

you've got one of those attachments on you?"

"Oh, no!" laughed Buckbee, "I'm no summons-server. It isn't quite so simple as that. You see the bank begins the action, the court issues a summons, and if you don't appear the judgment is declared by default. But it won't come to that, I'm sure. Just think it over and I'll call you up later. So long; don't take it too hard."

He flashed back a smile, but as the door closed behind him Rimrock answered by showing his teeth. He went to a safe that stood in the room and took out a single envelope. Then he strapped on his shabby old six-shooter, stepped quietly out and was gone.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

##### The New Year.

A CRAFTY-EYED lawyer on an East-side street told Rimrock all he needed to know—a summons in equity could not be served outside the bounds of the state. And so, a year after his triumphal arrival, Rimrock Jones left gay New York. He slipped out of town with a mysterious swiftness that baffled certain officers of the court, but, though Jepson watched the trains in something approaching a panic, he did not drop off at Gunsight. Mary Fortune watched the trains, too, though with different motives and hopes, and when the last day dawned and no Rimrock appeared she went off by herself on the desert.

When that sun rose again, unless something was done, the Tecolote mine would be lost. And all because Rimrock did not come. His share in the mine as well as her own was dependent upon what she should do and she motored out across the desert to think. Jepson's plans were complete—L. W. was still drunk and Ike Bray was waiting for the word. At midnight that night, as the old year went out and the new year was ushered in, Ike Bray and his guards would climb up to the dome and re-locate the Old Juan claim. And then they would leave it—for that was their plan—and let Rimrock contend with the law. Once located and recorded they had ninety days in which to sink their discovery shaft, and the last day was as good as the first.

Mary had overheard Jepson in his numerous consultations until she knew every move he would make; the question was, what would she do? Would she sit idly by and let this mountain of copper be snatched from their hands by Stoddard; or would she, alone and with no one to help her, brave the darkness and locate it herself? Already, as she nerved herself for the deed, she had typed out her location notice in duplicate; filling in the exact description of the boundaries from the records of the Old Juan claim. But would she dare to post that notice, in the face of three desperate men? Would she dare risk a meeting with drunken Ike Bray on the summit of that lonely peak? She resolved and recanted, and resolved again and drove back to the hotel in despair.

From the day she had known him she had helped Rimrock Jones in every way that she could; but he from the first had neglected every duty and followed after every half-god. She had written him to come, and told him of his peril, and that her own rights were jeopardized with his own; and he answered never a word. A hot wave

passed over her, of passionate resentment and hatred and womanly scorn, and she drew her lips to a line. She would jump the Old Juan, but she would jump it for herself and hold it against both Rimrock and Stoddard!

It had once been observed that, when driven too far, Mary Fortune became an Indian; and the man who said it knew. For the rest of that day she was afire with a resolution which contemplated even the killing of men. She bought her a pistol and, driving out on the desert, she practised until she could shoot. Then as the sun sank low and Jepson and his men were occupied with sobering up Ike Bray, she drove off in the direction of Geronimo. She was far out on the desert when darkness fell, rushing south on the other road to Tecolote. Within sight of the camp she put out her lamps and, turning her machine out of the road, she crept along until it was hidden from view, then leapt out and started for the butte. It stood against the stars, huge and sinister in its black bulk, and she shuddered as she took the lone trail.

UP that very same path the year before Rimrock Jones had rushed on to defend his claim. He had been a man then, or at least a fighting animal; but now he was a soft, pampered brute. He left his fighting to be done by a woman while he spent his money like a fool. The fierce anger from that thought gave courage to her heart and her resentment spurred her on. She toiled on and rested and gazed despairingly at the high crags, but still she kept her face to the heights. As midnight approached and the trail had no ending she stopped and gazed doubtfully back, and then she went hurrying on. A clanking of rocks and the bass guffaw of men had come up to her from below; and terror supplied a whip that even hatred lacked—it was Ike Bray and his drunken guards!

As she staggered to the rim and dragged herself past the wall where McBain had come to his death it seemed as if she must drop, but the men were coming behind. She drew a great sobbing breath and, with her hand on her pistol, hastened over to the discovery shaft. It was a black, staring hole and by the dump beside it there stood a sign-post supported by rocks. A pale half moon had risen in the East and by its light she made out the notice that was tacked to the centre of the board. That was Rimrock's notice, but now it was void for the hour was long after twelve. She tore it down and stuffed it into her pocket and drew out the one she had prepared. Then, gumming it carefully from a tube of glue, she posted it on the board. Already the voices were coming nearer, but there was one thing more to do—she lit a match and, looking at her watch, wrote the exact time on the blanks.

In the brief half hour that was occupied by Ike Bray in making the last lap of his trip Mary lived in an agony of fear. He came up slowly, using such violent language as she had never heard before; and, combined with the curses that he called down on the guards, was the demand for drink, and more drink. As she crouched behind a boulder that stood on the rim she bit her lips with shame and the hot rush of anger at his obscene revilings made her reconciled to killing him, if she must. He was lower than the lowest of created animals, a vile, degenerate beast; and as he struggled



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to the top and made for the monument his curses were directed against Rimrock.

"I'll show him!" he vaunted as he swayed before the sign, "I'll show him if Ike Bray's afraid. He can run a blazer over lawyers and women; but me—hey, tear off this notice!"

There was a minute of fumbling and then, as she gazed out at them, the taller guard spoke up.

"It's stuck," he said, "tighter than the back door of hell. Let it go and nail yours on top. Holy Smoke, if I'd knowed what a job this was—here, what are you doing now? Aw, give me that notice! Now where's your tacks? Say, Hank, pull him back from that hole!"

The sound of hammering came to her ears, half-drowned by a drunken brawl, and then there was a horror-stricken yell.

"He's fell down the hole! Are you hurt bad, Ike?"

The answer was a muffled curse, and both guards hurried to the shaft. With a prayer on her lips Mary crept from her shelter, then crouched and ran for the trail. She saw them lean-

ing over the shaft and heard them bandying oaths and then she had gained the path.

"What's that?" cried one as she knocked a stone from the wall, and as it clattered she went dashing down the trail. She fell and lay breathless, listening dully for their footsteps, then rose up and went limping on. She paused for strength far down the path, where it swings along the wall, and her heart beat loud in her breast. They were still on the cliff-tops, still cursing and quarrelling and poisoning the clean silence with their words—but she had located first!

THE day was breaking when, lost and wandering, she found her machine on the plain, but as it took the smooth road and went gliding towards Geronimo she smiled with a great sense of power. It was not alone that she controlled that throbbing engine, which made the car pulsate and thrill; she had a handle that would make two men she knew bow down and ask her for peace—Rimrock Jones and Whitney Stoddard. She appeared

(Continued on page 23.)



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