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fing ut all unless she takes the advice of some of us old timers and fires that young squirt of an engineer, John

Wilkerson leaned over and his face suddenly grew white in its intensity of "I'm the superintendent of this mine,

Tubbs looked astonished at the tone.

Wilkerson smiled to himself. One man, and be one of the most important in the camp, was his absolute tool and slave. He took his pen and rapidly wrote out an order:

"After this day all wages in this mine will be reduced 25 per cent." He called one of the bookkeepers and curtly ordered him to post it on the wall of the office outside. A surprise awaited him, however, in the attitude of the miners. They paid no attention to the notice he had posted on the office wall, nor did they seem to recognize the presence of the new superintendent. He questioned Ed Mayer, the loading boss.

"Miss Ruth is running The Master Key!" Mayer replied.

After the passing of Thomas Gallon' things at the mine went very quietly for a few weeks. John Dorr had accepted the subordinate position under Wilkerson and was faithfully de-



He Jerked Wilkerson to His Feet.

voting himself in the intervals of his duties to soothing Ruth's grief. The girl had really been enormously de pendent upon her father. She was only a child, but now in her solltariness she turned to John and old Tom Kane with impulsive trust and affection. She tried hard to be brave, but the days were long and the nights longer. The cook house bloomed with fresh roses every day, an excuse for her going down to talk with old Tom, and in the evening, when the shadows fell across the gulch, John and she we uld water the flowers together, and he would tell her of his life in college and

"I'd love to see New York!" she said knew so well. a dozen times, and on each occasion John would smile at her and say, "You

in New York.

Neither of them realized that circumstances would shortly take them both. though separately, to New York, for there was plling up in a secret drawer in Wilkerson's desk letters written in a woman's script. Some of them in scented envelopes on embossed paper. Each one of them was signed "Jean Darnell." When the seventh letter came the superintendent rerend it

Astor House, New York, May 15, 19-Dear Harry-From what you say and from what I learn from George, I think that I would be willing to put up the money to buy control of your "Master Key" mine, but you must be sure about this. I know that old Gallon made money out of it, but I'm also sure that he was concealing something, as you think | Make the mine worth while and-weil. I remember my days in that camp-I'd like my revenge. George Everett will handle the stock end of it very quietly when you say the word. Don't let your ugly temper get away from you and look out for Dorr JEAN DARNELL

"Now," thought Wilkerson exultant ly, "I can put the screws on Dorr; I'll fire him."

At this moment the man he was thinking so bitterly of appeared, and Wilkerson, while his courage was still fresh, said insolently. "I see you are spending a good deal of time out of your office The mine can't afford such extravagance. I guess we'll have to have a new mining engineer. I've sent for one, so you better pack."

For the moment John did not speak They confronted each other for a moment; then Dorr turned on his beet and walked off. As he did so he brush ed into old Tom Kane.

"The miners won't stand any more of Wilkerson, and they are going to strike tonight, when the day shift comes off," Tom croaked. "Lots of them are packing their duds now to get out. D-n him; he has ruined little Ruthie's property!"

John looked out of the window and realized that the various groups of miners, tired, sullen, as if waiting for something, made an ugly picture.

"I'm afraid it's up to them, Tom," he said, a little huskily. "I have been discharged, and I am leaving myself tonight."

He was perfectly amazed at the effect of his words. Dropping the coffeepot with a crash on the top of the range. Tom Kane dashed out of the door and into the nearest group of miners, gesticulating and laughing hysterically. He said two words and then bungalow, followed by a yelling. rushed back, his bright eyes gleaming tramping, laughing, bellowing column fiercely.

"That saves the mine for Ruthie, John," he gasped "The miners were went to his desk and unlocked the just going to quit quietlike. Now they

and you can make him straighten mat-

ters out with them." He peered anxiously up into the young man s face. "You won t desert her, will you, John?"

With an inarticulate growl John swung out into the soushine and et bowed his way through the streaming throng of miners just coming off suff Abead of him he saw Wilkerson taiking to an old miner, who seemed to be arguing earnestly. He saw the superintendent and the unper re-enter office, and a moment rater Ruth ap-

As John came to the office door he heard the sound of a scuffle within He kicked open the fruit barrier and stood inside just in time to see Wilkerson draw a gun on the old miner

"Drop that gun, you dog!" be bellowed, and with one leap was at Wilker-

Wilkerson was no pigmy in strength and as agile as a panther. He managed to land two stinging blows on John's eye before Dorr drove him ap against the wall, taid his powerful bands on him and thrust him to the floor in absolute belplessness. His fist was lifted to give the final finishing blow when he caught sight of Ruth's white face. He jerked Wilkerson to his feet, flung him into the corner and strode silently out

"John, John! What is the matter?" demanded Ruth

"That bound in there discharged me! I am going to leave tonight."

Her eyes slowly filled with tears. "You are not going to leave The Master Key' mine, are you, John? Andand" - Before he could answer her appeal in words there was a wild roar down the street and the tramp of book

"Get the dynamite and blow the fellow up!" bawled a couple of hoarse

"Get a rope and bang him to the hoist!" velled another. Then a full chorus of angry cries rose into the evening air and filled the valley with rancous sound

Quickly John drew Ruth aside in the shelter of one of the cottages and said hurriedly: "This must be stopped, Ruth. I'll get out there and stop

Ruth's property was in peril. - John's stentorian voice rang out across the throng: "Stop, men! Stop!" But be soon saw that the crowd was getting out of hand He perceived three or four of the tunnel men racing down the hill to join in the fracas. One of them, he was sure, had been to the powder house. He gritted his teeth and made his last appeal.

"Ruth-Ruth Gallon!" he called Doubtless none of the miners had noticed her presence, and when her siender figure emerged from a doorway boldly yet modestly out toward the man who was trying to hold them in check, there was a dead silence. That silence was portentous. In it was de cided the fate of "The Master Key."

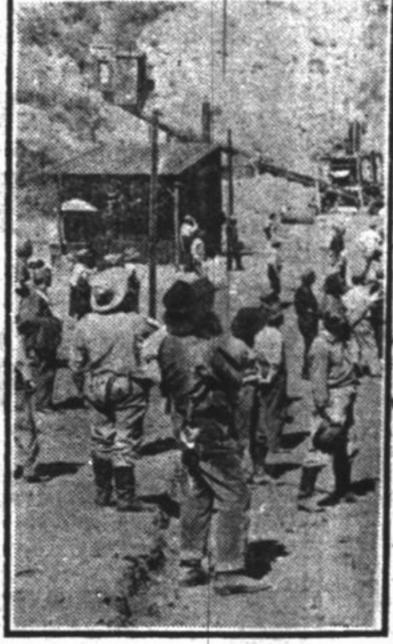
It was broken by wild and tumult ous cheers as John lifted Ruth on the box, and she held out her slender arms in girlish entreaty to the men she

Cowed, yet as ever alert to snatch at any opening. Wilkerson now came boldly on the scene. Just as be had bluffed his way many a time before. be now made a play on which he knew his own safety depended. He mount ed on the box beside fluth Gallon has asked me to restore the former rate of wages!" he shouted. "It has been done."

What meant that ominous silence? What more must he say to those faces upturned to his? "And I have reap- ing the Stuart era, so far as the upper pointed John Dorr to run this mine," classes went. Your plain citizen al he muttered,

Possibly he hoped that those low hourse tones would not carry far, but attentive ears caught them up and knew their meaning.

Old Tom Kane cume through the crowd, thrust Wilkerson off the box without ceremony and raised his crack



"Stop, men, stop!"

ed voice in a yell that brought a perfect thunder of cheers from the miners. Without waiting to listen for more Wilkerson went away with as much bravado as he could muster to the

On his way he picked up his gun. which John had flung through the window, and thrust it in the bosom of his shirt, with a meaning glance backwa at John Dorr, who was now belping Buth through the crowds toward the of men.

Once inside the office Wilkerson drawer which held that seventh letter. will make Wilkerson take you back, "Some time"- he muttered meaning".

Continued next week

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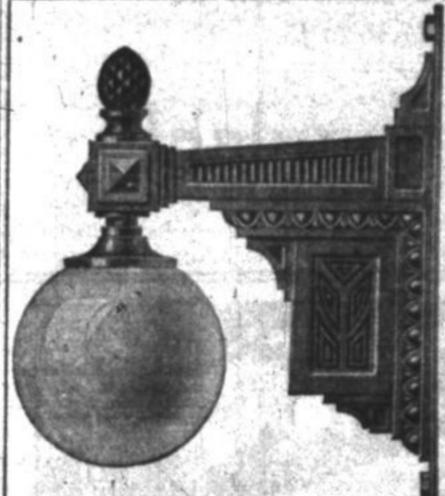
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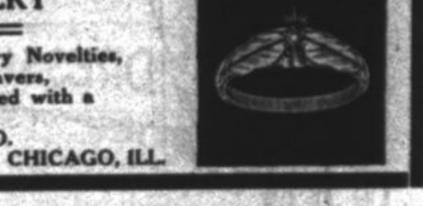


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