

# SOULS for SALE

By RUPERT HUGHES.

(Continued From Yesterday.)

CHAPTER LV  
 Mem found it a marvelous thing to have geniuses begging for the privilege of writing the words to the music of her beauty, librettos for her limber personality.

She had met so few authors, and those few so briefly, that she still thought of them as miracle workers of a peculiar mystery, creators who spun out little universes at their own sweet will.

The lack of continuity writers she had encountered had not confirmed this quaint theory, and she soon learned that most of them, somewhat like the dwellers on a certain famous island, earned a precarious existence by stealing one another's plots.

The novelists she had read but not seen were still cloudy beings who dropped tablets from their private Sinaitic. She felt that if she were even lucky enough to touch the hem of the garment of one of them she would ask him:

"How on earth do you ever think of your plots?"

In good time she would learn to know some of the most famous of the men and women who plowed with a pen and were as much hitched to it as it to them. And she would find them also poor, harrowed, plain people, wondering what life is all about, and why their sawdust dolls would not behave like humanity. Each of them had his or her favorite critic who made life a burden and every new work a target.

Still, for a time, it was drinking the milk of paradise and feeding on honey dew to find herself in the hands of a man with a desire to build stories as airplanes and chariots for her to ride and drive to glory. It was warming to have strange persons writing in from nowhere and everywhere imploring her to touch their manuscripts with her life-giving radiance, make them walk and life their authors out of their beds of oblivion.

When the compliment became a bore, a nuisance, a pest, an outrage. An amazing number of strange writers wrote her their life stories would make her rich and famous, and were far more dramatic than the works of Griffith, Jeanie, McPherson, John Emerson, Anita Loos, Marion Fairfax, June Mathis, Thompson Buchanan, J. G. Hawks, Charles Kenyon, Monte Katterjohn, and the other playwrights.

She answered such letters as she could by hand and labored to avoid positions of phrase. Then she set her mother to work copying out forms, and finally made her mother sign them with her best imitation of Mem's name.

"And now I'm a forget!" gasped Mrs. Steadon. "What next?"

By and by both of them were so overworked with the increasing task of answering letters from a crowd of person, ranging from little girls of 8 to elderly Japanese gentlemen, and offering everything for a prayer for a photograph to an opportunity to pay off a mortgage, that Mem began to hate and revile her annoyances.

Here and there was a letter of religious charm, a cry from some sore-souled soul, a word of rewarding gratitude from one who felt a debt to her art, a glimpse of some wretched child in a cancer of anatomy growing a hapless soul. Young girls, unthinkingly married and dwelling on farms far distant from Los Angeles, described the color of their messes of pottage for their bright eyes and hearts, and the compliments they had had from their neighbors, and begged to be brought to Los Angeles that they might trade their messes of pottage for their bright eyes and hearts and renown. They opened their windows to Los Angeles as to the city of deliverance—which it had been to a multitude.

Sometimes the letter unconsciously conveyed more landscape and character than a laborious author could believe, and carried with it an air of helpless doom that was heart-breaking. There were many of the following sort:

Dear Miss Steadon  
 May I introduce myself to you?  
 In a little Arizona girl, at I want to know how to become a Movie Star. Will you please take a few minutes of your time an tell me all about it. Does it take lots of money to become a Movie Star?  
 Every since I was 15 years old I've craved to be a star.  
 My people Objected very much.  
 When I was 17 I began work & when 19 I Married.  
 I'm on the plains with my father an Mather. I have a 2 months Old baby.  
 I'll be 21 in February. In call a disappointed brunette. I weigh 117 - 4 ft. 4 in. I think I send you a little picture of my self so you can see for yourself how I look.  
 As I am a petty good dancer. As I was pretty busy my self I must go.  
 Please take a few minutes An drop me a few lines about this.  
 Yours truly  
 MRS. JACQUE LANTON.

Youth might break through the laps of fate, though Mem could only answer that thousands of experienced actresses were out of work and there was little chance, there was too low salary for the dowdy middle-aged lady who wrote from mid-western villages enclosing photographs that would have ended their chances if they had any, but they wanted to know how to get famous quick.

Actors without experience, authors who could not spell, people of every conceivable and unimaginable ability, sent their pleas to this new goddess and she was as helpless to grant them as the gods above have always been to respond to the petitions that rain toward them from the volcanic fires of the molten hearts of this world.

Mem could not answer even with advice. And she felt that she was making enemies everywhere faster than friends.

There, too, has its income tax to pay, and the rate increases by the same doubling and trebling with which the government gouges success in the form of money.

Writing at the humiliations of obscurity, Mem was coming swiftly up into the humiliations of celebrity.

The letters from the back-up world were followed by another lot of letters, but no less tantalizing to her pride, who had just been glowing with the first thrill of the first requests for her photographs, and for her autograph, paid for in advance by Hattie. If not postage, when her eager eyes met those from Yuma-written by a heady who carried her sparkling proposition into her English:

Miss Rosebush Steadon  
 Dear Mrs. John Woodville  
 Bernard Steadon, Los Angeles, Cal.  
 Dear Madam

Being an actor, I have been at the theatre here last night and recognized you as the lady who sent a trunk here saying she would send me it as soon as she and her husband and daughters would send you a letter and so on and so on the moving picture the other night as I say I saw you so I believe on the scene as Miss Steadon and her family, you was to I must admit and so how about your book in what I am asking and their in through Chicago and New York. I would like to see you and see the picture with my eyes.

to ask you do you remember her asking you about being a Woodville and your saying you was ashamed of your husbands folks or rather that he didn't have no folks at all and she notices as you see another name and hoping to hear from you soon and do what is right as in my motto and I expect other folks to do the same.

Yours respectfully  
 MRS. CLEM SLOAT

Mem's own behavior had been more elegant than Mrs. Sloat's syntax. Her whole life, indeed, had been ungrammatical to the last degree.

She had slunk away from Yuma with all the ignominious of a coyote, and this sudden searchlight restored her to her craven memories.

She had crept from dark to dark then, but now she was both the pretenses and the prisoner of the light, the victim of her fame, the captive rather than the captain of the soul she had for sale, the tremendously advertised soul she had for sale.

Lin of Troy found the fact that launched 1,000 ships a most embarrassing possession, for the 1,000 ships went after her and besieged her. And now Mem's just was coming up in all directions like troops of ships.

She wondered now who would be the next to confront her with some-said-for-a-distortion of the truth, she wondered if every step she had taken and was to take would leave a petrified footprint like the fossilized traces of a primeval insect for all eternity.

She could not decide what answer to make to either letter, and so made none at all. The writer naturally thought she was indifferent and content for her feelings, but her silence was actually due to contempt for herself and her inability to devise a decent answer.

Now and then she sought escape from brooding in spurts of gaiety. She went about with Tom Holly and Ned Lake, and with other suitors among the various pleasures of Los Angeles. She danced at the Alexandria to the bewitching melody of Max Fischer, and at the Coconut Grove in the Ambassador made part of the multitudinous eddy of humanity that tried to follow Art Hickman's uncanny music.

She missed Wednesday night at the Sunset Inn, and on one occasion almost won a dancing prize with a wonderful lounge lizard. Thursday nights found her at the Hollywood Hotel. She was dancing feverily, but never quite away from her past. At the Turkish Village she drank the thick, sweet elixir called indifference and chatted with Lucille. She learned to know the Mexican Kitchen. She went through the inevitable phase of looking up old places to eat and enjoying four or five dollars worth of food.

She joined the horseback rides that set out from the Beverly Hills Hotel and threaded the canons till they came upon the Arabian desert, or sat on the terrace of the moonlit Samaritan and dreamed her way across the Mexican border in Tia Juana.

She took a course of Philharmonic concerts, heard the world's famous singers and instrumentalists, and regretted the tongueless career she had adopted.

But she learned to chatter of art and music in little groups of devotees, composers, painters, sculptors, verse makers, story writers that make up the countless clubs of a city already as big and as busy as half a dozen Athens.

She was broadening and deepening her mind and her heart, and aerating, volatilizing her spirit.

She tolled all the while at her own techin. When she finished the short comedy with Ned Ling she was drawn back to the Berkman Studio for the principal role in a big picture. She was not yet to be started, but she was to be "featured" with a young man, Clive Cleland, who was spoken of as Tom Holly's successor.

Young Cleland fell prey to her growing fascinations, but he was so much her business rival and their professional love scenes were such duals for points, that she could not think of him as an amateur in love. Besides, an unsuspected loyalty to Tom Holly was wakened in her heart by the pretence that this raw youth was Tom's "successor."

Tom Holly was out in the Mojave Desert on location, and his pleading for him like a still, small voice that interfered with the murmur of nearer loves.

She was full of impatience of every sort.

She had fallen out of love with herself.

Managers that directors or critics pointed out, or that she discovered for herself, vexed her to distraction. It was a strange thing to recognize in herself a fault, and she detested in others and was yet unable to eradicate. Striving to avoid these recurrent tricks, she grew self-conscious and people said that she was getting a swollen head when she was not in a panic. What they took for conceit was the bluff of a rabbit at bay.

And all the while the looking for a home, a single love, a normal average life, alternated with onsets of cynical defiance for the conventions.

While nature was darning a gash in her blood for nothing and method her new freedom drove her to anarchic protest against submission to the functions of the beast.

Mem was in a chess morally. She was at her spring, all her senses alight with youth and desire and a wilding day in looking through old rules. The moralities were to her like the that April brooks sweep away and the torrents melt the grim white ice of win by that frozen life and pits love and art and beauty away.

She was so horrified by the indifference of the Puritans and the cynicism and the riddle of her career, that nearly became a dither. The Maggot was a liberty pole.

But the dramatic world had its Puritan in the religious world has its cynicism.

In the picture she was taking of the time the role of her rival for the love of the lover was played by a girl having a swollen head, and she had her undivided votes that they became votes in the eyes of her out-lookers.

It was Mem who had depicted so far from her early training that she had little left of what she would once have called common decency. She was a girl who had decided to become a heady and she had decided to become a heady and she was on the stage who were what she was told in verse, left off without thought of protest.

Miss Nevins, however, was an opposite mind. She considered her cousin entirely her own, and her future husband's, she refused to wear one gown, because it was too low in the neck, and another because it was too high in the neck. She refused to be photographed actually because, as some on the line, she would like to have her picture taken, she would have been taken by her own hand.

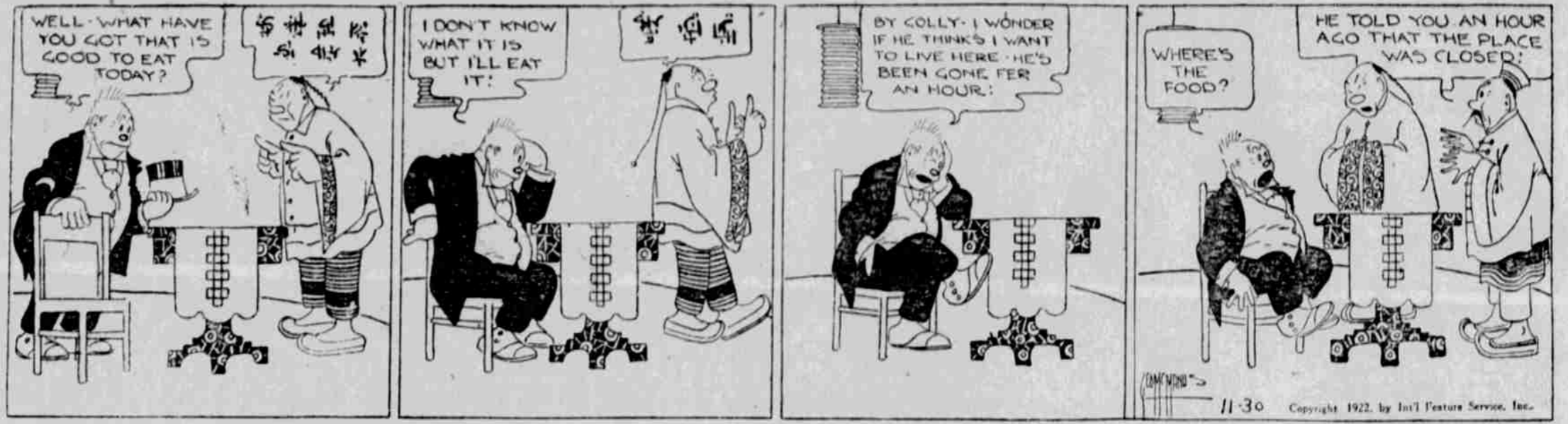
In one corner she had to run with

## BRINGING UP FATHER

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SEE JIGGS AND MAGGIE IN FULL PAGE OF COLORS IN THE SUNDAY BEE

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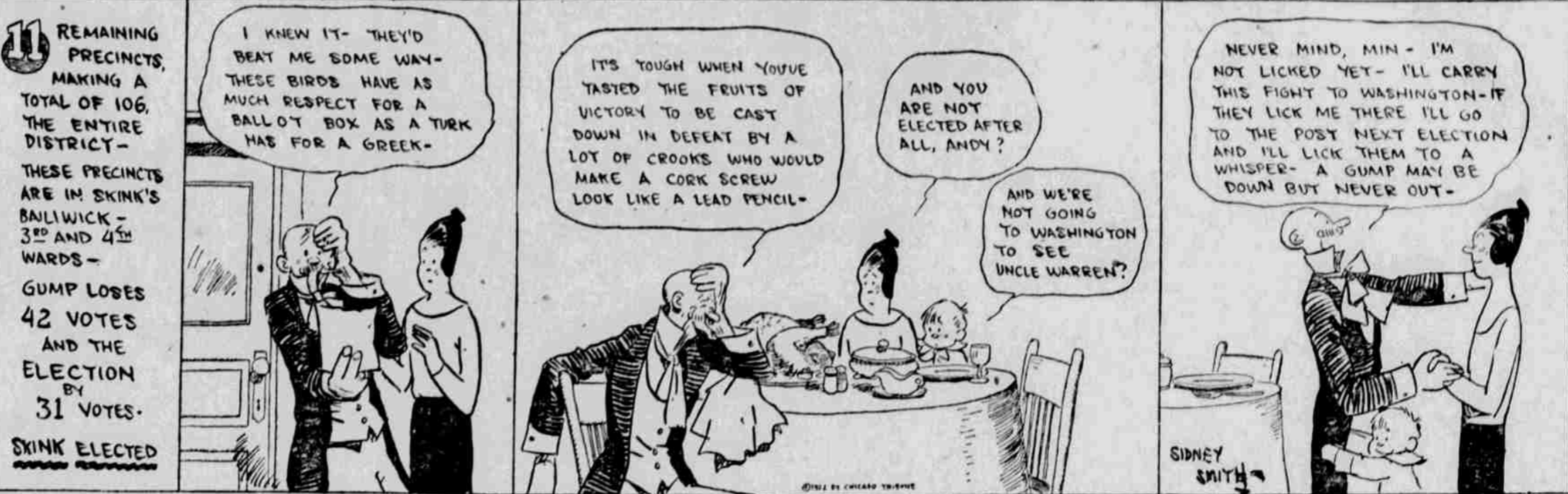


## THE GUMPS

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CROW

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## JERRY ON THE JOB

LET THE TURKEY GIVE THANKS

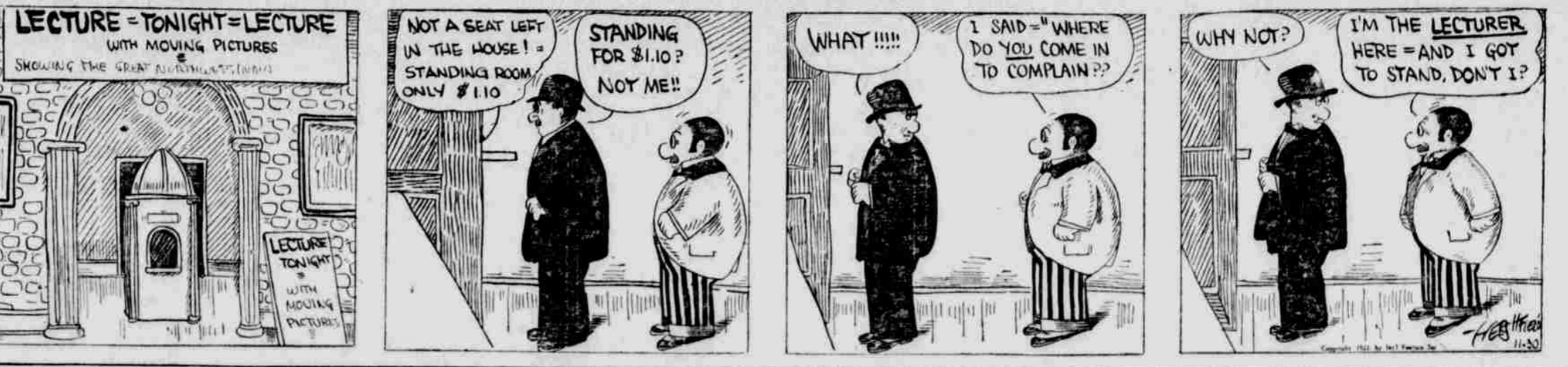
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## ABIE THE AGENT

THAT'S SALESMANSHIP

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## GASOLINE ALLEY

THANKS TO MRS. BLOSSOM

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## Winnie Winkle, The Breadwinner

Fawthaw Gets a Turkey, but

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