

for even telegraph operators have been known to talk. She slipped out quietly and a half hour afterward the papers were drawn up and signed, and the whole vacant block across the street from the hotel was tied up for the Tecolote Mining Company. And then the great news broke.

It is a penal offence, punishable by heavy fine and imprisonment, for a telegraph operator to disclose the secrets of his files; but within ten minutes the whole street knew. The values on property went up in meteor flights as reckless speculators sought to buy in on the ground floor. All the land along the railroad, instead of being raw desert, became suddenly warehouse sites; the vacant lots along the main street were snatched up for potential stores and saloons, and all the drab flats where the Mexican burros wandered became transformed to choice residence properties. It had come at last, that time prophesied by Rimrock when Gunsight would be transformed by his hand, but the prophet was not there to see. After all his labours, and his patient endurance of ridicule and unbelief, when the miracle happened Rimrock Jones, the magician, was immured in the County Jail.

But it made a difference. Even Mary Fortune came to think of him with more kindness in her heart. The Geronimo papers suddenly blossomed out with accounts of the Gunsight boom; and Rimrock Jones, though held for murder, was heralded as a mining king. The story was recalled of his discovery of the Gunsight and of his subsequent loss of the same; and the fight for the Old Juan, with the death of McBain, was rewritten to fit the times. Then the grading crew came with their mules and scrapers, and carloads of ties and rails. Great construction trains congested all the sidings as they dumped off tools and supplies. A track-laying machine followed close behind them, and the race for the Tecolotes was on. What a pity it was that poor Rimrock Jones was not there to see the dirt fly!

AND there were other changes. From an office drudge, Mary Fortune, the typist, suddenly found herself second in command. Every day from Geronimo there came letters and telegrams from the prisoner in the County Jail and his trenchant orders were put into effect by the girl who had worked for McBain. Nothing more was said about her mysterious past, nor the stigma such a past implies; the women of the hotel now bowed to her hopefully and smiled if she raised her eyes. Even Jepson, the superintendent, addressed her respectfully—after stopping off at the County Jail—and all the accounts of the Company, for whatever expense, now passed through her competent hands.

She was competent, Jepson admitted it; yet somehow he did not like her. It was his wife, perhaps, a proud, black-eyed little creature, who first planted the prejudice in his breast; although of course no man likes to take orders from a woman. To be sure, she gave no orders, but she kept the books and that gave her a check on his work. But Abercrombie Jepson was too busily occupied to brood much over this incipient dislike, he had men by the hundred pouring out

to the mine and all the details of a great plant on his hands.

First out across the desert went the derricks of the well-borers, to develop water for the concentrator and mill; and then diamond-drill men with all their paraphernalia, to block out the richest ore; and after them the millwrights and masons and carpenters, to lay foundations and build the lighter parts of the plant; and, back and forth in a steady stream, the long lines of teamsters, hauling freight from the end of the railroad. It was an awe-inspiring spectacle, this invasion of the desert, this sure preparation to open the treasure-house where the Tecolotes had locked up their ore. But Rimrock was missing from it all!

There came a time when Mary Fortune acknowledged this to herself; and, without knowing just why, she took the next train to Geronimo. The summer had come on and the jail as she entered it was stifling with its close, smelly heat. She sickened at the thought of him, caged up there day and night, shut off even from light and air; and when the sheriff let her in through the clanging outer gate she started back at sight of the tanks. Within high walls of concrete a great, wrought-iron cell-house rose up like a square box of steel and, pressed against the bars, were obscene leering eyes staring out for a look at the woman.

"Oh, that's all right," said the sheriff kindly, "just step right down this way. I regret very much I can't bring him outside, but he's in for a capital offence."

He led the way down a resounding corridor, with narrow windows high up near the roof; and there, staring out from a narrow cell, she saw Rimrock Jones. His face was pale with the prison pallor and a tawny growth covered his chin; but the eyes—they were still the eyes of Rimrock, aggressive, searching and bold.

"A lady to see you," announced the sheriff and suddenly they were alone.

There had been some business, some important matter upon which she had

needed his advice, but as she saw him shut up like a common felon the sudden tears came to her eyes.

"Kind of limited quarters," observed Rimrock, smiling wanly, "nothing like that new hotel that we're building. Well, it won't be long now till I'm out of this hole. Is there anything special you want?"

"Why, yes!" she said, getting control of herself, "can't—we get you out on bail? I didn't know it was so awful inside here—I'm going to engage the best lawyer in town!"

"No use," answered Rimrock, "I'm held for murder—and I don't want no lawyer, anyhow."

The old stubborn tone had come back into his voice, but swift compassion urged her on.

"But you certainly will have one when your case goes to trial? Mr. Lockhart said he would hire one himself."

"Nope, don't want 'em," answered Rimrock. "They're a bunch of crooks. I'll handle my case myself."

"Yourself? Why, you don't know the law—"

"That's why I'll win," broke in Rimrock impatiently. "I'm going to pick out that jury myself."

"No, but the briefs and papers! And who will represent you in court?"

"Never mind," sulked Rimrock, "I'll take care of all that. But I won't have a lawyer, if I swing for it!"

"Oh!" she gasped, but he gazed at her grimly without thinking about anything but his case.

"All I want is justice," he went on doggedly. "I want a fair trial before a jury of Arizona men. When I state my case I'll tell them the truth and I don't want any lawyer butting in. And one thing more. I'm going to ask you, Miss Fortune, to leave this case strictly alone. I thank you just as much for your good intentions, but we don't look at this matter the same. I quit the law when I lost title to the Gunsight, and I'm going to play out my hand to the end. I claim there's a law that's above all these lawyers—and judges and supreme courts, too—and

that's the will of the people. I may be mistaken, but I'll gamble my life on it and if I lose—you can have the whole mine."

"I don't want the whole mine," she answered resentfully, "I want—I want you to be free. Oh, I came to tell you about all we're doing—about the construction and the mine work and all—but I just can't say a word. Are you determined to plead your own case?"

"Why, certainly," he said. "Why shouldn't I do it? I don't consider I've done anything wrong. I hope you don't think, just because I killed McBain that I'm suffering any regrets? Because I'm not, nor nothing of the kind—I'm glad I killed him like I did. He had it coming to him and, gimme a square jury, I'll make 'em say I did right."

"I guess I don't understand," she stammered at last, "but—but I'm glad that it doesn't seem wrong. I can't understand how a man could do it; but I'll help you, any way I can."

"All right," said Rimrock and looked at her strangely, "I'll tell you what you can do. In the first place I want you to go back to Gunsight and stay there until I come back. And in the second place—well, I can't forget what I did—that day. I want you to say it's all right."

"It is all right," she answered quickly, "I guess that's what I came to say. And will you forgive me, too, for letting you lie here and never doing anything to help?"

"Oh, that's nothing," said Rimrock, "I don't mind it much. But say, isn't there anything else?"

"No!" she said, but the hot blood mounted up and mantled her cheeks with red.

"Come on," he beckoned. "Just to show you forgive me—it will help me to win if you do."

She looked around, up and down the narrow corridor, and then laid her cheek to the bars. Who would not do as much, out of Christian kindness, for a man who had suffered so much?

(To be continued.)



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