

SOULS FOR SALE

By RUPERT HUGHES
ILLUSTRATED BY DONALD RILEY

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

Elwood Faranby, a poor boy, son of the town sot. As Remember and Dr. Brethrick discuss the problem, a telephone message brings the news that Elwood has been killed in an accident. Dr. Brethrick 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.

narrowly avoided, and the passengers. 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 price 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 Memara, inviting her to Hollywood, and stating in her letter that she can get her 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.

Mem gets a tryout with the Bermond movie company. She finds herself posing with Claymore as her director, obeying his commands in a kind of stupor.

Mem is trained to be a star and in due course her first picture is finished, and she is being "lent" to the company starring Tom Holby. She will play the leading woman in Holby's new picture.

Meanwhile, Claymore has got Mem away to himself.

Now Go On With the Story

He never said anything, however, that he might not have said before a crowd. He never tried to hold her hand or snatch a kiss or filch an embrace. Mem was constantly set quivering with expectancy that he would make an advance, some gesture of endearment, yet always unable to decide just what she would do if he did. But he didn't.

The picture and its final retakes were finished on a Saturday afternoon. There was an evening's idleness ahead. Claymore asked Mem to take a drive in his car, a long farewell drive about the familiar and unvisited roads. She accepted meekly. Something told her that this drive was important to her fate.

Something was always telling her something. Nine times out of ten it was false, but she forgot the failures and recalled the coincidences.

Nobody had yet asked Mem for her self-respect as an initiation fee or an initiation rite. She was paid a weekly wage based upon her ability, her experience, and her usefulness. She was paid in coin on the realm.

Her price would rise and fall according to the general market for moving pictures and her specific value. Her emotions and her beauty were commodities, and Steddon stock would be quoted on the Soul Exchange as the demand for it rose and fell, as the bidders for it increased or diminished.

Claymore had been chaperoned by the company and his own reverence for discipline. But now she was outside his authority. Both were outside the Bermond inclosure. And they were as helpless together as any other twain whom nothing restrains or separates in the undertow of passion. They were two emotional people without a barrier.

Among the countless things said about the hows and whys of women's surrenders one motive seems to have been too much ignored, though it must have exerted a vast influence as women go more and more into the worlds of business, of art, and of freedom with only themselves for their guardians.

Good sportsmanship, a hatred of emugery, a contempt for too careful

self-protection, a disgust for a holler than thou self-esteem, these are the amiable attitudes of mind that make for popularity. To be a miser of one's graces, a coddler of one's virtue, is to be unloved and unlovable.

So many a man will gamble, break a law, risk his career, his health, his life, get drunk, steal, slay, and play the fool rather than face the reproach that he is a mollicoddie, a Puritan, a prig, and a Pharisee.

And many a woman who would not yield for love or luxury must have consented for fear of seeming to be overproud, stingy, cold, subnormal, unsportsmanlike.

Mem had once been swept beyond the moorings by a summer storm of devotion to young Faranby, her first love. Now she was to feel her anchors cut adrift by the gracious gesture of goodfellowship with a colleague.

The Ocean Drive stretched along a forest of palms like huge coco-nuts dark against the gaudy west. The automobiles of every make were so many that they were like one big automobile, or at least a chain on which they slid as black beads. Their lights were coming out now like early stars pricking a twilight sky. For miles and miles the highway mounted and writhed along the steep slopes of precipices, hugging the rocks to let pass car after car with lamps flashing in front of blurred passengers.

In almost every bay where there was a bit of space a motor had drawn close to the cliff side in the dark, each car a wheeled solitude, a love boat at anchor in a stream of cars. There was a strange influence in this recurrent mystery. Everywhere lovers were hiding themselves in conspicuous concealment. Mem felt disgust at the first dozen, amusement or contempt for the next fifty, tolerance for the next, and—

Claymore did not speak of them or anything else. He was too busy twirling the wheel and gauging the little distances between the edge of the cliff and the cars that whizzed past.

Halfway up the canyon his headlight ransacked a black cove and found no motor in possession of the estuary of night. And here, to Mem's dumb astonishment, he abruptly stopped the car, swung in off the road against the wall of rubble, and relaxed with a sigh of exaggerated fatigue.

"Well," he groaned, "this is a drive! I'll rest a bit if you don't mind. Pretty here, eh?"

From their cavern of gloom they looked across a fathomless ravine to a mountain on which the risen moon poured a silent Niagara. In the dozing radiance a creamy shaft of yucca stood, a candle blown out in a deserted cathedral.

The night air was of a strange gentleness, and the cars that shot past threw no light in their retreat.

There was a long, long silence that filled Mem with a terror she could not fail to enjoy. She could not tell whether she heard her own heart beats or his, but excitement was athrob together in the little coach that had brought them so swiftly to this remote seclusion.

Claymore was dumb so long that Mem had time to cease to be afraid of what he would say, and to begin

to wish he would get it said, so that she could know what her answer would be.

She felt a baffling uncertainty of herself. She could not imagine what she might do or say. She had not had much experience of men, but enough to know that before long he would initiate the immemorial procedure that starts with an arm adventuring about a waist and a voyage after a kiss.

She told herself that the only right and proper thing to do would be to resist, protest, forbid, and prevent at any cost the profanation of her sacred integrity. If necessary, she must fight, scratch, scream, escape, run away, appeal for help to any passer-by, or, as a last resort, leap over the cliff and die for honor's sake.

But who was that She and who was that Herself that told each other so many things?

Herself told She that Mr. Claymore could not be treated as an ordinary ruffian, an insolent, outrageous knave, a fiend. He had treated her with most delicate and kindly courtesy from the first, he had given her his admiration, his praise, his devotion, his mute but evident affection.

If he loved her and revealed his love, she could hardly reward his patient chivalry with prompt ingratitude and violence and fear. That would make her the insulter, not him.

She must be gentle with him, and ask him kindly to forbear and not spoil the pleasant friendship that she had prized.

If Mr. Claymore should propose marriage, that would make his carresses acceptable—according to some canons, though not to all. But he could not marry her and she did not want to marry anybody just now. She was a free woman in a free country.

She was not free, however, from the witchery of this night, this dream, the vast yearning of this mountainous beauty. She was not free of the disaster of desire, the hunger to be embraced and kissed and whispered to, the need to be kept warm in the cold loneliness of the world.

Her thoughts spun giddily in her mind, all entangled with a skien of romantic threads. She was young and pretty and time was wasting her flowery graces. Some one bloomed.

While she debated with herself, as doubtless innumerable women have plights, Claymore's own mind was a chaos of equally ancient platitudes of a man's philosophy.

At length he found the courage or the cruelty to slip his arm about Mem's waist and to draw her close to him. He was almost more alarmed than delighted to find that she hardly resisted at all.

He took her hands in his and whispered, "Your poor little hands are cold!"

Then he kissed them with cold lips that he lifted at once to hers and found them warm and strangely like a rose against his mouth.

He was as much amazed as if hers were the first lips he had ever kissed—as if he had just invented kissing. Then in a frenzy of wonder he closed her in his arms with all his power. He did not know that the

wheel bruised her side, and neither did she.

But she forgot to debate her duty or to think of her soul. She thought only of the rapture of this communion and her arms stole around his neck and she clenched him with all the power of her arms.

Mem, swooning she knew not whither, was awakened from her mad rapture by a low voice across her shoulder.

"Sorry to interrupt you folks, but I need your money."

She turned and found herself blinded by the glare from a motor halted at a little distance. Dazzled as she was, she could see the gaunt hand that held before her a black pistol with a glint outlinging its ugly muzzle.

Claymore was sane enough to attempt no resistance, though he almost perished of chagrin. He endured the insolence of the masked stranger who stole the chain and a wallet and the loose silver.

The blackguard held his clubbed pistol over Claymore's head a moment, then forebore to strike, and dropped from the step with a last warning.

"Sit pretty now and keep 'em up till I get goin' or I'll—"

His car shot around the curve.

Claymore brought down his aching arms. They were too much ashamed of themselves to return to their post about Mem's shoulders.

A perverse remorse filled their souls with confusion; a remorse because of a wrong remorse, a disgust for an unaccepted temptation and for being so temptable.

A woman never quite forgives a man for not dying for her at the first opportunity. She probably never quite forgives him for dying, either.

So the clever man evades the situation where a choice is required, as the virtuous man evades temptation while it is yet far off.

TO BE CONTINUED

Shoots Out Tooth, But—

..Santander, Spain, Nov. 21—Thomas Morales didn't want to pay a dentist. So he placed a pistol behind a painful front tooth and pulled the trigger. The bullet was deflected by the tooth so that it tore through his left cheek. He is now in the hospital, minus the tooth, but convinced after all that he should have gone to a dentist.

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