

crowd. They gazed at Old Juan as if he were an Aladdin, or Ali Baba in his treasure-cave. Old, gray-bearded Juan who hauled wood for a living, or packed cargas on his burros for El Patron! Yes, here he was with his fists full of dollars, piling them faster and faster into his bag.

"Now shake the bag down," suggested El Patron, "and perhaps you can get in some more."

"Some more?" panted Juan and quite mad with great riches he stuffed the sack to the top.

"Very well," said Rimrock, "now take them home, and give part of the money to Rosita. Then take what is left in this other bag and give a fiesta to the boys who worked for me."

"MAKE way!" cried Juan and as the crowd parted before him he went staggering down the street. A few shiny dollars heaped high on the top, fell off and were picked up by his friends. They went off together, Old Juan and his amigos, and L. W. came over to Rimrock.

"Now listen to me, Henry Jones," he began; but Rimrock waved him away.

"I don't need to," he said, "I know what you'll say—but Juan there has been my friend."

"Well, you don't need to spoil him—to break his back with money—when ten dollars will do just as well."

"Yes, I do!" said Rimrock, "didn't I borrow his picked rock? Well, keep out then; I know my friends. He'll be drunk for a month and at the end of his fiesta he won't have a dollar to his name, but as long as he lives he can tell the other hombres about that big sack of money he had."

Rimrock laid down one big bill, which paid for all the dollars, and walked out of the bank on air. He was feeling rich—that wealthy feeling that penny-pinchers never know—and all the world, except L. W. Lockhart, seemed responsive to his smile. Men who had shunned him for years now shook his hand and refused to take back what they had lent. They even claimed they had forgotten all about it or had intended their loans as stakes. With his pockets full of money it was suddenly impossible for Rimrock to spend a dollar. In the Alamo Saloon, where his friends were all gathered in a determined assault on the bar, his popularity was so intense that the drinks fairly jumped at him and he slipped out the back way to escape. There was one duty more—both a duty and a pleasure—and he headed for the Gunsight Hotel.

The news of his success, whatever it was, had preceded him hours before. Andrew McBain had hid out, the idle women were all a-twitter; but Mary Roget Fortune was calm. She had heard the news from the very first moment, when L. W. had dropped in on McBain; but the more she heard of his riotous prodigality the more it left her cold. His return to town reminded her painfully of that other time when he had come. She had watched for him then, her knight from the desert, worn and ragged but with his sack full of gold; but he had passed her by without a word, and now she did not care.

She looked up sharply as he came at last, a huge form, half-blocking the door; and Rimrock noticed the

change. Perhaps his sudden popularity had made him unduly sensitive—he felt instinctively that she did not approve.

"Do you mind my cigar?" he asked, stopping awkwardly half way to her desk; and he suddenly came to life as she answered:

"Why, yes. Since you ask me, I do."

That was straight enough and Rimrock cast his fifty-cent cigar like a stogie out of the door. Then he came back towards her with his big head thrust out and a searching look in his eyes. She had greeted him politely, but it was not the manner of the girl he had expected to see. Somehow, without knowing why, he had expected her to meet him with a different look in her eyes. It had been there before, but now it was absent—a look that he liked very much. In fact, he had remembered it and thought, apropos of nothing, that it was a pity she was so deaf. He looked again and smiled very slightly. But no, the look had fled.

CHAPTER VI.

Rimrock Passes.

IN the big moments of life when we have triumphed over difficulties and quaffed the heady wine of success there is always something—or the lack of something—to bring us back to earth. Rimrock Jones had returned in a Christmas spirit and had taken Gunsight by storm. He had rewarded his friends and rebuked his enemies and all those who grind down the poor. He had humbled L. W. and driven McBain into hiding; and now this girl, this deaf, friendless typist, had snatched the cup from his lips. The neatly turned speech—the few well-chosen words in which he had intended to express his appreciation for her help—were effaced from his memory and in their place there came a doubt, a dim questioning of his own worth. What had he done, or neglected to do, that had taken that look from her eyes? He sank down in a chair and regarded her intently as she sat there, composed and still.

"Well, it's been quite a while," he said at last, "since I've been round to see you."

"Yes, it has," she replied and the way she said it raised a more poignant question in his mind. Was she miffed, perhaps, because he had failed to call on her, that time when he came back to town? He had borrowed her money—she might have been worried, that time when he went to New York.

"I just got in, a little while ago—been back to New York about my mine. Well, it's doing all right now and I've come around to see you and pay back that money I owe."

"Oh, that four hundred dollars? Why, I don't want it back. You were to give me a share in your mine."

Rimrock stopped with his roll half out of his pocket and gazed at her like a man struck dumb. A share in his mine! He put the money back and mopped the sudden sweat from his brow.

"Well, now say," he began, "I've made other arrangements. I've sold a big share already. But I'll give you the money, it'll come to the same thing!" He whipped out his roll and smiled at her hopefully but she drew back and shook her head.

"No," she said, "I don't want your

money. I want a share in that mine."

She faced him, determined, and Rimrock went weak for he remembered that she had his word. He had given his word and unless she excused him he would have to make it good. And if he did—well, right there he would lose control of his mine.

"Say, now listen a minute," he began mysteriously, "I'm not telling this on the street—"

"Well, don't tell it here, then," she interrupted hastily, "they're listening, most of the time."

She pointed toward the door that led to the hotel lobby and Rimrock tiptoed towards it. He was just in time, as he snatched it open, to see McBain bounding up the back stairs; and a woman in a rocker, after a guilty stare, rose up and moved hastily away.

"Well, well," observed Rimrock as he banged the door. "I don't know which is worse, these women or peeping Andrew McBain. Are you still working for that fellow?" he enquired confidentially as he sat down and spoke low in her 'phone; and for the first time that day the smile came back and dwelt for a moment in her eyes.

"Yes," she answered, "I still do his work for him. What's the matter—don't you fully approve?"

Her gaze was a challenge and he let it pass with a grin and a jerk of his head.

"Just sorry for you," he said. "You'd better take this money and get a job with a man that's half white."

He drew out his roll and counted out four thousand dollars and laid them before her on the desk.

"Now listen," he began. "That four hundred then was worth four thousand and to me now. I had to have it, and I sure appreciate it—now just accept that as a payment in part."

He pushed over the money, but she shook her head and met his gaze with resolute eyes.

"Not much," she said, "I don't want your money and, what's more, I won't accept it. I gave you four hundred dollars—all the money I had—to get me a share in that mine, and now I want it. I don't care how much, but I want a share in that mine."

RIMROCK shoved back his chair and once more the sweat appeared on his troubled brow. He rose up softly and peeped out of the door, then came back and sat very close.

"What's the idea?" he asked. "Has some one been telling you who I've got in with me on this deal? Well, what's the matter then? Why won't you take the money? I'll give you more than you could get for the stock."

"No, all my life it's been my ambition to own a share in a mine. That's why I gave you the last of my money—I had confidence in your mine from the start."

"Well, what did you think, then?" enquired Rimrock sardonically, "when I jumped out of town without seeing you? You'd have sold out cheap, if I'd've come to you then, but now everybody knows I've won."

"Never mind what I thought," she answered darkly, "I took a chance, and I won."

"Say, you're strictly business, now ain't you?" observed Rimrock and

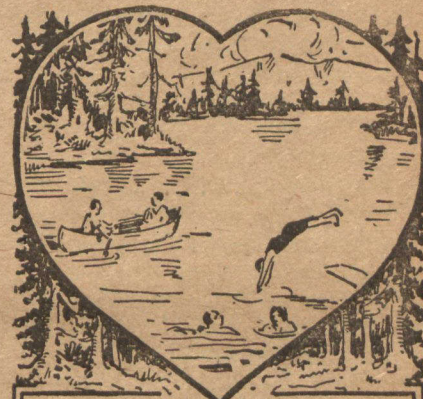
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