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Souls for Sale

(Continued from preceding page)

Again and again Mem revolted at the outrage of robbing her own parents of their savings — their one shield against old age. She went again and again to Doctor Bretherick and demanded that he release her from her promises not to tell the truth and not to kill herself.

But he compelled her to his will, and she was too glad for a will to replace her own panic to resist him. For a necessary stimulant he prophesied that somehow in that land of gold she was seeking she would find such wealth that she could repay her parents their loan with usury, with wealth, perhaps. Who knew?

He spoke of many women who had begun poor and finished rich.

"You might go into the movies, for instance, and make more money than Coal Oil Johnny," he said.

Mem imbibed mysterious tonics at the doctor's office, and always came away buoyed up with the feeling that her tragedy was unimportant, commonplace, and sure to have a happy finish.

But the moment she reached home she entered a demesne where everything was solemn, where jokes were never heard, except pathetic old witticisms more important in intention than in amusement.

And at last, one day, quite unexpectedly, when she was under no apparent tension at all, the girl went into Mrs. Steddon's room and said, in a quiet tone:

"Mamma, I want to tell you something. I'd rather break your heart than deceive you any longer."

"Why, honey! Why, Mem dear, what on earth is it? You can't break this tough old heart of mine. What is it?"

She whispered it so softly that her breath was hardly syllabled.

"Mamma, I—Fm going to have—to have a baby."

The shock of the news was its own ether. Mrs. Steddon whispered back, cowering:

"You? You! My baby! You? A baby?"

Mem nodded and nodded till her knees were on the floor and her brow in her mother's lap. Old hands came gropingly about her cheeks. She felt the drip, drip of tears falling into her hair, each tear a separate pearl from a crown of pride.

Then her mother fumbled at the dreadful question:

"But who—who—"
"Elwood!"

Mrs. Steddon's decision was easy, and she made no difficulty of the gross deceptions involved. Her husband must be protected in his illusions and protected from the necessity of wreaking his high moral principles on his own child. His child must be protected from the mercies world and the immediate wrath of the village.

(Continued Next Week)

Lion and hyena specimens obtained by the Marshall Field Jr. expedition to British India, in charge of Col. J. C. Faunthorpe, have been received at Field Museum of Natural History for use in proposed additional exhibits.

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