

muttered under his breath. "How much of a share do you expect me to give you?" he asked after a long anxious pause and her eyes lit up and were veiled.

"Whatever you say," she answered quietly and then: "I believe you mentioned fifty-fifty—an undivided half."

"My—God!" exclaimed Rimrock starting wildly to his feet. "You don't—say, you didn't think I meant that?"

"Why, no," she said with a faint flicker of venom, "I didn't, to tell you the truth. That's why I told you I was taking business; but you said: 'Well, so am I.'"

"Well, holy Jehosophrats!" cursed Rimrock to himself and turned to look her straight in the eyes.

"Now let's get down to business," he went on sternly, "what do you want, and where am I at?"

"I want a share in that mine," she answered evenly, "whatever you think is right."

"Oh, that's the deal! You don't want fifty-fifty? You leave what it is to me?"

"That's what I said from the very first. And as for fifty-fifty—no, certainly I do not."

THERE were tears, half of anger, gathering back in her eyes, but Rimrock took no thought of that.

"Oh you don't like my style, eh?" he came back resentfully. "All you want out of me is my money."

"No, I don't!" she retorted. "I don't want your money! I want a share in that mine!"

"Say, who are you, anyway?" burst out Rimrock explosively. "Are you some wise one that's on the inside?"

"That's none of your business," she answered sharply, "you were satisfied when you took all my money."

"That's right," agreed Rimrock rubbing his jaw reflectively, "that's right, it was no questions asked. Now, say, I'm excited—I ought not to talk that way—I want to explain to you just how I'm fixed. I went back to New York and organized a company and gave one man forty-nine per cent. of my stock. He puts up the money and I put up the mine—and run it, absolutely. If I give you any stock I lose control of my mine; so I'm going to ask you to let me off."

He drew out his roll—that banded sheaf of yellow notes that he loved so dearly to flash—and began slowly to count off the bills.

"When you think it's enough," he went on ponderously, "you can say so, but I need all that stock."

He laid out the bills, one after another, and the girl settled back in her chair. "That's ten," he observed, "these are thousand-dollar bills—well, there's twelve, then—I'll make it thirteen." He glanced up expectantly, but she gave no sign and Rimrock dealt impassively on. "Well, fourteen—lots of money. Say, how much do you want? Fifteen thousand—you only gave me four hundred. Sixteen, seventeen—well, you get the whole roll; but say, girl, I can't give you that stock."

He threw down the last bill and faced her appealingly, but she answered with a hard little laugh.

"You've got to," she said. "I don't want your money. I want one per cent. of your stock."

"What, of what I've got left? Oh, of the whole capital stock! Well, that only leaves me fifty per cent."

"That's one way of looking at it. Now look at it another way. Don't you think I'm entitled to that? Don't you think if I'd said when I gave you that money: 'All I want is one per cent. of your mine'—don't you think now, honestly, that you'd have said: 'All right!' and agreed to it on the spot?"

SHE looked at him squarely and the fair-fighting Rimrock had to agree, though reluctantly, that she was right.

"Well, now that you've won when nobody expected you to, now that you've got money enough to get the whole town drunk, is that any reason why you should come to a poor typist and ask her to give up her rights? I'm putting it frankly and unless you can answer me I want you to give me that stock."

"Well, all right, I'll do it," answered Rimrock impulsively. "I promised you, and that's enough. But you've got to agree not to sell that stock—and to vote it with me, every time."

"Very well," she said, "I'll agree not to sell it—at least not to any one but you. And as far as the voting goes, I think we can arrange that; I'll vote for whatever seems right."

"No, right or wrong!" challenged Rimrock instantly. "I'm not going to be beat out of my mine!"

"What do you mean?" she demanded. "I hope you don't think—"

"Never mind what I think," answered Rimrock grimly, "I got bit once, and that's enough. I lost the old Gunsight just by trusting my friends, and this time I'm not trusting anybody."

"Oh, you're one of these cynics, these worldly-wise fellows that have lost all faith in mankind? I've seen them before, but it wasn't much trouble to find somebody else that they'd wronged."

She said the words bitterly with a lash to her tongue that cut Rimrock Jones to the quick. It had always been his boast that there was no man or woman that could claim he had done them a wrong, and he answered back sharply, while the anger was upon him, that he was not and there was no such thing.

"Well, if that's the case, then," she suggested delicately but with a touch of malice in her smile, "it seems rather personal to begin now with me, and take away my right to vote. Did this man in New York, when he bought into your company, agree to vote with you, right or wrong? Well then, why should I? Wasn't my money just as necessary, when I gave it to you, as his was when he gave it later?"

"Oh—" Rimrock choked back an oath and then fell back on personalities to refute her maddening logic.

"Say, your father was a judge," he burst out insultingly. "Was he a promoted lawyer, too; or did you learn that line of talk from McBain?"

"Never mind about that. You haven't answered my question. Wasn't my money just as necessary as his? It was! Yes, you know it. Well, then, why should you choose me for the very first person that you ever intentionally wronged?"

"Well, by grab," meant Rimrock,

slumping down in his chair as he saw his last argument gone, "it was a black day for me when I took that four hundred from you. I'd have done a heap better to have held up some Chinaman or made old L. W. come through. And to be trimmed by a woman! Well, gimme your paper and I'll sign whatever you write!"

She drew in her lips and gazed at him resentfully; then, sitting down at her typewriter, she thought for a minute and rattled off a single sentence. Rimrock took the paper and signed it blindly, then stopped and read what it was.

"I, Henry (Rimrock) Jones, for value received, hereby agree to give to Mary Roget Fortune, one per cent. of the total capital stock of the Tecolote Mining Company."

"Yes, all right," he said. "You'll get your stock just as soon as I get it from the East. And now I hope, by the Lord, you're satisfied."

"Yes, I am," she answered and smiled cryptically.

"Well, I pass!" he exploded and, struggling to his feet, he lurched out upon the street.

CHAPTER VII.

But Comes Back for More.

FROM the highest pinnacle of success to the black depths of despair is a long way to drop in one hour and if Rimrock Jones went the way of all flesh it is only another argument for prohibition. All the rest of the town had got a good start before he appeared on the scene and to drown that black thought—defeated by a woman—he drank deep with the crowd at the Alamo. At the end of the bout when, his thoughts coming haphazard, he philosophized on the disasters of the day, his brain slipped a cog and brought two ideas together that piled Pelion on the Ossa of his discontent.

The first vision to rise was that of the lady typist, exacting her full pound of flesh; and then, sloping back to that other catastrophe, his mind fetched up—Andrew McBain. And then he remembered. She worked for McBain. He straightened up in the bar-room chair and gusty curses swept from his lips.

"You're stung, you sucker!" he cried in a fury. "You're sold out to Andrew McBain! Oh, you dad-burned idiot—you ignorant baboon—you were drunk, that's why you signed up!"

Rimrock's pitiful rage at that other personality that had marred his fair hopes in his mine—that perverse, impulsive, overweening inner spirit that took the helm at each crisis of his life—was a rage to make the gods above weep if they did not laugh at the jest. And this blind, drunken self that rose up within him to sit leeringly in judgment on his acts, it judged not so ill, if the truth must be spoken. He had gone to Mary Fortune with the bouquet of Bourbon subtly blended with the aroma of his cigar and the fine edge of his reason had been dulled by so much when he matched his boy's wit against hers. His mind had not sought out the hidden motive that lay behind what she had said; he had followed where she led and, finding her logic impregnable, had

yielded like a child, in a pique. Yes, yielded out of spite without ever once thinking that she worked, day by day, for McBain.

A dull rage came over him and when he roused up next morning that fixed idea was still in his brain. But in the morning it was different. Those two personalities that had been so exalted, and differentiated, by drink, snapped back into one substantial I Am; and his tumultuous, fighting ego took command. Rimrock rose up thinking and the first hour after breakfast found him working feverishly to build up a defence. He had been jumped once before by Andrew McBain—it must not happen again. No technicality must be left to serve as a handle for this lawyer-robber to seize. Before noon that day Rimrock had two gangs of surveyors on their way to his Tecolote claims; and for a full week they laboured, running side-lines, erecting monuments and taking angles on every land-mark for miles. The final blue-prints, duly certified and witnessed, he took to the Recorder himself and then, still obsessed by his premonition of evil, he came back to serve notice on McBain.

For every man there is always some person instinctively associated with trouble; some person that he hates beyond all bounds and reason, and intuitively fears and distrusts. In the jumping of the Gunsight there had been others just as active, but Rimrock had forgiven them all but McBain. Even the piratical L. W., for all his treachery, was still within the pale of his friendship. But this tall, lanky Scotchman, always lurking within the law as a spider hides for safety in its hole, invoked nothing but his anger and contempt.

Rimrock dropped off the train that had brought him from the County seat, and went straight up the street to the hotel. McBain was in his office, stalking nervously up and down as he dictated to Mary Fortune, when the door opened suddenly and Rimrock Jones stepped in and stood gazing at him insolently.

"GOOD morning," he said with affected nicety of speech. "I hope that I don't intrude. Yes, it is lovely weather, but I came here on a matter of business. We've had our difficulties, Mr. Apex McBain, but all that is in the past. What I came to say is: I've got my eye on you and I don't want you out at my mine. Those claims are my property and, I give you fair notice, if you trespass on my ground you'll get shot. That's all for the present; but, because you've cleaned me once, don't think you can do it again."

He bowed with mock politeness, taking off his hat with a flourish, and as he backed out Mary Fortune turned pale. There was something in that bow and the affected accents that referred indirectly to her. She knew it intuitively and the hot blood rushed back and mantled her cheeks with red. Then she straightened up proudly and when McBain began to dictate her machine went on clacking defiantly.

There followed long days in which Rimrock idled about town or rode back and forth to his mine, and then the gossips began to talk. A change, over night, had taken place in Rimrock the day after his return from