

upon him, "I wonder how much I win."

He drew out the bills from his faded overalls and began laboriously to count them out into his hat.

Ike Bray stopped and looked at him, a little, twisted man with his hair still rumpled from the bed.

"Where's that dealer?" he shrilled in his high, complaining voice. "I'll kill the danged piker—that bank ain't broke yet—I got a big roll, right here!"

HE waved it in the air and came limping forward until he stood facing Rimrock Jones.

"You think you broke me, do you?" he demanded, insolently, as Rimrock looked up from his count.

"You can see for yourself," answered Rimrock, contentedly, and held out his well-filled hat.

"You're a piker!" yelled Bray. "You don't dare to come back at me. I'll play you one turn win or lose—for your pile!"

A hundred voices rang out at once, giving Rimrock all kinds of advice, but L. W.'s rose above them all.

"Don't you do it!" he roared. "He'll clean you, for a certainty!" But Rimrock's blue eyes were aflame.

"All right, Mr. Man," he answered, on the instant, and went over and sat down in his chair. "But bring me a new pack and shuffle 'em clean, and I'll do the cutting myself."

"Ahhr!" snarled Bray, who was in villainous humour, as he hurled himself into his place. "Y'needn't make no cracks—I'm on the square—and I'll take no lip from anybody!"

"Well, shuffle 'em up, then," answered Rimrock, quietly, "and when I feel like it I'll make my bet."

It was the middle of the night, as Bray's days were divided, and even yet he was hardly awake; but he shuffled the cards until Rimrock was satisfied and then locked them into the box. The case-keeper sat opposite, to keep track of the cards, and a look-out on the stand at one end, and while a mob of surging onlookers fought at their backs they watched the slow turning of the cards.

"Why don't you bet?" snapped Bray; but Rimrock jerked his head and beckoned him to go on.

"Yes, and lose half on splits," he answered grimly, "I'll bet when it comes the last turn."

The deal went on till only three cards remained in the bottom of the box. By the record of the case-keeper they were the deuce and the jack—the top card, already shown, did not count.

"The jack," said Rimrock, and piled up his money on the enameled card on the board.

"You lose," rasped out Bray without waiting for the turn and then drew off the upper card. The jack lay, a loser, in the box below, and as he shoved it slowly out the deuce appeared underneath.

"How'd you know?" flashed back Rimrock as Bray reached for his money, but the gambler laughed in his face.

"I outlucked you, you yap," he answered, harshly. "That dealer—he wasn't worth hell room!"

"Gimme a fiver to eat on!" demanded Rimrock, as Bray banked the money, but he flipped him fifty cents. It was the customary stake, the sop thrown by the gambler to the man who has lost his last cent, and Bray sloughed it without losing his count.

"Go on, now," he said, still keeping to the formula, "go back and polish a drill!"

It was the form of dismissal for the hardrock miners whose earnings he was wont to take, but Rimrock was not particular.

"All right, Ike," he said, and as he drifted out the door his prosperity friends disappeared. Only L. W. remained, a scornful twist on his lips, and the sight of him left Rimrock sick. "Yes, rub it in!" he said, defiantly, and L. W., too, walked away.

In his sober moments—when he was out on the desert or slugging away underground—Rimrock Jones was neither childish nor a fool. He was a serious man, with great hopes before him; and a

past, not ignoble, behind. But after months of solitude, of hard, yegging work and hopes deferred, the town set his nerves all a-tingle—even Gunsight, a mere dot on the map—and he was drunk before he took his first drink. Drunk with mischief and spontaneous laughter, drunk with good stories untold, new ideas, great thoughts, high ambitions. But now he had had his fling.

With fifty cents to eat on, and one more faro game behind him, Rimrock stood thoughtfully on the corner and asked the old question: What next? He had won, and he had lost. He had made the stake that would have taken him far towards his destiny; and then he had dropped it, foolishly, by playing another man's game. He could see it now; but then, we all can—the question was, what next?

"Well, I'll eat," he said at last, and went across the street to Woo Chong's. "The American Restaurant" was the way the sign read, but Americans don't run restaurants in Arizona. They don't know how. Woo Chong had fed forty miners when he ran the cook-house for Rimrock, for half what a white man could; and when Rimrock had lost his mine, at the end of a long lawsuit, Woo Chong had followed him to town. There was a long tally on the wall, the longest of all, which told how many meals Rimrock owed him for; but Rimrock knew he was welcome. Adversity had its uses and he had learned, among other things, that his best friends were now Chinamen and Mexicans. To them, at least, he was still El Patron—the Boss!

"Hello, there, Woo!" he shouted at the doorway and a rapid-fire of Chinese ceased. The dining-room was deserted, but from the kitchen in the rear he

A shadow of doubt came across Woo's watchful face and he hurried away for more bread.

"You no bleakum bank?" he enquired at last and Rimrock shook his head.

"No, Woo," he said, "Ike Bray, he came down and win all my money back."

"Aw, too bad!" breathed Woo Chong, and slipped quietly away; but after a while he came back.

"Too bad!" he repeated. "You my friend, Misse' Jones." And he laid five dollars by his hand.

"Ah, no, no!" protested Rimrock, rising up from his place as if he had suffered a blow. "No money, Woo. You give me my grub and that's enough—I haven't got down to that!"

Woo Chong went away—he knew how to make gifts easy—and Rimrock stood looking at the gold. Then he picked it up, slowly, and as slowly walked out, and stood leaning against a post.

There is one street in Gunsight, running grandly down to the station; but the rest is mostly vacant lots and scattered adobe houses, creeping out into the infinitude of the desert. At noon, when he had come to town, the street was deserted, but now it was coming to life. Wild-eyed Mexican boys, mounted on bare-backed ponies, came galloping up from the corrals; freight waggons drifted past, hauling supplies to distant mining camps; and at last, as he stood there thinking, the women began to come out of the hotel.

All day they stayed there, idle, useless, on the shaded veranda above the street; and then, when the sun was low, they came forth like indolent butterflies to float up and down the street. They sauntered by in pairs, half-hidden beneath silk parasols, and their

skirts swished softly as they passed. Rimrock eyed them sullenly, for a black mood was on him—he was thinking of his lost mine. Their faces were powdered to an unnatural whiteness and their hair was elaborately coiffed; their dresses, too, were white and filmy and their high heels clacked as they walked. But who was keeping these women, these wives of officials, and superintendents and mining engineers? Did they glance at the man who had discovered their mine and built up the town where they lived? Well, probably they did, but not so as he could notice it and take off his battered old hat.

RIMROCK looked up the road and, far out across the desert, he could see his own pack-train, coming in. There was money to be got, to buy powder and grub, but who would trust Rimrock Jones now? Not the Gunsight crowd, not McBain and his hirelings—they needed the money for their women! He gazed at them scowling as they went pacing by him, with their

eyes fixed demurely on space; and all too well he knew that, beneath their lashes, they watched him and knew him well. Yes, and spoke to each other, when they were off up the street, of what a bum he had become. That was women—he knew it—the idle kind; they judged a man by his roll.

The pack-train strung by, each burro with its saw-horse saddle, and old Juan and his boy behind.

"Al corral!" directed Rimrock as they looked at him expectantly, and then he remembered something.

"Oyes, Juan," he beckoned, calling his man servant up to him, "here's five dollars—go buy some beans and flour. It is nothing, Juanito, I'll have more pretty soon—and here's four bits, you can buy you a drink."

He smiled benevolently and Juan touched his hat and went sidling off like a crab and then once more the black devil came back to plague him, hissing Money, Money, MONEY! He looked up the street and a plan, long formless, took sudden shape in his brain. There was yet McBain, the horse-leech of a lawyer who had beaten him out of his claim. More than once, in black moments, he had threatened to kill him; but now he was glad he had not. Men



Mary Fortune was not an adventuress, but she knew how to deal with Rimrock.

could hear the shuffling slippers of Woo.

"Howdy-do, Misse' Jones!" exclaimed Woo in great excitement as he came hurrying out to meet him. "I see you—few minutes ago—ove' Ike Bray's place! You blakum falo bank, no?"

"No, I lose," answered Rimrock, honestly. "Ike Bray, he gave me this to eat on."

HE showed the fifty-cent piece and sat down at a table whereat Woo Chong began to giggle hysterically.

"Aw! Allee time foolee me," he grinned facetiously. "You no see me the? Me playum, too. Win ten dolla', you bet!"

"Well, all right, Woo," said Rimrock. "Just give me something to eat—we won't quarrel about who won."

He leaned back in his chair and Woo Chong said no more till he appeared again with a T-bone steak.

"You ketchum mine, pretty soon?" he questioned, anxiously. "All lite, me come back and cook."

Rimrock sighed and went to eating and Woo remembered the coffee, but somehow even that failed to cheer.