

success; for Rimrock was swayed more by his heart than his head, and at times she seemed a little cold. There was a hard, worldly look that came over her at times, a sly, calculating look that chilled him when he might have told everything he knew. Yet it may easily be that he told her enough, and more than she needed to know.

IN some curious way that Rimrock could never fathom, Mrs. Hardesty was interested in stocks. She never explained it, but her visits to the Waldorf had something to do with trades. Whether she bought or sold, gathered tips or purveyed them or simply guarded her own investments was a mystery that he never solved; but she knew many people and, in some way not specified, she profited by their acquaintance. She was an elusive woman, like another that he knew; but at times she startled him, too. Those times were mostly on the rare occasions when she invited him to supper at her rooms. These were at the St. Cyngia, not far from the Waldorf, a full suite with two servants to attend.

On his first formal call Rimrock had been taken aback by the wealth and luxury displayed. There were rare French tapestries and soft Persian rugs that seemed to merge into the furniture of the rooms and at his very first dinner she had poured out the wine until even his strong head began to swim. It was a new world to him and a new kind of woman—with the intellect and, yes, the moral standards of a man. She was dainty and feminine, and with a dark type of beauty that went to his head worse than wine, but with it all she had a stockbroker's information and smoked and drank like a man. But then, as she said, all the women smoked now; and as far as he could judge, it was so. The women they saw in the gay, all-night restaurants, or after the theatre in cabarets, all beautifully gowned and apparently with their husbands, drank and smoked the same as the men.

But the thing that startled Rimrock and made him uneasy was the way she had when they were alone. After the dinner was over, in her luxurious apartments, when the servant had left them alone, as they sat together across the table and smoked the scented cigarettes that she loved, he could feel a spell, a sort of enchantment, in every soft sweep of her eyes. At other times her long, slender arms seemed thin, in a way, and unrounded; but then her whole form took on the slim grace of a dancer and that strange light came into her eyes. It, too, was a light such as comes to dancers' eyes, as they take on some languid pose; but it had this difference—it was addressed to him, and her words belied her eyes. The eyes spoke of love, but, leaning across the table, the tiger lady talked of stocks.

It was on the occasion of his first winning on copper, when he had sold out his Navajoa at a big profit; and, after the celebration that he had provided, she had invited him to supper. The cigarettes were smoked and, with champagne still singing in his ears, Rimrock followed her to the dimly lighted reception-room. They sat by the fire, her slim arms gleaming and dark shadows falling beneath her hair; and as Rimrock watched her, his heart in his throat, she glanced up from her musing to smile.

"WHAT a child you are, after all!" she observed, and Rimrock raised his head.

"Yes, sure," he said, "I'm a regular baby. It's a wonder someone hasn't noticed and took me in off the street."

"Yes, it is," she said, with a twist of the lips, "the Street's no place for you. Some of those big bears will get you, sure. But here's what I was thinking. You come back to New York to watch Whitney Stoddard and be where you could do him the most harm. That's childish in itself, because there's no reason in the world why both of you shouldn't be friends. But never mind that—men will fight, I suppose—it's only a question of weapons."

"Well, what do we care?" answered Rimrock, with a ready smile, "I thought maybe you might adopt me."

"No, indeed," she replied, "you'd run away. I've seen boys like you before. But to think that you'd come back here to get the lifeblood of Stoddard and then go to buying Navajoa! Why not? Why, you might as well be a mosquito for all the harm you will do. A grown man like you—Rimrock Jones, the copper king—fighting Stoddard through Navajoa!"

"Well, why not?" defended Rimrock. "Didn't I put a crimp in him? Didn't I double my money on the deal?"

"Yes, but why Navajoa? Why not Tecolote? If you must fight, why not use a real club?"

Rimrock thought a while, for the spell was passing and his mind had switched from her charms.

"How'm I going to use Tecolote?" he blurted out at last. "It's tied up, until I can find that girl!"

"Not necessarily," she replied. "We who live by the Street learn to use our enemies as well as our friends. You will never whip Stoddard as long as you stand off and refuse to sit in on the game. Isn't his vote as good as your friend, the typist's? Then use it to put Tecolote on the market. You know what I mean—to vote Tecolote commons and get the stakes on the board. Then while this scramble is on and he's fighting the Hackmeisters, buy Tecolote and get your control."

"Fine and dandy!" mocked Rimrock. "You're right, I'm a sucker; and it's a shame to take my money. But I don't want any Tecolote Commons."

"Why not?" she challenged, laughing gayly at his vehemence. "Are you afraid to play the game?"

"Not so you'd notice it," answered Rimrock, grimly, "but I never play the other fellow's game. The Tecolote game is going to be played in Arizona, where my friends can see fair play. But look at Navajoa, how balled up that company is with its stocks all scattered around. Until it comes in for transfer nobody knows who's got it. They may be sold clear out and never know it. No, I may look easy, but I've been dog-bit once and I've got the leg to show for it. To issue that stock we'd have to call in the lawyers and go through some reorganization scheme; and by the time we got through,

with Miss Fortune gone, I'd find myself badly left. There'll be no lawyers for me, and no common stock. I know another way to win."

He paused and as she failed to ask what it was, he grunted and lit another cigarette.

"I wonder," she began after a thoughtful pause, "if Stoddard doesn't know where she is."

She had guessed it as surely as if he had stated his plan—he still hoped to find Mary Fortune. And then? Well, his plan was a little nebulous right there; but Mary held the necessary stock. If he could get control, in any way whatsoever, of that one per cent. of the stock, he could laugh at Stoddard and take his dividends to carry on his fight in coppers. He had neglected her before, but this time it would be different; she could have anything she asked. And his detectives were hunting for her everywhere.

"Don't know," he answered, after a dogged silence. "Why? what makes you think he does?"

She laughed.

"You don't know Mr. Stoddard as well as I do. He's a very successful man. Very thorough. If he set out to find Mary Fortune he'd be almost sure to do it."

"Hm," said Rimrock. "I'd better watch him, then. I'll call up about that to-morrow. Just have a man there to watch the door—she might be going in or out."

"What a sleuth you are!" she answered, gravely, and then she broke down and laughed. "Well, well," she said, "'tis a battle of wits, but love may find a way. Do you believe in love?" she went on, abruptly, as Rimrock showed signs of pique. "I just wanted to know. You great, big Western men seem more fitted, somehow, for the part of copper kings. But tell me honestly, I feel so trifling to-night, do you believe in the great love for one woman? Or do you hold with these drawing-room philosophers that man is by nature polygamous? Never mind my feelings—just tell me."

SHE coiled up lazily in her soft plush great-chair and regarded him with languid eyes, and Rimrock never suspected that the words he had spoken would go straight to Stoddard that night. He forgot his rejection of a get-together plan and his final refusal of common stocks; all he saw was this woman with her half-veiled glances and the firelight as it played on her arms. He had confessed his hope of still finding Mary and of winning her back to his side; but as he gazed at the tiger lady, sprawling so negligently before him, his fickle thoughts wandered to her. He denounced the theory of these latter-day philosophers that man is essentially a brute and, still watching her furtively, he expressed the conviction that he could love the One Woman forever.

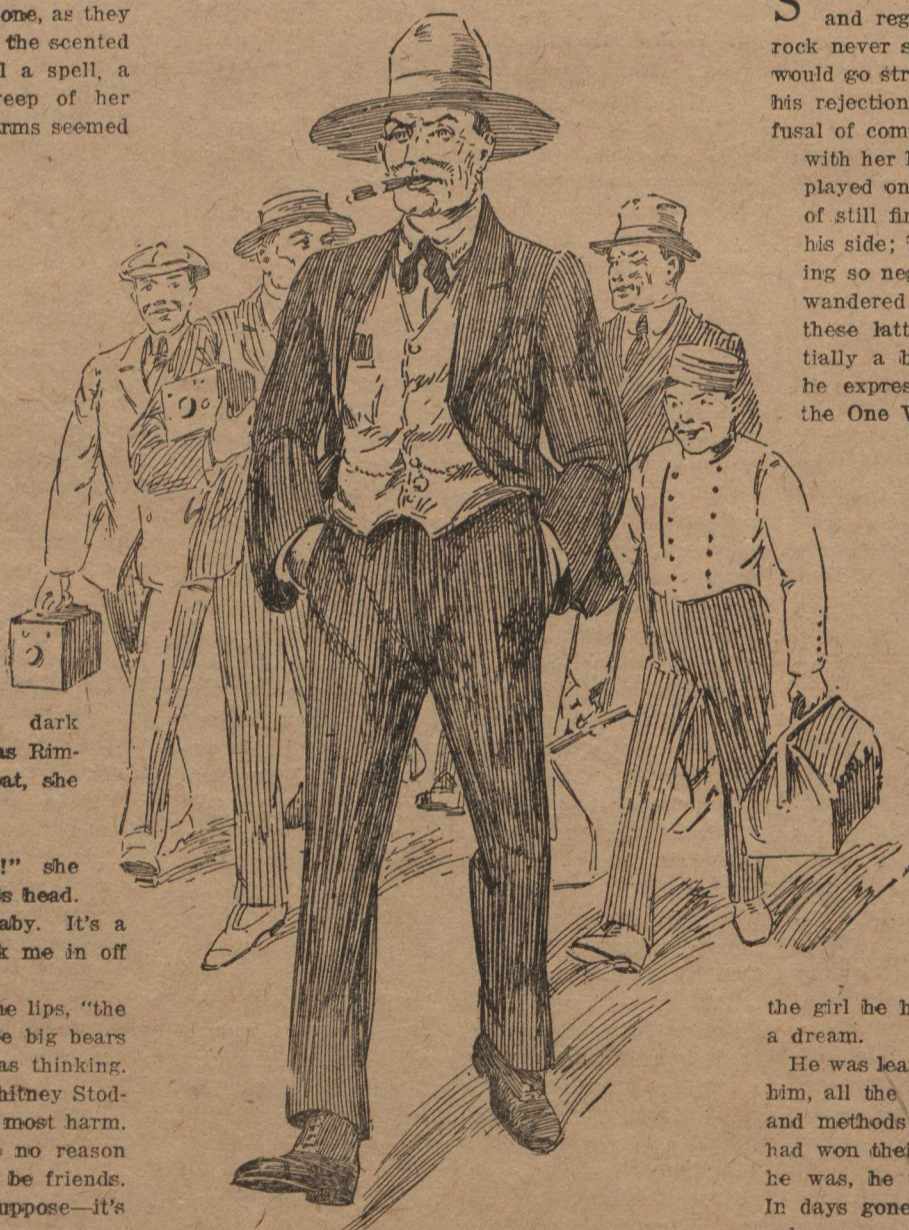
CHAPTER XIX.

Where All Men Meet.

WHEN Rimrock had caught the first train for New York he had thought it was to seek out Mary Fortune—to kneel at her feet and tell her humbly that he knew he had done her a wrong—but as the months went by and his detectives reported no progress he forgot his early resolve. The rush and excitement of that great gambling game that goes on in the Stock Exchange, the plunges on copper and the rushes for cover, all the give-and-take of the great chase; it picked him up as a great flowing stream floats a leaf and hurries it along, and Gunsight and Tecolote and

the girl he had known there seemed far away, like a dream.

He was learning the game from the gamblers about him, all the ins and outs of The Street; the names and methods of all the great leaders and how they had won their success; and also, bold gambler that he was, he was starting on a career of his own. In days gone by, at roulette or faro, or in frontier poker games, he had learned to play with big chances against him and, compared to them, Wall Street was safe. The money that he staked was less than



Then his naive hospitality in inviting them all to the bar.