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The LAPSE of ENOCH WENTWORTH

By ISABEL GORDON CURTIS

Author of "The Woman from Wolvertons"

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"This brought Mr. Merry down to
lay with us till we go home," Went-
worth announced.

"I'm delighted," cried Dorcas cor-
dially.

Next morning after breakfast Enoch
and his sister rowed out to deep water
with their fishing outfit. Merry still
was in bed; he was tired, he pleaded,
and could not immediately acquire the
habit of early rising.

"What do you think of Andrew?"
asked Wentworth abruptly. He lifted
his head after the task of baiting a
hook and looked into his sister's face.

"I think he ought to be waked up."

"To join our fishing trip?"

"I mean waked in his ambitions. He
seems to me like a man who has no
rest in sight. He needs something to
work for. He spoke last night of one
ambition he has—"

"Sort of moonlight confidences?"

queried her brother.

"No—not that. He's determined to
jump straight into a part that will
bring the heart out of his listeners."

"That's foolish. The public wants
just so much versatility. You can't
kill off a beloved comedian to resur-
rect a new emotional actor, no matter
how good he may be. People won't
stand for it."

"He isn't satisfied." The girl pulled
up her line and tossed away a morsel
of nibbled bait, covering the hook
with a fresh clam.

"Some greedy fish had a square
meal off your bait and never got the
hook in his gullet. He'll come back
for more, then get caught. It's the
same way with human beings."

"Philosopher!" laughed Dorcas. She
dropped her line again into deep water
and waited for her brother's predic-
tion to come true.

Merry had breakfasted before their
return. He sat upon the vine-grown
plaza, gazing at the sparkle of the
ocean, when the two agile figures
stepped across his vision.

"Well, Sir Lazy, so you're up!" cried
the girl. "You should have been with
us to find an appetite. See our fish!
Here's a dinner for you!"

"I'm going to turn over a new leaf,"
said Merry. His eyes were fixed on
the girl's glowing face, and for a mo-
ment he shared her intense enjoyment
of life.

"Will you turn it over tomorrow
morning at sunrise?" she demanded.

"Even so soon, most gracious lady."

He swept her a stage bow, his soft hat
trailing the ground as if it had been a
cavalier's cap loaded with plumes.

Matching his grace, the girl turned
to him, laughing, with the mock
dignity of a queen.

"I command that at early dawn,
when the tide goes out, ye hie three to
yon flats and dig clams for our savory
meal."

"I shall obey, most royal highness,"
answered Merry solemnly.

"I believe he is waking up," thought
Dorcas as she ran upstairs to dress for
the noon dinner. "If he does that, I'll
believe he has some backbone."

When Dorcas and her brother came
down next morning for breakfast,
Merry had disappeared.

"I'm glad I'm not your victim," said
Wentworth, with a note of sympathy
in his voice.

"Enoch," the girl turned to him
gravely, "I told you he needed waking
up, and this is a good start. It won't
hurt him a bit."

"Poor Merry! What a sight!"

They watched him come tramping
over the beach. He wore Farmer
Hutchins' overalls rolled up to his
knees and a flapping cow-breakfast
hat. He carried a clam fork and occa-
sionally shifted a heavy basket of
clams from one arm to the other.

CHAPTER III.

Cassiopea's Chair.

Dorcas Wentworth stopped on the
crest of a cliff and looked down. A
few feet below her, on a ledge like a
wide shelf, Merry lay watching the
waves as they broke against the
jagged walls of a narrow cove.

"Day-dreaming, Mr. Merry?" cried
the girl.

He sprang to his feet. "Why, I
never heard you. Do you wear velvet
shoes? Let me help you down." He
began to climb the uneven steps.

"The idea of helping me down, after
I have made my way alone over these
chasms!" She pointed to the wall be-
hind her. Then resting one hand on
his shoulder, she leaped past him
lightly.

"What a heavenly retreat!"

"Yes," answered Merry, dreamily. "I
found it several days ago. I've called
it Cassiopea's Chair."

"Who was Cassiopea?"

"I've forgotten. Some satellite crea-
ture, I believe. Her home has a restful
sound, and this place is restful and
lonely."

The girl laughed. "Were you day-
dreaming?"

"I suppose so. I was watching these
waves. Most of them break without a
splash; then once in a while, away out
as far as your eye can reach, you see
one roll up, gathering force from you,
can't imagine where, and it comes on

tempestuously through a calm sea, to
crash against the cliffs. Sometimes it
throws its spray up here." He pointed
to a wet line on the rock just below
them. "Then again, one which prom-
ises to be a ripper amounts to nothing
when it breaks."

"Yes it is fascinating," she agreed.
"Yesterday I spent an hour watching
them. It makes me think of people."

"What people?" he demanded, not
understanding.

"All sorts. People who never do
anything, who saunter through life and
are the failures, and the few who live
after their work is done."

"Merry," in her intensity the girl
addressed him as her brother did,
"they make me think of you. You
could make a towering big wave of
your life. You don't!"

The man turned quickly and looked
into her eyes with flushed face. He
did not speak.

"I wish—oh, I do wish"—Dorcas'
voice was like that of an ardent child.
"I wish I could rouse you to make the
best of yourself. There is so much
you could do!"

"Do you really think so?"

"No, I don't think it, I know it. You
are two people; one is lazy and indif-
ferent, with just ambition enough to
do the work you have to do. You
can't help doing it well—you could not
do it badly. Then there is the other—
a man with vivid imagination, feeling,
emotion, and ability; but it is so hard
to wake him up!"

Merry jumped to his feet and stared
down into the girl's face. "How did
you learn this—about me? Has
Enoch laid my soul bare to you?"

"Enoch told me something of your
career, that was all. I know you bet-
ter than he does."

Andrew pulled the soft hat over his
eyes and sprawled out on the rock
ledge.

Dorcas began with a nervous laugh.
"It sounds like—presumption, I know
so little of the world, only I have been
studying you—"

"Am I worth the trouble?" he inter-
rupted.

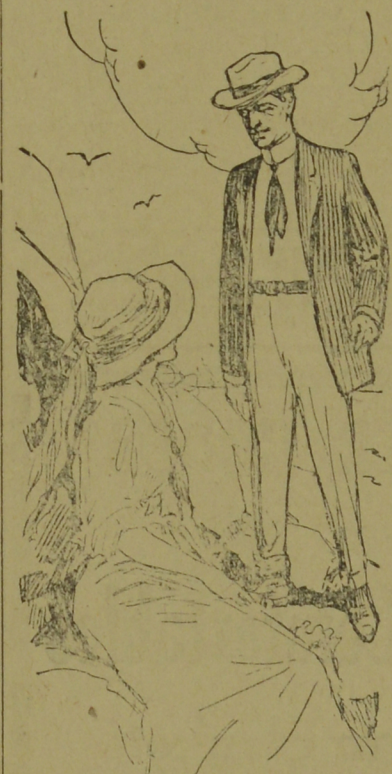
"Worth the trouble! I don't believe
you know yourself yet. You have a
wonderful imagination and such knowl-
edge of human nature. You could write
a great play, many of them possibly.
You know men and women. You have
laid bare the souls of some of them
when you talked with me. After you
bring a being into life, think how you
could make him live again on the
stage!"

Dorcas jumped to her feet. "And-
rew Merry, go to work! Show them
what you can do, if for nothing else,
than to please me and prove that I
haven't made a mistake."

"Miss Dorcas, sit down."

The girl looked at her companion
curiously.

"Let me shake hands on a bargain,"
he laughed. "That's a foolish little
ceremony I used to go through with



Merry Stared Down into the Girl's
Face.

mother when I was a boy. If I prom-
ised faithfully I would do anything, I
shook hands on it."

Dorcas held out her hand cordially.

Her clasp was magnetic.

"Sit down again and listen," he
begged. "For years and years and
years I've had a play crystallizing in
my mind. It's all blocked out. Let me
tell you about it."

(To Be Continued.)

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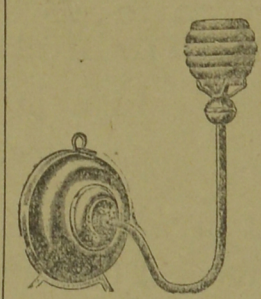
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