meeting. Well, you put a crimp in me then. Just by passing that dividend you dropped me so flat that I lost every dollar I had."

"Very likely," she observed with no sign of regret, "but you should have attended the meeting."

"Attended the meeting!" he repeated angrily. "I had something else to do! But is that any excuse for stopping my dividend and leaving me for Stoddard to clean?"

"If you had come to the meeting," she responded evenly, but with an answering fire in her eyes, "and explained that you needed the money, I might have voted differently." As it was I voted for the smelter."

"The smelter?"

"Why, yes! Didn't you get my letter? We're going to build a smelter."
"Oh, my Lord!" raved Rimrock, "did you let them fool you on that old whiskered dodge? Sure I got your letter—but I never read it—the first few lines were enough! When I saw that you'd sold me out to Stoddard and gone and passed that dividend—"He paused—"Say, what's the matter?"

She had forgotten at last her studied calm and was staring at him with startled eyes.

"Why-didn't you read about Ike Bray?"

"Ike Bray! Why, no; what's the matter with Ike? I just came in—on the freight."

"Then you don't know that your claim has been jumped, and—"

"Jumped!" yelled Rimrock, rising suddenly to his feet and making a clutch for his gun.

"Yes—jumped! The Old Juan claim! The assessment work was never done."

"Uh!" grunted Rimrock and sank back into his chair as if he had received a blow. "Not done?" he wailed staggering wildly up again. "My—God! Did L. W. go back on me, too? Didn't Hassayamp or anybody just think to go out there and see that the holes were sunk? Oh, my Lord; but this is awful!"

"Yes, it is," she said, "but it wouldn't have happened if you had come out here yourself. And if you'd just read my letter instead of throwing it down the minute it didn't happen to please—" She stopped and winked back the angry tears that threatened to betray her hurt. "But now go on, and blame me for this—you blame me for everything else! Curse and swear and ask me what I was doing when all this came to pass! Ah, you expect more of others, Mr. Rimrock Jones, than you ever do of yourself; and now it will be me or poor L. W. that will come in for all the—"

S HE broke down completely and buried her face in her arms while Rimrock stood staring like a fool. He was stunned, astounded; put beyond the power to listen, or reason, or think. All he knew was that some time, when he was away and while no one was there to befriend, Ike Bray his enemy had climbed up the butte and jumped the Old Juan claim. And all the time he was dallying in New York and playing his puny string at Navajoa the Old Juan claim and the mighty Tecolote had been left unguarded until they were jumped.

"Where's L. W.?" he asked, coming suddenly from his trance; and she was sitting there, dry-eyed as before.

"He's gone to the hospital. Bray

shot him through the arm in a quarrel over the claim."

"What? Shot L. W.? Well, the little shrimp! Just wait till I get to him with this!"

He tapped his pistol and a wry, cynical smile came over her tear-stained face.

"Yes! Wait!" she mocked. "You'll be a long time waiting. He's under the protection of the court. No, you can put up that pistol and never miss it—this case will be tried by law."

"Well, we'll see about that," he answered significantly. "I've got a lookin on this, myself."

"No, I don't think you have," she responded firmly. "The claim was the property of the Company."

"Well, what of that?"

"Why, only this, that the case is out of your hands. Ike Bray has disappeared, the claim is recorded, and only the Company can sue."

"What, do you mean to say that when my claim is jumped I can't begin suit to get it back?"

"Why, certainly. You have transferred that claim to the Company."

"Well, why didn't Jepson do that work? Do you mean to say that that high-priced man, getting his twenty-five thousand a year, deliberately sat down and let that assessment work lapse and then let Ike Bray jump it?"

"Yes," she nodded, "that's it."

"But—" He stopped and a wave of sudden intelligence swept the passion from his face.

"It's Stoddard!" he said and once more she nodded, then waited with an understanding smile.

"Yes, it's Stoddard," she said. "But of course we can't prove it. Mr. Bray has already begun suit."

"What, suit to dispossess us? Does he claim the whole works? Well, there must be somebody behind him. You don't think it could be—what? Well, doesn't that—beat——"

"Yes, it does!" she cut in hastily.
"The whole thing has been very carefully thought out."

H E slapped his leg and, rising from his chair, paced restlessly to and fro.

"How'd you know all this?" he demanded at last, and something in the nagging, overbearing way he said it woke the smouldering fires of her hate.

"Mr. Jones," she said, rising up to face him, "we might as well understand each other right now. From the very first you have taken it for granted that I have sold you out. You don't need to deny it, because you have used those very words-but please don't do it again. And please don't speak to me in that tone of voice, as if I had done you some great wrong. You are the one that has done me a wrong, and I assure you, I will never forget. But from this time on, if you want anything of me, please ask for it like a gentleman. Now what do you want to know?"

"I want to know," began Rimrock slowly, and then he broke down and smote the desk. "You have too sold me out!" he exploded in a fury, "you have—I don't care what you say! You stood in with Stoddard to pass that dividend, and, by grab, you can't deny it! If you'd voted with L. W.——"

"Very well!" returned Mary in a tone that silenced him, "I see that you don't wish to be friends. And I want to tell you, in parting, that you expect a constancy from women that you sig-

nally lack yourself. I will send Mr. Jepson down to be sworn at."

When Jepson, pale and anxious, sidled warily into the office he found Rimrock sitting thoughtfully in a chair. Some time had passed, for Jepson's wife had delayed him, but time alone could not account for the change. Rimrock was more than quiet, he was subdued; but when he looked up there was another change. In Abercrombie Jepson he saw, without question, the tool and servitor of Stoddard, the man who had engineered his downfall. And Jepson's smile as he came forward doubtfully-but with the frank, open manner he affectedwas sickly and jaundiced with fear. It was a terrible position that he found himself placed in and his wife was crying, upstairs.

(To be continued.)

Shining Milestones

(Concluded from page 13.)

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