sweetness.

"I'll tell you in a minute."

Across the dining room, through mur-ky waves of tobacco smoke, the girl could see careworn wrinkles about the

woman's eyes. The vivid scarlet of her cheeks was pitifully false, false as

The musicians huddled themselves and their instruments closer together,

indifferently as if it were part of every

of a singer.

The LAPSE of SY ISABEL GORDON CURTIS

Author of "The Woman from Wolvertons" ILLUSTRATIONS by ELLSWORTH YOUNG

"Yes." said Oswald gravely.

into Miss Wentworth's 'Cordelia.

has little to do except to follow her

which I mean to make the strongest point in the first act."

"It's that following the father about

"I hinted that we might give the lit-

"Thank you, Mr. Merry." Dorcas

Dorcas had a new insight in Merry's character when she found how his

friends held him in esteem. There was not a touch, in Mrs. Billerwell's greeting, of hero worship or deference

to the man who had won fame. It was merely a droll blend of loving de-

Volk entered, with Julie clinging shyly to her gown. Dorcas felt instantly a

throb of sympathy and warm friend-

except Mother Billerwell and myself. Mrs. Billerwell is pure gold, but Alice

Half an hour later they waited on

the platform of an L station for a

downtown train. They had scarcely spoken since leaving the Harlem house. Merry realized how deeply the

girl's heart had been stirred. The entered the train and took a seat t

"That's all right, but do you think

that child. She has a soul and sweet-

ess, and she understands. There is comething in her—we call it magnet-

ism in older people-which will reach

across the footlights and grip every

child will help me wonderfully. Now

Dorcas sat in silence while they rushed over the lighted city with its

insistent glimpses of sordid life. Merry saw her chin tremble once and her eyes grow misty; then she spoke sud-

"Alice Volk has seen the very depths.

She suffered more than misery and neglect; there was actual brutality. I

knew her before Volk came into her life. She played with the first New

York company I was in. She was the gayest little creature then you can imagine—a whimsical, laughing, care-

free, happy child."
"Gay!" Dorcas

"The gaiety has gone."

"She must have lived through

man and woman in the audience.

needs a woman like you

Merry jumped to his feet when Mrs.

votion and motherly tyranny.

time to see Mrs. Volk."

-you understand."

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"It is simply this. 'Mrs. Esterbrook is an utterly heartless woman. Dead to conscience as she is at the beginning, she comes out of her life's trag-edy calloused beyond all redemption. It strikes a false note to have her repent for even a second. She does not know what mother-love or love of any sort means. With her last exit she

sught to leave an audience hating and despising her. Now one feels a sudden touch of sympathy. She must be irredeemably bad. Then, too, it is not only true to the woman's character, but 'Cordelia' shines whiter against it." Merry nodded. "You're right, I fancy.

Wentworth has only to change a few lines to throw the whole thing plumb. You can do it in half an hour, old

When Oswald turned to Wentworth he caught a look on the man's face that puzzled him, a flash of impotent

"Is Wentworth-is he touchy? Did he feel that I was criticizing his play?" asked Oswald anxiously when the door "I don't think it's that." Merry



Wentworth's Face.

other subject. "I want to consult you about changing one of the people in the cast, little Katie Durham

"She's a bright enough youngster." She sa bright enough youngster. Throb of sympathy and warm friend-ship me she once got a hundred dollars a week in vaudeville as a toe dancer." Merry laughed. "A toe dancer scarcely fills the bill for the small 'Cordella."

"She struck me in rehearsal this "She struck me in rehearsal this members as leaking in scretchise."

"She is lacking in everything. She's nothing childlike about her. When she clings to my neck shricking, 'Father,' she jars every nerve in my body.'

"Let her go. Only it is a problem where to find a sweet, natural stage

diately," said Merry quietly. "It's a youngster who has never been behind the footlights in her life."

"Could you do anything with her in

tle, refined, sweet-voiced little girl; besides, she has dramatic blood in her—that always tells. Do you remember

"George Volk! Why, of course," cried Oswald after a mor What ever became of the man? Did he die?

a bitter tone in it. "Better for some people if he had died. This little Julie I want a chance for is his child." Where is Volk?"

"I can't tell you. If he's alive he must be far down by this time. He was a wretched sot when I saw him

production the first time I came to America, then in London. He was the handsomest man that ever stepped on

"A handsome piece of beef! Ten years ago he married one of the sweetwon much notice. Her work was so quiet and delicate that she appealed to the few. She was in a company with me for two seasons. How Volk made her suffer! The beast!"

"Is she alive?" for years. I was going home last night when a woman touched me on the arm. She was lame and looked ill. A little girl clung to her. I did not know her. 'I'm Alice Volk,' she said. I put them in a cab and took them up to Harlem,

e best old woman in the world.' "It has been wrung out of her."
"It has been wrung out of her."
"I never had a real woman friend except the sisters at the convent," said
Dorcas. "I think Alice Volk and I
will be friends. We can help each "Are they in want?" asked Oswald small for her age, but the way she cares for the poor, crippled little mather—" Andrew laid a gray wig She isn't quite seven and

mean a great deal to ner. It is have reaching out a hand to some one who is drowning."

"Alice Volk is different from any one I ever met. When little Julie ran out to speak to you, I followed her. The mother laid her hand on my arm, drew me back into the room, then she closed the door and kissed me. She did not say a word. Any other woman would have kissed me while I was saying 'Good-by,'—before you and Mrs. 'illerwell Sne does unexpected things that cannot help drawing one to her "Pour soul!" said Morry.

"Pour soul!" said Morry.

"Their eyes made a compact though

"Pour soul!" said Merry.
The conductor entered, shutting the cor behind him with a crash. "Twenthird street!" he called.

Their eyes made a compact through no word was spoken.
They lingered over strange dishes that came and went. Food seemed that came and went. door behind him with a crash. "Twenupon his knee and began to brush, it vigorously. "I don't want to throw this Durham youngster out of a job, though, simply because I can't endure her. She's common as dirt, but she can't help it. Have you seen the ty-third street!" he called.
"Let us get off and have dinner

somewhere," suggested the actor. "I want to talk to you—for hours."

CHAPTER XII.

A Prima Donna of the Past.

Dorcas and Merry paused for a moment before a flight of steps which led up to what had once been a fine approximately the marky atmosphere a woman's voice shrilled out with rare "What feazes me is how we could delide an audience into believing that this sharp nosed, uncanny-looking, abrill tongued little ape could develop up to what had once been a fine private residence. Its exclusive days They're different breeds entirely."

"You're right." Oswald's voice was emphatic. "I don't know why I did not see it. Perhaps because the child Tell."

Dorcas rose to her feet for a second, searching for the singer; then she seated herself with her back to the strains from the overture to "William Tell." were past; it was beckoning with a

ell."

"What a queer place," said the girl.

"You can't realize its queerness under the property of silver, and the popping of corks continued, but tongues were stilled except for one voice. It was singing the "What a queer place," said the 5...
"You can't realize its queerness until we are inside. The crowd that til we are inside. The crowd that tremendous aria from "Ernani." The girl drew a long breath as the last

"Engage the child immediately."
"I'll have to do diplomatic work to doors, was bizarre inside. At the farmed a daub of painted canvas at the condition of the c find in New York."

Dorcas ran lightly up the steps. The that puzzled him, a flash of impotent rage, hate, and apprehension. Enoch realized he had revealed his soul for a moment. He picked up his hat and a moment. He picked up his hat and part for herself which she could play blazed inside crimson apples on its widespread branches. Under it, at a bridge of tables, people were diling huddle of tables, people were dining vociferously. The place shrieked its vociferously. the Julie a chance. She snatched the child away as if she thought I meant to kidnap her. When a woman has seen the seamy side of life as she has you understand."
Oswald nodded gravely. "We must a hundred odors of highly-seasoned find a way to get around her."

Merry sat writing a letter in the manager's office the next afternoon noise. Dorcas followed Merry through when Oswald entered, accompanied by Dorcas.

Dorcas.

Dorcas followed sterly the labyrinth to a small table in a distant corner, hedged about with "I want you to tell Miss Wentworth palms.

about the little Volk girl," said the Englishman. "I have enlisted her sympathy. If the mother felt that some woman here would be interested treesting. People let themselves loose the place; the crowd is, so interesting. in the child she might change her in a coop like this; they enjoy life

Yrankly. "I should think they did." Dorcas heartily. "I am glad you are making laughed gaily. a change. It will improve the first act Across the r

a change. It will improve the first act wonderfully to have the child sweet and real. Then," the girl laughed in in utter inharmony to the orchestra's and real. Then," the girl laughed in a half-embarrassed way, "did you ever music. Corks were popping amid the rattle of dishes and silver while laughlook at a picture of yourself when you were at the tadpole age and wonder if it could have possibly been you? That has been my frame of mind since I laid eyes on the little 'Cordella.'

"It's a droll little world," said Merry.

"It's a droll little world," said Merry. "I don't blame you," Oswald smiled. Dorcas pulled off her gloves and sat "I can't imagine why we made such a blunder. Merry puts it just the way smoothing them between her fingers.
"I remember," Andrew gazed about son I was tied up with a summer proturned to the actor with a grateful smile. "I am ready to go with you any in New York. There was not a soul



People Were Dining Vocifer

the child can play the small 'Cor-delia?' asked Merry anxiously.
"You can do anything you wish with come here night after night and work myself into a light-hearted mood. I had a part I hated. I did not go on natil the second act, so sometimes I stayed here until haif-past seven. The place waked me up. I got into a queer humor while watching people. Before it wore off I used to dash to the theater, as one acts when you are over-powered with sleep, and try to get to bed before you go wide awake again. Usually I don't have to hammer my-self into the disposition for work. When I am'cast for some role that makes one fairly snort with impa-tience, it is horribly hard to feel like it. If I get a human character, I love the child will help me wonderfully. Now I won't have to create a new 'Cordella' when I come on the stage. My 'Cor-della' is simply the little girl grown older and wiser, with more love for her father and a larger knowledge of "You understand perfectly."
"You and I ought to understand
'Cordelia' if any one could."

"Like 'John Esterbrook?' " "Yes, like 'John Esterbrook.' Miss Dorcas," Merry went on eagerly, "I went tramping yesterday—alone. I found myself within sight of another state before I pulled up. I was heaven knows how many miles from anywhere. I thrashed things out with myself. I'm going to make 'John Esterbrook' the biggest thing that has struck New York in years."

Dorcas laughed. She felt foolishly

"I am so glad," she said. "It's up to me to do the best I can; I owe it to you," there was grim de-termination in Merry's voice; "to you and Oswald, he's a prince of a good fellow; now Alice Volk and the child come into it."
"And yourself."

"Yes, myself. If I succeed, it means retrieving more than you imagine."

"And you will confess you wrote the

merely a circumstance, an excuse for being alone and together. They felt curiously isolated, for the noise made a retreat for them as silence does. A sudden lull fell on the babel of sound. The orchestra, which had rested for a Dorcas rose to her feet for a sec

She turned again to look at the singer, who stood crushed into a narrow balcony which was crowded to discomfort by a piano and four muand she put her arm within his. He clasped it with a strong grip, but them snoke. At the same clasped it with a strong grip, but neither of them spoke. At the same the palmy days of a concert tour, she had swept upon the platform in a robe of burnt orange velvet splashed gorgeously with silver lace and scintillating embroidery. It had seen years of facing him. Enoch's hands clasped

tilted her face till Dorcas saw only the profile. For one moment the gross prised glance on Enoch's face while he

"That was good of you." In his sur-prise Wentworth showed an impulsive friendliness. He stretched out his

There was no cordiality in Merry's

a few bars of some tinking thing in a musical comedy, then the singer began to sway her huge body. There was no space for her feet to move. She sang to the accompaniment, but the physical effort made her wheeze. "I guess that's what it might be called." Wentworth's voice was impatient, and a frown chased across his "I hope so." Enoch spoke listlessly. The orchestra dashed into a tripping face. "Oswald's been asking for it this chorus, and the enthusiasm of the guests waxed high. Cheers were inter-him makes up his mind to have a ningled with laughter and screams of thing, he's apt to be confoundedly in-

The singer sank in a chair exhausted, then she rose and pushed her way down from the balcony. Dorcas watched her with a pitiful gaze. Perspiration was washing white streaks through the patches of rouge on her through the patches of rouge on her washing white streaks through the patches of rouge on her washing washing white streaks through the patches of rouge on her washing washing white streaks through the patches of rouge on her washing washing white streaks the stream of through the patches of rouge on her

"Twenty-five years ago her name was famous from one end of Italy to the other. When she went to Genoa to fill an engagement the whole town turned out to meet her, the shops closed, and it was a public holiday. The people pelted her with flowers and screamed themselves hoarse in a She was the star of the welcome. She was the star of the Bellini in Naples. She sang in Paris and London. She came here, grew sick and could not fill her engagements. A manager went back on her, she lost what money she had, friends deserted her, she came down to—

"Oh, the poor soul!" Dorcas' voice

"On, the poor was a whisper.

"Her's was an unusual case," said ing acquaintance with her' behind the scenes if I had my way."

"She is not fit to be seen with a de Merry. "She is only fifty-three now, so I've heard. It makes you realize into what a short bit of our lives fame into what I short bit of our transfer of the condition of the strength of the condition of the last-beens in our profession are an has-beens in our profession are an ingression limit.—I do." army, a pitiful army. Unless one has a home and some one in it to cherish and love, the lonely days of old age Andrew laughed cheerlessly Well, I never think of them.

He stretched out his hand to intercept a boy who wandered between the tables with a tray full of crimson roses. He laid a bunch of them before Dorcas. She buried her face in the "Shall we go?" asked Merry

As they pushed their way through the maze of crowded tables they passed woman who sat dining alone. She wore an orange velvet gown, and a shabby lace scarf covered her naked shoulders. Dorcas paused for a moment, laid her hand upon the woman's arm, and spoke a few words in Italian. The singer looked up and put a grimy. ring-bedizened hand upon the girl's fingers. Merry stood watching them The woman looked very old and faded under the white glare of the elec-tricity, but her face grew eager and tremulous while she poured out her soul in her own language. Dorcas took one rose from the cluster in her arms and laid the rest of the fragrant blos-

ms beside the singer's plate.
"You'll forgive me for parting with your flowers?" she whispered as she rejoined Merry. will hand over this act, rewritten as you want it, when you promise to have "I'm glad you did it. Once upon a

time stage bouquets were a wors sat when Merry stopped speaking he sensation for that woman; today I took a seat opposite Ench and waited

guess she is showered with roses about for a reply.

A visiting card lay on the table. after them with her chin buried in the



Her Face Grew Eager and Tremulous

geously with silver lace and scintillating embroidery. It had seen years of service, then grown tawdry, unfashionable, soiled, and grotesquely queer. It reminded Dorcas of the stately doon in its last stage of shabbiness. The its last stage of shabbiness. The whispered appealingly, "Andrew, she whispered appealingly, "Andrew, she whispered appealingly," "Andrew, she whispered ap woman's straw-colored hair was gath-ered into a ridiculous pompadour. save Enoch from that woman!

A Sealed Bargain Wentworth sat in a small room at the whiteness of her vast, bare shoulders. Again she began to sing, somethe theater, which he had appropriated as his own. It led directly off the box thing which come thrilling from the wonderful throat with perfect colora-tura. She threw back her head and office. He was glancing over a heap of press clippings when the door opened and Merry walked in.

lines disappeared; instead came a glimpse of beauty and picturesqueness, a dignity which belonged to the days Andrew nodded a response, then he drew a package of manuscript from his youth and power, the royal days pocket. Wentworth's eyes turned on him curiously while he flattened it out on the table before him. No unneces-The room rang with an encore, then came a shriek of command. "Dance!" shouted the group of students in a corsary courtesies passed between them.
"I rewrote the scene as you sug-gested," said Andrew carelessly. "Oh!" cried Dorcas piteously. "oh! how can they do it?"

hand for the manuscript.

night's program. The planist struck face. He glanced quietly through the a few bars of some tinkling thing in written sheets.

"Then you want it?"

with scorn.
"What is it then?" "I was dining last night at Colgaz

Wentworth's face grew suddenly wentworths face grew suddenly scarlet, then it whitened.
"I saw you there." Merry's voice was relentless. "I don't know a blessed thing about the Paget woman, for or against her. I do know this, though: every man who has lived among good women, know she is not fit commany.

women knows she is not fit company worth. "I had not thought of throw

"To a certain limit—I do."
"Well, what do you want?" Went

worth turned an apprehensive glanc

turn over this manuscript, that you will have nothing to do with Zilla "Why, are you interested in her

"My God, Enoch!" Andrew stu Ted the roll of paper in his pocket and lumped to his feet. "Here, sit down. I want this affair

straightened out-new."

Merry did not answer. He walked He picked one up carelessly and his with a straightforward look which was characteristic of the girl.
"Will you tell me," there was stern

demand in Wentworth's voice, "will you explain why you are so cencerned about my morals "I don't care a damn about your morals," answered Merry contemptu ously. "I was thinking about your sis-ter. I am still fool enough to believe that you have some decency left. I

you want it, when you promise to have nothing to do with Zilla Paget."

A visiting card lay on the table. Wentworth picked it up and tore it into halves. He sat tearing and retearing it in perfect silence. When it was reduced to fragments, he gathered them into the hollow of his hand and dropped them in the waste basket; then he looked across at Merry.

"That was Miss Paget's card," he said harshly. "I'm through with her."

Merry took the manuscript from his pocket, laid it on the table before Enoch, and walked out.

A few minutes later Enoch opened the door which led into the box office. A young man sat beside the window.

A young man sat beside the window.
"Dingley," he said, "I have locked
the outside or. Don't let a soul in

on me. I can't see Mr. Oswald even.
Fell him I am busy, writing."
Wentworth locked the door of the picked up the manuscript. He read it rapidly, slipped a blank sheet of paper into a typewriter, and began to copy it with slow deliberation. When it was finished he read each typed page care-fully. He tacked them together and rose to his feet. He began to search he turned to a wash-bowl in the corner ing and touched the paper with a match. It leased into a red blaze. He watched it carefully, poking the sheets over with a paper knife until each one fell away into a shivering back ash. When every spark had died be turned on a faucet, and the light ashes were swept down the waste pipe. He rubbed a speck of grime from his hands and opened the box office door. Oswald sat on a high stool beside the withdraw in the last chance he has to make restitution. He will never, never do such a thing as this!"

"Listen," she heard Merry's whisper clearly through the din. "Dear, it does not matter. What does anything.

worth brusquely. "I imagine it will suit you. The changes are exactly what you suggested."

do I care about the people out there? They are nothing to us."

"Oh!" cried Dorcas, "oh, I will go

cordial. "I'm ever so glad you felt like know!"



"And, Dingley, while I think of it, send a message back to Miss Paget. Ask if I can see her now, in her dressing-room for a few minutes." He turned to Oswald. "I must explain to her the change we're making. Better "Certainly."

"I sat up until Adylight to write this. be put into quick rehearsal."

CHAPTER XIV.

Wentworth stared at him blankly.
"A dicker?" he repeated. "Is it against a table. The curtain had fallen terbrook." The girl's body throbbed from head to foot, and she felt as if ing hand and ran to her dress the emotions of a lifetime had been She was choking with sobs. crowded into that single hour. There was a babel of noise behind the scenes; in front the applause sounded like a tempest. At intervals the handclaps died away as from weariness, only to begin again with tremendous

"Come." said Merry; "we must go

out again.

"Again?" whispered the girl.
"Yes," Merry smiled; "this time the

two of us alone.

a low, tender thrill in Merry's voice. He took her hand and led her out upon the empty stage. The curtain was lifting slowly. From where she stood she saw Enoch standing in the wings. His face was flushed with ex-citement. The audience looked to the girl like a blur of color and human forms. The people swayed forward eagerly, and the applause became uproarious. A voice cried, "Speech! Speech!" It began to come insistent ly from the back of the house. cry was taken up by men and women everywhere in the audience. Dorcas turned to Merry, Oswald was beckoning to him from the wings, but the

actor shook his head. "I could not make a speech tonight if my life depended on it," he whisand the curtain descended

house. Some one was shouting for th author. Dorcas laid her hand upon

"They want you," she cried.
He smiled and shook his head.
She heard Oswald urge Enoch go in front of the curtain. The noise across the stage and put her hand

"take Merry with you and explain. Wentworth left her without a word.

Oswald and the stage manager beckback, then stopped. Merry had called her. She paused, staring into his eyes

"Enoch must not go out there

The Army of Constipation ls Growing Smaller Every Day. CARTER'S LITTLE

LIVER PILLS are

Breut Sood

matter? The play is a success. You believe in me. I did it—for you. What

"Oh, splendid!" Oswald's voice was

drop curtain, then she stopped. A silence had fallen, not only upon the house but behind the scenes. Stage hands who had been dragging properties about stood motionless. A shiver crept over the girl. She felt Merry lay his hand on hers with a steadying clasp that seemed to quiet her. She could hear Enoch speaking. He had



A Look of Consuming Hatred Flitted

hind the scenes was listening and understanding except herself. His voice otionless in the had been. She turned to glance at wings, with Merry beside her, leaning Merry. Once a look of consuming against a table. The curtain had fallen hatred flitted across his face, and his

> ing hand and ran to her dressingher fingers tingle where Andrew had touched them, and there was a look of terror in her eyes.

Alice Volk sat waiting for her in the dressing-room. Little Julie jumped to her feet when Dorcas entered. The girl did not speak, but clasped the child to her bosom.

"Alice," she whispered, "help me to

ask Dugald to get a carriage. I want to go home." The woman kissed the girl's neck as she unbuttoned her gown. "It has, been an awful strain. I know all, about it-but Miss Dorcas, your future

dress as soon as you can. And Julie

The child returned in a minute. "Mr Wentworth has a carriage ordered. Dugald says will you go with him?" "No," cried Dorcas; "tell Dugald I'll, be ready in ten minutes. I am going,

Merry stood waiting at the stage entrance when she went out. He had heard Julie deliver the message. "Good night, Miss Dorcas," he said. "Sleep well. Remember, everything is all right. I owe it to you, I owe you more than you understand. You made good tonight; the papers will tell you so in the morning. Good night. God bless

"Good night." The girl shivered for a moment. It was intensely cold, and she drew a fur coat close to her chin. The cabman drove quickly, for the streets were emptied of vehicles. Along Broadway the theaters were

Jason stood waiting to open the door dusky old face was one grin of delight. He had just returned from the theater and was growing impatient for the

triumph of a he (To be Continued)

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