



Remember Steddon, a pretty, unsophisticated girl, is the daughter of a kindly but narrow-minded minister in a small, mid-western town. Her father,

Rev. Doctor Steddon, violently opposed to what he considers "worldly things," accepts motion pictures as the cause for much of the evil of the present day. Troubled with a cough, Remember goes to see

Dr. Bretherick, an elderly physician who is astonished to find her in a bad plight. Pressed by the doctor, Remember admits her unfortunate affair with

Elwood Faraway, a poor boy, son of the town set. As Remember and Dr. Bretherick discuss the problem, a telephone message brings the news that Elwood has been killed in an accident. Dr. Bretherick persuades Remember to go West, her cough serving as a plausible excuse. Unable to bear the secret any longer, Remember goes to her mother and confesses.

Her mother agrees with the plan of the doctor. Mem leaves town. On the train Mem accidentally meets Tom Holby, movie star, traveling with Robina Teele, leading lady of the movies, who are the cynosure of all eyes. The train comes to an abrupt halt, a disaster having been bet out and walk about.

At Tucson Mem meets Dr. Galbraith, a pastor, who knows her father. She miscalls Tom Holby Mr. Woodville in order to make her fancied suitor seem more real. While the Galbraiths are away, she writes them as well as her parents that she has married "Mr. Woodville" and that they are to live in Yuma—for which place she buys a ticket.

Arriving there she falls in with the movie company of Tom Holby. Tom insists that she become an extra and is most cordial to her. She finds herself in the movie game.

After her accident, Mem receives a letter from Leva Mematre, inviting her to Hollywood, and stating in her letter that she can get a position in a film laboratory.

Mem gets a job in a film laboratory but loses it. She meets a Mrs. Sturges from her home town, who talks of the evils of the movies and says that the stars are forced to sell their souls. Mem has a letter saying that her mother is coming to Palm Springs, and Mem goes there to meet her. She decides that she will sell her soul to get a job in the movies.

#### Now Go On With the Story

When Remember learned that her mother was already on the train, she could devise no plan for turning her back. Somehow she had to be met and provided for.

Everyone of the women of Mem's Hollywood household was out of work. She who had savings was lending it to them who had not.

And now her mother! With a few dollars from Leva's waning resources Mem took the train to Palm Springs.

With Mrs. Dack and her boy she stood on the platform of the little desert town waiting for the up train, and when Mrs. Steddon dropped off the steps Mem put her right back on again!

Mrs. Steddon had been prepared to find a scared and sticky child in a shack at Palm Springs. She had come as a rescuing angel. She found that her wings and halo were old-fashioned!

When they reached Los Angeles they left Mrs. Dack and Terry at the home of a cousin, then sped on to the bungalow, where Leva made Mrs. Steddon welcome.

And now Mem recalled Mrs. Sturges and her statement (so glibly did she substitute fact for facts) that "everyone of them has to pay the Price!"

Mem grew grim as she meditated. "The Price"—it was only a vague phrase. But she was ready to pay it, whatever it was. The question was, to whom?

She brooded a long while before she thought of a shop to visit. She smiled sardonically as she remembered The Woman's Exchange at home, where women sold what they made—painted china, hammered brass, knit goods, cake and candies.

Well, she would sell what God had made of her and what man might make of her!

At the studio she had met the casting director, Arthur Tirrey. It was he who said to this one or that one, "Here is a part; play it, and the company will give you so much a week."

He was the St. Peter of the movie heaven, empowered to admit or to deny. He was the man for her to seek. He had seemed a decent enough man, and he had looked at Mem without insolence. But you never can tell!

Mem studied herself a long while in the mirror, since her eyes and her smile must be her chief wardrobe, her siren equipment. She practiced such expressions as she supposed to represent invitation. They were rather silly and they made her sick.

She reached Tirrey's office and found him idly swapping stories with his assistant. He spoke to her very courteously, motioned her into his office, closed the door, and took his own place behind the desk.

The telephone rang. He called into it: "Sorry, Miss Waite; that part has been filled. The company couldn't make your salary. I begged you to take the cut, but you wouldn't. Times are hard and you'd better listen to reason. Sorry. Goodby."

This was a discouraging background for Mem's screen scenario. But she determined to carry out her theory, and, in all self-loathing, adjusted herself in her chair to what she imagined was a Cleopatra sinuosity. She thought of her best lines, secretly twitched up her skirts and thrust her ankles well into view.

She turned upon Mr. Tirrey her most languishing eyes, and tried to pour enticement into them as into bowls of fire.

She pursed her lips and set them full. She widened her breasts with deep sighs.

Tirrey seemed to recognize that she was deploying herself. He grew a little uneasy. But he was as polite to Mem as if she had been Robina Teele.

"What can I do for you?"

"I want a chance to act."

"What experience have you had?" he asked.

Mem was suddenly confronted with the fact that all actors must offer themselves for sale—not the pretty women only, but the old men, too, and character women.

Actors are much abused for talking about themselves. Few of them do when business is not involved, but when it is they must discuss the goods they are trying to sell. Shoe merchants talk shoes; railroad presidents, railroads; politicians, politics; clergymen, salvation. Each salesman must recommend his own stock and talk it up.

So Mem had to grope for experience and dress her window with it. And she had had so little she lied a little, as one who does who tries to sell anything.

"I was with the company that Tom Holby and Robina Teele played in. I took the part of an Arabian woman. Mr. Folger, the director—er—praised my work"

"Well, he knows," said Tirrey, "but he's not with this company, you know. Have we your name and address and a photograph outside in our files?"

"No."

"Well, if you'll give them to Mr. Dobbs, with your height, weight, color of hair and eyes, and experience, we'll let you know when anything occurs. I'll introduce you to Mr. Dobbs, and he—"

He moved toward the door to escape from the cruelty of his office, but a frenzy moved her to seize his arm in a fierce clutch.

She tried to play the vampire as she had seen the part enacted in the screen by various slithy loves. She drew her victim close to her, pressed tight against him, and poured upward into his eyes all the venom of an amorous basilisk.

"I'll pay the price! I know what it costs to succeed, and I'm willing to yap. I'll do anything you say, be anything to you. You can't refuse

me!"

She could hardly believe her own ears hearing her own voice, though with pride in the acting she was doing lifted her from the disbut of her role.

He looked at her without surprise, without horror, without even amusement, but—also without a hint of surrender. His only mood was one of jaded pity.

"You poor child, who's been filling your head with that stuff? Are you really trying to vamp me?"

The crass word angered her.

"I'm trying to force my way to my career, and I don't care what it costs."

Tirrey's sarcastic smile faded.

"Sit down a minute and listen to me. A little common sense ought to have told you that what you've been told is all rot. Suppose I was willing to give a job to every pretty girl who tries to bribe me with love. Do you know how many women I see a day—a hundred and fifty on some days; nearly a thousand a week. And if you won me over you'd still have to please the director and the managers and the author and the public. How long would our company keep going if we selected our actresses according to their immorality?"

"Forget this old rot about paying the price. Tell Mr. Dobbs your pedigree and we'll give you the first chance we get, and no initiation fee or commission will be charged. How's that? A little bit of all right, eh? You're a nice child, and pretty, and you'll get along."

He lifted her from her chair and put his arm around her as a comrade, and slapped her shoulder blades in and accolade of good fellowship.

She broke under the strain and began to cry. She dropped back into her chair and sobbed. It was good to be punished and rebuked into common decency by the way of common sense.

It chanced that the president of the company was returning to his office from a visit to one of the stages. This was the man whose name was familiar about the world. Every film from his factory was labeled "Bermond presents—" "Copyright by the Bermond company"; "This is a Bermond picture." The slogan of the company was "This is a Bermond year."

When Mr. Bermond heard Mem crying, his heart hurt him. He did not like scandal, disorder, confusion or grief on his lot.

He went to Mem and tried to console her. He took her hands down from her contorted face and made her to look at him. Seen through the cascades of her tears she was strikingly attractive, appealing.

"Sarah Behnhardt failed in her first play, you know, and you may be a second Sarah some day," he said. "Just you wait."

Mem's eyes were filling with rainbows. A bystander drew Bermond aside. It was Claymore, a dramatist who had had a few successes before he established himself in the moving pictures as a director.

"That girl has the tear," he said to Bermond. "That woman you've given me for my next picture is awful. Let me take this kid and give her a real test. She might have just what we want."

"Sure! Fine! Go to it!" said

Bermond, and hastened to Mem with the good news that Mr. Claymore, the great Mr. Claymore—was going to give her a chance—

The next morning found Mem at the studio betimes, beddowing mar- caro and advice from Miss Calder.

Claymore was waiting for her when she came from the women's dressing rooms. She was daubed, smeared, lined, powdered, rouged, mascoared, and generally calclimed for duty. Her heart was beating in alternate throbs of fear and frenzy. Her feet were on the edge of Rubicon.

Claymore had provided a camera man, a few men to handle the electric lights, a property man, and even a pair of musicians—a violinist and the treader of a wheezy little portable melodion.

Claymore marched her into the scene and gave her a little of what he called footwork.

"Go back to that door and come forward to this spot. Shake hands with—er—with your lover—er—well—no. Let me see. That's too simple. Let's get down to business."

"You've a— Ah,—well, just for instance, you've been—er—betrayed and your child has died and you've been accused of murdering it and you're now being called before the judge and jury. Do you get me? You are coming into a court room under a charge of crime; you feel your shame, but you're innocent of the charge, yet you're overwhelmed with guilt for your fall, and the father of the child is—was killed in the war, say—and you don't much care whether you live or die; so you're in despair, yet defiant. That's a triple-layer of emotion for you and I don't suppose you can get much of it over, just try to give the atmosphere of it. Now back to the door. Walk through it once."

Claymore was as much embarrassed as Mem, for his invention was not in its best working order so early in the morning. He felt as silly as a man badgered by a peevish child to tell a story.

But his trite plot stirred Mem amazingly. He could not know how close his random shots had come home to her and flung her back from the forward-looking artist to the lorn fugitive who had stumbled into California laden with disgrace.

She was all tremble and her eyes darted, her fingers twitched. Clay-

more marveled at her instantaneous response to his suggestion. There were born artists who shivered on the least breath of inspiration and suggestion.

His first impression of Mem was that he had found a genius, and he fought against the obstacles he encountered later with the zest of a man digging toward known gold.

In a kind of stupor Mem obeyed his commands like the trained confederate of a hypnotist. She went to the door, came in reluctant, shame-faced, doomed. She advanced slowly till she reached the edge of the rug he had indicated, then halted, and

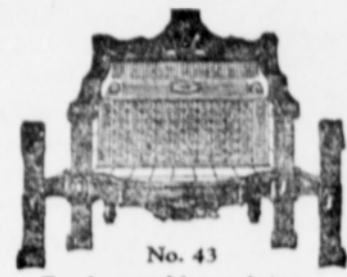
with a fierce effort hoisted her head in defiance and braved the lightning of the judge.

She heard Claymore call to her: "That's fine. Now we'll take it."

She started back, but was checked by the camera man's "Wait, please!" He ran forward and shouted directions on all sides for lights.

"Hit those spots! Throw the ash can on her. Bring up that Klieg! Put a diffuser on that Winfield. What's the matter with the second spot? Your carbons are flickering. Mike! Mike! Trim those carbons on the second spot! Pull 'em."

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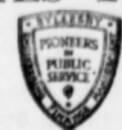
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