

**CYNTHIA A
DAUGHTER OF THE
PHILISTINES, VOL. II**

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Cynthia a Daughter of the Philistines, Vol. II by Leonard Merrick

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BY

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LEONARD MERRICK

AUTHOR OF

'VIOLET MOSES,' 'THE MAN WHO WAS GOOD,' 'THIS STAGE OF FOOLS,'
ETC.



IN TWO VOLUMES

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CYNTHIA

A DAUGHTER OF THE PHILISTINES

CHAPTER XV.

SHE was living in the Avenue Wagram—she had taken a small furnished flat there for a few months—and when he encountered her on the boulevards, about a week afterwards, Kent was puzzled to discover a reason why he had not availed himself of her invitation. He called a day or two later, and found her cynical but stimulating. In recalling the visit, it appeared to him that she was more entertaining in conversation than in print, which suggested that her good things were not so good as they sounded, but while she talked he was amused. He left the flat with the consciousness of

Storchell 6 Dec. 1943

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having spent a very agreeable half-hour, and was sorry that her 'day,' which she had mentioned to him, was a fortnight ahead. She seemed to know many people in Paris whom he would be glad to meet, and the entrée to the little yellow drawing-room promised to be pleasurable, apart from the hostess, with whom he had drunk 'English tea' and smoked Egyptian cigarettes. That she was a widow he had taken for granted from the commencement, and his assumption had proved to be correct. She was a woman who struck one as born to be a widow; it was difficult to conceive her either with a husband or living in her parents' home. As to her children, she spoke of them frequently, and saw them seldom. Kent decided that she was too fashionable and a trifle hard, but this did not detract from the pleasure the visits afforded him; perhaps his perception of her character was responsible for much of the pleasure, indeed, for it rendered it additionally complimentary that she was nice to him.

She was surprised to learn he was married, and declared that she looked forward to knowing his wife. She did not, however, take any steps to gratify the

desire, and Kent was not regretful. He felt that few things more productive of boredom for two could be devised than a tête-à-tête between Mrs. Deane-Pitt and Cynthia; and, though he was reluctant to acknowledge it to himself, he had a feeling also that the lady would be a little contemptuous of him afterwards if it occurred. He knew her opinion of young men's marriages in the majority of cases, and was uncomfortably conscious that she would not pronounce his own to be one of the exceptions.

Mrs. Walford's letters to her daughter hitherto had been in her most enthusiastic vein. Mr. McCullough had given the disappointed bass a berth in Berlin, and in her epistles this was alluded to as a 'position,' upon which she showered her favourite adjectives of 'jolly' and 'extraordinary' and 'immense.' Cæsar was 'McCullough's right hand,' the 'best houses in Berlin' were open to him, and his prospects, social and pecuniary, were dazzling. Of late, however, he had been dwelt on less, and one morning a letter came which contained a confession of personal anxiety. The recent heavy drop in American stocks, and the failure of two

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or three brokers, had seriously affected the jobber. They thought of trying to let The Hawthorns, which was much too large for them now, and moving out of the neighbourhood. Caesar remained McCullough's right hand, but quite briefly; and it was evident that the writer was in great distress.

Cynthia was terribly grieved and startled. She dashed off eight pages of love and inquiries by the evening mail, and when the news was confirmed, with more particulars, she felt she could do no less than run over to utter her sympathy in person.

Kent agreed that perhaps it was advisable, and raised the money that was necessary cheerfully enough by pawning his watch and chain. Only when she sent him a rather lengthy telegram from Streatham, detailing her mother's frame of mind, he felt that she was exaggerating his share in her solicitude.

The chilly salon, where the ladies played forfeits after dinner, or the vivacious daughter thumped the piano, was not attractive during Cynthia's absence. Neither was it lively to smoke alone in his room, or to go to a theatre or a music-hall by himself, and when, in calling