

SOULS FOR SALE

by RUPERT HUGHES
ILLUSTRATED BY DONALD RILEY

And so one morning they crossed the Mississippi and into Calverly.

As they stepped down from their car, both gasped and clutched.

The Reverend Doctor Steddon was a few yards away from them, studying the off-getting passengers.

"Let's see if he knows us," snickered Mrs. Steddon, with a relapse to girlishness.

"Let's," said Mem.

They knew him instantly, of course. He wore the same suit they had left him in, and the only change they could discern was a little more white in a little less hair.

But he did not know them at all. It amused them to pass him by and note the casual glance at the smart hat and the polite traveling suit of his wife. He had expected a change in his daughter, but he was probably braced for something loud and gaudy.

So her father passed her by. When Mrs. Steddon turned and hailed him in a voice that was gladder and more tender than she knew, he whirled with his heart bounding, and they heard his hungry, feasting heart groaning.

"I thank Thee, O God, Now let test Thou thy servant depart in peace."

But neither the Lord nor his family granted that prayer. His wife had turned time far back. Poor thing! She had never known till this year the rapture of being fashionable; had never dared, never understood how, to look her best.

Hiding under his high chin, Mem begged his forgiveness for all the heartaches she had caused him. She wept on his white bow tie, twisting a button on his coat and pouring out her regret for dragging his wife away from him and causing them to quarrel over her. She said it was a crime for her to have taken her mother on East and left him alone, but he protested:

"D'you suppose I wanted my little girl traveling in those wicked cities all by herself?"

This gladdened Mem exquisitely. It showed that, for all her wanton career, she was still in her father's eyes an innocent child who must be protected from the world. Of course, it was, rather the world that needed to be protected from her. But she would not disturb the sweet delusion.

The mayor had come down to give Mem welcome, as soon as he could push through the mob of Steddon children that devoured Mem and their mother.

The manager of the Calverly Capitol, with its capacity of two hundred, brushed the mayor aside and claimed Mrs. Steddon and his prize. He had a car waiting for her, and a room at the hotel; in case the parsonage was over-crowded.

Doctor Steddon grew Isalan as he stormed back: "My daughter stays in her own home."

This brought Mem snuggling to his elbow.

As their car moved off, with a sudden stab she remembered Elwood Farnaby and the far-off girl he had loved too madly well in that moonlight embrace. How little and pitiful that Mem had been! There was a toyish unimportance in her very fall, the debacle of a marionette world. But Elwood Farnaby was great by virtue of his absence and his death. He was a hero now with Romeo and Leander and Abelard and the other geniuses of passion whose shadows had grown gigantically long in the sunset of a tragic punishment

for their ardors. A horrifying thought came to Mem: if he had not died, she would have become his wife and the mother of his premature child. She would have been a laughing stock, material for ugly whispers about the village. And she would have been the shabbiest of wives even here. She would never have known fame or ease or wealth.

After lunch she found Dr. Bretherick and had him drive her to the cemetery. "And," she said: "I want to give you the installment I forgot, of the conscience money. Please get it to papa as soon as you can. And here's a little extra."

The doctor took the bills with a curious smile. She seemed to feel his sardonic perplexity as she mused along a well-thought path.

"If I hadn't been a fallen woman, I couldn't have saved papa's church from ruin. How do you explain it? What's the right and wrong of it all?"

The old doctor shook his head: "I'm no longer fool enough, honey, to try to explain anything that happens to us here. According to one line of thinking, your misstep was a divine plan. According to another, good can never come out of evil. Of course we know it does, every day; and evil out of good. So let's be as human as we can, and I guess that's about as divine as we'll ever get down here."

He led her out to his woeful little tin wagon and they went lurching through the streets and out to the cemetery.

Mem's only rite of atonement was a glance of remorseful agony cast toward Elwood's resting place. It showed her that the founder of her fortunes was honored only by a wooden headboard already warped and sidelong.

"One last favor," she mumbled to Dr. Bretherick. Get a decent tombstone for the poor boy and let me pay for it."

"All right, honey," said the doctor. And the car jangled out of the gates and into the road. And that was that.

At the supper table the younger children beset her with questions. Gladys was particularly curious and searching in her questions. Then came the hour of the theatregoing. Nobody had dared to ask Doctor Steddon if he would accompany his family. He had not made up his own mind. He dared not.

The family tacitly assumed that his conscience or his pride forbade him to appear in the sink of iniquity he had so often denounced.

The family bade him goodbye and left him, but had hardly touched the gate when he came pounding after. He flung his arms about Mem's shoulders and cast off all his offices except that of father, chuckling:

"Where my daughter goes is good enough for me!"

He made almost more of a sensation in the theatre than Mem. There was applause and cheering and even a slow and awkward rising to the feet until the whole packed auditorium was erect and clamorous.

Seats of honor was reserved for the great star and the family that reflected her effulgence. As soon as they were seated the young woman who flailed the piano began to batter the keys, and Mem's latest picture began to flow down the screen.

She could feel at her elbow the rigid arm of her father undergoing martyrdom. She felt it wince as her

first close-up began to glow, her huge eyes pleading to him in a glisten of superhuman tears. The arms relaxed as he surrendered to the wonder of her beauty. It tightened again when danger threatened her, and she could hear his sigh of relief when she escaped one peril, his gasp as she encountered another.

He was like a child playing with his first toy, hearing his first fairy tale. He was entranced. She heard him laugh with a boyishness she had never associated with him. She heard him blow his nose with a blast that might have shaken the walls of Jericho.

A sneaking side glance showed her that his eyes were dripping. And when the applause broke out at the finish of the picture, she heard his great hands making the loudest noise of all. This was heartbreaking bliss for her.

The family rode home in state, the mother and children loud in comment, the father silent.

The old parson had to think it all out. Once at home, he sent the children up to bed and held Mem and her mother with his glistening eyes for a long time before he delivered his sermon.

"My beloved wife and daughter, I—ahem, ahum! I want to plead for the forgiveness of you both. I have been wrong headed and stiff necked but now I am humbled before you in spite of all my pride. It has just come over me that when God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light, he must have had in mind this glorious instrument for portraying the wonders of his handiwork. Our dear Redeemer used the parable for his divine lessons, and it has come to me that if he should walk this earth again today he would use the motion pictures.

"You have builded better than you knew, perhaps, my child—and now I ask your pardon for being ashamed of you when I should have been proud. You were using the gifts that heaven meant you to use them. Your art is sacred and you won't, and can't, sully it in your life. God forgive me for my unbelief and send you happiness and goodness and a long long usefulness in the path you have elected."

That night Mem knelt again by her old bed, and implored strength to keep her gift like a chalice, a grail of holiness. She woke with an early morning resolve to be the purest woman and the devoutest artist ever lived.

The next day she left the town with all its blessings, no longer a scapegoat, sin laden, limping into the wilderness, but a missionary God-sped into the farthest lands of the earth. It seemed as if all Calverly was at the station to wring her hand and waft her salutation.

The conductor called "All aboard!" and hasty farewells were taken in clasp of hand and awkward kiss.

Mem ran to the rear platform and waved lengthening signals of love to her dwindling family. She noted the absence of her sister Gladys and wondered at it as she went to her drawing-room. There she found the girl ensconced in fairy triumph, smiling like a pretty witch.

"What on earth are you doing here?" Mem cried.

"Going to Los Angeles with you. I may never be great like you, but I'm going to have a mighty good time trying."

There were many questions to exchange and Mem soon learned that

Sweethearts Fifty Years Ago, They Wed Now



Mr. and Mrs. Albert H. Rogers, of Seattle, who were sweethearts fifty years ago, but who did not marry each other. After fifty years of separate married lives they have wed and are now on their honeymoon. They are shown with one of their grandchildren. They met in Wisconsin when she was fifteen and he seventeen.

her sister had flung off the chains that one or two ardent lovers had tried to fasten about her.

And when, with a last faltering reproach she asked her sister if she were wise to toss aside the devotion of a good man, Gladys laughed.

"Let love wait! The men have kept us waiting for thousands of years, till they were ready. Now let them wait for us!"

There was no gainsaying this. It had been Mem's own feeling when she left Los Angeles and her lovers there.

Let love wait, then, till she had made the best of herself. And then let love not demand that she bow her head and shrivel in his shadow; but let him bloom his best alongside.

She wondered who that fellow of her destiny would be—Tom Holby, maybe—Austin Boas, or still another perhaps; or others, perhaps, including him or them! In any case he (or they) had better behave and play fair.

As for being a mother, let that wait, too. She was going to mother the multitudes and tell them stories to soothe them.

There was far more in this dream than vanity, far more than selfishness. The hope of the world lay therein, for the world never can advance farther than its women.

She had a soul to sell and it was all her own, and she was going to market.

The dawn was hers for conquest. Mankind was her lover and her beloved. That one-man passion called love could tarry until at least the late forenoon.

THE END

She—The man I marry must have an income running up to at least five ciphers.

He—Marry me; mine's all ciphers.

TRAIN SCHEDULE
Springfield Stops

NORTH
No. 16 at 3:54 A. M. Stop to detain passengers from Klamath Falls and beyond.
No. 8 at 4:11 P. M.
Bus connections at Eugene for trains leaving 1:30 P. M. and 7 P. M.

SOUTH
No. 7 at 12:47 P. M.
No. 15 at 10:09 P. M. Flag stop for passengers to Klamath Falls and beyond.
Bus connections at Eugene for trains leaving 11:45 A. M. via Siskiyou line.

Dog Saves Dog

Belmont, Mass., Dec. 19.—Caught for eight days with his left forepaw jammed in the jaws of a hunter's trap in the McLean Woods near here, a hound dog was kept alive by the faithful ministrations of an Airdale which brought him meat and food scraps from garbage pails. The dog had strayed far from his New Hampshire home. J. H. Munroe of Nashua, N. H., is his master. Saved by boy scouts, the dog is now under treatment, but the paw which was in the trap had to be amputated. An effort will be made to find and punish the owner of the trap, for not visiting it every 24 hours, as required by law.

"They say bread contains alcohol."
"Then let's drink a little toast."

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