

New York. On the first great day he had been his old self—boasting, drinking, giving away his money and calling the whole town in on his joy. The next day he had been sober and from that day forth he had not taken even a drink. It was noted also that nothing was doing in the direction of developing his mine; and another quality, the rare gift of reticence, had taken the place of his brag. He sat off by himself, absent-minded and brooding, which was not like the Rimrock of old.

The first man to break loose from the spell he cast by the flash of his big roll of bills was L. W. Lockhart, the banker. For some reason best known to himself Rimrock still carried his roll in his pocket, whereas any good business man will tell you that he should have deposited it in the bank. And one thing more—not a man in Gunsight knew the first thing about his associates in the mine.

"I'll tell you the truth," said the overbearing L. W. as he stood arguing with Rimrock in front of the Alamo, "I don't believe you've got any company. I believe you went East with that two thousand dollars and won a stake at gentleman's poker; and then you come back, with your chest all thrown out, and get mysterious as hell over nothing."

"Well, what do you care?" answered Rimrock scornfully. "You don't stand to win or lose, either way!"

"Nope! Nope!" pronounced Hassayamp positively, "he's got a company—I know that. I reckon that's what worries him. Anyhow, they's something the matter; he ain't took a drink in a week. Seems like when he was broke he was round hyer all the time, jest a-carousin' and invitin' in the whole town; and now when he's flush and could buy me out with that little wad right there in his jeans, he sits here, by George, like a Keeley graduate, and won't even drink when he's asked."

"Well, laugh," grumbled Rimrock as Old Hassayamp began to whoop, "I reckon I know what I'm doing. When you've got nothing to lose except your reputation it don't make much difference what you do; but when you're fixed like I am, with important affairs to handle, a man can't afford to get drunk. He might sign some paper, or make some agreement, and euchre himself out of millions."

"Aw! Millions! Millions!" mocked L. W., "your mine ain't worth a million cents. A bunch of low-grade copper on the Papago Desert, forty miles on a line from the railroad and everything packed in by burros. Who's going to buy it? That's what I ask and I'm waiting to hear the answer."

He paused and waited while Rimrock smiled and felt thoughtfully through his clothes for a match.

"WELL, don't let it worry you," he said at last. "I'm not telling everything I know. If I did, by grab, there'd be a string of men from here to the Tecelote Hills."

"Yes—coming back!" jeered the provocative L. W.; but Rimrock only smiled again and gazed away through a thin veil of smoke.

"You just keep your shirt on, Mr. Know-it-all Lockhart, and remember that large bodies move slowly. You'll wake up some morning and read the

answer written in letters ten feet high."

"Yes—For Rent!" grunted L. W., and shutting down on his cigar, he stumped off up the street; but Old Hassayamp Hicks nodded and winked at Rimrock, though at that he was no wiser than L. W.

RIMROCK kept his own counsel, sitting soberly by himself and mulling over what was on his mind; and at last he went to see Mary Fortune. It was of her he had been thinking, though in no sentimental way, during the long hours that he sat alone. Who was this woman, he asked himself, and what did she want with that stock? And should he give it to her? That was the one big question and it took him two weeks to decide.

He came into her office while she was running her typewriter and nodded briefly as he glanced out the rear door; then without any preliminaries he drew out an engraved certificate and laid it down on her desk.

"There's your stock," he said. "I've just endorsed it over to you. And now you can give me back that paper."

He did not sit down, did not even take off his hat; and he studiously avoided her eyes.

"Oh, thank you," she replied, glancing hurriedly at the certificate, "won't you sit down while I write out a receipt?"

She picked up the paper, a beautiful piece of engraving, and looked it over carefully.

"Oh, two thousand shares?" she murmured questioningly. "Yes, I see; there are two hundred thousand in all. 'Par value, one hundred dollars.' I suppose that's just nominal. How much are they really worth?"

"A hundred dollars a share," he answered grimly, and as she cried out he picked up a pen and fumbled idly with its point.

"Oh, surely they aren't worth so much as that?" she exclaimed, but he continued his attentions to the pen.

"No?" he enquired and then he waited with an almost bovine calm.

"Why, no," she ran on, "why, I'd—" "You'd what?" he asked, but the trap he had set had been sprung without catching its prey.

"Why, it seems so much," she evaded rather lamely.

"Oh, I thought you were going to say you'd like to sell."

"No, I wouldn't sell," she answered quickly as her breath came back with a gasp.

"Because if you would," he went on cautiously, "I'm in the market to buy. It'll be a long time before that stock pays any dividend. How'd you like to sell a few shares?"

"No, I'd rather not—not now, at least. I'll have to think it over first. But won't you sit down? Really, I'm quite overcome! It's so much more than I had a right to expect."

"If you'd sell me a few shares," went on Rimrock without finesse, "you wouldn't have to work any more. Just name your price and—"

"Oh, I like to work," she countered gaily as she ran off a formal receipt; and, signing her name, she handed it back to him with a twinkle of amusement in her eyes. "And then there's another reason—sit down, I want to talk to you—I think it will be better for you. Oh, I know how you feel about it; but did you ever consider that other people like their own way, too? Well, when you're off by yourself just think that over, it will help you understand life."

Rimrock Jones sat down with a thud and took off his hat as he gazed at this astonishing woman. She was giving him advice in a most superior manner; and yet she was only a typist.

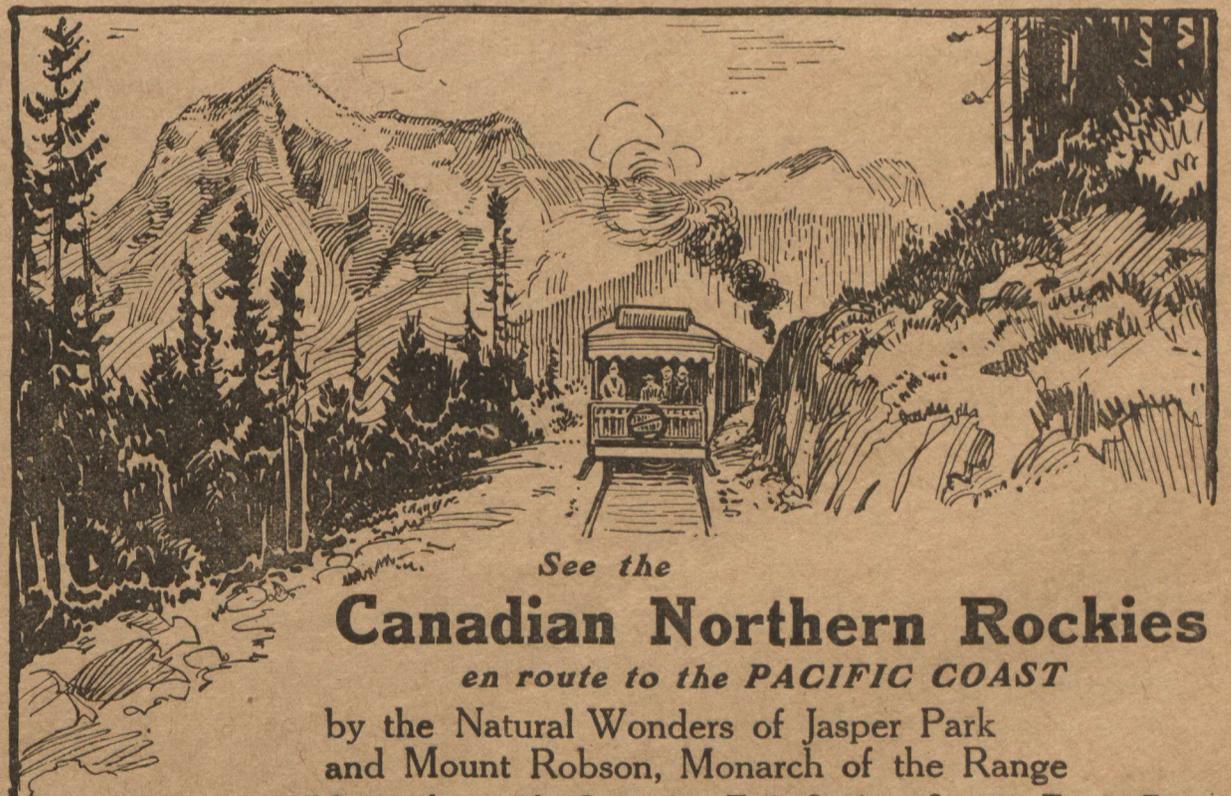
"You said something one time," she went on seriously, "that hurt my feelings very much—something about being trimmed, and by a woman! I resolved right there that you needed to be educated. Do you mind if I tell

you why? Well, in the first place, Mr. Jones, I admire you very much for the way you've kept your word. You are absolutely honest and I won't forget it when it comes to voting my stock. But that cynical attitude that you chose to affect when you came to see me before—that calm way of saying that you couldn't trust anybody, not even the person addressed—that won't get you very far, where a woman is concerned. That is, not very far. She looked him over with a masterful smile and Rimrock began to fumble his hat.

"You took it for granted," she went on accusingly, "that I had set out from the first to trim you but—and here's the thing that makes me furious—you said: 'Trimmed, by grab, by a woman!' Now I'd like to enquire if in your experience you have found women less honest than men; and in the second place I'd like to inform you that I'm just as intelligent as you are. It was no disgrace, as I look at the matter, for you to be bested by me; and as for being trimmed, I'd like to know what grounds you have for that remark? Did I ever ask more than you yourself had promised, or than would be awarded in a court of law? And couldn't I have said, when you went off without seeing me or writing a single word; couldn't I have said, when you went off with my money and were enjoying yourself in New York, that I had been trimmed—by a man?"

SHE spat out the word with such obvious resentment that Rimrock jumped and looked towards the door. It came over him suddenly that this mild, handsome woman was at heart strictly anti-man. That was putting it mildly, she was anti-Jones and might easily be tempted too far; for right there in her hand she held two thousand shares of stock that could be used most effectively as a club.

"Well, just let me explain," he stammered abjectly. "I want you to



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