



FINAL INSTALLMENT

Austin Boas was at the station to see Mem off. For his fling he filled her drawing-room with flowers—poor things that dropped and died and were flung from the platform by the porter.

Long after their spell had been forgotten, the sad gaze of Boas as he cried good-bye haunted her.

She had murmured to him, "When I make another picture or two I may decide to be sensible, and then—if you are still—"

"I shall be waiting," said Boas. And he gave up with a groan: "Marry me anyway and have your career, too. I'll put my money into your company. I'll back you to the limit."

At Buffalo and at Cleveland she paused to come before huge audiences and prattle her little piece. When she reached Chicago she found awaiting her a long letter from the manager of the moving picture house in Calverly. He implored her to visit her old home town and make an appearance at his theatre. He promised that everybody would be there.

This was success indeed! To appear in New York was triumph, but to appear in her native village was almost a divine vengeance.

And so one morning they crossed the Mississippi and into Calverly.

As they stepped down from their car both gasped and clutched.

The Reverend Doctor Steddon was a few yards away from them, studying the off-getting passengers.

"Let's see if he knows us," snickered Mrs. Steddon with a relapse to girlishness.

"Let's!" said Mem.

They knew him instantly, if course. He wore the same suit they had left him in, and the only change they could descry was a little more white in a little less hair.

But he did not know them at all. It amused them to pass him by and note his casual glance at the smart hat and the polite traveling suit if his wife. He had expected a change, in his daughter, but he was probably braced for something loud and gaudy.

So her father passed her by. When Mrs. Steddon turned and hailed him in a voice that was gladder and more tender than she knew, he whirled with his heart bounding, and they heard his hungry, feasting heart groaning.

"I thank Thee, O God! Now letest Thou Thy servant depart in peace."

But neither the Lord nor his family granted that prayer. His wife had turned time far back. Poor thing! She had never known till year the rapture of being fashionable; had never dared, never understood how, to look her best.

Hiding under his high chin, Mem begged his forgiveness for all the heartaches she had caused him. She wept on his white bow tie, twisting a button on his coat and pouring out her regret for dragging his wife away from him and causing them to quarrel over her. She said that it was a crime for her to have taken her mother on East and left him alone, but he protested:

"D'you suppose I wanted my little girl traveling in those wicked cities all by herself?"

This gladdened Mem exquisitely. It showed that, for all her wanton career, she was still in her father's eyes an innocent child who must be protected from the world. Of course, it was, rather, the world that needed to be protected from her. But she would not disturb his sweet delusion.

The mayor had come down to give Mem welcome, as soon as he could push through the mob of Steddon children that devoured Mem and their mother.

The manager of the Calverly Capitol, with its capacity of two hundred, brushed the mayor aside and claimed Mrs. Steddon and his prize. He had a car waiting for her, and a room at the hotel in case the parsonage was overcrowded.

Dr. Steddon grew Isaian as he stormed back:

"My daughter stays in her own home!"

This brought Mem snuggling to his elbow.

As their car moved off, with a sudden stab she remembered Elwood Farnaby and the far-off girl that he had loved too madly well in that moonlit embrasure. How little and pitiful that Mem had been! There was a toyish unimportance in her very fall, the debacle of a marionette world. But Elwood Farnaby was great by virtue of his absence and his death. He was a hero now with Romeo and Leander and Abelard and the other geniuses of passion whose shadows had grown gigantically long in the sunset of a tragic punishment for their ardors.

A horrifying thought came to Mem: If he had not died, she would have become his wife and the mother of his premature child. She would have been a laughing-stock, material for ugly whispers about the villabe. And she would have been the shabbiest of wives even here. She would never known fame or ease or wealth.

After lunch she found Dr. Bretherick and had him drive her to the cemetery. "And," she said, "I want to give you the installment I forgot, of the conscience money. Please get it to papa as soon as you can. And here's a little extra."

The doctor took the bills with a curious smile. She seemed to feel his sardonic perplexity as she mused aloud a well-thought path.

"If I hadn't been a 'fallen woman,' I couldn't have saved papa's church from ruin. How do you explain it? What's the right and wrong of it all?"

The old doctor shook his head:

"I'm no longer fool enough, honey, to try to explain anything that happens to us here. According to one line of thinking, your misstep was the divine plan. According to another, good can never come out of evil. Of course we know it does, every day; and evil out of good. So let's be as human as we can, and I guess that's about as divine as we'll ever get Down Here."

He led her out to his woeful little tin wagon and they went larruping through the streets, out into the cemetery.

Mem's only rite of atonement was a glance of remorseful agony cast toward Elwood's resting place. It showed her that the founder of her fortunes was honored only by a wooden head-board already warped and sidelong.

"One last favor," she numbled to Doctor Bretherick. "Get a decent tombstone for the poor boy and let me pay for it."

"All right, honey," said the doctor. And the car jangled out of the gates again into the secular road.

And that was that. At a supper table the younger children beset her with questions. Gladys was particularly curious and searching in her inquiries.

Then came the hour of the theater-going. Nobody had dared to ask Doctor Seddon if he would accompany his family. He had not made up his own mind. He dared not.

The family tacitly assumed that his conscience or his pride forbade him to appear in the sink in iniquity he had so often denounced.

The family bade him good-bye and left him, but had hardly reached the gate when he came pounding after. He flung his arms about Mem's shoulders and cast off all his offices except that of a father, chuckling:

"Where my daughter goes is good enough for me!"

He made almost more of a sensation in the theater than Mem. There was applause and cheering and even a slow and awkward rising to the feet until the whole packed auditorium was erect and clamorous.

Seats of honor were reserved for the great star and the family that reflected her effulgence. As soon as they were seated the young woman who flailed the piano began to batter the keys, and Mem's latest picture began to flow down the screen.

She could feel at her elbow the rigid arm of her father undergoing martyrdom. She felt it wince as her first close-up began to glow, her huge eyes pleading to him in a glisten of super-human tears. The arm relaxed as he surrendered to the wonder of her beauty. It tightened again when danger threatened her, and she could hear his sigh of relief when she escaped one peril, his pask as she encountered another.

He was like a child playing with his first top, hearing his first fairy story. He was entranced. She heard him laugh with a boyishness she had never associated with him.

She heard him blow his nose with a blast that might have shaken a wall in Jericho.

A sneaking side glance showed her that his eyes were dripping. And when the applause broke out at the finish of the picture, she heard his great hands making the loudest thwacks of all. This was heartbreaking bliss for her.

The family rode home in state, the children and the mother loud in comment, the father silent.

The old parson had to think it all out. Once at home, he sent the children to bed and held Mem and her mother with his glittering eye for a long while before he delivered his sermon:

"My beloved wife and daughter, I—ahem, ahum! I want to plead for the forgiveness of you both. I have

been wrong headed and stiff necked as so often, but now I am humbled before you in spite of all my pride. It has just come over me that when God sand, 'Let there be light,' and there was light, he must have had in mind this glorious instrument for portraying the wonders of his handiwork. Our dear Redeemer used the parable for his divine lessons, and it has come to me that if he should walk the earth again today he would use the motion pictures.

"You have builded better than you knew, perhaps, my child—and now I ask you to pardon me for being ashamed of you when I should have been proud. You were using the gifts that Heaven sent you as Heaven meant you to use them. Your art is sacred and you can't, you won't, sully it in your life. God forgive me for my unbelief and send you happiness and goodness and a long, long usefulness in the path you have elected."

That night Mem knelt again by her old bed and, on knees unaccustomed to prayer, implored strength to keep her gift like a chalice, a grail of holiness. She woke with an early-morning resolve to be the purest woman and the devoutest artist that ever lived.

The next day she left the town with all its blessings, no longer a scapegoat, sin?laden, limping into the wilderness, but a missionary God-sped into the farthest lands of the earth.

It seemed that all Calverly was at the station to wring her hand and wait her salutation.

The conductor called, "All aboard!" and hasty farewells were taken in clench of hand and awkward kiss.

Mem ran to the rear platform and waved and waved a lengthening signals if love to her dwindling family. She noted the absence of her sister GIGadys and wondered at it as she went to her drawing-room. There she found the girl ensconced in fairy triumph, smiling like a pretty witch.

"What on earth are you doing here?" Mem cried.

"Going to Los Angeles with you. I may never be great like you, but I'm going to have a mighty good time trying."

There were many questions to exchange and Mem soon learned that her sister had flung off the chains that one or two ardent lovers had tried to fasten about her.

And when, with a last faltering reproach she asked her sister if she were wise to toss aside the devotion of a good man, Gladys laughed.

"Let love wait! The men have kept us waiting for thousands of years, till they were ready. Now let them wait for us!"

There was no gainsaying this. It had been Mem's own feeling when she left Los Angeles and her lovers there.

Let love wait, then, till she had made the best of herself. And then let love not demand that she bow her head and shrivel in his shadow; but let him bloom his best alongside

She wondered who that fellow of her destiny would be—Tom Hoiby, maybe—Austin Boas, or still another perhaps; or others, perhaps, including him! or them! In any case he (or they) had better behave and play fair!

As for being a mother, let that wait, too. She was going to mother the multitudes and tell them stories to soothe them!

There was far more in this dream than vanity, far more than selfishness. The hope of the world lay therein, for the world can never advance farther than its women.

She had a soul to sell and it was all her own, and she was going to market.

The dawn was hers for conquest. Mankind was her lover and her beloved. That one-man possession called love could tarry until at least the late forenoon.

(THE END)

George Malkemes

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9:15 a. m.—Morning services.
7:30 p. m.—Epworth League.
10:30 a. m.—Sunday school.

TO GIVE BENEFIT CARD PARTY

Unit No. 1, a group made up of women vitally interested in Welfare women vitally interested in welfare work in this vicinity, will hold a benefit card party in the new high school auditorium on Wednesday evening, November 13, at 8 o'clock. Proceeds from the affair will be used to purchase supplies, pay for doctors' calls, and pay hospital expenses for needy cases that come to the attention of the unit during the year. It is a worthy cause and should receive the united support of residents of the community. There are two other units in Dallas and these in turn will hold benefit card parties during the winter months. Bridge, flinch, 500, euchre, pinochle and hearts will be played.

Hostesses are: Mrs. George Gertner, Mrs. Fred Gordon, Mrs. G. K. Swartz, Mrs. Harold Rood, Mrs. Harold Titman, Mrs. Arthur Turner, Mrs. Karl Kuehn and Mrs. G. A. Baur. Tickets are 50 cents.

-Noxen-

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Weinsheimer and family were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. R. S. Crosby on Friday.

The ladies of the Lutheran Church have been renovating and cleaning the Lutheran hall this week.

The many friends of Mrs. Harley Newel tendered her a surprise party

on Friday evening.

Mr. and Mrs. E. Y. B. Engelman and son Edgar are visiting friends and relatives in Western Pennsylvania and Ohio. Mrs. Engelman is also visiting her old home at Glerf' Campbell, Pa.

A number of persons from Noxen will attend the Luther League conven-

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tion in Wilkes-Barre this week. Among them are: Rev. Levi Veingst, Martha Ely, Herbert Osborne, Thelma Miller and Mr. and Mrs. R. S. Crosby.

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