

Rex Beach Short Stories



(Continued From Last Week)

started nor what became of young Cushing thereafter.

The lady leaned over confidentially. "That's not the worst though. I've heard he drank!" She said it breathlessly with open shame.

Her listener didn't seem particularly horrified.

"Well, he is, too, as I recall it now." "Yes, yes! I don't mean that way. He drank whisky. Think of it!"

"I often do," said Shorty, licking his lips. "Why?"

"We heard he was dead," she continued sadly. "It nearly killed mother, and as soon as my school closed I came out to see the mine. Just think—\$2,000 right in that box. Won't that come in handy for us?"

Shorty loved it would.

"We can't be too kind to our mothers, can we?" she smiled at him brightly.

"I s'pose not. What're they like? I was drug up on goat's milk an' cut my teeth on chewin' tobacco."

The young lady told him, greatly to his interest.

They reached Number Two in a rattling burst of speed, and as the fresh animals were bent in the driver inquired: "Where's them messengers? Hey! You there?"

The stableman started from his staring admiration of the passenger.

"Guess they're late. I reckon you'll meet 'em in a few miles."

As they left the relay station Shorty admitted that he was uneasy, and when after a few miles the Wells-Fargo men failed to appear his uneasiness grew. They were threading deep into the heart of Bart's stamping ground by now, and at every hill and every curve the driver strained ahead for a glimpse of the tardy escort.

He concealed his forebodings from the girl, for he had acquired a strange feeling for her, a feeling that had grown rankly with the demise of his shyness, fostered, no doubt, by the warmth of her gentleness and which was too unusual as yet to permit of analysis.

Swinging past an elbow in the trail, the stage rushed rattling down across a gully, whence up a gentle rise, where the horses slowed. As it topped this the girl shrieked muffledly, and the driver leaned back on the reins, cursing.

Instinctively he approved of the fact that his passenger did not crouch against him, as any other woman would under sudden fright, but instead sat tight and still, leaving him free and unhampered.

Two figures had risen from the top of the bank, armed, masked and sinister. One, the familiar form of Black Bart, tall, debonaire, mocking; the other, a stranger whom Shorty had never seen before. Each carried a Winchester, the taller man holding his loosely in his holstered arm, the other half leveled in the position for quick action.

Before the horses had reared at the back pull the little teamster had grasped these points and swore again at the luck which sent two men against him on this of all days.

It had come too suddenly for him to formulate a plan of action. Moreover it was contrary to all precedent for a driver to assume other than passive duties. He even doubted whether road etiquette permitted it. Still, it was quite impossible that his companion should lose her fortune.

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

As these thoughts hurried through his brain he likewise weighed the odds against him. Even if he got one the other would probably kill him where he sat. Bart he knew for a deadly shot, whereas the stranger seemed oddly shaken—regular buck fever apparently, from his trembling. Evidently it were better to wing Bart if possible—the other man might miss.

Black Bart was speaking. "Oh! Better cargo than bullion this trip."

his hand and suddenly to his poster and the overgrown gun leaped forth, roaring as it came. Bart's Winchester whirled from his grasp, leaving him untouched, the whirling whine of the glancing bullet mingling with the scream of the woman.

As the driver fired he writhed in his seat, expecting the blow of a ball from the other road agent's rifle. But it did not come, so he swung about and fired again, whereupon the stranger, who had seemed numbed by an unaccountable paralysis, swayed gropingly off over the bank and slid limply down into the road amid a rattle of gravel and stones. Bart snatched up his rifle and leaped to cover behind the boulders of the hillside, moving with the quick litheness of a panther or a man accustomed to the spat of rifle bullets. He was yanking vainly at the ejector of his Winchester.

"I've smashed its stummock!" yelled Shorty gleefully, firing at each exposure of the retreating figure. "I've spiked his gun!"

As the bandit dodged out of range he leaped down.

"Here; get inside, quick!" he called to the girl, and she dug herself into his arms.

Oh, the indescribable sweetness of that moment! Shorty had held a woman—a real, regular woman—on his breast! The boys would swear he was a liar if he ever told.

Thrusting her inside, he ran forward to the figure that lay in the road by the heads of the snorting horses, but as he did so the man raised unobtrusively upon one elbow, the mask, a bandanna kerchief, still hiding his features. Blood trickled from a thin gash over one ear.

"Just cressed him, I reckon. So much the better," said he and snatched the long neckcloth from his own throat. He rolled the man roughly on his face, drew his arms together and knotted his wrists at the back. He worked with fury, glancing up the mountain side, where on the bare ridge he saw the figure of Black Bart running westward along its crest, paralleling the direction they would take.

"He's making for the cut-off," Shorty grunted. "This fight ain't started yet, and if I turn back he'll get me sure."

Knowing the mountains like a book, Bart was racing for a sheep trail which led down from the "hog back" and intersected the wagon road at the far side of a great bend where it hugged the hill before debouching upon the flat at the forks. Gaining this point ahead of the stage, he could lie in wait with the certainty of getting his man with his side arms.

Disregarding his victim's groans, the dwarf swung him over his great shoulders and rushed at the stage. Hurling him abruptly in upon the girl, he slammed the door, shouting, "Hang on little woman, an' keep your head in."

Then he mounted to his perch and lashed his horses down the dizzy trail, while above and far to the right he saw the vanishing outlaw flickering through the scattered pines.

The team, frenzied by the smell of raw blood, fed madly, their driver bolted to his seat, yelling words of encouragement. Other furious drives had Shorty made down this road, but never such a racing, swaying, drunken flight as this. He gripped the "forty-five" between his knees, driving with one hand, while he ejected and reloaded with the other.

As they roared down the mountain side the intoxication of the chase rose in him till he shouted hoarsely great bellows of defiance. The presence behind him stirred knightly depths in his soul of which he had never dreamed, and he ached with a desire for sacrificial offering—a passion for immolation.

As they rocked around the nose of the last bluff he yelled again, for ahead of him and midway down the zigzag sheep trail was Black Bart, literally dropping off the vertical cliff. It was evident he would be within range.

"Hope he gets me 'stead of a horse," thought the driver. "If he drops one of them we'll go over the mountain side like a rocket."

The animals were stretched fatly in the foam flecked delirium of a runaway, their rattling hoof roll thundering above the hubbub of the jolting, jumping coach.

Bart knelt, resting his weapon over the crook of his folded arm. The splinters bit off from the seat at Shorty's side. Then they both fired, but the heave of a whined, panting man is as bad for the aim as a perch on the summit of a careening stage.

"Thank God, he ain't tryin' for the team," thought the dwarf; then, as the two drew together, he beheld the other's face and saw that rage rioted there so savagely that it blinded him to his surer revenge. His mask was gone, and Shorty knew that he alone had seen the features of the mysterious road agent. As the team tore up

around of the outlaw his gun belched again, and Shorty felt the paralyzing stroke of a missile, while the ribbons slipped from his left hand.

"Ye got me!" he belated, then he was whisked past and, kneeling, shielded his short body behind the vehicle top, sheathing his six shooter.

They swung down to the flat amid a spatter of gravel, splashed through the ford of the North fork and rushed scrambling up the bank to the Wire bridge toll house. Old Charley Crane appeared, followed by Winters, the Wells Fargo messenger, and a stranger, doubtless his companion. Both carried abbreviated shotguns.

"What's up, Shorty?" questioned Winters, speaking with the restrained curiosity of the mountaineer. "Sound-ed like a gun play back yonder."

"Ye don't say?" replied the driver tentily. "Why didn't ye meet me at No. 2?"

"Smashup on the railroad! Who was it—Black Bart?"

Shorty nodded.

"How'd you come out?"

"Oh, not too bad. I got a little something to show for it." He clambered down, finding it impossible not to swagger slightly in spite of his wound, for he felt an overpowering satisfaction. The safety of his lady, the capture of a desperado, the preservation of the company's bullion; all this he had effected single handed—and against odds.

With the others crowding him he jerked the door open, then his jaw fell. The outlaw rested limply on the girl's breast, while she sopped at his bleeding temple. Her clothes were awry, her face fearstained and swollen. It was not this that abashed the little man and shattered his complacency. It was the look of her eyes. She flashed upon him the glare of an animal at bay and spoke words that left him dumfounded.

"You've killed him! Oh, you beast!" Then she addressed the wounded man, unconscious of his presence: "Link, speak to me. It's Milly—Milly, your little sister."

Shorty slammed the door abruptly in the faces of the others.

"Get some water and bandages, quick," said he. "It's plumb indecent to butt into the sanctity of the Red Cross this way."

He moved away, with the messengers following.

"Guess we'd better tie him up, hadn't we?" said Winters jerking his head toward the panting team.

"Tie who up?" Shorty inquired.

"That fellow."

"Why?"

"So's he can't play the 'Maiden's Prayer' or bite his finger nails, of course." Winters replied with elaborate sarcasm.

"I don't rightly get you," maintained the driver. "Jest because a passenger is shot up inadvertent, what's the use of ropin' him?"

"Passenger?" Both men stared at Shorty, then the spokesman laughed nastily, a mocking, dry, mirthless laugh.

"Oh, I see. Thought you had something to show for the holiday?"

"So I have. Here it is." The driver displayed his useless left arm. "Jest

missed my funny bone." Then, as the other continued to regard him with unwinking, skeptical stare, the cords of his bull neck thickened ominously, while his voice grew raucous with rage. He exploded harshly, shaking his fist in Winters' face.

"Don't look at me like that! If ye want any o' my game you're on from two bits to a million dollars' worth. I'll stroll into ye like an avalanche into a custard pie. You put the reverse English on them sarcasms."

Winters is a mountaineer, also a shotgun guard. Such men do not frighten by word of mouth. Neither, on the other hand, do they search the byways and blind trails of life for trouble. When one lives with a short barreled No. 10 in his lap he grows to hunger for Arcady and the pastoral walks of harmony. Moreover, the wilder the wilderness the more gentle the chivalry it breeds.

The Wells-Fargo man's eyes had narrowed ominously, while a sinister whiteness, born of compression, paled his lips; then through the stage window he glimpsed the face of a girl. It was strained and tense, and she listened breathlessly, hanging upon his words. The iron softened in his voice, and he said quietly: "All right. Let's have a drink. It's my mistake."

They fled into the low room and gravely filled their glasses, Shorty still panting from his anger.

"S'ow!" they said and tossed it off.

As the buggy driver waddled forth and clumbed the wheel for his three-mile Auburn drive Winters gazed at his companion solemnly. Then, without facial disturbance, one eyelid fell slowly in a wink of great understanding, and, delving into a pocket, he drew forth the soiled and bloody half of a bandanna. It had eyeholes and a string at the upper corners, forming a rude road agent's mask. He tore it up and tossed it out of the window into the river.

"As I have always observed," said he, "outside of wimmen folks there's nothin' more onreliable an' deceivin' than circumstantial evidence—when it's destroyed."

All Wichita (Kan.) woman asks with her divorce is her dog, one pillow, a pair of portieres, two stewpans and two geraniums.

Escaped monkey stole four umbrellas on Hudson river boat Berkshire, threw coal at engineer and committed suicide by jumping from upper deck.

The Dalles' new \$100,000 federal building is completed.

CHERRYVILLE

It rains in August this year.

The gentle rain did a great deal of good and no harm as all the grass hay was in and the grain harvest not begun.

Eighteen hundred people stood in the lake one night at Chicago to keep from roasting to death. The poor dubs will be crawling into furnaces to keep from freezing to death in less than six months.

A mountaineer has named his twin boys Theodore and Steve-dore. What one knocks down the other can drag out. This combination suits the stand-patters.

A smoke was seen issuing from the top of Mt. Hood lately and some thought the old mountain was going to erupt but come to find out it was "Lige" Coleman in his high house getting supper for some Mazama girls that had climbed the mountain. "Lige" said they dined "al fresco and had snow-shoe rabbit fricazee and snow ball frappe."

Mr. Pridemore, the proprietor at Government Camp, has a hidden lake way up near the snow line full of fine trout which he caught whenever he had a big run of customers, greatly to their delight. But Verne Rogers of Sandy, a famous angler, while up near there camping out, ran on to this lake and didn't do a thing but catch a fine string of big fellows, much to Pridemore's disgust.

The society event of this week at Cherryville is the wedding of C. W. (Dad) Miller, our merchant, who married Mrs. E. L. Bartlet, also of this place. The wedding occurred at Vancouver and upon their return a big uproar was started that created great excitement among all the denizens of these woods both human and animals. These people are past the prime of life. It is the second matrimonial venture of the groom and the sixth for the bride. They are good citizens and the new Mrs. Miller in spite of her years, is holding down a railroad claim on which she has growing one of the finest gardens in the state.

Chester Martin, an attorney from Portland, and wife, are spending their vacation on a ranch near here.

A fine crop of wild blackberries have been gathered in this vicinity. One family has put up over 200 quarts of them. No finer fruit grows than these berries which are a spontaneous gift of Nature. The Indians sell them at the same price of huckleberries, from 75 cents to \$1.00 a gallon.

Mrs. Geo. E. Couper has two short rows of loganberries from which she has already made 20 dozen bottles of juice and sold it readily in Portland for 20 cents a pint bottle. The imagination can hardly figure out the amount to be produced on an acre at this rate. If a person had four or five acres they would have a gold mine.

A. B. Brooke of Hood River, who has property interests here was a recent visitor and was entertained by people here with whom he is always welcome.

The hunting season begins next week and several of our hunters are planning a hike up in the hills.

A. C. Runyan has gone to eastern Oregon where he has secured employment through the harvest season.

We are under obligations to Senator Lane for a handsome portfolio of scenes in our National Parks. There are 11 of these parks and each one is illustrated under a separate cover. It is a valuable and beautiful collection recently issued by the Interior Department.

The big campaign is on and Hughes, the leader of the standpatters will be here next week. All that money can do will be done to make his trip a success and draw big crowds. Big Business is determined to elect him and they are very apt to succeed as money will accomplish wonders. Then comes intervention in Mexico as our capitalists have too much money invested there to lose out in that land of rebellion and anarchy. Exploiting South America with her vast undeveloped resources will come next.

A hog-tight fence around your doorway is the first step toward beautifying the farm home.

When You Have A Cold

Give it attention, avoid exposure, be regular and careful of your diet, also commence taking Dr. King's New Discovery. It contains Pine-Tar, Antiseptic Oil and Balsam. Is slightly laxative. Dr. King's New Discovery eases your cough, soothes your throat and bronchial tubes, checks your cold, starts to clear your head. In a short time you know your cold is better. Its standard family cough syrup in use over 40 years. Get a bottle at once. Keep it in the house as a cold insurance. Sold at your druggist.

Will Sloan's Liniment Relieve Pain?

Try it and see—one application will prove more than a column of claims. James S. Ferguson, Phila., Pa. writes: "I have had wonderful relief since I used Sloan's Liniment on my knees. To think after all these years of pain one application gave me relief. Many thanks for what your remedy has done for me." Don't keep on suffering, apply Sloan's Liniment where your pain is and notice how quick you get relief. Penetrates without rubbing. Buy it at any Drug Store. 25c.

Coffman & Spring LEADING GROCERS

Offer the Public Special Values in all Lines of Groceries Provisions and Hardware Standard Lines and Good Values The Best Service

92 Street and Foster Road... Lents

ESTIMATES FURNISHED

Plumbing and Heating

We carry a Complete Line of Plumbing Fixtures and Supplies

Phone Tabor 5542 M. N. SADLER

Lents Station Portland, Oregon

Dr. P. J. O'DOWNELL DENTIST

92nd St. and Foster Road, over the LENTS PHARMACY Phone Tabor 3214

Reliable Shoe Repairing

Cash Shoe Repairing Shop 6009 92nd St. South of Station, Lents