

Rex Beach Short Stories

The Strategy Of Shorty

By REX BEACH

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IT was stage time, and the men sprawled restfully upon the hotel porch awaiting the coming of the mail. Shorty had pre-empted the doorsill, which he held by squatters' right, his thick body, toadlike and short, harrising eyes, while the idling smoke from his pipe excited apoplexy within him. A front step in the early evening, with the fullness of supper investing his audience, was solace to the little man—first, because the darkness hid his ungraciously body; second, because to every man there comes a garulous hour when reminiscence is like honey, and, third, because his legs did not dangle in impotent discomfort as when he expended his wealth of shortness upon the edge of made furniture.

"Say, how comes it you ain't drivin' the stage any more, Shorty?" questioned a prospector who had just packed in from the Big Divide. "Get fired?"

"Sure! Fired at and into, both."

"How's that—shot? You don't say so. Who done it?"

"Black Bart."

"Well, I'm durned! I didn't s'pose Bart would shoot up a driver; thought he allus played the messengers. How'd it happen?"

"There was a lady with me one trip," began Shorty, blushing at the memory, "an' Black Bart stuck us up on the



"Look a-her, you!" growled Shorty. "Don't you get funny with me."

Big Grade. He insulted her—leastways he called her my sweetheart—so I shot at him to spare her feelin's. I don't claim I done just the gentlemanly thing, 'cause it ain't a driver's place to mix with road agents, them dukes bein' delegated to messengers an' such passengers as has a right to dis-turbance. However, there bein' no messenger handy, I dipped at him an' busted his Winchester. My bullet knocked the gun out of his hands, an' he ran for the cutoff down the old sheep trail. He laid fer me there with his guns. When I drove by he got me here. Most well now though."

Peg-Leg spoke unexpectedly from the shadows.

"Look a-her, Shorty. I ain't never figured out one thing about that fracas. Old Charlie Crane says you come tearin' into his place on the dead run, your hosses plumb beat out, an' you an' the young feller all shot up."

"That's right," said Shorty.

"Well, who was this young feller? You left here that mornin' with the girl an' the bullion, but there wasn't no young feller along."

Peg-Leg had sprung the question which had excited the camp for months, and the listeners waited breathlessly. From the first the affair had a touch of mystery maddening to the camp, the more so inasmuch as Shorty, the man of splendid simplicity, had suddenly lost his candor and maintained a baffling silence. Speculation had fed upon drifting rumor until Forest Hill wrigled in an agony of curiosity.

Considering his ferocious habit of reducing to an unfortunate personal basis those questions he found not to his liking, there seemed no advisable method of arriving at the truth, unless, perhaps by the exhibition of a curiosity which Shorty would be privileged to regard as morbid and insulting. Time and silence had served to hone the edge of this sharp interest until "Peg Leg," the landlord, had arisen unexpectedly to press the question. The idlers wondered why they hadn't

peccors—they were crooked. They brought their devious eastern methods out into God's country and thought folks would stand their work. He'd never seen them, but they were chicken hearted pups—anybody who would cheat a woman was a quitter. He was for peace, himself, of course; trouble never did look good to him, but a real man was due to step into this affair. Not to use violence. No, sir; just cool, disinterested argument backed up by equity and a reasonable firmness.

Shorty busied himself with the legal aspect of the case. Never was there a clearer. The Wilkins had failed to make good; ergo, they had another jump coming. There remained only the process—simplicity itself. Reason made a bee line, hurdling certain confusing obstacles in the nature of statutes and common law precepts, fleeing directly along the course of least resistance. Shorty oiled up his six shooters.

His theory of strategy forbade delay, for a scant measure of military knowledge demonstrates the value of an attack in the cold gray of the dawn. It is then that the blood moves slothfully and the mind is flaccid from the spathy of slumber.

"GI' me your 'gat,'" he said to Hoffmeister, the Canada bar superintendant, as that gentleman was preparing for bed.

"Sure; help yourself."

Shorty carefully tested ejector and sights, throwing the gun to shoulder tentatively.

"What's up? Thought you didn't like big guns."

"I don't. The little guns is best, only I'm golt' bombardin'. I want 'bout 500 rounds too. Also jest witness that."

He spread upon the table a document evidently fresh from the throes of composition. Hoffmeister read it wonderingly, gazing with amazement at the in his passion, while his voice was still hoarse.

"What does this mean? It says Link Cushing's alive—in Honolulu."

"Drop it, I say!" shouted the prisoner, kicking savagely. "You le'me up an' gimme one belt at you with a pick handle—that's all I want—jest one wallop. I'll learn ye to read letters."

Bart forced him roughly back.

"Shut up, or I'll slit your gullet!"

The other only bounced on his bed in a paroxysm of abuse, his one intelligible sentence running, "I ain't no humpback!"

"The boy did me a good turn up Emigrant Gap way once," said the road agent, "and I took him for a partner. When you dropped him the day of the holdup I swore I'd kill you if it took twenty years. How'd you get to know his sister?"

At the lady's mention Shorty spoke again, sulkily at first:

"That was her on the stage with me that day. When you stuck us up I let drive at both of you. I busted your Winchester lock an' creased the kid. I throwed him in the wagon an' drove on. When I found he was her brother, of course I couldn't give him up, so I told 'em at the wire bridge that he was a passenger an' had got shot in the holdup."

For some time the outlaw remained silent.

"Why didn't you tell me that just now?" said he. "I came near killing you."

"'Cause I ain't no humpback!" yelled the little man loudly, reverting to his unspeakable indignity. "Le'me up and fight like a man."

The other regarded him strangely, almost in wonder, but no hint of amusement lay in his eyes. At last he apologized: "I beg your pardon, Shorty. I didn't mean it. You sure ain't a humpback. We've been too good enemies not to be good friends. You saved that boy, and I'd like to shake on it. I've heard considerable about you, off and on."

He cut the lacings, and Shorty rolled out, feeling his many bruises gingerly.

"I never went back on a partner," continued Bart, "but you've done more for the boy than I ever could, and when you need any help let me know. I feel like I owed it to you."

Shorty's mind ached quickly.

"I'll take some right now. Ye notice that letter says they're plumb busted—the girl an' the old lady. Well, I've tore this flat all up lookin' for gold. I've wallered in work disgraceful to a section gang till I've wore blisters on every shovel handle around the place. For results look at this an' weep."

He displayed his tin can, with its meager yellow contents. "Now, s'pose you blow in with some of that ill gotten wealth of your'n."

"Bet I will," he heartily replied the tall man, and from each pocket he produced much currency, tossing it upon the table until the watcher's eyes grew round and wondering. As each exploration resulted in an added roll, the dwarf remarked: "You remind me of that passage in the good book about the Wilder Cruse's oil—you never seem to run out. Seems like your business has its redeemin' features."

"Yes; there's easy money in it for nerry men," said Bart. "I need a partner too."

"Wouldn't wish any, thanks," quickly replied the other.

"Well, I guess you're wise." The dark man sighed wearily. "It's a fast life. They'll get me some day. Don't let the women know where that money came from." He stepped outside, then added shrewdly, "And, say, I hope you marry the girl."

The little man stood a moment dumbly, then leaped savagely at the door.

"Here, you"—But Bart had melted into the night, and there came only the echo of his laughter and a rustle across the carpet of pine needles.

(To Be Continued.)

Many a velvet word has a sandpaper thought behind it.

PLEASANT VALLEY

Mr. and Mrs. O. M. Richey of Boring were visitors at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Will Richey Sunday.

Emmet Odell was a business visitor in Gresham Tuesday.

Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Bateman of Bellrose were guests of Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Anderson, Sunday.

A. G. Sager of Lents visited with T. P. Campbell, Sunday.

Mrs. Roman made a business trip to Portland Monday.

The Misses Beatrice and Lucile Lang of Portland were over Sunday visitors at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Nolte.

Pleasant Valley Grange is having the inside walls of their dining hall and kitchen treated to a coat of paint. J. L. Johnson of Gilbert is doing the work.

P. L. Bliss has installed an electric light plant on his place, lighting his house, barn and out buildings.

Little Miss Eula Marvin gave her mother a surprise party on her birthday last Saturday evening. A number of guests were invited. Ice cream and cake were served.

Carl Borges and daughter, Mrs. Hadley, of Portland, visited with Chris and Fred Borges Monday.

Mr. and Mrs. O. N. Blair of Lents were valley visitors Tuesday.

Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Richey of Boring called on Mr. and Mrs. G. N. Sager one day recently.

Mrs. Elwood and daughter Miss Lura, of Portland, came out Saturday and visited over Sunday with friends at this place.

Drs. L. S. and Laura E. Downing of Portland and Mrs. King of Wichita, Kansas, were entertained by Mr. and Mrs. F. P. Campbell last Sunday.

G. N. Sager called on J. F. Wing of Lents, Sunday.

Ernest Olson of Sellwood visited with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Olson, during the latter part of the week.

Mr. and Mrs. O. J. Forsgren entertained friends from Powell Valley Sunday.

Willard Bliss was a Damascus visitor Sunday afternoon.

Grain harvest is in full swing hereabouts this week.

A special meeting was held last Saturday evening by Pleasant Valley Grange at which the first and second degrees was conferred upon a large class of new candidates.

KENDALL

The baseball game planned for Sunday a week ago, between Kendall and the Woodstock Firemen was called off on account of the non-appearance of the firemen. This is the second time that team was to play Kendall and both times failed to show up.

Miss Hazel Sample was a recent visitor among friends in this vicinity.

Mr. Newton has a short time since completed a new addition to his residence.

From now until November 25th, look out for the playing of "peanut politics" on the part of certain metropolitan newspapers. To get some idea of the game as played, subscribe for the papers of the two most important parties. Thereafter you will think twice before casting your vote. As the political section of the papers is today conducted, no man is doing himself justice who relies solely upon the advice of a prejudiced paper to decide for whom he shall vote. Someday—or is this hoping too much?—man will trust man completely. Then there will be no need of political editors making use of psychology, suggestion, etc., of which the general public knows very little and by which they may be greatly influenced, by one adept in making use of the above—to swing voters over to their way of thinking. About the only way a voter may now do justice to himself in this respect is to read all sides. By getting only one side one becomes too one-sided. Get both sides, then draw your own conclusions.

Miss Cecelia O'Sullivan was a recent visitor in our midst.

Mr. O. B. Olson has disposed of his residence property and is thinking of going on a farm.

Several persons in this section, who have lately received word from their soldier friends on the border, report that the Oregon soldiers are unanimously in favor of "Oregon Mist," instead of the scorching atmosphere of the border.

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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 Oils and Balsams. 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.

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At The Churches

Arleta Baptist Church

9:45 a. m. Bible School.
11 a. m. Teaching services.
8:00 p. m. Evening services.
7:00 p. m. B. Y. P. U. meeting.
8:00 Thursday Prayer meeting.
Everybody welcome to any and all of these services.

W. T. S. Spriggs, pastor.

Millard Avenue Presbyterian Church

10 a. m. Sabbath School.
11 a. m. Morning worship.
7:30 p. m. Y. P. S. C. E.
7:45 p. m. Evening worship.
7:30 p. m. Thursday, mid-week service.
8 p. m. Thursday, choir practice.
Rev. Wm. H. Amos, Pastor.

St. Peter's Catholic Church

Sundays:
8 a. m. Low Mass.
10:30 a. m. High Mass.
8:30 a. m. Sunday School.
12 M. Choir rehearsal.
Week days: Mass at 8 a. m.

Seventh Day Adventist Church

10 a. m. Saturday Sabbath School.
11 a. m. Saturday preaching.
7:30 p. m. Wednesday, Prayer meeting.
7:45 p. m. Sunday preaching.

Kern Park Christain Church

Corner 60th St. and 46th Ave. S. E.
10 a. m. Bible School.
11 a. m. and 7:30 p. m. preaching service.
6:30 p. m. Christain Endeavor.
7:30 p. m. Thursday, mid-week prayer meeting.
A cordial welcome to all.

Rev. G. K. Berry, Pastor.

St. Pauls Episcopal Church

One block south of Woodmere station.
Holy Communion the first Sunday of each month at 8 p. m. No other services that day.

Every other Sunday the regular services will be as usual.
Evening Prayer and sermon at 4 p. m.
Sunday School meets at 3 p. m. B. Boatwright, Supt., L. Maffett, Sec.
Rev. O. W. Taylor Rector.

Lents Evangelical Church

Sermon by the Pastor, 11 a. m. and 7:15 p. m.
Sunday School 9:45 a. m., Albert Fankhauser, Superintendent.
Y. P. A. 6:45 p. m. Paul Bradford, President.

Prayer meeting Thursday 8 p. m.
A cordial welcome to all.
T. E. Hornschuch, Pastor.

Lents Friend's Church

9:45 a. m. Bible School, Mrs. Maud Keach, Superintendent.
11:30 a. m. Preaching services.
6:25 p. m. Christian Endeavor.
7:30 p. m. Preaching Services.
8:00 p. m. Thursday, mid-week prayer meeting.

A cordial welcome to all these services.
John Riley, Pastor.

Lents Baptist Church

Lord's Day, Bible School 9:45 a. m. Morning worship, 11 a. m. Elmo Heights Sunday School, 2:30 p. m.

B. Y. P. U., 6:30 p. m. Evening worship, 7:30 p. m. A cordial welcome to these services.
J. M. Nelson, Pastor.

Fifth Church of Christ

Fifth Church of Christ, Scientist of Portland, Ore. Myrtle Park Hall, Myrtle Park.
Services Sunday 11 a. m.
Sunday School 9:30 and 11 a. m.
Wednesday evening testimonial meeting 8 p. m.

Lents M. E. Church

Sunday School 9:45 a. m. Preaching 11:00 a. m. Services at Bennett Chapel at 3 p. m. Epworth League 6:30 p. m. Preaching 7:30 p. m. Prayer meeting Thursday evening at 7:30.

W. R. F. Browne, pastor.
Residence 5703 83rd St.

Laurelwood M. E. Church

9:45 a. m. Sunday school.
11:00 a. m. preaching.
12:30 a. m. class meeting.
6:30 p. m. Epworth League.
7:30 p. m. preaching.

The pastor is assisted by a chorus choir and the Amphion Male Quartette.
8:00 p. m. Thursday evening, prayer service.
Dr. C. R. Carlos, pastor.

German Evangelical Reformed Church

Corner Woodstock Ave., and 87th St. Rev. W. G. Lienkaemper, pastor.
Sunday School 10 a. m.
Morning Worship, 11 a. m.
Y. P. S. at 7:30 p. m.
German School and Catechetical Class Saturday 10 a. m.

Third United Brethren Church

10 a. m. Sunday School.
11 a. m. Preaching.
3 p. m. Junior Christian Endeavor.
6:30 p. m. Senior Christian Endeavor.
7:30 p. m. Preaching.

Brentwood M. E. Church

10 a. m. Sunday School.
11 a. m. Preaching service.
Rev. W. L. Wilson, Pastor.

LODGE DIRECTORY

Magnolia Camp No. 4025, Royal Neighbors, meets regular Second and Fourth Wednesdays of each month at E. O. F. Hall. Second Wednesdays social meeting. Neighbors bring your families and friends. Fourth Wednesday, business. All Neighbors requested to come. By order of the Camp.