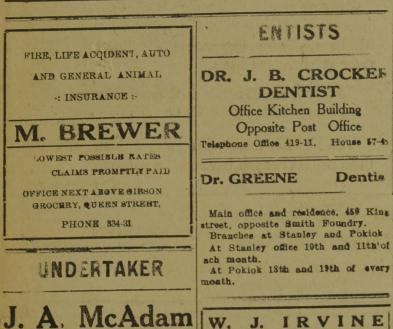


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usiness talk, Dorry-not exactly busi-ess cither. You may stay if you another near the brain produce of another near the brain produce of the brain produce vish and hear a play. I was just going to read to him. If he likes it he ill star Andrew Merry in it."

in the girl's eyes. She laid her coat and hat on the window seat and dropped into a low chair beside her brother. Once or twice she patted im affectionately on the shoulder. The Englishman watched her. There was vivid admiration in his eyes, but Dorcas did not see it. Her only thought as of the L'piness in store for Merry.

Wentworth laid the pages of manuscript on the table and cleared his throat. Oswald sat ready to bestow a business-like attention upon the reading. When Enoch lifted the first page his visitor asked: "May I know who wrote the play?"

"I did," all were d Wentworth quietly. "Ah!" said the Englishman. He noticed the startled look on Dorcas' face. It escaped her brother, who sat turned half way from her.

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Wentworth began to read. He was an excellent reader; his enunciation was slow and distinct. The story quickly unfolded itself in strong, vivid language. Grant Oswald, who was an ardent student of dramatic literature. tell immediately under its spell and istened with intent quiet.

The minds of both men were so vitally concentrated upon the drama that they were scarcely conscious of a movement when Dorcas crept from her low chair to the window seat. She lay back against a pillow, gathered the folds of a silky portiere around her, and stared down at the square. She heard her brother's voice in fragments. Those fragments were always the words of the girl, Cordelia, or of the father fallen to pitiful estate. She clasped her hands together with such a grip that it numbed her fingers. A strange pain and a horrible suspicion were seeping through her body and burning in her veins. Outwardly she was inert.

Suddenly she was awake again, wide awake, tingling with life and emotion, listening to her brother's vibrant voice. The day of release had come for John Esterbrook. He stood with halting, tremulous steps, fearful at the sight of the world he had left twenty years before, hiding his eyes from its tumult. Then Cordelia ran to meet nim-young, hopeful, loving and eager Dorcas forgot the horror and doub which had swept her down for a mo ment, she was thinking of nothing bu the play. It was greater, more human than she had dreamed of that day when Andrew and she walked hom over the beach at Juniper Point. He eyes grew wet with pity, then ch smilled happily as life ceased to be

This is the day of the optimist. The problem for Cordelia. Love had come

"Good-by," said the Englishma holding out his band cordi.

"Good-by." murmured Wentword "Ch!" A glow of anticipation shone the million control of the window. A carriag stood waiting in front of the house He watched Oswald step into it an drive away.

Suddenly he recollected that Dorca had not spoken a single word of prais or congratulation on the play. was always enthusiastic and happy over every triumph that came to him She must have though. well of the play. She had a full appreciation o Merry's talents and she had seemed to like him while they v . e together during the summer. He paused to pull bimsel? together mentally, they he called her. She came slowly into the room, which had grown dark.

"Dorry," said Wentworth slowly, "do you know you have not said yet that you like-my play?" "Your r"

"Why, Dorry ?"

The girl spoke in an unsteady voice. 'I don't believe, Enoch, that Andrew Merry told you of a long talk we had at Juniper Point. You remember you left me along with him when you were called to Boston. We sat on the rocks one afternoon and he told me his plot for this play-he had been thinking it out for years and years. Why," the girl shook her head impatiently, "why. Enoch, he had labored on it so long that some of the speeches were writ ten, in his mind. Sometimes he put the story into the very words you read!"

During a few minutes Enoch Wentworth fought the battle of his life. It was the struggle between good and evil, which every human being harbors to a greater or lesser degree, in one soul, in one body. Wentworth sighed. The battle had passed and evil had won. It was prepared to carry him through the most dangerous moment. With it came fresh valor, and not only the power to sin further, but a mysterious weakening of the moral tiesues which made it possible for him to sin coolly and remorse-lessly. He turned on the light and with cool composure faced his sister. He met her gray eyes without a quiver. They asked a question which could not be evaded. "I hate to tell you, Dorcas," there

was a tone of reluctance in Wentworth's voice, "but Merry is down again, down in the gutter." The girl jumped to her feet. "J

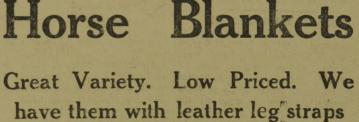
don't believe it!" she cried. "Pesides, if he were, what has that to do with his play?

Enoch did not answer. Instead he asked a question. "Doreas, do you care for-do you love-Andrew Merry?' A flush blazed into the girl's face

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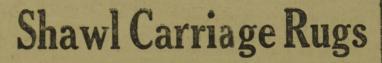
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what was left him of a future.

Enoch laid the manuscript aside The Englishman, hearty in his con-gratulations and enthusiastic, was urging the earliest possible produc He offered unlimited money P. tion. insisted that the best company N+ York could produce should be engage. The spell of the story was still upo Dorcas. She passed out, shaking has astily with Oswald.

"Dorry," oried her brother. She did not answer.

"The play stirred her intencely said Oswaid. He had noticed a trad of tears on her checks. "Was this th first time she heard it read?"

"Yes, I had never even toka ber of ? She has been away while-it was wri ten.'

"Is your sister an actress?" "No-she wants to go upon the stage."

"Let her have her way," advised the Englishman. "Her every action show hat she possesses dramatic talent." "It isn't my idea of her future."

"Stage life is exactly what con-chooses the make of it. Curiously nough. I bave a conviction she could

Wentwarth brushed his hand across is forehest and stated at the scale ered sheets of manuscript on the

"Get Merry here as soon as possible. want a consultation with both o u," suggested Oswald while he drew his gloves. "It is now only a ma of time and a theater. If I may a now, con/t choose anyone on this

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In spite of the telltale color her brother believed her.

"Yes, I care for Andrew Merryvery much. i do not love him." Enoch gazed at her wistfully. He

knew, as she did not, how easy it is to cross the bridge from mere friendship to love

"Why did you ask me that?" "I wanted to find out how much it would hurt if I told you the truth. Merry is not worth your love, he is not even worth your friendship." "It is not 'rue!" There was indignant protest in the woman's voice. know better, so do you. Only this does not explain about his play, for it is his play.

"You remember he left Juniper Point suddonly?" ' "Yes." She raised her head with

an eager gesture. "He went away to write this play." She pointed to the manuscript which lay on the tab "Yes," said Enoch slowly. "He ba gan bravely enough. Then-he went under, as he had done so many times in his life.'

What was it?" cried the girl. "Drink or gambling?"

Enoch lay, back in his choir. For began to marvel at how easily be could lie, because a He had never com I readily to him before.

"Drink and gambling-and every thing." Her brother shrugged his shoulders as if in disgust. "Of course be stopped writing. A man could not write in his condition. He sent fo me. I stayed by him night and day and-wrote. You see-I wrote it He lifted a written sheet from the toose pile of manuscript.

"Perhaps-but it is not your play." Dorcas shook her head with obstinate incredulity.

"I told him so. I suggested we make it a collaborated play. "It is not even a collaborated play, Enoch. Why, every situation, the plot, even the very words, are his."

"He wants me to father it." "He must have changed since he said good-by to me. He was on fire

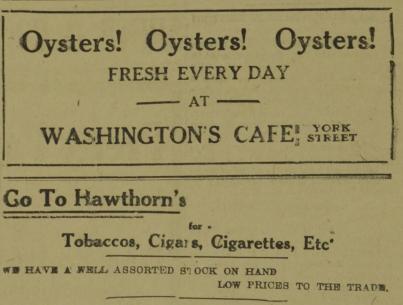
then with hope and ambition." "He has changed," acceded Enoch

gravely. It was a relief to make one truthful statement.

"Is he to play 'John Esterbrook when it is produced?"

(To Be Continued.)

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