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The Lapse of Enoch Wentworth

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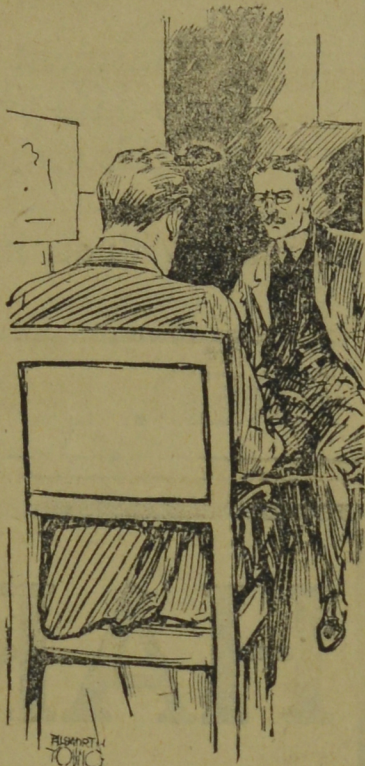
Author of "The Woman
from Wolverton"

Illustrations by Ellsworth Young

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Enoch gave him a savage look. It was a look which puzzled Oswald all day long. "I will think of that when I get good and ready. The 'House of Esterbrook' is good for one season more—probably for two." Then he flung out of the office and slammed the door behind him.

Oswald sat in silence for a few minutes. His face was full of anxious perplexity. He rose, put on his hat and overcoat, and went out. In the lobby he met Zilla Paget. She turned eagerly as if to speak to him. His



Wentworth's Voice Was Fierce With Irritation.

lifted his hat with grave courtesy and walked past her. She followed to the door and watched him while he crossed the street.

Her face flamed scarlet and she bit her lips, then she laughed contemptuously and hurried through the dark theater to the stage. The place was deserted. She went straight to the letter-rack. In the shelf marked P she found several letters for herself. She was turning away when her eyes fell upon an envelope in the lower corner of the rack. She picked it out and stood for a moment staring at it blankly, then she gasped. The letter was not for her. It was addressed in coarse, shaky writing, "Mrs. Alice V. Bourne, G. Thar Theater, New York." It bore the Madison Square postmark. The words were furtively searching the gloomy theater in all directions. She did not hear a sound; nobody was in sight. She slipped the letter into her muff and ran upstairs.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Green Turquoises.

"Then," continued Dorcas, "Guleesh lifted the lady to the horse's back and leaped up before her. She put her arms about his waist and clung to him tightly. 'Rise, horse, rise,' he cried. The horse and all the hundreds of horses behind him spread out their wings and rose in the air. They went flying swiftly across the sea."

"Miss Dorcas," interrupted Robin incredulously, "I didn't know that horses could fly. I thought they trotted on the streets like this." The boy slipped down from his chair and kicked with his heels upon the floor.

"Guleesh's horse had wings—all fairy horses have wings," Dorcas laughed.

"Did you ever see a fairy horse?" "I'm afraid I never did."

"Then how do you know that it's true?"

"Fairy stories tell us so."

"Oh," the child's brown eyes turned to her eagerly. They were interrupted by a knock at the library door. Jason entered.

"I reckon yo'se awful busy dis afternoon, Missy?"

"Not if there is anything I can do for you, Jason."

"Emiline's downstairs. You know who Emiline is?" He paused and glanced at Robin.

Dorcas nodded.

"It 't wain't be inconveniently she'd like to see yo'."

"Why does she want to see me, Jason?"

"I can't tell, Missy. She's des kep' apleadin' en apleadin' to yo' to see her, so I tol' her, I'd ask yo'."

"I'll see her. And, Robin, suppose you go with Jason for a little while. He keeps a doughnut jar in the pantry. Make Jason tell you a story. Flying horses are nothing to the wonderful things he has seen."

Emiline entered timidly and stood waiting until Dorcas pointed to a chair. She was a neat-looking yellow girl, but there was a worried look on her good-natured face.

"Anything wrong, Emiline?" asked Dorcas.

"Wrong! Eberyting's wrong, Miss Wentworth. I've lef' Miss Paget fo' good en all. Lawd, what a whack she hit me when I tol' her somethings I thought!"

"She struck you?" Dorcas stared at the girl in astonishment.

"Deed, Miss Wentworth, she struck me hard, straight 'cross my mouf wid her han'. I could take de law to her, I reckon, en git damages, but I ain't a-goin' to. I'm scared to death ob havin' anything to do wid her." The girl's face seemed to whiten, and she clasped her hands in an agony of terror. "I wouldn't wuk fo' her nohow—I'd rather go on de streets. Miss Wentworth, her tuquoises am a-turnin' green!"

"What do you mean?"

Emiline spoke in a frightened whisper.

"Her tuquoises am a-turnin' green I 'clar fo' Gawd, dey is!"

Dorcas laughed. The doctor's statement was so irrelevant it was almost funny.

"Lawdy, Miss Wentworth, don't go to laughin', I reckon yo' don't know what an awful ting dat is to happen. I nebbber heard tell ob hit but once. Hit don't happen exceptin' when a woman's ez wicked ez de ol' serpent herself!"

"Emiline, what on earth are you talking about?"

"My granny once worked fo' a wicked lady—was back in slave days. I member hearin' her tell 'bout it when I was a little gal. Her Misses was an army lady, rich en beautiful ez could be, but she done hated her husband en der was anoder man she was sho' sot arter. Her husband, de fine ol' army man, he died sudden one night. She had er necklace on, de bluest tuquoises yo' ebbber see, en de next day dey turned green. Den dey found out she'd poisoned him. Dey would have hung her, but she drowned herself. De tuquoises was on her neck when dey pulled her out ob de ribber—dey was green as grass."

Dorcas shivered. "Emiline, what has this to do with Miss Paget?"

The girl's eyes grew round with terror.

"She had er necklace ob de swellest tuquoises gib her a month ago by a gemman. She's always gittin' presents fr'm gemmen. Dey was ez pale blue ez de sky when she got dem. She wears dem all de time, day and night. You see dem on her when she was actin'?"

Dorcas nodded.

"She nebbber takes dem off. One day I tol' her dey wa'n't near ez blue ez dey used to be. She took dem to a jeweler man en hed dem cleaned. Hit didn't do dem a mite ob good. Dis

mornin'," Emiline paused as in terror of repeating it, "dis mornin', Miss Wentworth, ez sho' ez Gawd made me, dem tuquoises was turned green!"

Dorcas sat staring at her.

"I screamed when I sot my eyes on dem." The girl's teeth chattered. "She asked what was de matter, en I tol' her de story ob de ol' Colonel's Misses. Dat's when she whaled me 'cross de mouf."

"But," queried Dorcas with a puzzled frown, "what does it all mean?"

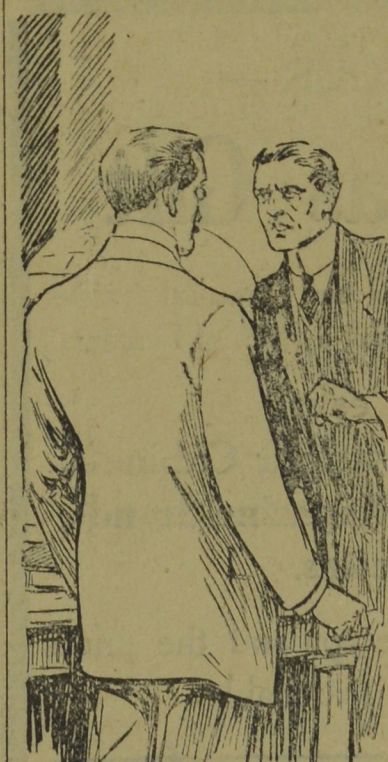
"Lawdy, dem tuquoises would have stayed sky-blue en 'o', Miss Wentworth, er on any lady dat wa'n't doin' all dem kind ob wicked tings."

"Rubbish!"

"I swar to de Lawd hit's true," cried Emiline appealingly. "I heard my granny tell hit many time."

Dorcas laughed. Although the story was absurd, her skin had grown chilly while Emiline talked.

"I'll tell yo'." The girl's voice grew intense. "Don' yo' member she had dem tuquoises on las' night when yo' come in wid de little blind boy? Lawd, I could er choked her dead wid my own han's! She was de ol' debil his



"That Actor Won't Play It."

self, en der's a judgment a-comin' on her. When yo' was gone, de tings she done say was curdin' to de blood!"

"Miss Paget is not a good woman I knew, but—"

(To Be Continued.)

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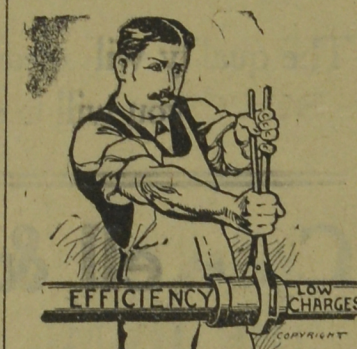
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