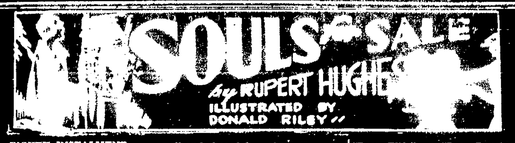

EIGHTH INSTALMENT

Remember Steddon comes West to avoid revealing the result of an unfortunate love affair to her father.

The Rev. Dr. Steddon, a clergyman of kind heart but narrow mind, who attributes much of the evil of the world to the "movies" and constantly inveighs against them. Mem, her lover Elwood Fernsby, having died in an accident, at the advice of Dr. Bretherick, gives her bad cough as an excuse to get to Arizona and from there writes home that she has met and married "Mr. Woodville," a wholly imaginary person. Later she writes again to say that her "husband" has died in the desert. She takes a job as a domestic to avoid being a burden on her parents. A fall prevents her becoming a mother. In Arizona she had met

Tom Holby, a leading man in a motion picture company, and thru him gets the opportunity to play in a desert drama. With the company is

Robina Towle, a star, fond of Holby and

Leva Lemaire, an extra woman. After her accident, Mem becomes friendly with

Mrs. Dack, a poor woman of Palm Springs, Arizona, and takes an interest in her bright little son,

Terry Dack, who has a great gift of mimicry. Inspired by a letter from Leva, Mem plans to go to Los Angeles to take a job in a film laboratory.

She gets a job in a film laboratory, but loses it. She meets a Mr. Sturgs from her home town, who talks of the evils of the movies and says the stars are forced to sell their souls. Mem then learns her mother is coming to visit her. Mem is worried about her finances.

She sees a casting director, Arthur Stirrey, and abruptly offers herself to him in return for a job in the movies. He tells her the talk about "paying the price" is all rot. Meanwhile the attention of Mr. Bermond, head of the company, is diverted to her and he decides to give her a chance. Soon she finds herself posing with Claymore as her director, obeying his commands in a kind of stupor.

Now go on with the story—

Then the lights went out and there was a wait while Mike ran along the gallery parallel, with tweezers in his gloved hands. When Mike was ready the camera man shouted: "Hit 'em! All right, Mr. Claymore!" Mr. Claymore called: "Music, please."

And Mem found herself in a sea of blazing radiance tremulous with a shimmer of music.

She went back to the door and nodded when Claymore's "Are you ready?" penetrated the myth realm from far away. She heard him murmur: "Camera! Action!" and she heard his voice reciting an improvised libretto for her pantomime.

"You've come from your dark cell! The lights blind you! You begin to see the angry public, the cruel judge. You flinch. You fall back. They are going to sentence me to death!' 'They are hissing me because I loved too well!' 'But my little baby! They said I killed him! They can't know how I loved him; how I felt his little hands on my breast, his little strong heart, how it suffered when his cheek grew cold! Oh, God! I prayed for his life, even tho it meant eternal shame! But he is gone! My lover is dead! What is this world to me!' Wring your hands! Look at the judge! Draw yourself up! Defy him! That's it! Now let the tears come. My baby, I am coming to you! My baby!"

She heard his voice wailing and trembling like the vox humana stop the village organist used to pull out for the sake of pathos. It was maudlin, surprisingly clever and trashy, yet it was the truth for her, as for millions of other girls. It was true, because it had broken so many hearts.

She felt like a fool, a guilty fool. The music, the lights, the director's voice—all, all was insanity. But it swept her heartstrings with an Aeolian thrill and they sang with a mad despair.

But Mem had been schooled all her life to keep her hands down and to avoid flourish, to take short steps and to keep her waist and hips stolid. The the fashions of the day gave her short, loose skirts, no corsets, free arms, she might as well have been handcuffed and hobbled and fastened in iron stays, for all the freedom she used.

Claymore made her run, with longer and longer stride, bend and touch the floor, fling her arms aloft, take the step of a Spanish dancer and a Spanish vixen. But she was unbelievably inept.

"I wish I had the courage and the kindness to give you a Belasco training," he said. "You know he trained Mrs. Leslie Carter for her great parts, and he had to break down her stiffness in exactly this way. Now, Sam! Show Miss Sand how to do it."

Sam, a young man, came out of the gloom and chased her about the room. She told me herself that she learned the Declaration of Independence by heart and spent hours and hours repeating it as glibly as she could. Every time she missed an articulation she went back to the beginning and recited it all over again—hundreds and hundreds of times. That's how she learned to deliver great tirades with a breathless rush, yet made every syllable distinct. That's how she learned how to charge about the stage like a lioness.

"To be a great actress is no easy job. You've got to work like a fiend or you'll get nowhere. You've got to exercise your arms and legs and your voice and your soul. If you will, you've got a big future. If you won't you'll slump along playing small parts till you lose your bloom of youth, then you'll slip into character parts and go out like an old candle."

She felt a fool. The music, the lights, the director's voice—all was insanity.

* * * *

The upshot of this ordeal by fire was that Mem was recognized as a star yet to be made—if, indeed, her nebulous ambitions should ever be condensed into solid achievement.

Claymore felt that she had a future. He told her so. But he told her that a period of hard labor lay between her and paradise.

Theirs was an exceedingly curious method of getting acquainted. Teacher and student became as much involved in each other's souls as Abelard and Heloise at their first sessions.

Claymore offered her a lift home in his automobile. It was quicker than the street car, but it seemed far quicker than that. They chattered volubly of art theories and practices. They did not realize how long the car stood in front of her bungalow before Mem got out, or how long he waited after she got out, talking, talking, before he bade her the final good night.

Her mother realized it, peering thru the curtains, and Leva exclaimed:

"Good Lord! The minx has the director eating out of her hand already. She'll get on!"

She met Tom Holby on the lot one day. He had been asked to come over and talk of a possible contract with the Bermond company. He greeted Mem with effusive enthusiasm, and she warmed at the pride of his recognition. Then she felt a little twinge of conscience—an intuition that she had no right to be so glad to see Holby, since now she fancied, she belonged to Mr. Claymore.

* * * *

One day when a little scene was being filmed in which Mem was the only actress, the rest of the company being excused for a change of costume, a visitor from overseas was brought upon the set, a great French general.

The publicity man suggested that the general might like to be photographed on the screen. He laughed and came forward with a boyish eagerness. When the picture appeared in newspaper supplements about the world it was stated in each of the captions that the great warrior had said: "Remember Steddon is the prettiest girl in America."

More amazing yet, Mem first learned of the astounding tribute from her astounded father.

The news came in a letter from the man Mem and her mother loved and dreaded. As Mrs. Steddon's fingers opened the envelope in the swirlwindness of guilt, two pictures fell to the floor. They were in the brown rotogravure of the Sunday supplements and presented Mem standing at the side of the French general. Both stated that he had called this promising member of the Bermond Company "the pretiest girl in America."

Mem and her mother gathered themselves together as if they had been struck by a gale from the blue and waited for the blood shock to assail them. Then they read the letter together. It began without any "Dear Wife" or "Dear Daughter." It began:

The enclosed clippings were sent to me by members of my congregation who were sojourning one in New York and one in Chicago. It is hard for me to doubt the witness of my eyes, but it is almost harder to believe that the wife of my bosom and the daughter reared in the shelter of our home could have fallen so low so suddenly. Before I write more I want to hear the truth from both of you, if you can and will tell it.

The Reverend Doctor Steddon was something more than a father to his daughter, something more than a husband to his wife; he was also the high priest of their religion.

But Mrs. Steddon had grown up with her husband and had seen his tempers goad him on too many mistakes. She was merely angry at him now for a burst of wrath, while Mem cowered before him as an inspired prophet.

Finally, in a fine frenzy she went to her table and wrote her husband an answer to his letter:

Dear Husband—I am ashamed of you for writing such a mean little note. Yes, I am proud to say that my daughter is an actress and is doing fine work. If you are not proud of her it is because you don't know enough to be. You will some day, you'll see.

She is working hard and earning lots of money, and I'm going to stay down here as long as she needs me. I guess you can get along without me for awhile. If you can't, come out and see for yourself how wrong you are. I hope your next letter will be an apology. Mem would send her love if she knew I was writing. Your loving;

Wife.

When this tiny bomb exploded in Doctor Steddon's parsonage it produced an outstanding effect. The old devil fighter was not afraid of all the legions of hell. He could even face his richest pewholder without flinching.

But he was afraid of that little wife of his. She alone could scold him with impunity and by the mere withdrawal of her approval cast a cloud across his heaven. He was in an abject perplexity now.

* * * *

Have a job and get a job. To him that hath.

Remember Steddon's first picture was approaching its finish.

She had been already acquiring a little name. Gossip of every sort was rife, and some of it was flattering. The word floated about that "Steddon was making good at Bermond's."

The Bermond Company, when her "term" expired, asked to renew "term" Mem to a new company that was to make Tom Holby a star. He had earned the elevation, and this meant that he and Robina Towle would part company—at least upon the screen.

When Mem read of this facinating plan in an evening paper her heart gave a hop. She was not sure just what the excitement meant within her there.

She did not want Tom Holby for herself, yet she did not want to see any other woman have him.

Claymore obtruded upon her meditations. She was under obligations imposed by his devotion.

He tried to be particularly aloof professional, and theoretical in his contact with Mem, just the contrary of his love talk last night. He had left her with a kiss on her cheek, and the whisper was still in her. Claymore and Steddon were thicker than thieves.

He proposed to her that night that she should marry him and go to Europe on his honeymoon.

(CONTINUED)

The Scrap Book

The Captain's Daughter

By James Thomas Fields

We were crowded in the cabin,
Not a soul would dare to sleep—
It was midnight on the ocean
And a storm was on the deep.

'Tis a fearful thing in winter
To be shattered by the blast
And to hear the rattling trumpet
Thunder "Cut away the mast!"

So we shuddered there in silence,
For the stoutest held his breath,
While the hungry sea was roaring
And the breakers talked with death.

As we sat there in the darkness,
Each one busy with his prayers,
"We are lost!" the captain shouted
As he staggered down the stairs.

But his little daughter whispered,
As she took his icy hand,
"Isn't God upon the ocean
Just the same as on the land?"

Then we kissed the little maiden,
And we spake in better cheer,
And we anchored safe in harbor
When the morn was shining clear.

SANTA CLAUS IS AN AMERICAN

(Continued From First Page.)

celebrated as the anniversary of the greatest Mother of all time, Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

Christmas was still, however, distinctly a religious festival. St. Nicholas Day remained the day when the children had their innings, until the 16th century. On St. Nicholas Day it was the custom to elect a Boy Bishop, who appointed other boys to the offices of the church, and the youngsters ruled their towns (since in those days the church dominated everything) until Holy Innocents Day, December 28. In some parts of Germany the Boy Bishop ceremony persisted until 1790. But in England Henry VIII abolished it in 1542. Queen Mary restored it in 1552 and Elizabeth abolished it finally a few years later.

The festivities which had been a part of St. Nicholas Day then began to be transferred to Christmas, tho there was a time when even Christmas celebrations were forbidden in England. That was in 1644, when Cromwell's Puritan Parliament passed an act forbidding any merriment or religious services at Christmas on the ground that it was a heathen festival. This feeling against Christmas persisted among the Puritan settlers of New England down to the 19th century.

The exchanging of gifts by grown-ups on Christmas Day is a very modern idea indeed. And children today where their presents come from; they no longer believe in the good "San Niklaas" who fills their stockings secretly by night. Perhaps the world was happier when Christmas giving was less of an obligation and more of a joy and the little ones still believed in fairies and Santa Claus.

Mother!

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