

# Rex Beach Short Stories



Continued from Last Week

preparations. "Look here. What the deuce does this mean? I can't witness that till the signatures are there."

"Never mind all them technicalities. If this here canon don't get het up on me I'll have plenty of signatures on there by breakfast time."

With much reluctance Hoffmeister attached his name. He had learned that the road to great unpleasantness lay in thwarting his undersized friend.

"Peg-Leg," less versed in the intricacies of legal formalities, lent his name without discussion and without reading. So soon after midnight Shorty hit the trail.

The Golden Fleece lies picturesquely in a narrow gorge overhung by wooded hills, and its cabin squats in an open glade among the pines. It is a quaint spot. The log house with its mud daubed walls is encircled by a tiny clearing, beyond which is a forest of whispering, smooth barked trees. The gravelly trail winds up along the frothing river, and over all is the pulsing, cooling song of the stream.

As day broke sounds became audible from the shack. Smoke drifted from the pipe and there occurred the rattle of breakfast preparations. Nate Wilkins appeared, shirt sleeved and yawning prodigiously, water pail in hand. As the door swung inward under his hand he started, then gazed with astonishment at what met his eyes. On the outside of the door, pinned thereto by a huge clasp knife, was a written document. As he scanned its opening lines the yawn left his face, and he spoke quickly to the men asleep.

"Hey, boys! Wake up! Look here, quick!"

At the tones of his voice they came scrambling out en deshabille, and as they stared at the paper the slumber fled from their eyes. It ran as follows:

as it was by the rocky gorge.

A stranger appeared running excitedly down the trail, summoned from the claim above by the fusillade. He presented the repugnant possibility of a re-enforcement, so Shorty swung about, and his first shot sang a tune of cold unwelcome over the man's head, while his second stirred up a discouraging puff of pine needles about his legs. The newcomer stopped with set brakes and, all inquisitiveness satisfied, fled silently back up trail, while Shorty resumed his coverage on the cabin.

Shorty's purpose will work wonders. As the Wilkins brothers vanished limply among the trees, vowing vengeance of a fearful type, the little man grinned after them in rare satisfaction.

Having stormed the cabin, he unwrapped the blue letter and, wiping the powder stains from his fingers, re-read it. So far he was exactly on schedule, but he had not planned beyond a recovery of the claim. The problem was still complex. The women needed money, not an idle placer mine, but quick money—"cash" money for all he knew.

As the days passed worry preyed upon Shorty. It was not fear of the Wilkins' return, but that letter staring at him reproachfully from its shrine over the table.

He produced his strong box, a baking powder can, and estimated his cleanups.

"Thunder an' mud! Here I've grubbed dirt like a steam drudger an' there ain't enough to buy the girl a stack of white chips," he said aloud.

On the seventh night he inspected the pile. It was pitifully small, and despite his bodily weariness his disappointment found vent in unspeakable oratory. He read the letter, as was his



"For God's sake let up!" yelled a voice, nightly custom, and fell dejectedly into his bunk. As a miner he was not a success.

Some men sleep sluggishly in a lethal coma which requires bodily violence to break; others, accustomed to the alarms of life in the open, maintain a tenseness of certain nerves which a mere unfamiliar presence will disturb. In this class Shorty had considered himself, but tonight his exhaustion and discouragement dulled him, and so it was that he awoke suddenly to find himself fighting with desperation. It was too late, however. He had been pinned to his couch as he lay and now in his struggles felt the heavy weight and writhing muscles of a large man crushed upon his arms and chest, while a hot breath beat into his face.

"It's the big Wilkins," he thought, "and the others is waitin' 'longside for the finish."

He fought till the blood thrummed dizzily in his ears and the breath wheezed from him, but amid cracking joints his arms were noosed by his sides, and a moment later he lay panting within the coils of a riata.

Then speech frothed out of him, and he roared imprecations at the tribe of Wilkins, rich in imagery and marvelous in western word structure. The object of his obloquy worked impassively and with marvelous dexterity for one roared east of the Missouri; then, his task completed, struck a match, lighting the shelf lamp.

As the darkness fled, instead of the bulky awkwardness of the junior Wilkins, Shorty beheld the silhouette of a tall, clean waisted, wide shouldered man with the long black hair of an Indian. He turned and the light gleamed yellowly on the sallow, sinister face of Black Bart, the road agent.

The sounds from the prisoner ceased sharply, and he lay rigid, following the other's movements with blazing glances.

"My turn tonight, eh?" the outlaw spoke sneeringly. Shorty nodded.

"I've been on your trail for two

QUIT-CLAIM DEED

For value rec'd and to avoid trouble we, the Wilkins boys sell unto and pass up for keeps this here Golden Fleece Claim to Miss Millicent Cushing or her heirs. Now and forever world without end. Amen.

Yours truly  
Signed in the presence of  
H. H. HOFFMEISTER  
PETER JOHNSON

Appended to this model of brevity was a note:

Dear Sir and Friends—Please show at y'r early convene and duck out or I will do business soon as it get lit emet to shoot. The writer is respectfully hid out in the brush and has got you covered at the present date. Wishing you a pleasant journey. Yours sincerely, SHORTY.

Something in this unusual notice excited recollections in the older Wilkins. He guffawed himself, reaching to pull it down.

"Ain't that a bit?"

The laughter broke in his throat, however, when he felt the swish and thud of a bullet in the door, followed by the wicked bark of a rifle among the pines.

"Hey, what's the matter with you?" yelled Nate from within the cabin.

"Oh, I'm all right," boomed the little man. "Better sign that deed, fer I ain't goin' to be jewed down none in terms. You can let breakfast down at camp, otherwise I'll lay you all out side by side an' pick daisies for you."

As he ceased speaking fire spouted from the cabin window and a bullet glanced from the bowlder behind which he crouched. Diplomatic relations thus severed, Shorty wasted no more time in idle chatter. Instead, sighting closely, he began to shoot the chinking out of the cabin.

"Guess I'll have 'em under the bed shortly," he said. "Soon as I get this chink shot out I'll take the one below."

It is embarrassing to cover in a one roomed log but while his chinkings are systematically shot out from corner to corner. Bullets are apt to glance erratically and with puzzling method.

Shorty exposed nothing of himself for a target, whereas the "middle" Wilkins, as a result of too rash endeavor, reeled from the window minus the use of one arm and shoulder. Later a flatted ball ricocheted into and about four inches along a fence; rib necessary to the economy of the elder brother, and although a thin man with ribs but sparsely hid, he proved a free bleeder, and the sight of red in such demoralizing quantities did the trick.

"For God's sake let up, you've killed Bud!" yelled a voice.

"Thanks," replied Shorty, continuing his activities. "You ain't—bang!—signed that—bang—twenty yet."

"I'd love to finish that second creek before you quit this," he thought, while the roaring of his rifle made confusion in the early morning light, multiplied

months, you utter nonsense."

Blood rushed to the dwarf's face till it grew black and congested, then faded until he lay white and silent, shaking in the rigors of suppressed hate.

"Nobody ever took a shot at me and got off with it, but I might have let you go if you hadn't killed the kid."

"Did he die? Tell me! Tell me!"

"Twas his first job, and he got so rattled he let you plug him. The papers don't say what becomes of him, but I want to know. Quick." He shook the dwarf.

It was not fright that silenced the little man, but a blinding, speechless rage. Never had such an insult gone unheeded. Bart had glibbed at his deformity, had gouged roughly at his one most painful spot—and that unjustly, too, for no one back in California carried less of a hunch than Shorty's. Nobody had firmer, cleaner muscles than his, albeit the legs beneath were odd. Speech refused him. Instead, he spat viciously, spat unerringly at his captor, and a sentence shot forth with it:

"I ain't no humpback!"

At the act Bart's excitement froze, and he glibbed to the table where the great hunk lay. He tested the points with his thumb—an unpleasant sight.

"I'll knife you for that!" said he.

As he picked up the weapon, however, his eye caught the blue letter hanging above. It lighted on the signature, and, being a man of some culture, its contents became quickly absorbed. He snatched it, and at this sacrilege Shorty writhed insanely, finding his voice at last.

"Take your nasty hands off'n that letter!" he yelled.

Bart did not heed him, but eagerly reread the missive, attempting to grasp its purport. Striding to Shorty's side, he shook it before his eyes, quivering 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' give me 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 spasm of abuse, his one intelligible sentence running, "I ain't no humpback!"

"The boy did me a good turn up Emerald 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, sullenly 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."

"Because I ain't no humpback!" yelled the little man loudly, reverting to his unspoken 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 owe it to you."

Shorty's mind acted 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 waltzed 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, a s'pose you blow in with some of that ill gotten wealth of your'n."

"Bet I will," 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 Widdler 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 slyly, "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. Shorty closed the door, trembling so that the latch rattled beneath his touch. A strange new light had flooded him, as if from a sudden whipping out of many humpbacks.

in the grip of some sweet wild passion, no inkling of which had approached him until now. Its intensity, its volume, swept his mind whirling into a drunken tumult, delightful, distracting, acutely painful. "Marry the girl! Ah, marry her! Yet why not? Why not? He loved her; for this must surely be love, and what else mattered? His great chest swelled to bursting. He stretched his long, iron muscled arms. He picked the blue page tenderly from the floor, and as he did so its dying incense reached his nostrils. Moreover, as he stooped he saw himself—saw his distorted figure—and at the vision the frenzy in him died lellly. With a despairing cry he crushed the letter to him; then, as if jealous of the light, he shattered the lamp and, hurling himself into his bunk, hid his hopeless face in his arms.

## The Automobile Craze

"There are 3,500,000 automobiles in this country that are valued at about \$2,000,000,000. In 1898-'99 this country, which had been almost prostrate so far as business was concerned for several years, received something over \$2,000,000,000 for food from the world outside that was starving.

Now if that amount transformed the land then, what effect will the absorption of that amount by a few firms produce?

An eastern great newspaper before us says tens of thousands of farmers have purchased automobiles and a good many of them have mortgaged their homes to buy them.

Formerly those farmers raised horses and sold them for fair prices which was nearly all profit. They did not accumulate money very fast even then. Now they do not raise horses for the demand for horses has so fallen that there is no profit in raising common horses. But they buy autos and gasoline to run them. What is to be the outcome for such farmers as mortgage their homes to make that purchase? And what is to be the ultimate effect on farm labor? Will not such farmers each try to get along with one hired man less?

Before the receipt of that vast sum from abroad in 1898-'99, the farmers kept their boys and girls out of school to do the work on the farm, not being able to employ hired help.

This caused hundreds of thousands of those boys and girls to rush away from home so soon as they reached maturity to the cities to live by their wits, as their homes had become intolerable. All the men who were making any money in those days were the interest-gatherers. Having no other place to invest their money they built up one city after another prematurely. That was why in the mighty depression that whole row of northern cities from Buffalo, New York, to beyond Minneapolis, Minn., took on their abnormal and premature growth, and in which the boys and girls from the profitless farms lost themselves.

Is that history in a way to be repeated soon, when as is predicted and expected there will be one automobile for every twenty-five persons?

This is not to try to discourage people who are able to buy automobiles. They are a great convenience, of vast utility and real luxuries.

But the farmer who mortgages his home to buy an automobile is crazy, and in the event of a national depression, or a failure of his crop, or either of a dozen not infrequent calamities, will lose his home."—Goodwin's Weekly.

## Barnum & Bailey Circus Coming

At last the welcome news has been announced that the youngsters and oldsters of this vicinity will have an opportunity to visit the Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth. This great circus will be within easy traveling distance when it exhibits in Portland on Sept. 8.

This year Barnum & Bailey announce an all new novelty circus, composed of more foreign acts than ever before. An important feature is the new, Oriental spectacular pageant, "Persia, or the Pageants of The Thousand and One Nights." In this gorgeous display more than 1,350 persons participate. The Oriental music incidental to the production is rendered by 350 musicians, and 3,500 costumes are worn in the various actions of the pageant.

The circus program will be one of unusual novelty and variety. More than 480 arena artists will appear in the various acrobatic, aerial and riding numbers, and an army of fifty of the funniest clowns on earth will keep the audience convulsed with laughter. Among the new acts to be offered for the first time this season are four great troupes of Chinese artists, presenting a complete Chinese circus, replete with thrilling aerial and acrobatic feats. The famous Hanneford Family, champion riders of Europe, and another new importation, as is also Signor Bagonghi, Italy's famous dwarf equestrian. More than twenty trained animal acts will be included in the program, headed by Pallenberg's two marvelous troupes of trained bears.

The Barnum & Bailey Circus is larger this season than ever before and require 89 cars to transport it. It carries 1,400 persons, 785 horses and a greatly enlarged menagerie of 108 cages and 41 elephants.

### 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 the 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. Freaching service.  
8:00 p. m. Evening services.  
7:30 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, midweek 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 Christian Church

Corner 69th 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. Christian Endeavor.  
7:30 p. m. Thursday, mid-week prayer meeting.  
A cordial welcome to all.  
Rev. G. K. Berry, Pastor.

### St. Paul's 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. M. Moffett, 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. R. Hornschoch, Pastor.

### Lents Friend's Church

9:45 a. m. Bible School, Mrs. Mand Keach, Superintendent.  
11:00 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 3rd 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 chorale 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.  
6:30 p. m. Junior Christian Endeavor.  
8:00 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 I. O. O. F. Hall. Second Wednesday social meeting. Neighbors bring your families and friends. Fourth Wednesday, business. All Neighbors requested to come. By order of the Camp.