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His Conversion

By EDGAR FALES MOODY

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Some years ago I visited the far west, passing through a region that had been infested by the worst eleent of society.

I put up one night at the house of John Murphy, a sheep raiser. His ranch house was not large, but comfortable, and its decorations showed evidence of refinement. His wife was a woman who impressed me as one having considerable equipoise and character. After supper I went out | on the porch to have a smoke with Murphy and listened with interest to his account of the building up of his region. During our conversation i stated the opinion that men were what women made them. Then he told me his story.

"You're dead right, stranger," he said. "and I'm one of the men that has been made by a woman. When I came to this country it was from an eastern city, and my education was derived from the dime novel. I was a waif, with no father or mother to instill into me the fact that however brave the road agents and others of whom I read they were acting on a wrong principle. As it was, I admired them, and almost before I became a man I scraped up enough money to bring me out here to live the

"i soon got to be a head man among them and for eight years lived a life that I would give anything I have to forget. I have to be thankful for only one thing. During that frightful pe-lod I never took a life. I didn't ac-

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cumulate any money, and if I had should later on have got rid of it.

"One evening I stopped at a house and knocked at the door. I intended to ask for some supper, expecting once inside to get my bearings for valua-bles and take them away with me. I had started in with the intention of confining my operations to stage-coaches, army paymasters and the like, but a man is always going either uphill or downhill, and as I was necessarily going down I wasn't above taking anything I could get my hands on, even from a woman.

"A woman came to the door. She was young and fairly good looking. To my request for some supper she gave a smiling assent, asking me to come in and make myself comfortable. She went into the kitchen, and I looked about me. There was a chimney in the room where I was with no fire. I knew a chimney was a favorite place to hide money, and, going to the fireplace, I stooped and looked up. On a projecting brick I saw a small box, which I appropriated and, lifting the change. I slipped it all in my pocket and put the box back in the chimney.

"By and by the young woman came in and set a good supper on the table. I ate my fill and when I had finished took out one of the coins I had taken from the box and handed it to her.

"'No.' she said, 'there's nothing to pay. You're quite welcome to your supper. I hope it has done you good. You looked tired and hungry when you came in, and I felt sorry for you. So I have given you the best in the

"That was the first lesson in kindliness I ever received. At any rate, it was the first that ever took hold of me. When I thought of the contents of the box in my pocket and my offering one of her own coins in payment for her kindness, not the least part of which was the way she offered it, my despicable meanness seemed to shrivel me all up. I couldn't look her in the

"'You don't need to go on,' she said. 'We have a spare bed upstairs.'

"I was thinking how I would get the money back in the box in the chimney, and it occurred to me that if I stayed there all night I could slip down in the night and do the job. So said: Thank you, miss. If you don't mind I reckon I will. It'll be a great accommodation to me.'

"No more than to me. -My brother and his wife have gone away for a few days and left me alone with the children. They say that Murphy's gang is operating in the neighbor-hood, and I wouldn't mind having a man in the house."

""In that case,' I said, 'I think I'll sleep on that lounge, and I'll guaranee that no man gets upstairs unless ie goes over my dead body.'

"I knew two of my men would be along there that night, and I reckoned they'd take in anything by the way. The first thing I did before turning in was to put the money back in the box. When I'd done that I felt the first of a kind of comfort I'd never experienced before. I didn't go to sleep, wanting to be awake if any one called. In the middle of the night my two men, Pete Barnickel and Colorado Bill, did call. I showered bullets everywhere about them except just where they were, and they concluded there must be a whole vigilance committee inside. When they had gone i heard a soft voice call down the stairs:

"Thank you."

"'Just you go to sleep. I'm in command here.

"And I've been in command here ever since. I married the girl. t didn't confess till shortly before the wedding and have been living here ever since. My wife owned the property, and after I came in her brother's family went off to a ranch they sought farther west."

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