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The Lapse of Enoch Wentworth

ISABEL GORDON CURTIS

Author of "The Woman
from Wolverton"

Illustrations by Ellsworth Young

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"No other actor can," Merry has the
entire conception of it now."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know."

"I thought you promised Mr. Oswald
to have him here and get things started
for an early production?"

"I did. I am hoping to find Merry
at one of his haunts. He must be
found and put on his feet. There's a
tremendous lot at stake, Dorcas," he
turned to her appealingly, "won't you
help me?"

"I'll help you," Dorcas spoke slowly.

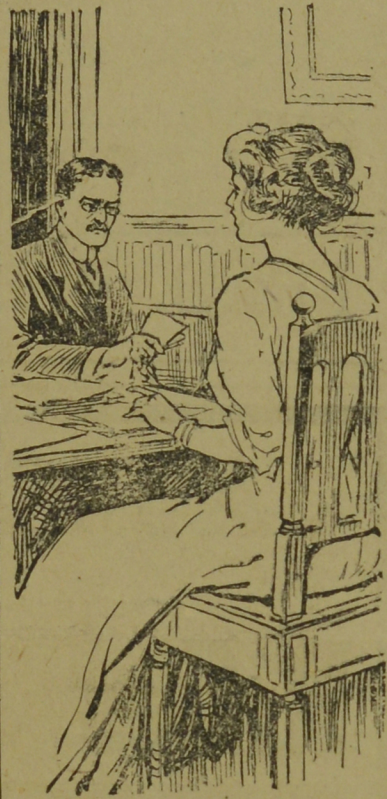
"If you can assure me of one thing."

"What?"

"That there is no wrong to be done."

"There is no wrong to be done,"

Merry will have the opportunity of



"Then He Must Be Found!"

his life, if he can only be made to
see it that way."

"And there is no wrong to be right-
ed?"

"There is no wrong to be righted."

"Then he must be found. When he
is found," the girl spoke decisively,

"he must appear before the world
as the author of his play."

"He won't do it," answered Went-
worth.

He rose, put on his hat, and went
out. Dorcas heard the front door slam
behind him, then she laid her face on
the arm of the sofa and burst into
tears.

CHAPTER VII.

Merry Disappears.

Suddenly, as if the earth had swal-
lowed him, Merry disappeared. A
week passed. Grant Oswald, in a
fever of enthusiasm, had begun prepa-
rations for a Broadway production.
He turned a vast amount of responsi-
bility over to Wentworth, who should-
ered it thankfully. It kept at arm's
length the possibility of dwelling
much with his own thoughts; the
were not cheerful company, and he
was racked by constant anxiety about
Merry. There was not a single mo-
ment to spare when he could go into
the highways and byways of a great
city to search, as he had searched be-
fore when the man was his friend.
He could not delegate the task to
another. He had prepared a tale for
the public of Merry's whereabouts.
Oswald believed the actor was study-
ing his part and stood ready to appear
at a moment's notice. Enoch went
ahead with the tremendous load of de-
tail that fell upon him, toiling day and
night, while his mind alternated be-
tween terror and hope.

Every day the man was acquiring
traits new to his nature. When a
strange accident had tossed before
him the possibility of satisfying his
deepest ambition, conscience entreat-
ed loudly against the theft of another
man's life-work. Every noble instinct
in Enoch made its appeal; his honesty,
his generosity, an innate demand for
fair play, the love of his sister and
friend, all cried aloud to him dur-
ing the lonely hours of the night.
There had been moments when he
would have gladly retraced his steps,
but the die had been cast. He was
like a racer who, by some treacherous
ruse, had pushed aside an opponent
and was close to the goal. The intox-
ication of applause was beginning to
sound in his ears and the future held
untold possibilities. It was too late
to turn back; it would mean the down-
fall of great ambitions and bitter
shame—it might even mean crime. It
seemed easier to take the chances.

Occasionally Andrew's dogged face
flashed back to his memory when he
cried, "I will see what the law can
do to protect a man from theft." Enoch
felt his face blanch at the thought of it.
Many a man had gone down and out
for a crime less knavish than this. But
he knew Andrew Merry well, and he trusted
to one trait which was predominant in the
man—his queer, exaggerated idea of honor.

Day by day his conscience quieted
down, self-confidence took the place of
wavering, and the fear of exposure
seemed to recede. At last he could
look the situation in the face without
flinching. The task of putting on a
theatrical production began to absorb
him completely. He had always
longed for such a chance; he had been
storing away ideas he could now uti-
lize, besides he knew New York thor-
oughly, and he had observed for years
the system of producing a play. Os-
wald looked on with appreciation as
Enoch put his plans into shape. He
knew how uncommon was the combi-
nation of such talents in the same
man—the ability to write a virile play,
then to stage it with practical skill
and artistic feeling and originality. A
remarkably strong company was en-
gaged. Oswald insisted on filling even
the smallest parts with people far
above the level of subordinate actors.
The salary list grew to stupendous
figures. One morning Wentworth re-
monstrated against paying one hun-
dred dollars a week to an actor who
was to play the janitor.

"Breen is a far bigger man than you
need," he objected. "He has played
leads to many of the biggest stars.
We need a mere bit of character work
in this—he isn't on the stage half an
hour. I can get a first-rate man for
half that price."

"Breen can make the janitor so true
to life that the audience will regret
seeing him for only half an hour," Os-
wald rejoined. "That's the test of
quality. When I pay a hundred dol-
lars I want a hundred-dollar man."

Before the middle of October all the
parts were in rehearsal except two.
An Englishwoman, Zilla Paget, was
crossing the Atlantic to play "Mrs. En-
terbrook." Oswald refused obstinate-
ly to give "Cordelia" to any actress that
Wentworth suggested.

"We must close with somebody
mighty quick," said Enoch, when Os-
wald had turned down Katherine
Dean.

"Miss Dean is not even to be
thought of," answered the Englishman
decisively. "She's beautiful, but
where's her feeling, her intelligence?
I eat watching her face—the light fell
strong upon her while you talked.
There's absolutely nothing to her but
beauty."

"She can act," insisted Wentworth.
"I've seen her act. It isn't acting."
We want in "Cordelia." The woman
who plays "Cordelia" must have feel-
ing, tender, compassionate understand-
ing, dignity, with a young face—not a
face into which youth is painted."

"Cordelia" must have beauty."

"We may get both. I am not search-
ing for 'Cordelia' among the stars; I
have hopes of finding her among the
unknowns."

"That's a risky proposition," said
Wentworth impatiently. "Cordelia
is a big part. Why, it's almost lead-
ing business—it ought to be in rehearsal
now."

"Wait a few days," suggested Os-
wald. "Now, tell me, when is Merry
to show up? He should have been
here a week ago. Can't you wire him
today?"

"I'll do it right away," Wentworth
tossed his hat on his head and left
the office. He drew a long breath,
when he stepped out on the sidewalk,
and looked anxiously up and down
Broadway as if hoping to see Merry
approach with his nonchalant stride.

He paused for a moment to light a
cigar, then started at a brisk gait
down the street. He was accosted
here and there by a friend. Each one
offered congratulations. He was in no
mood for that sort of thing. A block
further ahead he saw Phillips of the
Herald in the moving throng. There
would be no escaping him. He
jumped on a downtown car, and a few
minutes later he was at his father's

He stepped off and crossed the square.
The tide was coming in and a breeze
blew off the ocean.

He seated himself on a bench and
watched the spray dash over the pier.
Throng came and went, but Enoch
did not see them. His mind was en-
tered desperately upon one anxious
Merry must be found. He had it so
certain that the actor might appear
at any moment that he had allowed
Oswald to think he knew where
was. He reported him half-sick, try-
ing to regenerate, and having the
worst of a lawsuit with an angry man-
ager, which Oswald was trying to
settle out of court. He assured him
that the comedian was better perfect
in his part; all he needed was to ap-
pear at late rehearsals. The strain
however, was telling on Wentworth.
He had grown nervous and irritable.
Oswald saw traces of it, but laid it to
anxiety over the preparations for his
play.

(To Be Continued.)

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