

# The LAPSE of ENOCH WENTWORTH

By ISABEL GORDON CURTIS  
Author of "The Woman from Wolverton"  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ELLSWORTH YOUNG  
COPYRIGHT, 1914 BY F. G. DROWNE & CO.

## SYNOPSIS.

Enoch Wentworth, journalist, and Andrew Merry, actor, play a hand at poker, the stakes absolute control of the future of the loser. Wentworth wins. They decide to keep the matter secret. Dorcas, knowing from her brother, Enoch, of Merry's shortcomings, tries to arouse his ambition. Andrew outlines the plot of a play he has had in mind and she urges him to go to work on it. When the play is completed Merry reads it to Wentworth whose life ambition is to write a successful play. He demands Merry's play as a forfeit of the bond won in the poker game. Preparations for staging the play are begun, but Merry, who is to take the leading part, is missing. Dorcas proves a success in the leading female part at rehearsals. She quarrels with her brother for taking credit for a play she knows to belong to Merry. Dorcas finds Merry among the down-and-outs in a bread line and persuades him to take his part in the play. The producer suggests certain changes in the play, which Wentworth tries to induce Merry to make. The actor refuses, but finally consents on condition that Wentworth cease his attentions to Zilla Paget, the heavy woman in the play, who has a bad reputation.

## CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

"Here is the second act," said Wentworth brusquely. "I imagine it will suit you. The changes are exactly what you suggested."  
"Oh, splendid!" Oswald's voice was cordial. "I'm ever so glad you felt like it. You will say yourself it is an improvement."  
"I hope so," Enoch spoke listlessly. "And, Dingley, while I think of it, send a message back to Miss Paget. Ask if I can see her now, in her dressing-room for a few minutes." He turned to Oswald. "I must explain to her the change we're making. Better have the part copied at once; it must be put into quick rehearsal."

## CHAPTER XIV.

The Opening Night.  
Dorcas stood motionless in the wings, with Merry beside her, leaning against a table. The curtain had fallen on the third act of "The House of Esterbrook." The girl's body throbbed from head to foot, and she felt as if the emotions of a lifetime had been crowded into that single hour. There was a babel of noise behind the scenes; in front the applause sounded like a tempest. At intervals the hand-claps died away as from weariness, only to begin again with tremendous vigor.

"Come," said Merry; "we must go out again."  
"Again?" whispered the girl.  
"Yes," Merry smiled; "this time the two of us alone."

"The two of us?"  
"The two of us—alone." There was a low, tender thrill in Merry's voice.

He took her hand and led her out upon the empty stage. The curtain was lifting slowly. From where she stood she saw Enoch standing in the wings. His face was flushed with excitement. The audience looked to the girl like a blur of color and human forms. The people swayed forward eagerly, and the applause became uproarious. A voice cried, "Speech! Speech!" It began to come insistently from the back of the house. The cry was taken up by men and women everywhere in the audience. Dorcas turned to Merry, Oswald was beckoning to him from the wings, but the actor shook his head.

"I could not make a speech tonight if my life depended on it," he whispered, and the curtain descended slowly.

A new cry came from the clamorous house. Some one was shouting for the author. Dorcas laid her hand upon Merry's arm.

"They want you," she cried.  
He smiled and shook his head.  
She heard Oswald urge Enoch to go in front of the curtain. The noise in front grew louder. The girl flew across the stage and put her hand upon her brother's shoulder.

"Enoch," she pleaded in a whisper, "take Merry with you and explain."  
Wentworth left her without a word. Oswald and the stage manager beckoned to him from the wings. She took a few flying steps as if to hold him back, then stopped. Merry had called her. She paused, staring into his eyes with terror.

"Enoch must not go out there alone," she protested in a low voice. "He must not do it. You should be with him. It is the last chance he has to make restitution. He will never, never do such a thing as this!"

"Listen," she heard Merry's whisper clearly through the din. "Dear, it does not matter. What does anything matter? The play is a success. You believe in me. I did it—for you. What do I care about the people out there? They are nothing to us."  
"Oh!" cried Dorcas, "oh, I will go and tell them myself. They must know!"

She darted toward the edge of the drop curtain, then she stopped. A silence had fallen, not only upon the house but behind the scenes. Stage hands who had been dragging properties about stood motionless. A shiver crept over the girl. She felt Merry lay his hand on hers with a steady clasp that seemed to quiet her. She could hear Enoch speaking. He had a strong, vibrant voice. Every one behind the scenes was listening and understanding except herself. His voice

grew blurred as faces in the audience had been. She turned to glance at Merry. Once a look of consuming hatred flitted across his face, and his lips grew pallid as gray ashes.

Dorcas pulled away from his clasping hand and ran to her dressing-room. She was choking with sobs. She felt her fingers tingle where Andrew had touched them, and there was a look of terror in her eyes.

Alice Volk sat waiting for her in the dressing-room. Little Julie jumped to her feet when Dorcas entered. The girl did not speak, but clasped the child to her bosom.

"Alice," she whispered, "help me to dress as soon as you can. And Julie, ask Dugald to get a carriage. I want to go home."

The woman kissed the girl's neck as she unbuttoned her gown. "It has been an awful strain. I know all about it—but Miss Dorcas, your future is made."

The child returned in a minute. "Mr. Wentworth has a carriage ordered. Dugald says will you go with him?"

"No," cried Dorcas; "tell Dugald I'll be ready in ten minutes. I am going home alone."

Merry stood waiting at the stage entrance when she went out. He had heard Julie deliver the message. "Good night, Miss Dorcas," he said. "Sleep well. Remember, everything is all right. I owe it to you, I owe you more than you understand. You made good tonight; the papers will tell you so in the morning. Good night. God bless you!"

"Good night." The girl shivered for a moment. It was intensely cold, and she drew a fur coat close to her chin. The cabman drove quickly, for the streets were emptied of vehicles. Along Broadway the theaters were dark.

Jason stood waiting to open the door when the girl ran up the steps. His dusky old face was one grin of delight. He had just returned from the theater and was growing impatient for the triumph of a homecoming.

"Missy," he cried, "yo' certly done us proud. My soul! I couldn't er' bleived de baby I toted yeahs en yeahs oga ud ebber a' lived to act ez fine ez yo' done. I used to play I was yo' black mule. I reckon y' don' 'member, honey, ridin' mule on ol' Uncle Jason's back, do yo'?" En dar yo' was, honey, a-workin' me up till I 'clar to goodness I mos' cried my ol' eyes out. When Marse Enoch come out en made dat speech folkses holered en got to der feet clappin' en bangin' sticks on de floor, I 'clar to de Lawd dar wa'n't a prouder ol' darky in New York den Uncle Jason."

Dorcas began to laugh and cry at once.

"I don' wonder yo's all done up, Missy. I's got de fines' supper ready fo' yo' yo' ebber see."

Dorcas was too unnerved to eat. She swallowed a cup of coffee and nibbled at the good things Jason had prepared. Then she went upstairs and began to undress. She brushed her hair, plaited it in two long braids, and slipped into a gray kimono, which folded itself about her in sheeny waves. The coffee had driven sleep away. She tossed a shawl about her shoulders and ran down through the silent house to the library. Wentworth often read there until long after midnight, and a coal fire was burning brightly.

She pushed an armchair close to the hearth and dropped into it wearily. She realized that she was very tired. She had not thought of nerves or body during the long weeks of rehearsal, with the incessant study, the multitude of detail, and the strange irregularity of life.

She began to live over again the last few hours and drew a long breath as she remembered the strangling terror

which laid hold of her before she made her first entrance. When she heard her cue she felt dumb, crippled, almost blinded for one moment. The smile on Zilla Paget's face, as she stepped from the wings, stung her into action. There was scorn in it, and cruelty smoothed over by a sweet, beguiling perfidy, which aroused in the girl a sudden hate that she had never felt in her life before. The hatred made her forget everything except her part.

The recollection of a bit of gossip had flashed to her memory: Zilla Paget had prophesied that her "Cordelia" would be a dead failure. Before the end of that second act the intense loathing and scorn which Merry had put into her lines became real. The woman understood. She shrank with a terror which was scarcely simulated during the girl's denunciation of a mother who had lost all claim upon a child for love or respect. Seven times the curtain rose and fell upon the two women. Once a volley of hisses was hurled at Zilla Paget, and she smiled in happy triumph. Oswald and Merry stood in the wings watching the act. The intensity which Dorcas threw into her part stirred both men strongly, as it did the audience. They had anticipated womanly sweetness and tenderness, but they had not gauged her emotion to the depths.

"I never dreamed she could do anything like this," said Oswald slowly. Merry did not speak. He had caught Zilla Paget's subtle smile. He knew there was more than acting in the scene.

While Dorcas sat gazing into the red caves of the coal fire she went over each situation in the play, step by step. Once she buried her face in the folds of her shawl; her cheeks were throbbing hotly. She felt Merry's kiss burn upon her lips. There had been no real kisses at rehearsal. The trust and love and gratitude with which the broken old convict turned to his child seemed real for a moment; she felt it when the actor touched her lips. Then she had fallen sobbing into his arms. She heard the audience sob with her. When she turned to glance aside through half-blinded eyes, she met the derisive smile of Zilla Paget, who stood in the wings. There was jealousy in her scorn. Her part was over for the night; she was dead to people in front. They had forgotten her, in spite of the applause she had won a half hour before. It hurt her vanity.

Dorcas came out of her reverie with a start. The door behind her closed, and Enoch walked in. His face was glowing with eager, impetuous triumph, his cheeks were flushed, and his eyes shone. He stooped suddenly to kiss his sister. She did not speak. It seemed years since she had seen him in such a mood.

"Dorry," he cried, "why did you rush home? Everybody was waiting to congratulate you. You lifted people off their feet; I swear, you took me off mine! The critics went wild over you and wanted to interview you. Tomorrow you'll be the talk of the town."

Everything that had blurred life seemed to vanish. It was wonderful that in a few hours the dreams of a lifetime should have come true. The girl laughed. Her heart had suddenly grown light.

"Enoch, I cannot make myself believe it."

He stood beside her with a proud smile upon his lips. "Dorry, you're a queer proposition. Any other girl would have had her head turned by the triumph tonight. Why, child, in three hours you climbed straight onto a pedestal that many women work half a lifetime to reach. Even then they often miss it."

Enoch bent and lifted her face till her eyes looked into his. "There were minutes," he said fondly, "when I actually questioned whether it was the little sister herself or not."

Dorcas had never seen her brother so strangely excited. She wondered for a moment if he had been drinking, but she saw it was the intoxication of sudden success, not of wine. He paced about the library, talking, laughing, building a thousand plans for the future. The girl watched him curiously. It was a strange transition from the sullen silence of months. The Enoch of light-hearted boyhood days had returned.

"You have a great future, Dorry." He stopped abruptly and his voice grew grave. "There is one thing I want to say. Don't," he hesitated and began to pace the room again, as if choosing his words carefully, "don't make a hero of Merry. He did well tonight. I have seen him set the whole town talking as he did in 'Esterbrook,' then topple back and go down, away down."

Dorcas rose from her chair and tossed the long braids of hair over her shoulders. Her eyes and cheeks were blazing. Wentworth's face grew inexorable. "Enoch," she cried, "how dare you say such a thing—to me?"

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean!" He saw her chin tremble. In spite of her anger she was on the verge of tears.

"When people were calling for the author, how did you dare to go out and take the applause? Have you no conscience, no honor left?"

"Merry got as much applause as one man could stand." He looked at her with dogged defiance.

"That makes you none the less—a thief."

Enoch did not answer. He pulled a cigar from his vest pocket, lit it, and began to smoke. He did not flinch before his sister's gaze.

"I should have been the happiest girl in the world tonight, almost foolishly happy." There was a pitiful quaver in her voice. "I feel now as if I were disgraced. Men have gone to

the penitentiary for stealing—less than you did."

Wentworth laughed scornfully. He tossed his cigar into the heart of the fire and turned upon Dorcas in sudden rage. "Stealing is not a nice word."

"It is nice enough for what has happened."

"Do you know," asked Wentworth with grave deliberation, "what did happen? Has Merry ever taken you into his confidence about this transaction?"

"Merry has never said one word against you—to me."

"Then reserve your judgment until he does. If you were to ask him, and if he played fair, he would tell you that it was a straight, honest bargain, a bargain bought and paid and signed for. Merry, with all his failings, is no welfcher."

"Bought and paid and signed for?" repeated the girl in slow bewilderment. "How could you buy and pay for something conceived by another man's brain and written by another man's hand?"

"That is my business, wholly," answered Enoch coldly. "It is an affair no woman would understand." He paused to light another cigar; then he turned to Dorcas with such authority as he had never used to her before. "I want to say one thing before you leave this room. It is about the question of the authorship of this play. It is not to be brought up again at any time between us. Do you understand?"

"I understand," Dorcas answered quietly. "I understand it is perfectly useless to appeal to a conscience which is dead."

Enoch shrugged his shoulders. "If that is the way you choose to put it, well and good. It seems to me a pity that you cannot drop this altogether and—forget. The future looks bright for both of us. We could easily go back to our old happy life if you would."

Dorcas moved toward the door. "I cannot forget, I promise you one thing, Enoch, I will never speak of it again."

"Thank you," said the man brusquely.

## CHAPTER XV.

Master Robin Tully.

When the curtain dropped on the last act at a Saturday matinee, Dorcas paused on the way to her dressing-room and glanced out at the stage door. Rain was lashing the street in furious, wild-blown torrents. The few people who braved the storm bent their heads against it and plodded on with determination. Nearby, a street organ was wheezing the "Miserere" in pitiful appeal to a heedless crowd at the theater door.

Dorcas returned to her dressing-room. It was a delightfully cozy retreat—Mr. Oswald had seen to that. Alice Volk sat repairing a gown.

"Where's Julie?" Dorcas demanded.

"She's asleep in our dressing-room." The girl seated herself in front of the mirror and began to remove her make-up. At intervals she glanced over a bunch of letters which lay on the dressing table.

"I used to wonder how it would feel to be famous. Of course I am not famous yet," said Dorcas quickly; "I am merely one of the people you hear of in passing. Still, I cannot grow accustomed to the queer experience of seeing my name blazoned on every house-top when I ride on the L, or finding my picture in papers and magazines. People stop on the street to stare at me; occasionally they whisper my name to some one who is with them. A girl I went to school with wrote the other day and asked for sixteen autographed portraits to give as favors at a party. She was a rich child, and at school she snubbed me unmercifully."

"It's the way of the world," the other woman answered. "A little of it came into my own life."

"It's a queer way," Dorcas continued, "and somehow already I feel blasé. The love and trust I have from Julie and you is something worth while."

Mrs. Volk rose to hang up a gown she had been repairing. As she passed Dorcas she bent and kissed her cheek. The girl looked up with a grateful smile.

"Suppose," Dorcas suggested, "we have a little spread right here. I can order a hot dinner sent in. It's a wretched night—What do you say?"

"If I were to speak for Julie, you know how she would enjoy it."

"Phone to the Beauclerc for a menu. It will be fun."

Half an hour later the dressing-room looked like a small banquet hall, for the property man had put everything he controlled at their disposal.

"Listen," said Dorcas to the waiter, who stood ready to take their order; "bring us consommé, boiled salmon, celery, cucumbers, and sliced tomatoes, potatoes, string beans, roast chicken, lettuce, almond meringue pie, coffee, and—is that all?" she asked of Julie who stood peering over her shoulder.

"Ice cream and cake," suggested the child.

"Of course," cried Dorcas; "it's so long ago since I was a little girl I had forgotten that ice cream and cake is much more important than soup."

Julie turned to gaze at the table. "Isn't it a pity, Miss Dorcas, there are only three of us, when there are four sides to a table."

Dorcas laughed. "I'll let you pick out a guest for us, Julie. Who shall it be?"

"Well, let me think." The child paused. "There's Dick—Dick would do anything for us. He's only a call boy, but he's nice. Then there's Robertson. He loaned us the chairs and table. Robertson's the nicest man in

the Gotham—almost. We could have had Brunton, but she's just going out. Then there's Mr. Merry. I believe," she added decisively, "I would rather have Mr. Merry than anybody."

Dorcas bent to rearrange a knife and fork.

"How do you know Mr. Merry is in?"

"He is," cried Julie. "He called me into his dressing-room when I passed and gave me these." She unclasped her hand to show three caramels squeezed into a sticky lump.

"Would your mother like to have him here?"

Julie did not wait for her mother to answer.

"Of course. Mother and I love him." "Well, you may be our messenger. Tell him he is invited to dine with three ladies. Dinner will be served in ten minutes."

Merry returned with Julie clasping his hand.

"This is unexpected! When the young lady tapped at my door, I was debating whether it was worth while going out to eat in the storm."

It was a gay little party. Dorcas ordered the waiter to set the dishes on the hot radiator, then she sent him away. Julie took her place delightedly.

"You're a clever waitress," said Merry.

"I used to plan to be a waitress when I was grown up," said the child, while she gathered plates neatly on a tray. "That was before I went on the stage. Playing the little 'Cordelia' is nicer than being a waitress."

"It means getting rich faster," said Merry gravely.

"Of course," agreed Julie. "Still, it must be delightful work to be a waitress. Before we found you, Mother and I used to go mornings to a little restaurant to get hot cakes, and I loved to watch the waitresses. Some of them were pretty. They had lovely hair and cunning little muslin aprons."

Merry laughed. "You were wise to decide on 'Cordelia.'"

"I know that. I would be quite happy to be 'Cordelia' with you, even if I didn't get any money for it. Of course, though, it's lovely to get my salary envelope once a week, and to have nice rooms at Mrs. Billerwell's, and all we want to eat, and clothes and shoes. I am growing rich—I have a bankbook!"

"Really?"

"I have four hundred dollars in the bank."

"Four hundred dollars!"

"When I have two thousand I am going to buy a little house out in the country. Mother and I picked it out one day when Miss Dorcas took us driving. We will keep chickens and a pony and a cow, and have cherry trees and radishes and pansies in the garden."

"I will come and board with you," said Merry, "if I don't have to milk the cow."

"Oh, Mother," cried the child impetuously, "I never thought of keeping boarders before!—only we can't charge Mr. Merry much."

"May I come too?" asked Dorcas.

"Oh, that would be lovely!" Julie laid down a chicken bone she held between her fingers to clap her greasy little hands joyfully. Merry was telling a ridiculous adventure which had once befallen him on a snowbound train when he was interrupted by a timid knock at the door.

Julie rose to open it. She turned to look back at her mother with a bewildered glance. A small, odd figure stood motionless in the doorway—a little boy with serious, brown eyes.

A Small, Odd Figure Stood in the Doorway.

His straight, yellow hair was cropped in a fringe about his eyes, then it waved upward. He wore a black suit with long, tight trousers. A round jacket, over a white shirt, reached to his waist. In his hand he held a hat like a small saucer.

"Hullo, David Copperfield, where did you come from?" cried Merry.

"That isn't my name." The child had a soft English accent. "I have heard of 'David Copperfield,' but I'm not 'David,' sir, my name is Robin Tully."

"Come in, Master Robin Tully," said Merry, "and have dinner with us."

The child stared at them steadily but did not move.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

# Illinois Brevities

Maple Park—Frank L. O'Brien has received his appointment as postmaster of this city.

Pana.—Marshall Hurley, a wealthy farmer, was found dead in bed in the Wilson hotel at Farmer City. He was sixty-two years old. He had not been ill.

Orangeville.—Mrs. Aaron Bowers lost the thumb of her right hand, when a horse to which she was feeding corn husks made a sudden grab for the food.

Quincy.—Miss Florence Halbach of this city, whose whereabouts in Germany had not been known for a month, has been located by the state department in Lippstadt, Germany.

Dixon.—Rev. A. B. Whitcombe has resigned as rector of St. Luke's Episcopal church of this city. Mr. Whitcombe is a candidate for the Democratic nomination for circuit clerk of Lee county.

Nana.—Linn H. Williamson, retired business man of Pana, Ill., died. He was sixty-four years old. His widow, one daughter and two sons survive. For more than 35 years Williamson has been in the live stock and commission business.

Bloomington.—The Central Illinois Baptist association opened its annual conference at Kilbourne. Rev. J. G. Little, Havana, and Rev. R. W. Johnson, Whitehall, were the principal speakers, discussing phases of church work.

Kankakee.—Fleming Moore, former prosecuting attorney at Milford, died in the Kankakee State Hospital for the Insane from the effects of a blow on the head said to have been struck by Daniel Rogerson, an epileptic patient from Cook county.

Cairo.—The steamer City of Peoria was burned here. The boat was owned by the Bluespot Towing company of Paducah. She recently had been used for towing purposes. She formerly was an excursion steamer on the Illinois and upper Mississippi rivers.

Rock Island.—A mother filed a petition for the adoption of her two children in the county court. Proceedings were instituted for adoption merely to give the children the name she now bears, she having been married a second time.

Springfield.—Announcement is made from the board of education that all teachers in the public schools will have to undergo a physical examination and be able to present a certificate of health before being allowed to take a position.

Bloomington.—Negotiations were concluded for an exhibition game at Clinton, October 5, between the St. Louis Americans and an independent team. The contest was arranged by Ivan Howard of the Browns, who is now at home.

Waterloo.—Mrs. Charles Schilling died here. She was one hundred and three years old. She was the oldest person in southern Illinois, having been born in Germany in 1811. Burial was in the Lutheran cemetery at Wartburg.

Fairfield.—Charged with the murder of his cousin, Ether Chaney, Logan Forth, sixteen years old, son of James I. Forth of Orchardville, was arrested here. Chaney was disturbing a "Holy Roller" meeting, it is said, and Forth remonstrated with him. Chaney was stabbed in the heart.

Bloomington.—Illinois conference of Mennonites adjourned at Carlock. President J. C. Hoffman delivered a report on the Bluffton college, telling of its aims and needs. Rev. M. P. Lantz, conference secretary, read the annual report showing statistics of the year's work in Illinois.

Duquoin.—The annual Sunday school institute of the Rehoboth Baptist association will be held in Mount Carmel Thursday. Among the ministers who will speak are Rev. G. S. England, Rev. G. L. Huggins, Rev. J. L. Corzine of Anna, Rev. J. M. Carlock and Rev. G. W. Danbury of Duquoin. There will be a debate between Rev. Harmon Edgar and Rev. D. K. Barber.

Champaign.—A delegation of 200 women of this county inspected the household science department of the University of Illinois, where the course is being fully explained. Similar delegations from many other counties of the state will follow within the next few months, to be climaxed by the two weeks course in household science to be given delegates from all over the state at the university in February.

Springfield.—Articles of corporation were issued by Secretary of State Harry Woods to the Joliet & Eastern Traction company of Chicago to build a railway through Cook and Will counties, passing through the cities of Joliet, New Lenox, Frankfort, Matteson, Chicago Heights and Chicago. The incorporators are: Edmund J. Clausen, Irving J. Solomon, David F. Rosenthal, Leo S. Kosetchek and Jacob Schwartz. The capital stock is \$1,000.

Chicago.—The Exchange Telegraph company's Tetuan, Morocco, correspondent says that Raisuli, the noted Moorish brigand and pretender to the throne of Morocco, has died in the country between Tetuan and Tangier. Raisuli gained fame in 1904 when he captured Mr. Perciaris, an American, near Tangier, and demanded a ransom of \$50,000. Theodore Roosevelt, then president of the United States, demanded the sultan of Morocco "Perciaris alive or Raisuli dead."

Bloomington.—John Quigg, wealthy banker and grain dealer of Minier, died, aged seventy-three.



A Look of Consuming Hatred Flitted Across His Face.



A Small, Odd Figure Stood in the Doorway.