

"I agree, and promise," said Frank, half dazed.

"Good," Sam answered. "Then I want just to tell you that I have not repaid you by one-fifth. Everyone knows you're the whitest little white man that ever stepped into the north country. That goes without saying. You've been the best partner a man like me could have. I thank you for it. It isn't what you've said, but what you've done. You've lived clean yourself and somehow—by Jupiter Frank, if you knew what I've suffered this last six months—" Sam hid his face for a moment, then he went on in the same quiet voice. "Frank, did you ever read a poem called Eugene Aram? It tells of a schoolmaster who committed a wretched murder, and then went and sat among the innocent children in the school. I think I've felt rather as that man felt when I've tried to live with you. I can't stick it, Frank, and that's why I've got to get out."

Frank leapt to his feet. "Goodness, Sam!" he cried. "Tell me what has happened?"

Sam shook his head. "I'd rather you didn't know," he said. "I'd rather you thought of me as you've found me."

"I shall always do that," answered the boy.

Sam looked at him thoughtfully for a moment, then he said—"Do you know, boy, that for five months you've shared the shanty of a murderer—that you've eaten grub with him, and shared his life?"

"A murderer!" cried Frank. A cold sweat had broken out on his forehead. His eyes were wide open and terrified. "A murderer!" he repeated. "Not you, Sam! Anything but that!"

He clutched his partner by the lapels of his tunic, but Sam shook himself free, and strode to the other end of the verandah. There he stood, a big, broad, hardy figure, older by ten years than a year ago, but a better man.

"Yes," he said slowly, "a murderer. If the police knew the truth they'd be here for me in under an hour. I would have given myself up, Frank, five months ago. It wasn't because I was afraid. It was because I wanted to do some good in the world before I left it, for Heaven knows I've done plenty of harm."

Frank hid his face. He asked no questions, but he let the dreadful truth sink into his mind bit by bit. Sam was a murderer! The man for whom he had lived nearly two years, the man in whose success he had rejoiced, seeing him turn from a gambler and a drunkard to a respectable member of society, was branded with the vilest of crimes.

Sam laid his hand on the boy's shoulder, but the boy shrunk away.

"All right," said Sam, "I won't touch you, but let me tell you how it happened. It was Christmas Day. I returned from the city early. I was drunk."

"Just where that old cedar lies across the creek, an Indian met me. His name was Halman, and I owed him money. He had helped me to get whiskey out of the city to the Indian encampments, and the sum of fifty dollars had been owing him for some months."

"Well, he met me there, and demanded it. I thought he was insolent. Whether or not he really was I cannot say. I struck him once, and he went down like a log. I tried to rouse him, but he was dead—dead as the trees."

"I ran away from the awful place, and went home to sleep. I slept soundly enough, but next morning I awoke with the awful guilt of the thing upon me. I hurried back to the spot where the old cedar grows, but there was nothing to be seen but the tracks of wolves."

"That's all, sonny," Sam went on. "The wolves had polished off the remains, dragging what they could not destroy into the bush. There was nothing left, unless the snow had covered it. Those cursed wolves saved me from the police, but they could not save me from myself. Every night I've dreamt of it. I've lived in Hades, and all the time I was fooling you into thinking that you were living with a straight man, when you were living with a murderer. That was the worst part of all."

The boy rose slowly to his feet. He was still ghastly white, but the fear had gone from his eyes. He held out his hand; Sam clenched it and shook.

"I shake your hand," said the boy, "but I would almost die sooner than shake the hand of a murderer."

Then the boy told, quietly and simply as Sam had told his own story, how that night he himself had found Halman, the Indian, lying on the trail, how he had given up his bunk, and how the red man had departed next morning, fit and strong.

Sam did not answer, but the awful nightmare was passed. He took the boy's hand, and shook it again. After all his own hand was clean—he need not leave this life which had become so dear to him, he need not leave his partner. It was all a ghastly dream. He was an innocent man. He flung himself down on the moist, soft turf, and wept as he had wept but once before.

And Frank, standing over him, clutched in his hand the polished panther claw.

In next issue will be told how Halman, the Indian, sought to bring about his vengeance.

The story "The Panthers Claw" by Mr. H. Mortimer Batten appearing in this number will be continued for July and August.

The writer is known not only to readers of The Western Home Monthly, but to readers of the best English magazines. The story has to do with the life in the early days in this country when redmen, whiskey and daring explorers played a prominent part in life. It is intensely interesting throughout and no reader of the magazine should miss reading it.



Jubilant members of the "Fighting Fifth," making merry over their captured war trophies. They are trying on helmets, caps, gas masks, and other trophies taken from the Germans. These men are of the Northumberland Fusiliers, and were the heroes of the Battle of St. Eloi, a fierce engagement which took place on a sector of the German front, at a point south of Ypres. At times the men fought in mud up to their arm-pits, and the victory of the British was due to the stubborn fighting and endurance, and the example set by the gallant "Fighting Fifth."

There is no power in the victory of an hour ago to keep us from sinning now. Our continued victory is not assured to us by our past victories, but only by a present Christ. For real victory over sin is never a matter of our strength, our effort; it is won only by Christ, and is ours only as we trust Him for it.

It is true, therefore, that a man has in himself no more power to resist sin after a hundred Christ-achieved victories than after one. They may give increased confidence in Christ, and thus make it easier for him to continue to trust Christ for victory; but they add not an ounce of strength to himself. The moment he presumes on past deliverances, instead of trusting in Christ, he is gone.

It is as though a man crossing a deep ravine on a narrow bridge should believe, when half-way over, that because he had come well on the way in perfect safety he could now ignore the bridge. His bridge-given safety of an instant earlier would be of little value to him after he had stepped off the bridge.

LOOKING is seeing. It may be afar off, still it is seeing. The weight of a cross is known best to him who carries it.

The Silence that Follows the Storm

By Gerard Van Etten

THE last flames snarled through the wiry typewriter sheets, eating their way still hungrily amongst the remnants of their feast. The yellow-white walls of the little adobe cottage caught a few of the beams, but only a few, and the rest lost themselves in the dim places smoke-grimed through many years. Even now, with scarcely a breeze stirring, the old fireplace smoked as if in protest at being used. Perhaps this was but natural in the fireplace as outside the dry sun was blistering the dust-white ground and in the scintillant heat all the world lay hushed and still.

Before this transient fire a man sat with his head in his hands—staring, staring, staring. Seeing nothing, feeling nothing, hearing nothing. He was dead to all but the agony of his own heart as the work of long, long years crumbled into ashes. His dreams—the creations of his brain—and he had burned them.

Well, how could they live since she didn't understand and had gone out of his life? He remembered how, when first writing, she had shared all his thoughts and ideals and how, out of that sharing, had come stories and poems dainty, sugar-sweet—and worthless as treacle. Then, later, when he had written of the things of life not sweet, not pretty, she had been unable—or unwilling—to follow him. They had parted. There had been

that charm was still there but he could not write of it until he was away, until he had perspective. So, in black moodiness he had burned all that he had written. He would write no more until he was a well man again and back in "God's country."

Outside the cottage, propped up in the shade against the trunk of a mesquite, Jesus Hernandez slept and dreamed of winning "mucha dinero" at the cock fight the next Sunday. His bird was surely of all birds the finest. He was sure the Senor Caryl would permit him to have the whole day to himself. He would take it anyway. He would fight his cock on Saturday night also but that he must play the violin at a dance at the house of Senor Gonzales, the father of Senorita Dolores Gonzales, who was of all women a subject for clacking tongues, and therefore beautiful beyond the beauty of all other women.

Minutes passed languidly. Jesus slept on. A dusty hen rose from her place in the shade, disturbed by the too near passing of a darting lizard. Idly she pecked about for a minute or two and then settled down again, feathers fluffed out for coolness.

A stumpy, perspiring priest walked along the hot road under a huge, black umbrella. He turned into the yard of the "casa" of the Senor Caryl Lansing and came up close to the snoring Hernandez. "Jesus Hernandez, wake up and get thy father a glass of water."

Jesus woke, rubbed his eyes and then, seeing who the disturber of his dreams was, scrambled hastily to his feet. "Oh, padre mio, pardon. I was so tired from the hard work. I slept. I did not hear you until you spoke."

"Such hard work as you do. But let that pass. I would like a glass of water and then I must hurry on to Concepcion. You should observe the ways of your padre, Jesus Hernandez, it would do you good."

"Ah, but padre, I am not filled with the spirit of God as thou art."

The padre smiled and waited, mopping his face with an already moist handkerchief. Hernandez brought him a glass of cold water and he drank thirstily. "Gracias," he said as he handed the glass back. "Now remember, I want to see you at mass Sunday, Jesus Hernandez. What if you should die between now and Sunday? You would go straight to hell."

Jesus smiled, "Between now and Sunday? That is three days, padre mio, and in three days I can get much religion. But if I should get sick unto death I would send for you, padre, for I know you would not let me die and go to hell."

The padre laughed. "You are right. Hell is too full of rascals like you already. Oh, by the way," as he turned to go, "how is the Senor Caryl? He will be a well man soon, is it not so?"

"Well? Of a certainty. But, padre, it is not the body of him that is sick so much now, but the heart of him. Ah, I know. Jesus Hernandez has known much of the women and has loved very much—oh, very many times—and he can tell that the senor is in his heart longing for a woman. Si, padre, even though he pretends to care for them not at all and to say loudly that they are all bad and all of an unfaithfulness, eh, even so. Well then, you mark the words of Jesus Hernandez, for he knows much of the ways of the heart. What the Senor Caryl needs is a woman. And if I knew one for him, her would I bring to him at once. Eh, but there would be no delay. From the way he sits for long hours with the black look in his eyes, I believe that some woman once treated him ill. It must be so, eh? Well, then very good. For a man who has been ill-treated by a woman hates them worse than a man who knows them not. It is so. Again, very good. And look you, to-day he sits so, as I have said, and then he brings all his papers which he has written and burns them in the fireplace. And, padre, you know to make a fire without need on a day such as this one must be either—what you say, crazy?—or in love, which amounts to the same thing. I saw the burning of the papers ere I fell asleep. It is so of a truth. And but now, when I went for the water for thee, padre, still was he sitting there staring at the ashes."