune falling suddenly.

The mists were spinning themselves out of the lower valley as from a rope-walk, when I first saw him come up with them out of the Unseen. What impression did he make on me at that first moment? Many ask me that question. I can hardly tell now. It is so long ago. All is so different. Now I know—I live. Then I was dead almost—physically—terribly, pitiably dead. Not that I pitied myself. God be thanked, I was at least saved from that! Nor did I ask any other, not even God, to pity me. There was the residue of something in my heart—something high, strong, and sufficient for these things. Even amid the swelter of destinies a human soul may keep that, and regard the future not afraid.

At first I thought him merely one of the dreams that had been mocking me about that time—a little clearer than usual, perhaps, better defined. But after a moment I saw it was indeed a man.

He was of no great height, clad in a robe of some fine white stuff, all in one piece from his neck to his feet. I took him for a priest of some Order I had never encountered. Very gentle as to his eyes—so I thought—his face like soft ivory, with few lines and a look of youth upon it. Yet no mantling blood as of a young man, no ardours of life, no square strengths of sex about the lips, no proud outlook in the eyes—nothing of all that.

Yet at first I did not see the eyes. They were

turned from me. He was gazing up towards the mountain summit behind me to the right. But I marked instead his dress, and vaguely I said to myself that I had seen something like it somewhere in a picture. But I could not recall the exactness of it, and the thing troubled me, as such trifles will.

For one thing, if he were a priest, there was no rivulet of little ball-shaped buttons cascading down the front as on a *soutane*. All was plain-woven, in one piece like a stocking. I think it must have been put on over his head. The skirts were wringing wet with the valley mist. But above many capes of white shed the drops from his shoulders to the ground. In his hand he held a shepherd's staff with a curved head on which he leaned a little wearily.

Save for a white skull-cap his head was bare, his hair still mostly black. Youthful hair it was, silvering only in streaks. He held his head high and the cap prevented me from seeing whether it was tonsured or not. About him the driving valley clouds blew thinner, fuming away into lawny nothingness on the higher slopes.

Presently he turned and saw me. He did not seem in any way surprised. I remember his eyes now. They were bent full on me. They were not the powerful eyes you might expect in a great man—gentle rather, and drawing. But I suppose my nerves were upset with prolonged insomnia, for beneath the soft gaze which I seemed to underlie, the soul within me trembled like a tuning fork. They were grey-blue eyes, very piercing but noways