SOULS *for* SALE

By RUPERT HUGHES.

(Continued From Saturday.)

She was the more determined to seek a foothold in comedy, in wild farce. She wanted to play a woman of sin, a vampire, anything that would free her of the charge of wearing a virtuous mask.

She burned the letter, but she could never forget it. She could not walk along a street or ride in a car without wondering if the last man who cast a glance her way might not be the thief who had robbed her of something irretrievable. When she sat in a moving picture theater she wondered if he were not the man at her elbow, and, since few men failed to look at her with a trailing glance that caught a little on her beauty as on a hook, she was incessantly thrown into panics.

In time she grew brazen and said she didn't care. A little later she forgot the terror that walked by, but now and then it would return upon her—as often when she was alone as when she was in the range of human eyes.

CHAPTER LII.

The first thing that struck Mem about the business of selling jokes was the melancholic despondency of it. In the other studios there had been a deadly earnestness at times, but usually a cheerful informality. But Ned Ling was in a state of nerves and dismal with anxieties.

The first scene rehearsed showed Mem being ardently proposed to by a dapper young juvenile whose grace and beauty were to be the foil for Ned Ling's triumphant ugliness. The juvenile was instructed to do a simple bit of business.

Young Mr. McNeal, realizing that the scene was supposed to be mildly funny, tried to play it in a mood of gayety—to "horse" it a little with a slight extravagance of manner and a humorous twinkle in his eye.

Ned Ling checked him at once.

"Cut out the comedy, Mr. McNeal, if you please! It's all right to be funny in an emotional picture, but comedy is a serious business. A joke is dynamite, and if it's handled carelessly it will blow up in your hands and take you with it. I want the audience to blow up, not you. So you carry that scene as seriously as you can."

The criticism hurt young Mr. McNeal, but it warned Mem. She went through her own business with a simple matter-of-factness as if it had no humor in it. This was because she did not know how to make it funny. To her amazement Ned Ling cried out:

"Great! Perfect! Play it straight! The audience wants to laugh at your expense. Don't let 'em know you know you're funny, or you're gone. But, Mr. McNeal, I must ask you not to crab Miss Steddon's scene."

"Crab the scene, sir? What did I do?"

"You moved."

"Don't you want me to move?"

"Never! Not when somebody else is getting off a point. You can kill half or all the laugh by distracting attention. An audience can only see one thing at a time—get one idea at a time. You've got to ship 'em your jokes like a train of box cars. You can't jumble 'em, or there's a wreck.

"When Miss Steddon's at work, you freeze! And Miss Stedden will do the same when it's your turn. And when I'm with you I'll murder you if you move an eyelid when I'm springing something. And you can murder me if I breathe during anything of yours. And one thing more. Watch out that you don't spoil your own comedy by moving the wrong part of your anatomy. I can kill the best face play in the world by moving my feet or my hands. I can kill the work of my hands by rolling my eye. Remember that! Comedy is the most solemn business there is."

Mem was amazed, dismayed at the anguish of exactitude attending each little bit of silly wit. She had captured her tears and her dramatic climaxes with a rush. But wit had to be stolen upon, prepared, and exploded just so.

Ned Ling at lunch time told her of a year of meditation spent on one idiotic incident. He had not got it right yet. It might not be ready for this picture or the next. Some day it would come out just right, and then it would appear like an improvisation of the moment.

He was especially delicate about the broad bits. He was a lover of coarse jokes; he loathed the Puritanism that gave them an immoral quality. Yet they would not have been half so funny or perhaps not funny at all if it were not for the forbidding of them, just as nakedness would suggest no evil thoughts if it were ignored or made compulsory, or if the wrong-headed moralists did not surround it with horror and give it the fascination of rarity.

Mem suffered acutely from Ned Ling's discussions of risky humor. She had never heard such talk.

She was like a trained nurse getting her first glimpse of life through the eyes of a doctor, learning not to swoon at the lifting of the veils.

Ned Ling had a doctor's impatience of prudency, the same contempt for the vicious indecency of what he called nasty-nice. He lolled Mem horribly, but he shook the furniture of her soul into more solid places.

Like a nurse, like a woman doctor, Mem was far more decent after this course of training than before. But it took all her nerve to keep from wincing, from protesting, from taking up that obsolescent woman's weapon, "How dare you!"

She learned in time to laugh wholeheartedly, like a man, at the coarse verities. She was not educated up to Rabelais. Few women have ever yet gone so high in the upper humanities.

She would never love the great vulgarities, but she was emancipated from the smaller squeamishness, the wide-eyed doll mind, and the Kate Greenaway innocence.

That was why, perhaps, she could revel so wonderfully in "The Beggar's Opera" when she saw it.

It was the first opera she ever did see, grand or comic. Not even a musical comedy had passed her eyes and ears. Her father did not believe in opera, and if he had had his way Mozart, Verdi and Wagner would have been as dumb as Shakespeare—for he abhorred the playhouse, too. The catalogue of his abhorrences was unending. He abhorred almost everything human that he could think of except when it was twisted into a form of prayer. He liked plays about Santa Claus, and he vaguely approved the old miracle plays the Church had fostered, since he never dreamed how indecent many of them were. He was beginning to admit that motion pictures of educational or religious purpose might atone for their sins.

But Mem would as soon have asked permission to go to a dance as to a theater in Calverly.

Los Angeles had, for a city of its size, a minimum of theatrical entertainments. The long haul across the deserts made it prohibitive of late years for most companies to visit the Pacific coast. She had seen a few plays given by the city stock companies and by the Hollywood Community Players. She had even dragged her mother to those devilish amusements anad brought her away without a sniff of brimstone.

Her acquaintance with the world was almost exclusively of the movies, movish. Like the people of all other trades, when the cinefators had a free evening they spent it in more of the same. The picture houses were frequented by the picture people—of whom there were thousands in Los Angeles.

Her first opera was curiously the last opera one might be expected to see at all in her day.

Somebody in London had been inspired to revive the sensation of 1728. It had run for a solid year in the new London and another season in New Yorok. Its ancient art had glistened like a Toledo blade. It made the epigrams of Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw look old-fashioned. An opera whose hero was a thief and whose scenes were sordid—the gayest of operas, it dumfounded Mem as it had set old London aghast. There where the rival Italian companies had made war in an otherwise undisputed field, it suddenly arose and laughed them off the boards—drove Handel into bankruptcy, drove him to such despair that he went to Ireland and, casting about for something to do besides the operas that were a closed career for him, tossed off in three weeks—"The Messiah"(!) and became immortal as a religious force.

(To Be Continued Tomorrow.)

Hard Luck for Woman.

Elvira, O., Nov. 26.—Miss Mabel Nash, republican candidate for county clerk, was observed with a sign pinned to her dress a couple of days before election. The sign read: "Not talking. No, it's not permanent, but orders from my doctor. Have tonsilitis."

SLEEPY-TIME TALES

TOMMY FOX, ADVENTURER

BY ARTHUR SCOTT BAILEY

CHAPTER II.

Jimmy Rabbit and His Fox-Party.

You've heard of donkey-parties. No doubt you've been to them and tried to pin a tail, when you were blindfolded, upon the picture of a tailless donkey that was hung on a wall.

Somehow Jimmy Rabbit got the notion that he would give a fox-party. As soon as the idea popped into his head he hurried to invite all his friends.

At first they were quite backward about accepting his invitation.

"A fox-party!" Miss Belinda Bunny exclaimed with a shudder when Jimmy Rabbit stopped at her house to

"My! My!" she exclaimed. "I smell a Fox!"

ask her if she would come. "Won't that be very dangerous?"

Jimmy Rabbit smiled.

"You don't understand," he said. "There won't be a real fox present. There'll only be a picture of a fox."

Miss Bunny clapped her paws together and cried that that would be fun.

"May I go, ma?" she begged her mother.

"Yes! We'll go," said Mrs. Bunny. She hadn't been invited at all. But she meant to go just the same, because she liked a good time now and then like anybody else.

Well, Jimmy Rabbit was quite willing to have Mrs. Bunny at his fox-party, so long as she brought her daughter with her. So that was settled.

By the end of the day every one had said he would come to the party—after Jimmy Rabbit had explained to all that there would be not the slightest danger.

That evening the guests met in the back pasture, near the woods. Along the fence Jimmy Rabbit had stretched a life-size picture of Tommy Fox. And when the guests saw it they all laughed heartily. It looked exactly like Tommy, except that it had no tail. And that made everybody chuckle.

"Now," said Jimmy Rabbit, "we'll let Miss Belinda Bunny be the first one to pin the tail on the picture." He stepped forward to blindfold Belinda. And just then Belinda's mother shouldered her way through the company.

"I'm the oldest in the party," she announced. "I ought to be the first."

Well, Jimmy Rabbit didn't want to offend her. She was the mother of Miss Belinda. So he tied a handkerchief over Mrs. Bunny's eyes, put a tail and a pin into her paw, spun her about several times, and then gave her a gentle push toward the picture. He gave her a gentle push, though he really felt like giving her a hard one.

Meanwhile everybody had taken his eyes off the picture, in order to watch what Jimmy Rabbit was doing. So not one had seen what happened. No one had noticed Tommy Fox himself when he slipped through the fence and stood right in front of the picture, so close to it that he hid it completely. He twisted his tail between himself and the picture. And when the company turned their eyes toward him not one of them knew any difference. Certainly dizzy Mrs. Bunny, blindfolded as she was, couldn't see what was in front of her as she zigzagged up to Tommy.

Suddenly she stopped.

"My! My!" she exclaimed. "I smell a fox!"

Everybody laughed when she said that. And some one remarked, "Isn't it wonderful what one's fancy will do!"

"Go on, Mrs. Bunny!" said Jimmy Rabbit. "There isn't the slightest danger."

Mrs. Bunny took three steps forward and tried to pin the tail to Tommy Fox's nose.

She pricked him sharply—so sharply that he gave a yelp of pain.

Then there was a mad scramble. The whole party tured and ran, leaving poor Mrs. Bunny alone with Tommy Fox, and blindfolded!

She jumped. But of course she couldn't see where she was jumping. Her claws caught in the top of the picture. And then she fell backward, pulling the top of the picture with her. It folded over Tommy Fox. He tripped inside it. And struggling to free himself he only managed to get so tangled up in it that before he crawled out and looked for Mrs. Bunny she had vanished.

She had snatched the handkerchief off her eyes and scampered into the woods.

Resting in her own home later, she said to her daughter, "I'd give a good deal to know if that young Jimmy Rabbit played a trick on me."

"Why, ma!" cried Miss Belinda, "How you do talk!"

My Marriage Problems

Adele Garison's New Phase of "Revelations of a Wife."

The Way Madge Deftly Cornered Mr. Smythe.

Miss Cargill, quick, adroit, took advantage of the ludicrous incident in which Katie had worsted young Mr. Smythe and carried off Claire Foster's torn photograph, to put again the question which the youth so rudely had interrupted.

"Your attitude then," she said, "is that the whole affair is to be regarded with amusement rather than wrath, and you are going to Caldwin at once in order to assure yourself that your husband and your dear friend, Miss Foster, are uninjured, and that there is no serious angle to the comedy. May I quote you to that effect?"

I did not need Lillian's warning signal to hesitate before I acquiesced in this ingenious version of my thoughts. Yet I knew enough of newspapers and reporters to know that as long as the first story had been printed, it was far wiser for me to give reliable reporters some comment they could quote.

"I do not think that quite expresses my attitude," I said slowly. "I know from the advices I have had from Mr. Graham and Miss Foster"—my Puritan conscience fell unconscious at this stroke—"that the newspaper account greatly exaggerated the affair. I am going up there, of course. It is perfectly convenient for me to do so, and I may be able to be of some help to Miss Foster. She is inclined to be nervous and an accident of that sort is not very soothing, you know."

I made a mental apology to Claire Foster's splendid health and iron nerves, then I braced myself anew as Mr. Rickett's calm, suave voice struck into the conversation.

"A few minutes ago you referred to the incident as harmless comedy," he said. "Would you object to explaining your meaning?"

A Veiled Threat.

"Not in the least," I returned brightly. "Of course, I did not mean to refer to the accident itself as comedy, but could there be anything more humorous than the comment and excitement which, according to the newspaper the incident appears to have caused among the inhabitants of this summer colony? Anything more intensely small town stuff I cannot imagine. I hope that the account is greatly exaggerated, and that Miss Foster has not been annoyed by it."

"And you want to go on record," queried young Mr. Smythe, with an unpleasant leer, "as saying that you are not angry at your husband or jealous of Miss Foster, and that you are going up there to protect the girl from gossip?

"Well, in one way that makes a better story than the one I had. Come now, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll write this story the way you want it, not telling the real thing about your tearing that photograph of Miss Foster that the baby had, if you'll give me a bangup picture of Miss Foster, which I can use."

"I beg you to believe—" Miss Cargill began," her dark eyes sparkling with anger, and I saw Mr. Rickett half rise from his chair as if he meant to call the other man to account. But I interrupted them both ruthlessly, faced young Mr. Smythe, and spoke slowly, firmly.

"Mr. Graham Is an Athlete."

"I have been most patient with your insufferable actions," I began, "because of the courteous behavior and evident desire to be fair which your colleagues have exhibited. But I warn you that my patience with you is at an end. It is one thing to write an account of something which actually happened, it is something altogether different to indulge in guess work as to someone's mental attitude.

"I have stated to Miss Cargill and Mr. Rickett exactly what my position is, and I know—I made a little gesture of confidence in their direction—"that they will quote me correctly. You are at liberty to do the same thing, but please remember that I have your card and I shall know exactly who is responsible for any article concerning me which is published in your paper. There are two other facts which it would be advisable for you to impress upon your memory."

I paused with as impressive an air as I could assume, taking heart from Lillian, who, standing back of the little group surrounding me, where she could not be seen, was applauding silently but vigorously. I also caught a distinctly admiring look on the faces of Miss Cargill and Mr. Rickett, and what I valued more, a sullen, malevolent, but distinctly respectful expression in the eyes of young Mr. Smythe.

"I am perfectly familiar with the legal recourse I should have if you disregard my warning," I went on, "and"—another significant pause—"Mr. Graham is an athlete of no mean ability, he is hot-tempered, and very quick to action when roused to anger."

I turned indifferently from him, and held out my hand to Miss Cargill.

"You and Mr. Rickett will excuse me now, I am sure," I said, "for I am extremely busy. Thank you so much for your courtesy, Lillian, will you do the honors?"

I kept the stereotyped little smile on my face until I was safely out of their sight and hearing. Then I ran to my own room, and behind my locked door, raged at my husband for involving me in so humiliating an encounter as the one I had just experienced with Mr. H. Edouard Smythe.

Common Sense

By J. J. MUNDY.

When Father Stays Away From Home.

Fathers seldom realize how much more of atmosphere they add to a home than anyone else in the family.

Mothers are not themselves when dad is due at home and does not get there.

"It seems like half the house is gone when dad is away," is a remark which is duplicated in hundreds of homes many times a week.

Father is inclined to think that mother can make up for his absence, but that is where he is wrong.

It is not the necessary absence of father which has to do with the "all-gone-ness" feeling of the rest of the family.

It is the brief moments when it is known that he is free and one is waiting for him to come home.

If the men who stand around on street corners, gossip in garages and play pool and cards night after night on a pretext that they are busy were to see the hearts of the home folk, the lonesomeness, the hours of aimless waiting, they would divide their loafing time at least.

Boys need their fathers and then mother cannot give a boy a man's point of view, though she may be ever so devoted.

Parents' Problems

Is it true that foreign languages are easier to learn during childhood than later?

Yes, so far as learning to speak them is concerned. This involves much memory work, in which children are almost always very much quicker than adults.

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