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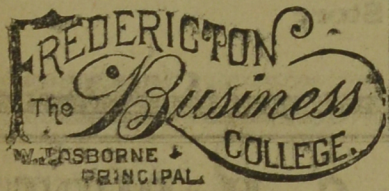
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The Lapse of Enoch Wentworth

By

ISABEL GORDON CURTIS

Author of "The Woman
from Wolverton"

Illustrations by Ellsworth Young

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"Jason," she cried impatiently, "who
is Mr. Wentworth's livery man?"

"Costello, miss."

"Stay here a minute," she said as
she paused for central's answer. Then
she stooped to the 'phone.

"Send a cab, please, to 26 Waverly
place, immediately."

She turned again to the old servant.

"Jason," she asked, "you have wait-
ed on Mr. Merry when Enoch brought
him here—sick—haven't you?"

"Deed I has, missy. Many's de
time Marse Enoch en I's done all sorts
ob waitin' on him, when he's done
been sick, puffedly misable, missy.

Yo'-all don't know how misable."

"Can you help tonight? I may bring
Mr. Merry back with me—miserable."

"Deed I can," cried the old man
with eager sympathy. "Yo' des leet
him to me. Lawdy! I tink ez much
ob Marse Andrew mos' as I do of
yo'-all. He's been mighty good to me."

"Thank you," said Dorcas gratefully.

"I am not sure whether he will come,
but in case he does, be ready for him.
He may want a hot bath and supper.
Have a cheerful fire; it is bitterly cold
outdoors."

She turned and ran downstairs
when she heard the rattle of wheels
on the street below.

"Don't yo' want me to go wid yo'
missy?" suggested Jason. "Hit's pow-
erful late fo' a lady to be goin' round
New York alone."

"No; I would rather have you here
waiting for our return."

"Tenth and Broadway," she directed,
as the cabman shut the door. He
pulled up at her signal opposite the
bakery. The place was closed, the
bread line had dispersed, and the
quiet gray of early morning had be-
gun to creep over the street. Occa-
sionally a cab dashed past or a trolley
went on its clamorous way, but there
were few stragglers to be seen. Here
and there a man on foot walked
briskly, as if a shelter waited him
somewhere. On the sidewalk stood a
tall policeman. Dorcas studied his
face for a moment, then she beckoned
him. He came instantly to the cab
window.

"Is this your beat every night?"

"Every night this week," said the
man in blue.

"The men in the bread line have
dispersed. Do you know where they
go?"

"Where they go, lady?" The police-
man smiled. "I couldn't tell you no
more where they go than if they were
rabbits scurrying to their holes."

Dorcas shivered. "Are they abso-
lutely homeless—on such a night as
this?"

"A good share of them are." The
man spoke with little interest. The
misery in the streets of New York was
an old story to him.

"Do the same men come to the line
night after night?"

"A man has to be mighty hungry
when he stands an hour or two wait-
ing for a hunk of bread. If his luck
turns he drops out. Still, I've seen
the same faces there every night for a
month. Are you a settlement lady?"
he asked respectfully.

"No." The girl's face flushed. "I
thought tonight when we were passing
that I saw some one in the bread line
I knew, somebody we can't find."

"That happens many a time."

"Do you think," Dorcas asked ca-
pably, "there would be any chance of
his being here tomorrow night?"

"The likeliest chance in the world.
If a man's wolfish with hunger—and
you'd think some of them were wolfish
the way they eat—there's a heap of
comfort in even a mouthful of bread
and a cup of coffee."

"If I should come tomorrow night—"

"I'll give you any help you want,"
said the officer kindly, as Dorcas hesi-
tated.

"I don't believe I'll want help. The
only thing is—I wish to do it as quiet-
ly as possible. It is altogether a
family affair."

"I understand. You'll find me here."

"Thank you. Good night," said Dor-
cas gratefully.

"I didn't bring Mr. Merry tonight,
Jason," she said, when the old servant
opened the door for her; "but tomor-
row night I think he will come."

The following day seemed to Dor-
cas the longest she had ever lived
through. The weather was crisp and
cold. She went for a long walk, tread-
ing for the first time a tangle of
streets in the vicinity of the docks. It
was a part of the city which belongs
to the very poor. She searched every-
where for one figure. Poverty, famine,
and hopelessness seemed to create a
family resemblance among men, wom-
en, and children. Still—she found
nowhere the man for whom she looked.
When she reached home at noon she
felt tired physically and mentally.
She had spent an almost sleepless
night. As she dropped off in a
drowse she dreamed of finding Merry.

or bringing him back to the world
where he belonged, of setting his face
towards fame, happiness, and an hon-
orable life.

Not a thought of love—the love of
a woman for a man—stirred in her
heart. She had forgotten her brother's
question. There was something
singularly childlike about Merry. With
his magnetism was blended a strange
dash of childish dependence which a
few men never lose. It had appealed
to the maternal instinct in Dorcas the
first time they met.

From morning till night she waited
anxiously for news from her brother,
but none came. She realized that he
was on the wrong clue, but he had
left no address, and Dorcas could
merely wait. After her walk she lay
down to rest on the library couch. A
few minutes later she was sleeping
peacefully as a child. When Jason
came in he closed the shutters noise-
lessly and covered her with an afghan.
The city lights were ablaze when she
woke. She waited impatiently for the
hours to pass. The policeman had
told her it was of no use to come to
his corner until eleven or later; it was
past midnight when the bread was dis-
persed. The clock struck eleven when
a carriage Dorcas had ordered stopped
at the door. Jason hovered anxiously
about her.

"You mus' put on yo' big fur coat,
missy, please." He was trying con-
stantly to manage her as he had done
when she was a little girl.

"Jason, I don't need it; I'm perfectly
warm."

"Yo' do, sure ez yo' breathin',
missy," he pleaded anxiously. "Hit's
grown bitter col' fo' November. Yo'-all
'll freeze ef yo' don't."

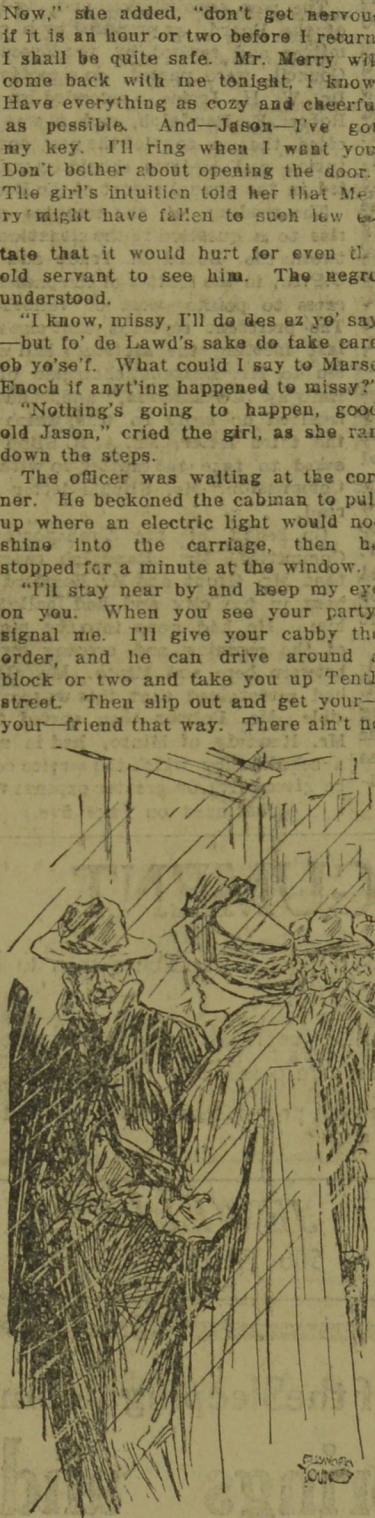
"All right," laughed the girl, and
she slipped her arms into the wide
sleeves. "Just to please you, Jason—
remember that—not because I'm cold.
Now," she added, "don't get nervous
if it is an hour or two before I return.
I shall be quite safe. Mr. Merry will
come back with me tonight. I know.
Have everything as cozy and cheerful
as possible. And—Jason—I've got
my key. I'll ring when I want you.
Don't bother about opening the door."
The girl's intuition told her that Mer-
ry might have fallen to such low es-
tate that it would hurt for even the
old servant to see him. The negro
understood.

"I know, missy. I'll do des ez yo' say
—but fo' de Lawd's sake do take care
ob yo'self. What could I say to Marse
Enoch if anyting happened to missy?"

"Nothing's going to happen, good
old Jason," cried the girl, as she ran
down the steps.

The officer was waiting at the cor-
ner. He beckoned the cabman to pull
up where an electric light would not
shine into the carriage, then he
stopped for a minute at the window.

"I'll stay near by and keep my eye
on you. When you see your party,
signal me. I'll give your cabby the
order, and he can drive around a
block or two and take you up Tenth
street. Then slip out and get your—
your—friend that way. There ain't no



He Turned and Stared at Her.

chance of him seeing you come up be-
hind, as he would if you crossed the
street."

"Has the bread line begun to gather
yet?" she asked.

"Hardly, ma'am. There's a few
stragglers hangin' round. Them that
come first get the first chance, of
course, only it's a nasty night to wait
outdoors with an empty stomach."

Dorcas glanced at the handful of
men cowering in a shadowed corner.
A sudden fear seized her, the feminine
terror of midnight streets.

"You don't imagine," she whispered,
"that I shall have any trouble? It is
possible I am making a mistake in the
man. Are there dangerous characters
among them?"

"Not exactly dangerous," said the
officer slowly. "If they're dangerous
it's from hunger. It ain't once a year
you find a crook in the bread line. It's
too easy to spot them, waiting as they
do for an hour or two in that light."

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