



SOULS FOR SALE

by RUPERT HUGHES
ILLUSTRATED BY DONALD RILEY

First Instalment

"Los Angeles!" the sneering preacher cried, as Jonah might have whinnied, "Nineveh!" and with equal scorn: "The Spanish missionaries may have called it the City of Angels: but the moving pictures have changed its name to Los Diablos! For it is the central factory of Satan and his minions, the enemy of our homes, the corrupter of our young men and women—the school of crime. Unless it reforms—and soon! — surely, in God's good time, the ocean will rise and swallow it!"

Though he was two thousand miles or more away—the Reverend Doctor Steddon was so convinced by his own prophetic ire that he would hardly have been surprised to read in the Monday morning's paper that a benevolent earthquake had taken his hint and shrugged the new Babylon off into the Pacific ocean.

But Doctor Steddon, if he could have seen the realm he oburgated, would have confessed that the devil had a certain grace as a gardener and that his minions were a handsome, happy throng. As it was Doctor Steddon had never seen Los Angeles and had never seen a moving picture. He knew that the world was going to wrack and ruin—as usual—and he laid the blame on the nearest novelty—as usual.

His daughter had heard him lay the blame in previous years on other activities. She wished he wouldn't.

But then she had not escaped blame herself, and she was in a mortal dread now of a vast cloud of obloquy lowering above her and ominous with lightning.

Her father and mother had named her Remember — after one of the Mayflower girls—nearly three hundred years after. Her father, often wished that she had been likened to those Puritan maidens. But that was because he did not know how like she was to them, how much they, too, had terrified their parents with their love of finery and romantic experiment.

For it is only the styles, and not the souls, that change. There are chronicles enough to prove that the same quota of the Remembers and the Praise-gods of Plymouth and the other colonies suffered the same bitter beatitudes and frantic bewilderments as Remember Steddon and Elwood Farnaby endured when their elbows touched in the choir loft of this mid-Western village.

Miss Steddon felt a sudden tremor in Farnaby's elbow; then it was gone from hers; she saw his thumb nail whiten as it gripped the hymn book hard.

Somehow in the words he chanted seemed to stab him with a sense of guilt. He felt it a terrible thing for her to stand before that congregation and cry aloud words of ecstasy over her redemption from sin.



... All he said was, "My Child!" ...

Their secret, unknown and unconfessed, was concealed by the very clamor of its publication. And it troubled Farnaby mightily to be gaining all the advantage of a lie by singing the truth.

When the choir was not singing openly and aboveboard, it was usually busily whispering. Even Elwood Farnaby had to lean over tonight and whisper important news to Remember. He was not permitted to call at her house or to be at her home after the service. Singing beside her in the house of God—that was different. He told her now what he had just learned, that the factory where he was employed would close down the following week because of hard times. Elwood was to have been promoted to superintendent soon.

To Remember Steddon the news that Elwood would have no job in a week and would know no place to look for one had more than a commercial interest. It was the alarm of fate.

She had loved Elwood since they were children—had loved him all the more for the squalor of his home. He was the son of the town's most eminent drunkard, old "Falldown Farnaby."

Among the slipshod children of his family Elwood alone had managed to acquire ambition. He had latterly supported his mother and a pack of brothers and sisters. He had even been able to afford to go to the war and win the guerdon of a wound that made him glorious in Remember Steddon's eyes and a little more lovable than ever.

Her father, however, had been unable to tolerate the thought of his daughter's marrying the son of the town sot. Doctor Steddon felt that he was proving his love, his loving wisdom toward his daughter, by forbidding her even to meet young Farnaby outside the choir-loft. He was sure that her love would wear out.

He did not know his daughter. Who ever did?

Elwood had expected that the bad news would shock her. But he could not understand the look of ghastly terror she gave him. He forgot it in his own bitter brooding and did not observe the deathly white that blanched her pallor.

Yet he had noted that she was paler of late and had added that worry to his backbreaking load of worries.

She coughed incessantly, too, and kept putting her hand to her chest as if it hurt her there.

On the way home under the wasted magic of the rising moon, Remember did not walk as usual between her father and mother with a hand on the arm of each. Tonight she kept on at her mother's left elbow and clung so tight to the fat, warm arm that her mother whispered:

"What's the matter, honey?"
"Nothing, mamma," she faltered.
"I'm just a little tired, I guess."

Mem again was coughing violently and the rest of the way home Doctor Steddon was not a preacher anxious about his daughter's soul, but a father afraid of her life. The cough to her parents was an ominous problem. To her it might promise a solution.

Next morning at her father's command Mem went to see Doctor Bretherick. She told him that her parents were afraid her cold was more than a cold, and she coughed for him. He asked her many questions, and she grew so confused and apt in blushes that he asked her more. Suddenly he flung her a startled look, gasped, and stared into her eyes as if he would ransack her mind. In the mere shifting of his eyelid muscles she could read amazement, incredulity, conviction, anger, and finally pity.

All he said was, "My child!"

There could be no solemn conference than their. Doctor Bretherick had attended Mem's mother when the girl was born. He thought of her still as a child, and now she dazed him and frightened him by her mystic knowledges and her fierce demands that he should help her out of her plight or help her out of the world.

He refused to do either and demanded that she meet her fate with heroism.

In the talk that followed, Dr. Bretherick drew out the fact Elwood Farnaby was "the man" and suggested a plan for their marriage when the telephone rang.

The doctor's welcoming "Hello!" broke through a many-wrinkled smile. It froze to a grimace. As Mem watched he kept saying: "Yes . . . Yes . . . Yes!" and finally, "That's right—bring him here."

He set down the telephone as if it were a drained cup of hemlock.

"It wasn't Elwood?" Mem said.
"No. Yes. Well—O God! what a bitter world this is!"

Mem caught eagerly at grief.

"Tell me! What's happened? What's happened to Elwood? He's hurt. He's killed."

"Yes!"

It was Dr. Bretherick who afterward found a solution.

"Your cough will take a long time to cure or kill," he said. "But it may come in very handy. I've got it all thought out. You can't stay in this town now, I suppose. Most of the animals crawl away and hide at such a time; so suppose you just vanish. Let your cough carry you off to—asy, Arizona or California."

She was startled at this undreamed-of escape. He went on:

"I'll tell the necessary lies. That's a large part of my practice. And practice makes perfect. You will go to some strange town—and pose as a widow.

"You will marry an imaginary man out there and let him die quietly. Then, if you ever want to come home here, you can come back as Mrs. Somebody-or-other."

He chose Woodville as the name. Mem was to write of Mr. Woodville's devotion, then to describe a hasty marriage and request that her letters thereafter be addressed to her as Mrs. Woodville.

After a brief honeymoon she could eliminate Woodville in some way to be decided at leisure. It would be risky, he said; to let Mr. Woodville live too long.

A hurricane struck the little town of Caverly on the day of Elwood's funeral. When Mem expressed a wish to sing with the choir at the service over their late fellow-singer, her mother cried, "A girl who's got to be shipped out West has got no right to go out in weather like this."

So she stayed at home and stared through the streaming windows. She saw her poor old father set out to preach the funeral sermon.

He had that valor of the priests which leads them to risk death in order to defeat death; to endure all hardship lest the poorest soul go out of the world without a formal conge. Doctor Steddon clutched his old overcoat about him and plunged into rain that hatched the air in long, slanting lines.

(Continued on following page)

Selvi
RA
COL



I p
lov
che
b
rad

SELV
MU
Corner
Gro
Tel

DR. GE

Hours: 9
16 N
Office Phon
Residence I

Phone
Hi
Man

Tile P

Jam
926

HORS
Summer

Horse
KENTUCKY
S
DUR
Telegraph
1 mi. so B

DR.
D

Suite 4
256 St. Jo