

ing in a line of black here and of scarlet there, and when he stepped back from his masterpiece of rapidity, an attendant thrust into the faces of the crowd another placard:

**SUNRISE**

after  
Claude.

Time, 5 min.

Price, \$5.00.

It was a signal for the crowd to shuffle nervously, as if to assure the proprietors that they really must be going. At the movement, the tired lips of the Lightning Artist curled in scorn. Now that he faced about, you could see that he was a man of advanced middle age, tall but stooped, whose sallow, unhealthy skin was drawn tight over his sharp nose and prominent jaw bones, but gathered in slight bluish bags under his lustreless eyes. His lips were large, and in repose hung loosely open above a jaw that trembled with the visible weakness that physically records the unseen weakness of soul. A man of blighted career, you might have thought him, and the sensuous mouth and burnt-out eyes left no doubt where the fault lay.

But now his lips were scornful, and his eyes half closed in a sneer at the crowd that would look though it would not buy. In one glance of contempt, he swept from the first row to the outskirts of the crowd, where his eye paused and the sneer faded. Then half furtively he rubbed his paint-spotted hand on his rough artist's apron, and with a startled yet eagerly expectant gesture, lifted the small black skull-cap that covered his thin hair.

It was a priest whose presence on the outskirts of the crowd evoked the gesture, a man whose years were not far different from those of the Lightning Artist, but whose clear eyes and firm lips and jaw were the manifestations of a soul wholly unlike the other's. In the short moment when priest and painter gazed into each other's eyes, a look of mutual acknowledgment passed between them, brief but conclusive, for the priest smiled a happy welcoming smile, and slowly lifted his hat as he passed on.

The new church of the Dominicans was to be, as far as loving devotion could make it, a work of perfect art. The traditions of an Order whose convent walls still bore the records of Fra Angelico, and whose churches had been an ornament to the Old World, were to be sustained in this land of fresh Catholic promise. To insure this, the work of designing the new edifice had been entrusted to Father Benedict, whose pictures and frescoes had won him the admiration of critics. You may be sure that this devoted artist threw into the plans of the church his whole soul's effort. It was his master work, the crowning achievement of a life dedicated to ecclesiastical art. Every line of nave and transept, every color of window and fresco, every detail great or small, he had planned in long hours of loving study, until he felt that from the cross on the lofty campanile to the carvings on the confessionals, the church was one artistic unit, a symmetrical blending of color and line.

But every thought of his church was driven from his mind when his eyes met those of the Lightning Artist. The feeling of utter contempt that had shocked his artistic soul at first sight of the hideous paintings gave way first to surprise, then to joyous recognition, and then to a sense of deepest pity.

The memories of youth lie closest to the surface. A forgotten letter, a crushed flower, a passage in a book, is enough to send them rioting through the mind. And the brain of Father Benedict, like an album thrown open, was filled with a thousand pictures, none the less vague for that they were registered in youth. The bright May day, when he and his boyhood friend, lying in the cool grass of the meadow, planned their future—the life they would lead in the studios of the great city, and the fame they would win in the world's salons: the work at the two canvases set side by side with the kindly master bending lovingly over the friend's, so fraught with the promise of genius: the parting, dimmed by a foreboding fear, when his friend, buoyant and trustful, left him for the art schools of

Paris—he lived them all again. And, now that he had looked into the eyes of the Lightning Artist, the neglected letters, the long silence, the vain queries were all explained. Something like a sob rose in the Dominican's throat. The fair lad whose hand had the skill of Del Sarto and whose mind could read beneath flesh and blood the intangible soul was now the Lightning Artist! Yet his heart sang at the thought that his friend had returned. In that one glance, the priest had said, 'I was waiting for you,' and the artist had answered, 'I shall come.'

It was perilous for one as abstracted as was Father Benedict that day, to walk about on the rickety scaffolding, high up among the frescoes. Even his assistants noticed how spasmodic were his movements, and how pointless his usually incisive comments. And when his favorite assistant, a young man of remarkable gifts, asked for the hundredth anxious time if he might begin the Madonna which was to fill a large oval above the altar of our Lady, the Father's answer was so vaguely indefinite, that the artist turned on his heel in disappointment and disgust.

Presently a workman scrambled up the ladder, and stumbled over loose scaffolding, amidst stools and palettes and brushes to where the Father stood gazing with unseeing eye at the blank oval destined for the Madonna.

'There's a guy downstairs,' said the workman, 'that wants to see you. He's a rum looker, and I tried to show him off; but there was nothin' stirrin'. He says he wants to talk to you.'

But the workman never finished, for Father Benedict was hurrying toward the ladder at a pace that threatened a fall or certain destruction.

A dozen faces looked over the scaffolding, staring in utter amazement at the priest, whose arms, as tender as those of the Prætor's father, encircled a miserable tramp. There was little said between them; men do not talk to one another like that. The priest led the Lightning Artist to a rough bench, and sat beside him, still holding the weak, pulseless hand in his own firm grasp.

So much like the confessional did that first interview seem that when hands are both to tear aside the veil from life's that mispent life with its squandered talents and opportunities. He had been weak, the temptations strong, and he had fallen again and again, until with broken health and shattered gifts, he fled from the scene of his disgrace, to the city which had known him in his boyhood. There is a dread monotony in the paths of all prodigals, and when Father Benedict noted the gaunt cheeks and hollow cough of his friend, he thanked God that the feet which had wandered into a far distant land had not faltered on the path home.

'God be praised!' said the priest, affectionately, 'that you did not die among strangers. You are home now and.'

The eyes of the Lightning Artist were lifted quickly to his friend's.

'I can die in peace,' he finished in a flash. 'You noticed it then?'

Father Benedict flushed, for he had not meant to betray the fact that he had marked his friend's illness.

'Yes,' continued the other, almost bitterly, 'it's consumption, quick consumption. I haven't long to live. The work at the Benbrandt is terrible on a weak man, but it's all I could get. Men won't take an artist that looks as I do. But sometimes I think that I may live just long enough to do something for God, just one work, done before I surrender the shattered remains of my talents. I think,' and his voice grew wistful, 'I should like to paint a Madonna before I die—something pure and holy to make up for the rottenness of my life. Can't you help me to it?'

Father Benedict's favorite assistant looked very glum when he heard that the oval over our Lady's altar was to be filled by another. He would have protested had not the priest's few words changed his protest into generous enthusiasm. The scaffolding was reared into place, and the wondering artists saw Father Benedict's