

glaring at her husband. Perhaps Jepson looked up—he sensed her in some way—and, remembering, glanced wildly about. And then, to the moment, in came Rimrock Jones, striding along with his big hat in his hand.

IT happened as in a play, the swift entrance of the hero, a swifter glance, and the woman smiled. At sight of that tiger-skin coat Rimrock stopped dead in his tracks—and Jepson saw his chance to escape.

"Mr. Jones," he beckoned frantically, "let me introduce you to Mrs. Hardesty. Excuse me!" And he slipped away. There were explanations later, in the privacy of the Jepson apartments, but Mr. Jepson never could quite understand. Mrs. Hardesty had come out with a card from Mr. Stoddard and it was his duty, no less, to look after her. But meanwhile the drama moved swiftly, with Mary in the balcony looking on. She could not hear, but her eyes told her everything and soon she, too, slipped away. Her appointment was neglected, her existence forgotten. She had come—the other woman!

"Ah, well, well!" the woman cried as she opened her eyes at Rimrock and held out a jeweled hand, "have you forgotten me already? I used to see you so often—at the Waldorf, but you won't remember!"

"Oh! Back in New York!" exclaimed Rimrock, heartily. "What'd you say the name? Oh, Hardesty! Oh, yes! You were a friend of—"

"Mr. Buckbee! Oh, I was sure you would remember me! I've come out to look at your mine!"

They shook hands at that and the crowd moved off further, though it increased as the circle expanded, and then Rimrock looked again at the tiger-skin.

"Say, by George!" he exclaimed with unctuous admiration, "ain't that the finest tiger-skin you ever saw. And that's no circus product—that's a genuine tigre, the kind they have in Old Mexico!"

"Oh, you have been in Mexico? Then that's how you knew it! I meet so many people who don't know. Yes, I have an interest in the famous Tigre Mine and this was given me by a gentleman there!"

"Well, he must have been crazy over you!" declared Rimrock, frankly, "or he'd never have parted with that skin!"

"Ah, you flatter me!" she said, and turned to the clerk with an inquiry regarding her room.

"Give her the best there is!" spoke up Rimrock, with authority, "and charge it up to the Company. No, now never you mind! Ain't you a friend of Buckbee's? And didn't you come out to see our mine?"

"Oh, thank you very much," answered Mrs. Hardesty, sweetly, "I prefer to pay, if you don't mind."

"Your privilege," conceded Rimrock, "this is a fine, large, free country. We try to give 'em all what they want."

"Yes, it is!" she exclaimed. "Isn't the colouring wonderful! And have you spent all your life on these plains? Can't we sit down here somewhere? I'm just dying to talk with you. And I have business to talk over, too."

"Oh, not here!" exclaimed Rimrock, as she glanced about the lobby. "This may not be the Waldorf, but we've got some class all the same. Come up to the balcony—built especially for the ladies—say, how's friend Buckbee and the rest?"

AND then with the greatest gallantry in the world he escorted her to Mary's own balcony. There was another, across the well, but he did not even think of it. He had forgotten that Mary was in the world. As they sat in the dim alcove he found himself telling long stories and listening to the gossip of New York. Every word that he said was received with soft laughter, or rapt silence or a ready jest; and when she in her turn took the conversation in hand he found her sharing with him a new and unseen world. It was a woman's world, full of odd surprises. Everything she did seemed quite sweet and reasonable and at the same time daring and bizarre. She looked at things differently, with a sort of worldly-wise tolerance and an ever-changing, provocative smile. Nothing seemed to shock her even when, to try her, he moved closer; and yet she could understand.

It was a revelation to Rimrock, the laughing way she restrained him; and yet it baffled him, too. They

sat there quite late, each delving into the mystery of the other's personality and mind, and as the lower lights were switched off and the alcove grew dimmer, the talk became increasingly intimate. A vein of poetry, of unsuspected romance, developed in Rimrock's mind and, far from discouraging it or seeming to belittle it, Mrs. Hardesty responded in kind. It was a rare experience in people so different, this exchange of innermost thoughts, and as their voices grew lower and all the world seemed far away, they took no notice of a ghost.

It was a woman's form, drifting past in the dark corridor where the carpet was so thick and soft. It paused and passed on and there was a glint of metal, as of a band of steel over the head. Except for that it might have been any woman, or any uneasy ghost. For night is the time the dead past comes back and the soul mourns over what is lost—but at dawn the spirits vanish and the work of the world goes on.

Mary Fortune appeared late at the Company office, for she had very little to do; and even when there she sat tense and silent. Why not? There was nothing to do. Jepson ran the mine and everything about it, and Rimrock attended to the rest. All she

ONE of our more or less regular woman contributors says in a recent letter concerning things she reads in this paper: "I like Rimrock Jones, far ahead of Number 70, Berlin. I think we are a little tired of German spies." The more we study Rimrock more worth while he seems to be. He is worth in fact rather more while than we allotted him at the start. Not to rush Rimrock off the stage before too many of our new subscribers have a chance to make his acquaintance, we have decided to let him stay in the Courier until about the first week in October. As the days get shorter, the instalments of Rimrock will shorten up also. But we definitely engage to have him off the boards by the middle of October to make room for the next.

had to do was to keep track of the records and act as secretary to the Board of Directors. They never met now, except perfunctorily, to give Rimrock more money to spend. He came in as she sat there, dashing past her for some papers, and was dashing out when she spoke his name.

"Oh, Mr. Jones," she said, and, dimly noting its formality, he paused and questioned her greeting.

"Oh, it's Mister again, is it?" he observed, stopping reluctantly. "Well, what's the matter now?"

"Yes, it's Mister," she said, managing to smile quite naturally. "You know you told me your name was 'Mister'—since you made your pile and all that—but, Mister, I'm going away."

"Going away!" exclaimed Rimrock, suddenly turning to look at her; and then he came hurriedly back.

"Say, what's the matter?" he asked, uneasily, "have I done something else that is wrong?"

"Why, no," she laughed, "what a conscience you have! I'm going East for an operation—I should have gone long ago. Oh, yes, I've been thinking about it for quite a while; but now I'm going to go. You don't know how I dread it. It's very painful, and if it doesn't make me any better it's likely to make me—"

"Oh," said Rimrock, thoughtfully, rubbing his chin, "well, say, when do you want to go? I'm going East myself and there ought to be one of us—"

"So soon?" enquired Mary, and as Rimrock looked at her he caught a twinkle in her eyes. Not of merriment, exactly, but of swift understanding and a hidden, cynical scorn.

"What d'ye mean?" he blustered. "Ain't I got a right—"

"Why, certainly," she returned, still with that subtle resentment, "I have no objections at all. Only it might make a difference to Mr. Stoddard if he found us both away."

"Aw, that's all bosh!" broke out Rimrock, im-

patiently, "he's got his hands more than full in New York. I happen to know he's framing up a copper deal that will lay the Hackmeisters wide open. That's why I want to go back. Mrs. Hardesty says—"

"Mrs. Hardesty?"

Rimrock stopped and looked down. Then he picked up his hat and made another false start for the door.

"Yes, Mrs. Hardesty—she came in last night. That lady that wore the tiger skin."

"Oh!" said Mary, and something in her voice seemed to stab him in the back as he fled.

"Say, what do you mean?" he demanded, coming angrily back, "you speak like something was wrong. Can't a man look twice at some other woman without your saying: 'Oh!' I want you to understand that this Mrs. Hardesty is just as good as you are. And what's more, by grab, she's got stock in our Company and we ought to be treating her nice. Yes, she bought it from Stoddard; and if I could just pull her over—"

"How much stock?" asked Mary, reaching suddenly for a book, and Rimrock fidgeted and turned red.

"Two thousand shares!" he said, defiantly. "She's got as much as you have."

"Oh!" murmured Mary, as she ran through the book, and Rimrock flew into a fury.

"Now, for the love of Mike!" he cried, striding towards her, "don't always be pulling that book! I know you know where every share is, and just who transferred it to who, but this Mrs. Hardesty has told me she's got it and that ought to be enough!"

"Why, certainly!" agreed Mary, instantly closing the book. "I just didn't recall the name. Is she waiting for you now? Then don't let me detain you. I'll be starting East to-night."

Rimrock rocked on his feet in impotent anger as he groped for a fitting retort.

"Well, go then!" he said. "What do I give a damn?" And he rushed savagely out of the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

An Afterthought.

IT was part of the violent nature of Rimrock that his wrath fell upon both the just and the unjust. Mary Fortune had worsted him in their passage at arms and left him bruised from head to heels. She had simply let him come on and at every bludgeon stroke she had replied with a rapier thrust. Without saying a word against the character of Mrs. Hardesty she had conveyed the thought that she was an adventuress; or, if not exactly that, then something less than a lady. And the sure way in which she had reached for that book was proof positive that the stock was not recorded. But the thing that maddened him most, and against which there was no known defence, was her subtle implication that Mrs. Hardesty was at the bottom of his plan to go East. And so, with the fury still hot in his brain, he made poor company on the road to the Tecolote.

Since Mrs. Hardesty had come, as a stockholder of course, to look over the Company's properties, it was necessary that she should visit the mine, though she was far from keen for the trip. She came down at last, heavily veiled from the sunshine, and Rimrock helped her into his machine; but, being for the moment in a critical mood and at war in his heart against all women, he looked at her with different eyes. For the best complexion that was ever laid on will not stand the test of the desert and in the glare of white light she seemed suddenly older and pitifully made up and painted. Even the flash of pearly teeth and the dangerous play of her eyes could not hide the dark shadows beneath; and her conversation, on the morning after, seemed slightly artificial and forced.

Perhaps, in that first flight of their unleashed souls when they sat close in the balcony alone, they had reached a height that could never be attained when the sun was strong in their eyes. They crouched behind the windshield, for Rimrock drove recklessly, and went roaring out across the desert and between the rush of the wind and the sharp kick of the chuck-holes conversation was out of the question. Then they came to the camp, with its long rows of deal houses and the rough bulk of the concentrator and mill; and even this, to Mrs. Hardesty's wind-blown eyes, must have seemed exceedingly Western and raw.