

## Rimrock Jones

(Continued from page 21.)

the next morning at the Recorder's office with a copy of her notice for record. Her torn clothes were concealed beneath a full cloak and her hands within automobile gloves; but the clerk, even in the rush of New Year recording, glanced curiously at a bruise across her forehead. Then he filed her claim with a hundred others and she slipped out and drove away.

When Mary Fortune returned to Gunsight she found the whole town in an uproar. Men were running to and fro and a great crowd of people was gathered in front of the hotel. If she had feared for a moment that the scar above her eye, which she had covered so artfully with her hair, might be noticed by Jepson and others, that fear was instantly allayed. There was bigger news afoot—Ike Bray had come to town and given notice that he had jumped the Old Juan claim. He was backed up now against a plate-glass window of the Tecolote Mining Company's office and Jepson was making a speech. As she drove up closer she could see Hassayamp Hicks, and as the crowd shouted he broke in on Jepson's disavowal.

"That ain't the question, suh!" he shouted fiercely, "we want to know who paid him! And as a personal friend of Mr. Jones, the best man in this hyer town, I wish to say right now that the Old Juan claim can't be jumped by nobody!"

"Just a moment, Mr. Hicks!" interrupted Jepson patiently, but the mob was shouting him down.

"It's a lie!" yelled Bray from his place against the window. "I jumped that claim for myself! I jumped it myself; and Rimrock Jones, nor none of his friends, can't come and take it away!"

"Oh, they can't, hey?" thundered a voice and Mary started as she saw a tall form through the crowd. It was L. W. Lockhart, the man who had sold Rimrock out and allowed the Old Juan to lapse. "They can't, you say? Well, I want to tell you they can! And, gun-play or not, they will!"

HIS high hat surged forward into the forbidden space that Bray had cleared with his gun and then a pistol shot rang out. The next moment the glass windows were swaying and bending beneath the weight of the mob. There was a babel of shouting, a quick surge forward and then the crowd gave back. L. W. was coming out and as they gave way before him he addressed the men of Gunsight.

"I've got 'im, boys!" he cried in a frenzy, "come on, we'll string 'im up! We'll show 'im if he can jump Rimrock's claim!"

He came striding from the crowd, one arm hanging limp the other dragging the cursing Ike Bray.

"You got me!" he snarled, shaking Bray like a rat, "but dang you, I've got you, too!"

The mob fell in behind, but as they passed Mary's automobile Bray reached out and clutched it with both hands.

"Let go!" commanded L. W., still dragging at his collar while his bloody arm flapped with each jerk. "Let go, you dastard, or I'll skin you alive—you can't run no sandy over me! The man don't live, so help me

God, that can rob a friend of mine!"

He turned back impatiently, but as he raised his boot to stamp on the clinging hands his eyes met Mary Fortune's.

"Don't let him kill me, lady!" gasped Ike Bray imploringly as he felt L. W.'s grip relax. "I only shot in self-defence."

"You'd better let him in here," suggested Mary as she hurriedly threw open the door. "I think it will be better that way."

"No, he robbed old Rimmy!" sobbed L. W. hysterically, "the best friend I ever had. And I was drunk and let the assessment work lapse. My God, he'll kill me for this!"

"No, he won't!" she said and as she touched his hand L. W. let go and backed away.

"Well, all right, Miss Fortune," he stammered brokenly, "but—he's got to git out of town!"

"I'll take him!" she answered, and as the crowd fell back she speeded up and raced away.

"God bless you, ma'am," cried Ike Bray tremulously as she slowed up to let him down, "I'll do as much for you, some day! Is there anything, now, I can do?"

He had read the sudden wish in her eyes, but she hesitated long before she spoke.

"Yes," she said as she started ahead, "keep away from Rimrock Jones!"

### CHAPTER XXV.

#### An Accounting.

ALL the next day, and the next, May watched the door and on the morning of the third Rimrock came. From motives of prudence the badly shaken Jepson had suggested that she see him first and she had consented with an understanding smile. He

slipped in quietly, glancing furtively around, and then looked at her coldly in the eye.

"Well," he said with an accusing smile, "I see you sold out to Stoddard, too."

She turned away wearily and, picking up a letter, laid it down on the counter before him.

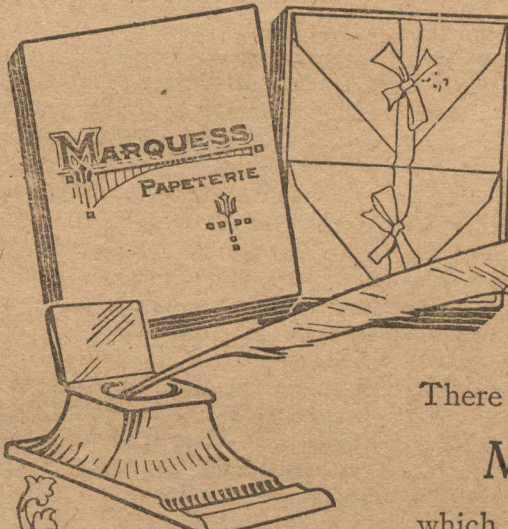
"There's a notice," she said as if she had not heard him, "that I've been asked to turn over to you."

He glanced at it impatiently and then, confused by its verbiage, looked up with a questioning scowl.

"What's all this?" he asked. And then, in a louder tone: "Where'd you get this paper?"

"It was sent to me," she answered, "as secretary of the Company. But it's only a matter of form. When you left New York a general summons was published in a legal paper and in

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