

The LAPSE of ENOCH WENTWORTH

By ISABEL GORDON CURTIS

Author of "The Woman from Wolverton"

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ELLSWORTH YOUNG

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CHAPTER XXVI—Continued.

Across the pale face of the invalid swept a wave of scarlet; then he began to talk slowly and hesitatingly. "I was in a Southern academy the first time it happened. I must have been seventeen or thereabouts. Prizes were to be given for a public oration and people were coming from everywhere to hear us. The governor was to address us. My father was a lawyer, one of the big lawyers of the state. He went to this school when he was a boy, and he had carried off the oration prize. His heart was set on my winning it. I toiled and toiled over that speech; it was about the death of Julius Caesar. I can remember, as I lay awake nights starting out into the darkness, how the speech came throbbing in my brain. I could never write, though, as I declaimed it to myself in the still dormitory. I used to go out into the woods and try to write. One day I gave up. I sat huddled against a stone wall which ran down the hill, dividing a pasture from the forest. There was a tall pine over my head and the crows were calling from the top of it. I can see the place yet."

Enoch lifted his eyes and turned to meet the steady glance of the man who sat beside the bed.

"Do you want to hear the story?" he asked bluntly.

"Yes—if you are bound to tell it."

"It isn't an easy task to set the stark-naked soul of man before another's gaze, especially when it's a man's own soul; but I've been over this, step by step, during these bedridden days, and I'll feel better when it's out of my system."

"Are you sure?" Merry spoke gently.

"Yes, sure." The reflective tone had gone from Enoch's voice. It was emphatic. "Out there in the sunshine," he continued, "I realized what defeat meant. I knew my oration was merely a babble of senseless words; there was not a throbb in it. Besides, I knew that I could not make it better. Suddenly, on the quiet hillside, I heard a voice close beside me."

"There was a long pause. Wentworth turned his eyes from Merry and stared out at the window. A trumpet vine climbed over the back of the Waverly

gold-piece. I carried it to Dave. He refused it, turning his back on me with angry scorn. Twenty years later I met him again. He had gone to congress and was blasting his way upwards toward fame. I was assigned to interview him. He remembered me from head to foot, then he turned away without a word and never touched the hand I offered him. My God! how that hurt!" A shiver went through the man's body.

"That happened twenty-five years ago," said Merry hesitatingly. "You can't say up a boyhood sin against a man. He changes—he's almost another human being."

"No, he isn't," answered Wentworth doggedly. "I want to show you that the psychological fellow was in the right. That was my first fall from grace; but there was a second lesion. It was worse, worse even than—that what I did to you, Merry. I was out in the Balkan mountains where the blamed barbarian Turks go tearing at each other's throats once in so often. The world looked on, waiting for a story of war. I had none to tell, nothing happened but a skirmish or two once in a while. There was nothing a man could make out of it."

"That's a wretched campaign," Young Forsyth, of the Tribune, and I hung together through it for months, like stray dogs, sick to death of our job, and ready to throw it up at any moment. One morning at daybreak we were awakened by shooting. We scrambled from the cave where we had slept and looked down into the valley. We were in the very heart of a battle, and these savages were climbing over the rocks with their cutlasses flashing. They shrieked like maniacs, the bullets went flying about our heads. I crept back to the hole among the rocks where we had spent the night. I couldn't see what was happening; I didn't want to see. Death shrieks echoed all around and above me. It was the most hellish din of battle I ever listened to. I had turned coward. I lay there with every tooth in my head chattering. A nice consolation for a man to make, eh?" asked Wentworth with a grim smile.

Merry half rose, then dropped back into his chair. "Hold on, Enoch, I swear you're not fit for this sort of thing! Your temperature will go up, then the nurse—"

"Damn the nurse. I'm fit enough; keep still. I want to finish my story. Forsyth, the intrepid young fool, went creeping along the face of the cliff. He had never seen a battle before. I called to him to lie low, but he never heeded me. Through a crevice in the rock I saw him stretch his head over the chasm and crane his neck, then plunge down and begin to write as if he were mad. Once I sneaked out and tried to drag him in beside me. He fought like a wildcat, so I went back to shelter. The bullets pinged on the rocks all around me. Suddenly I heard a low, gurgling, awful cry and somebody called my name in a hoarse shout. It was Forsyth. I crept out. He stood on a cliff above me, clutching at his throat, then he toppled and fell. He came plunging down over the rocks until he reached my feet. He was dead, stark dead, when I pulled him into the cave. His notebook was clutched so tight in his hand that I tore a corner from one page as I took it from his fingers. I buried him right there."

"After a little while the battle fizzled down to a stray shot or two. That night under the gleam of a spitting little torch I read Forsyth's story. It was tremendous—perfectly tremendous—truly tremendous! It read like inspired stuff. I had never dreamed of the few words such a vocabulary. A few lines lay there close beside me, asleep—under the damp, warm, soft earth. I had a fit of the horrors. I put out my light, stuffed the pages of writing in my pocket, then went doubling and twisting down those wild mountains, dodging the enemy's campfires and their infernal bullets, until I reached the miserable little town in the valley where two men had our headquarters. I hurried to the telegraph office to send out Forsyth's story to the Tribune, with the news of his death. I was waiting to get the wire when somebody handed me a cable. I looked at it half-dazed. It came from my own paper, crazy because I had sent them no story; they were hungry as vultures for news. As soon as I could get a wire I sent out Forsyth's story."

"Under his name?" asked Merry quietly.

"No." Enoch lifted his head, looked at his friend with guilt and shame in his eyes, then he turned away. "No, I signed my own name to it. I sent it to my own paper. I wired the news of Forsyth's death to the Tribune."

Neither of the men spoke for some minutes. When Merry turned, Wentworth lay staring at him with a prayer for pity, comprehension, and forgiveness in his eyes.

"I want you to understand one thing," pleaded the older man. "When you called my bluff that morning and I wrote that bond, I was innocent of any thought of injury to you. I don't know what was in my mind. It was nothing in the world but an idle fancy. I told you so at the time. I did not dream that you could write a play. If anyone had told me you were capable of turning out 'The House of Esterbrook' I should have laughed at him. Then that day, when you came and read my manuscript—I had just given up all hope, as I did with the oration on Caesar. I had been toiling for years and years on a play. There was one—it had seemed to me like a great plot—but I had begun to realize that labor does not mean anything. You want inspiration, or genius or art—or something, and I didn't have it."

Enoch paused, wrinkling his eyes as if in an attempt to remember some-

thing. "I was trying to think of something Ellen Terry wrote on the back of a photograph she once gave me. It ran like this: 'When am I to be an actress? Well, after fifteen years' labor, perhaps. Labor! Why, I thought it was all inspiration. No, labor and art are the foundation; inspiration—a result.' 'Terry wasn't altogether right. Labor alone won't land the prize. You've proved that, Boy.' 'I don't know,' said Merry vaguely. 'I do.' The man's pale face flushed. "When you dropped in on me, eager as a young victor for a laurel wreath, I knew as surely as if a judge had passed sentence on me that my years and years of toil meant nothing but waste paper. Then, suddenly, as temptation had clutched at me twice before in my life, came a rejuvenated desire for fame—the fame that another man had labored for and—"

"I understand," cried Merry. There was a thrill of compassion in his voice. "Now, dear old man, let's forget it. The one thing I can never forget is that you have raked me from the depths more than once. I might have been worse than dead today if it hadn't been for you."

"You never descended to the depths I did," said Wentworth abruptly.

"Sin—my variety of it or yours—is nothing but the difference of a man's taste. His palate differs what he will eat. There is a moral palate, and if you go on slaking your appetite, there's a weakening of the moral tissue. Isn't that what your psychologists call it? If it had not been for you, Enoch, I might have been worse than dead today." Merry uttered the last sentence in an undertone. "I have a feeling, though, that I can never go so low again, because—"

He sat silent for a minute. Wentworth's eyes were fixed upon him like an insistent question. "Because Enoch," he went on in a steady voice, "because Dorcas has promised to be my wife."

"Oh!" cried Wentworth quickly. "Oh, thank God for that!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

Behind the Curtain.

It was a wet night in October. A line of carriages moved slowly over the shining asphalt to the door of the Gotham. Grant Oswald stood in a corner of the foyer watching the throng pour in.

"This busts your first night in London, doesn't it?" queried a newspaper man who stood beside him.

"Yes," acceded the Englishman. "The first night or any other night."

"Wentworth's escape from death was a great ad—if you look at it that way. He had a close call."

"Yes," Oswald spoke absently.

"That morning he had arrived from London. Although he was the least curious of men, he felt as if the people from whom he had parted four months ago were living in a different atmosphere. Before the ship docked he had discovered a group waiting to welcome him. Dorcas was there, her beautiful face glowing with happiness. He watched her untie a gray scarf from her hat and wave it. Merry stood beside her, but the girl's hand was clasped inside her brother's arm. Wentworth was wan and thin. Across his temple gleamed a wide red scar. Merry lifted his hat when he caught sight of Oswald and the wind tossed down, almost into his eyes, the way lock of long fair hair which proclaimed his calling. Alice Volk stood in the group, with Julie jumping impatiently beside her. Little Robin clasped her hand, while he searched for the ship with his sightless eyes."

With a courteous "Good night" Oswald left the man and walked into the theater, where a gay, chattering crowd streamed past him. The throng was so dense that he was pushed into a corner. When the overture began he moved toward the rail and took his place among a group of men who had not been able to buy seats. He found himself in the center of the last great proof of his friendship for me, you all know he almost lost his life in saving me from almost certain death. Good people, I owe much to Enoch Wentworth, and it is a great pleasure to acknowledge it in this public manner."

The audience saw Wentworth stare as if in utter amazement when Merry began his confession. Then his eyes grew misty, and when the young actor turned to him with an affectionate smile, he gripped the hand held out to him as a man does when he cannot put love or gratitude into words. Across the footlights men and women realized vaguely, through the strange human insight we call intuition, that another drama was being played before their eyes; life-and-blood drama, where the feelings of strong men were deeply stirred.

"Good Lord!" said Singleton.

Oswald turned with a start as if he had been aroused from sleep. The newspaper man stood at his elbow with a look of blank astonishment in his eyes. It passed quickly, however; he was a trained newspaper man, all his news instincts were aroused, he was on the track of a story. Here was something he must get to the bottom of. He sensed a mystery and was immediately on the alert for anything that might give him a clew to start on. His paper must have this big story. It was big, he was sure of that. He turned suddenly to the man at his side.

"What's back of all that?" he asked.

"I can understand that Merry wrote the play, I've known Enoch Wentworth for years, and I was never so staggered in my life as the first night when I saw 'The House of Esterbrook.' I went to the office afterward to write my stuff and I sat for ten minutes—dumb, stupid—trying to figure out how Wentworth, the Enoch Wentworth I knew, could have writ-

ten it. How long have you known this?"

"I have known it," answered Oswald quietly, "just as long as you have."

"Then I'm right," cried Singleton. "I knew Merry was lying when he stood there on the stage giving us that bluff about Wentworth carrying the secret for him. Merry wrote it all right. I might have guessed it long ago. I say, do you know there's a devil of a big story back of all that?"

Oswald's face grew stern.

"You see I know both of the men so well," went on Singleton eagerly. "Why, they were a regular David and Jonathan pair ever since I met them first. Enoch was forever setting Merry on his pins. The actor would go off, Heaven knows where, throw over a part, and drop off the edge of the world. I don't believe he dissipated exactly; he simply tossed his money away and went downhill. Wentworth would hunt him up and drag him back where he belonged. He straightened up suddenly when he began to play 'John Esterbrook.' You can't even pull him into a poker game now. I guess I took the winnings at the last game he stood in for. That night I had a great mind to hand the money back to him. We said 'Good-by' and daylight. He looked pessimistic about game. No, he wasn't game either; Merry never gets game. He had a down-and-out, don't-leave-a-damn-expression that morning. I can see him yet. Suddenly he disappeared again. When he came back Wentworth and he cut each other dead. That Paget woman affair began, then Wentworth saved Merry's life. Why, it's a tremendous story!"

Oswald turned abruptly. Something in his quiet gaze made Singleton shift his eyes with a start of guilt. "I want to say a word to you," the Englishman's voice was stern, "and I want you to repeat what I say to every man in your fraternity. There may be a big story somewhere behind this—I cannot tell. If there is, if an enemy lies behind these two men which we do not comprehend, leave it to them. They have buried it. Don't turn, gully," he pleaded, "and dig it up simply to make a curious, heartless world buy your paper for a day or two. I am told there is a bond between newspaper men, like a warm-hearted brotherhood. Wentworth belonged to that brotherhood; he does yet—remember that."

Singleton stretched out his hand with an impulsive gesture. "Thank you, Mr. Oswald. You're a good deal of a man. I never knew you before. We all need a jog on the elbow once in a while. A newspaper man grows a buzzard when a story is in the air. He forgets how the other fellow feels. I'll pass the word around. I can promise you that not a man among us will do anything but take Merry's word for it. His confession is a big story in itself."

"Thank you," said Oswald with a cordiality which few men had seen in the dignified Englishman.

He stood talking with a group who gathered about him at the close of the play, eager as Singleton had been to discuss Merry's dramatic confession, when an usher interrupted them. "Mr. Oswald, you're wanted back of the scenes," said the boy.

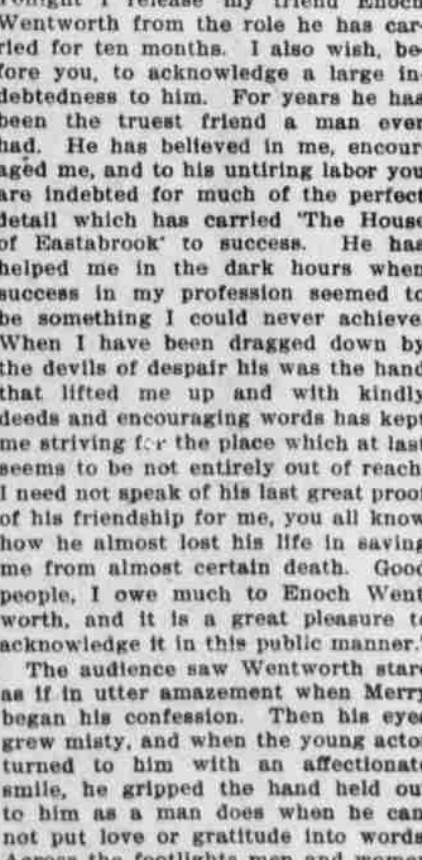
Under the white glare of electricity a little group stood on the half-dimmed stage. The people in the call were there—property men, the cast boy, electricians, ushers, and the humblest employes of the house. The actors still wore their stage garb and make-up. Dorcas' hand was linked in her brother's arm. For a moment Oswald stood watching her. Her face was flushed, her eyes shone, she seemed transfused by happiness.

Merry stretched out a welcoming hand to Oswald. "We've been waiting for you, Oswald," he said, "round our circle," he cried gaily. "I had a Scotch grandmother. When she reached the western wilderness and built a home, she made her husband carve over the chimney-piece: 'We're a sibb te ane anither here.' Once, when I was a little boy, she explained it to me. I understood. The English language won't translate these words, but they mean that there's nobody here but the best of friends. Because we're a sibb te ane anither here tonight I want to break a secret to you. It is a more wonderful secret than the news I gave to the audience."

Merry looked about him with a quick, boyish smile. "I used to say I could not make a certain speech to save my life. Tonight I feel as if I were blossoming out. I seem capable of speeches behind the curtain as well as in front. I suppose happiness makes an actor of a man." He laughed joyously. "But—to my secret. This dear lady, whom you all love and honor, has promised to be my wife."

He held out his hands to Dorcas and caught her. Then he drew her into his arms as if they stood alone to some empty corner of the world.

THE END.



Oswald Was Watching the Throng Pour in.



Merry Stretched Out a Welcoming Hand.

for you, Oswald, to round out our circle," he cried gaily. "I had a Scotch grandmother. When she reached the western wilderness and built a home, she made her husband carve over the chimney-piece: 'We're a sibb te ane anither here.' Once, when I was a little boy, she explained it to me. I understood. The English language won't translate these words, but they mean that there's nobody here but the best of friends. Because we're a sibb te ane anither here tonight I want to break a secret to you. It is a more wonderful secret than the news I gave to the audience."

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THE END.

Back to the Bible

Application of the Scriptures to the World Today as Seen by Eminent Men in Various Walks of Life

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AN ANCIENT LITERARY ERA DISCOVERED.

(By MELVIN GROVE KYLE, D. D., LL. D., Egyptologist; Member Archaeological Institute of America; Author of 'The Dying Voice of the Monuments in Biblical Criticism'; President Board of Foreign Missions, United Presbyterian Church.)

"The true man of science is also a man of faith. He, as well as the Christian believer, walks in the light of the evidence of many things unseen, and satisfies his mind with the substance of many things hoped for."—G. A. Frederick Wright, LL. D., F. G. S. F.

She was a woman with a basket, probably not a prepossessing woman, but who can say what a veiled woman may be? The basket was a very ugly, dirty, misshapen basket. The woman in it was usually very dusty and disagreeable, but this time she filled her basket with some clean, hard, flat cakes of dried mud and went away to her village to beat them into dust and scatter the dust as fertilizer over her beds of leeks and onions and other things good to eat.

How many of these tablets she had already pulverized and grown into onions, no one will ever know. This time a man saw her basket load and felt a curiosity about these queer little cakes of clay. He bought them all for a trifle and showed them to an Egyptian who bought and sold antiquities, and he bought them for another trifle. He could not imagine what they were something. He went to an American friend, the Reverend Chauncey Murch. He saw at a glance that the mud cakes were tablets covered with the wedge-shaped writing of the Babylonians and Assyrians. He could not read the writing, but he knew that such tablets found in Egypt must be important and at once give information to the world of scholars. In a few weeks the enterprise of museum authorities, the cupidity of native dealers and even international jealousies were stirred up over these little bits of clay to an amazing degree. After some unseemly squabbling, in which some of the tablets were broken up by the natives in order to distribute their value around among themselves, the whole lot was divided for the most part between the British museum, the Berlin museum and the Cairo museum, with a few scattered elsewhere.

All this time no one had read the tablets, but expectation concerning them was not disappointed. This was brought to the world by the student of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, the most important discovery for the land of the Book since the beginning of archaeological research there. These tablets tell us more about the ancient political geography of Canaan than all other sources put together; they have made known to us that the old Canaanite language was in reality Hebrew, or the Hebrew, Canaanite; that the peasant speech of that day was practically identical with the peasant speech of the land now; that the official language of Canaan then was the Babylonian and the method of writing, the wedge-shaped writing called cuneiform, that, though Canaan was then a province of Egypt, so great was the Babylonian influence in the land that official correspondence with the Egyptian imperial government was in the Babylonian tongue and method of writing; that thus early, 150 years before the time of Moses, there was great literary advancement among even the people of Canaan, with a wide diffusion of education among all classes; and, last of all, that there was ruling at Jerusalem a line of kings with titles strangely like the title of Melchizedek, "without father and without mother."

Such was the discovery of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets. It was the opening of a door into another and much older ancient literary world in Bible lands.

THINKING THROUGH THE UNIVERSE.

(By FLETCHER HOMAN, A. M., D. D., President of Willamette University, Salem, Oregon.)

"Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the Scriptures. It is possible that a book at once so simple and sublime should be merely the work of man"—Jean Jacques Rousseau, famous French agnostic philosopher.

Each man individually, and men collectively, need great breadth of purpose. Some men have within them the desire for all around glimpses of knowledge. The world especially needs such men this day, for humanity is becoming one industrially, one socially, and will ultimately become one religiously.

No Proverb to Guide Him.

She—"A proverb says that fruit is gold in the morning and lead at night, meaning that it's bad for one in the evening, I suppose." He—"That's right! Look at the trouble Adam got into by eating an apple after Eve."—Boston Transcript.

True Greatness.

He only is a great man who can neglect the applause of the multitude, and enjoy himself independent of its favor.—Steele.

Domesticated Canaries.

There are 12 distinct breeds of canaries. About 500 years ago a Spanish sea captain brought them from the Canary islands and some insignificant little greenish birds which were called canary birds, and from these have been evolved the 12 species or varieties of canaries known to the breeder of today.

For Artists.

An artist should be fit for the best society and keep out of it.—Ruskin.

ously, the education of our day recognizes these existing conditions and seeks every aid to bring the race into unity.

No one book has had such a dominating influence in this direction as the Bible. When many million volumes of a single book are published every year and scattered over the wide world, it must be because of the tremendous influence and power that the book possesses. The Bible has a world-wide vision. The God of the universe and the God of infinite power, the God of eternity, the God of infinite love and wisdom, the God who "so loved the world," is the God of the Bible.

No man can read this great book without getting these visions and purposes that are there wrought with not only world activity, but universal and eternal activity. This in itself compels men to think big thoughts, form big ideas, generate universal ideals applicable to all humanity.

The inspirational power of thinking that ranges through the universe is one of the finest educational influences that can possiblnding over the lives of men. No man of intellectual ability or of wide sympathy or great force in any line can read the Bible without being enriched, broadened, awakened to the meaning of life.

The Bible arouses a man not only to think about his personal life, but kindles with enlightening power his appreciation of his relation to society. The thoughtful reader of the Bible receives lessons in integrity, in legislation and government, in industrial betterment, in social service of the highest order, in sacrifices for the elevation of social institutions.

Service is the keynote of the Scriptures. In the twentieth century it is likewise the keynote of education. It is impossible for the educated man to get an understanding of the finest ideals in connection with social service and governmental purity without a careful study of the ideals of the Bible. Consequently, no education is complete without the Scriptures.

EDUCATION IN GREAT PRINCIPLES.

(By CHARLES F. THWING, LL. D., President of Western Reserve University, Cleveland.)

"The Bible is better worth reading twenty times than any other book is worth reading once."—Albert S. Cook, Ph. D., LL. D., professor of English language and literature, Yale University.

The college seeks to train men in the great principles, intellectual and moral. It does not seek to make lawyers, or doctors, or clergymen, or editors, or architects, or manufacturers. It does seek to create and to discipline powers of intellect, of will, of conscience, which may be applied in and adjusted to whatever special calling the student may finally select. It is not a professional school. It is a preparation for a professional school. It is both life and a preparation for life.

But there are two things which, among and above all others, the college does emphasize: The student is, first, to be able to reason, and second, he is to be clean and honest in character.

The Bible is likewise concerned with principles. It calls no man to a particular form of service. It lays down no arbitrary standards of holiness. It numbers among its disciples humble folk, dwelling in the obscure alleys of small provincial towns, as well as the great ones found in the capital cities. But the Bible does demand that to whatever form of service one is devoted he shall bear thinking and thoughtfulness, a sense of faithfulness and a good will. Whatever else one may have or whatever one may lack, these offerings and forces are absolutely essential.

That these great intellectual and moral principles shall be applied in and fitted to every task and condition, personal and public, is the demand of both the Bible and of modern education.

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Warm-Weather Story.

Returning from a fishing trip at night, Alexander McCarey, who lives in a Connersville suburb, saw two white figures moving across a grassy common. He halted, thinking of ghost stories half forgotten, and dropped behind a clump of willow. The figures moved nearer. McCarey peeped from his hiding place and saw two girls, clad in garments which, he says, were thinner than the thinnest mist. They sat on a little mound of stones, within ten feet of him and discussed the heat of the night, which was uncommonly high.

McCarey listened and watched, being, he said, quite unable to get away. Presently one of the damsels remarked: "Say, Dora, what if some man would come along here and catch us?"

"Oh, gee! I never thought of that," exclaimed the other. McCarey saw a flutter of white toward a big, dark bungalow a hundred yards away, and realized that the nymphs were gone.

Vacation Time Coming.

Met a man going down the street the other day with a French dictionary, a book of familiar quotations and an encyclopedia. Said he was expecting his daughter home from the boarding school.—Philadelphia Telegraph.

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