

Rimrock Jones

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SYNOPSIS.

RIMROCK JONES, prospector, discovers the Tecolote copper mine in Arizona. The mine is rich in ore, but Rimrock is "broke." He gets \$10 from Lockhart, a local banker. With it he plays Faro and wins thousands. Another throw and he loses all. While searching for "Apex" McBain, his chief enemy, he meets Mary Fortune, McBain's typist. To her he explains how McBain euchred him out of the mine that put Gunsight on the map. She lends him \$400 on the security of an un-named share in the Tecolote. Rimrock comes back later with a bag of gold ore on which he gets \$2,000 loan from Lockhart. The ore was borrowed from a Mexican; whereby Rimrock begins to get even with a man who had previously robbed him. Rimrock goes down to New York and floats a company. He comes back, repays Lockhart, and tries to pay Mary Fortune her \$400. Mary insists on the "share" he had promised her. She names one per cent. Rimrock is trapped. That one per cent. throws the casting vote to Mary. The New York man has 49; Rimrock 51. It takes Rimrock's 50 and Mary's 1 to control the mine.

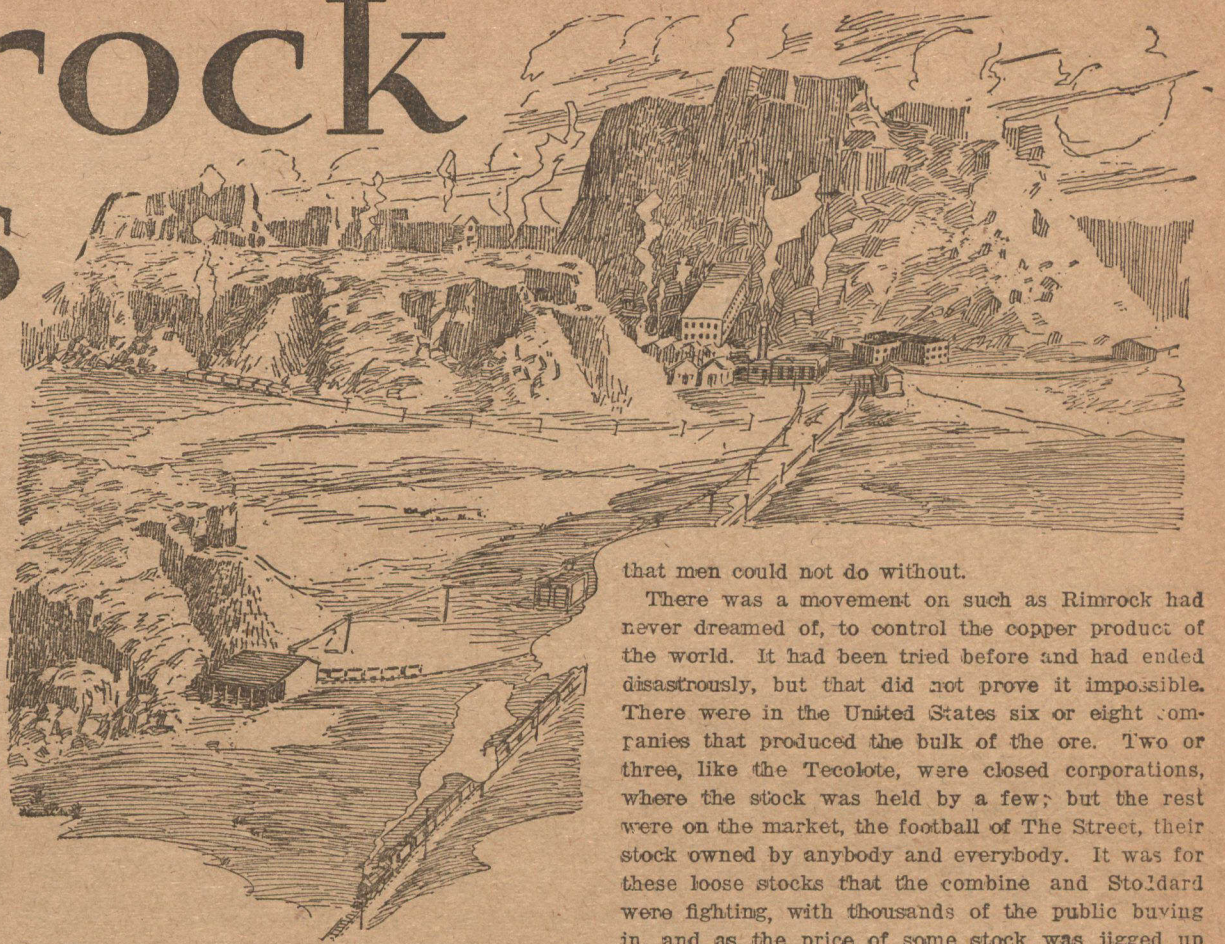
In a motor-ride to the Tecolote Rimrock proposes marriage to Mary Fortune. She postpones her decision. Surveyors arrive to line the railroad from Gunsight to Tecolote. "Apex" McBain and his gang undertake to jump Rimrock's claim. Rimrock arrives on the scene single-handed with his gun. In the scrimmage to get the claim jumpers off his property, he shoots McBain. Rimrock is placed under arrest on a charge of murder. He goes to jail. Unable to get bail, he also refuses to engage a lawyer, preferring to conduct his own case on a man-justice basis. Meanwhile Mary is made Secretary of the Company. Gunsight property booms. Jepson, manager for the New York interests, arrives. Mary visits Rimrock in jail and urges him to secure counsel. He refuses. A hotel, with the company's offices, is built. Rimrock's trial comes on. He is acquitted, and returns to Gunsight. Rimrock plays Faro again and when he quits he owns the place. He presents it to Old Hassalyamp Hicks, a saloon-keeper, who has befriended him in the olden days. Mrs. Hardesty, the "Tiger Lady," arrives in Gunsight. She is a friend of the New York interests. Rimrock meets her and takes her up to the hotel balcony, forgetting his appointment with Mary there. Mary sees them and slips away unseen. She later informs Rimrock that she is going to New York to have a long-deferred operation performed. He intuitively perceives that she is jealous. Mary leaves for the East, and Rimrock is in a fix. Somebody should stay and oversee Jepson, and Rimrock has promised Mrs. Hardesty to return to New York. She suggests that Rimrock follow Mary, and explain, which he decides to do.

CHAPTER XVIII.

New York.

RIMROCK JONES' return to New York was as dramatic and spectacular as his first visit had been pretentious and prodigal. With two thousand dollars and a big black hat he had passed for a Western millionaire; now, still wearing the hat but loaded down with real money, he returned and was hailed as a Croesus. There are always some people in public life whose least act is heralded to the world; whereas others, much more distinguished but less given to publicity, accomplish miracles and are hardly known. And then there are still others who, fed up with flattery and featured in a hundred ways, are all unwittingly the victims of a publicity bureau whose aim is their ultimate undoing.

A real Western cowboy with a pistol under his coat, a prospector turned multi-millionaire in a year, such a man—especially if he wears a sombrero and gives five-dollar tips to the bell-hops—is sure to break into the prints. But it was a strange coincidence,



ILLUSTRATED BY T. W. McLEAN

when Rimrock jumped out of his taxicab and headed for the Waldorf entrance, to find a battery of camera men all lined up to snap him and a squad of reporters inside. No sooner had Rimrock been shot through the storm door into the gorgeous splendours of Peacock Alley than they assailed him en masse—much as the bell-boys had just done to gain his grip and the five-dollar tip.

THAT went down first—the five-dollar tip—and his Western remarks on the climate. Then his naive hospitality in inviting them all to the bar where they could talk the matter over at their ease, and his equally cordial agreement to make it tea when he was reminded that some reporters were women—it all went down and came out the same evening, at which Rimrock Jones was dazed. If he had telegraphed ahead, or let anyone know that he planned to return to New York, it would not have been surprising to find the reporters waiting, for he was, of course, a great man; but this was a quick trip, made on the spur of the moment, and he hadn't told a soul. Yet in circumstances like these, with a roomful of newspapers and your name played up big on the front page, it is hardly human nature to enquire too closely or wonder what is going on. Still, there was something up, for even coincidence can explain things only so far. Leaving out the fact that Mrs. Hardesty might have sent on the telegram herself, and that Whitney H. Stoddard might have motives of his own in inviting his newspapers to act; it did not stand to reason that the first man Rimrock ran into should have had such a sweet inside tip. Yet that was what the gay Buckbee told him—and circumstances proved he was right. The money that Rimrock put up that night, after talking it over in the cafe, that money was doubled within the next three days, and the stock still continued to advance. It was invested on a margin in Navajoa Copper, a minor holding of the great Hackmeister combine that Stoddard had set out to break.

Stoddard was selling short, so Buckbee explained, throwing great blocks of stock on a market that refused to break; and when the rush came and Navajoa started up Rimrock was there with the rest of his roll. It was a game that he took to—any form of gambling—and besides, he was bucking Stoddard! And then, there was Buckbee. He knew more in a minute than some brokers know in a lifetime; and he had promised to keep him advised. Of course it was a gamble, a man might lose, but it beat any game Rimrock had played. And copper was going up. Copper, the metal that stood behind it all, and

that men could not do without.

There was a movement on such as Rimrock had never dreamed of, to control the copper product of the world. It had been tried before and had ended disastrously, but that did not prove it impossible. There were in the United States six or eight companies that produced the bulk of the ore. Two or three, like the Tecolote, were closed corporations, where the stock was held by a few; but the rest were on the market, the football of The Street, their stock owned by anybody and everybody. It was for these loose stocks that the combine and Stoddard were fighting, with thousands of the public buying in, and as the price of some stock was jugged up and down it was the public that cast the die.

If the people were convinced that a certain stock was good and refused to be shaken down, the price of that stock went up. But if the people, through what they had read, decided that the stock was bad; then there was a panic that nothing could stop and the big interests snapped up the spoils. So much Rimrock learned from Buckbee, and Mrs. Hardesty told him the rest. It was her judgment, really, that he came to rely upon; though Buckbee was right, in the main. He told the facts, but she went behind them and showed who was pulling the strings.

It was from her that he had learned of the mighty press agencies—which at the moment were making much of his coup—and how shrewd financiers like the Hackmeisters or Stoddard used them constantly to influence the market. If it became known, for instance, that Rimrock Jones was plunging on Navajoa and that within three days he had doubled his money and was still holding out for a rise; that was big news for Hackmeister and his papers made the most of it. But if Navajoa went down and some broker's clerk lost his holdings and committed embezzlement, or if a mining engineer made an adverse report, or the company passed a dividend, then Stoddard's press agents would make the most of each item—if he wished the stock to go down. Otherwise it would not be mentioned. It was by following out such subtleties and closely studying the tape, that brokers like Buckbee guessed out each move in advance and were able to earn their commissions.

BUT all this information did not come to Rimrock for nothing—there was a price which had to be paid. For reasons of her own the dashing Mrs. Hardesty appeared frequently in the Waldorf lobby, and when Rimrock came in with any of his friends he was expected to introduce them. And Rimrock's friends in that swarming hotel were as numerous as they were in Gunsight. He expected no less, wherever he went, than the friendship of every man; and if any held back, for any reason, he marked him as quickly for an enemy. He was as open-hearted and free in those marble corridors and in the velvet-hung club and cafe as the old Rimrock had been on the streets of Gunsight when he spoke to every Mexican.

It was his day of triumph, this return to the Waldorf where before he had been but a pretender, and it did his heart good to share his victory with the one woman who could understand. She knew all his ways now, his swift impulsive hatreds and his equally impulsive affections; and she knew, as a woman, just when to oppose him and when to lead him on. She knew him, one might say, almost too well for her