REX BEACH ADVENTURE STORIES

The Shyness of Shorty

By REX BEACH

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PROLOGUE.

As a teller of adventure tales Rex Beach is without an equal in America. Years of experience as a miner in Alaska made him familiar with a little known quarter of the globe where life flows at full tide; consequently his stories are not only intensely interesting, but they are absolutely true to nature. Most of his characters are real people, changed somewhat to suit the motives of the particular story in which they appear. He has been in many an Alaskan gold rush and has had many narrow escapes. One of the stories in this series describes a frightful experience in a blizzard in an Alaskan pass. Beach par-Heipated in a trip of this very character and barely escaped being frozen to death. One of the Indians who accompanied him died of exposure. Beach made his first great hit with "The Spoilers," a remarkably interesting tale of life near the arctic circle, and this was followed by "The Barrier" and "The Silver Horde." His Adventure Stories are varied in character and full of thrilling tneidents and humorous episodes. In appearance he resembles a college football player, being six feet two inches tall and weighing 200 pounds.

AILEY smoked morosety as he scanned the dusty trail leading down across the "bottom" and away over the dry, gray prairie. toward the hazy mountains in the

He called gruffly into the slience of the house, and his speech held the surliness of his attitude:

"Hot Joy! Bar X outfit coming. Git aupper."

A Chinaman appeared in the door and gazed at the six mule team descending the distant guily to the ford. "Jesse one man, bey? All fight,"

and he slid quistly back to the kitchen. Whatever might be said, or, rather, whatever might be suspected, of Balley's roadhouse for people did not run to wordy conjecture in this country-it was known that it boasted a good cook, and this stoned for catalogue of shortcomings. waxed popular among the hands of the big cattle ranges near by. Those given to idle talk held that Balley acted strangely at times, and rumor painted occasional black doings at the



Me Seemed to Bounce Galvanically,

Landing on Jay's Back,

haciends, squatting vulture-like above the ford, but it was nobody's business. and he kept a good cook.

Bafley did not recall the face that greeted him from above the three span as they swung in front of his corrai, but the brand on their fanks was the hitch." Bar X, so be nodded with as near an pproach to hospitality as he permit-

It was a large face, strong featured stopped in the bar of light from the and rugged, balanced on wide, square | door. Bailey's anxiety was replaced housdorn, yet some oddness of posture by a mask of listless surprise as the held the gaze of the other till the voice of Ross Turney called to him: tranger clambered over the wheel to he ground. Then Bailey removed his rier and heaved tempestuously in the rose of great and silent mirth. the was a dwarf. The head of a



Titan, the body of a whisky barrel, rolling indicrously on the tiny limbs of a bug, presented so startling a sight that even Hot Joy, appearing around the corner, cackled shrilly. His laughter rose to a shriek of dismay, however, as the little man made at him with the rush and roar of a cannon ball. In Balley's amazed eyes be seemed to bounce galvanically, land ing on Joy's back with such vicious suddenness that the breath fled from him in a squawk of terror. Then. seizing his cue, he kicked and betabored the prostrate Celestial in feverish silence. He desisted and rolled across the porch to Bailey. Staring truculently up at the landlord, he spoke for the first time.

"Was I right in supposing that some thing amused ye?"

"No, sir; I reckon you're mistaken ain't observed anything frivolous

"Glad of it," said the little man. "! don't like a feller to hog a joke all by himself. Some of the Bar X boys took to absorbing numor out of my shape when I first went to work, but they're sort of educated out of it now I got an eye from one and a finger off of another. The last one donated a

Bailey readily conceived this man as a bad antagonist, for the heavy corded neck had split buttons from the blue shirt, and he glimpsed a chest hairy and round as a drum, while the brown arms showed knotty and hardened.

"Let's liquor," he said and led the way into the big, low room serving as bar, dining and living room. From the rear came vicious clatterings and slammings of pots, mingled with oriental lamentations, indicating an aching body rather than a chastened spirit.

"Don't see ye often," he continued. with a touch of implied curiosity.

"No, the old man don't lemme get away much He knows that dwelling close to the ground, as I do, I pine for spiritual elevation," with a melting glance at the bottles behind the bar. doing much to explain the size of his first drink.

"Like it, do ye?" questioned Bailey. indicating the shelf.

"Well, not exactly. Booze is like air -I need it. It makes a new man out of me and usually ends by getting both me and the new one laid off."

"Didn't hear nothing of the wedding over at Los Huecos, did ye?" "No. Whose wedding?"

"Ross Turney, the new sheriff."

"Ye don't say! Him that's been elected on purpose to round up the Tremper gang, her? Who's his antagonist?"

"Old man Miller's gat. He's cetebrating his election by getting spliced I been experting of 'em across this way tonight, but I guess they took the Black Butte traff. Ye heard what he said, didn't ye? Claims that inside of ninety days he'll rid the county of the Trempers and give the reward to his wife for a bridgi present. Five thousand dollars on 'em, ye Bailey grinned evilly and continued: "Say, Marsh Tremper 'll ride up to his house some night and make him eat his own gun in front of his bride, see if he don't. Then there'll be cause for an inquest and an election." He spoke with what struck

"Dunno," said the other. "Turney's a brash young feller, I hear, but he's game. "Tain't any of my business. though, and I don't want none of his contrac'. I'm violently addicted peace and quiet, I am. Guess I'll un-

the teamster as unnecessary heat.

As the saddened Joy It candles in the front room there came the rattle band. wheels without, and a buckboard

"Hello, there, Bailey! Are we in time for supper? If not, I'll start an fully. insurrection with that Boxer of yours. He's got to turn out the snortingest more alluringly. supper of the season tonight. It isn't every day your shack to honored by

a bride Mr. Bailey, this is my wife, since 10 o'clock a. m." He introduced a blushing, happy girt, evidently in the grasp of many emotions. "We'll Stay att night. I guess."

"Sure, said Battey. "I'll show ye a room, and he sed them up beneath the low roof where an unusual cleanliness betrayed the industry of Joy.

The two men returned and drank to the bride Turney with the reckless lightness that distinguished him. Bailey suffen and watchful.

"Got another outfit here, baven't you?" questioned the bridegroom. "Who is it?"

Before answer could be made, from the kitchen arose a tortured how! and the smashing of dishes, mingled with stormy rumblings. The door burst inward, and an agonized Joy fled, flapping out into the night, while behind him rolled the caricature from Bar X.

"I just stopped for a drink of water." boomed the dwarf, then paused at the twitching face of the sheriff.

He swelled ominousty, tike a great pigeon, purple and congested with rage Strutting to the newcomer, he glared insolently up into his smiling

"What are ye laughing at, ye shave His hands were clinched till his arms showed tense and rigid, and the cords in his neck were thickly swollen.

"Lemme in on it! I'm strong on bumor. What in h-l ails ye?" be yelled, in a fury, as the tall young man gazed fixedly, and the glasses rattled at the bellow from the barreled-up lungs. "I'm not laughing at you," said the

"Oh, ain't ye?" mocked the man of peace. "Well, take care that ye don't, ye big wart, or I'll trample them new clothes and browse around on some of your features. I'll take ye apart till ye look like cut feed. Guess ye don't know who I am, do ye? I'm"-

"Who is this man. Ross?" came the anxious voice of the bride, descending

The little man spun like a dancer and, spying the girl, blushed to the color of a prickly pear, then stammered painfully, while the sweat stood out under the labor of his discomfort:

"Just 'Shorty,' miss," he finally quavered. "Plain 'Shorty' of the Bar Xer-a miserable, crawling worm for disturbing of ye." He rolled his eyes helplessly at Bailey while he sopped with his crumpled sombrero at the glistening perspiration.

"Why didn't ye tell me?" he whispered feroclously at the host, and the volume of his query carried to Joy. hiding out in the night.

"Mr. Shorty," said the sheriff gravely, "let me introduce my wife, Mrs Turney.

The bride smiled sweetly at the tremulous little man, who broke and fied to a high bench in the darkest corner, where he daugled his short legs in a silent ecstasy of bashfulness.

"I reckon I'll have to rope that Chink, then blindfold and back him into the kitchen, if we git any supper," said Bailey, disappearing.

Later the Chinaman stole in to set the table, but he worked with hectic and fitful energy, a fearful eye always upon the dim bulk in the corner, and at a fancled move he shook with an ague of apprehension. Backing and aidling, be finally announced the meal, prepared to stampede madly at notice.

During the supper Shorty ate ravenously of whatever lay to his hand, but asked no favors. The agony of his shyness paralyzed his huge vocal muscles till speech became a labor quite

To a pleasant remark of the bride he responded, but no sound issued; then breathing heavily into his larynx, the reply roared upon them like a burst of thunder, seriously threatening the gravity of the meal. He retired abruptly into moist and self conscious allence, fearful of feasting his eyes on this disturbing loveliness.

As soon as compatible with decency he slipped back to his bunk in the shed behind and lay staring into the darkness, picturing the amazing occurrences of the evening. At the memory of her level glances be fell a-tremble and sighed ecstatically, prickling with a new, strange emotion. He lay till far into the night, wakeful and absorbed He was able to grasp the fact but dimly that all this dazzling perfection was for one man. Were it not manifestly impossible he supposed other men in other lands knew other ladies as beautiful, and it furthermore grew open him blackly, in the thick gloom, that in all this world of wom anly sweetness and beauty no modicum of it was for the misshapen dwarf of the Bar X outfit. All his life he had fought furiously to uphold the empty shell of his dignity in the eyes of his comrades, yet always morbidly conscious of the difference in his body Whisky had been his solace, his sweetheart. It changed him, raised and beatified him into the likeness of other men, and now as he pondered he was aware of a consuming thirst engendered by the heat of his earlier emotions. Undoubtedly it must be quench-

He rose and stole quietly out into the big front room. Perhaps the years of free life in the open had bred a suspicion of walls; perhaps he felt his conduct would not brook discovery; perhaps habit prompted him to take the two heavy Colts from their hoisters and thrust them inside his trousers

He slipped across the room, silent and cavern-like, its blackness broken by the window squares of starry sky. till he felt the paucity of glassware behind the bar.

"Here's to her." It burned delight-"Here's to the groom." It tingled

"I'll drink what I can and get back

to the long before it works," he

He started at a noise on the stairway. His senses, not yet dulled, detected a steamby tread not the care my wife. You've killed ber! Who less step of a man unafraid, but the was it? Let me get at him!" cautious rustle and balt of a maraud. Shorty stiffened as though a douche er. Every merve bristled to keenest of ice water had struck him, "Killed alertness as the faint occasional sounds | ber! Struck his wife!" My God! Not | 1000 approached, passed the open end of the bar where he crouched, leading on to the window. Then a match flared, and the darkness rushed out as a candle

wick sputtered. Shorty stretched on tiptoe, brought his eye to the level of the bar and gazed upon the horrent head of Balley. He sighed thankfully, but watched with interest his strange behavior.

Bailey moved the light across the window from left to right three times, paused, then wigwagged some code out into the night.

"He's signaling," mused Shorty "Hope be gets through quick. I'm getting full." The fumes of the liquor were beating at his senses, and he knew that soon he would move with didiculty. The man, however, shoved no inten-

tion of teaving, for, his signals completed, he blew out the light, first listening for any sound from above; then his figure soomed black and immobile against the dim starlight of the win "Ob, Lord, I got to set down!" and the watcher squatted upon the floor. bracing against the wall. His dulling

and the cautions unbarring of the "Getting late for visitors," he thought as he entered a blissful doze "When they're abed I'll turn in'

perceptions were sufficiently acute to

detect shuffling footsteps on the porch

It seemed much later that a shot startled him To his dizzy hearing came the sound of curses overhead. the stamp and shift of feet, the crashing fall of struggling men and, what



brought him unsteadily to his legs, the agonized scream of a woman, it echoed through the bouse, chilling him. and dwindled to an aching moan.

Something was wrong, he knew that, but it was hard to tell just what. He must think. What hard work it was to think too! He'd never noticed how, and he'd laughed when he first saw Shorty That settled it. could get out of it himself. Evidently it was nothing serious, for there was no more disturbance above, only confused murmurings Then a light showed in the stairs, and again the shuffling of feet came as four strange less. It was the sheriff.

get into such a fix? The prisoner stood against the wall, white and defiant. He strained at his bonds silently, while his captors by now." watched his futile struggles. There was something terrible and menacing the quietness with which they gloated—a suggestion of some horror to come. At last be desisted and burst

"You've got me, all right. You did an equal. this, Bailey, you -- traitorf"

"He's never been a traitor, as far as we know," sneered one of the four. on the square with ua."

"I didn't think you made war on women, either, Marsh Tremper, but it seems you're everything from a dog thief down. Why couldn't you fight me alone, in the daylight, like a man?" "You don't wait till a rattler's coiled before you stamp his bead off," said the former speaker. "It's either you or us, and I reckon it's you."

So these were the Tremper boys, eh? The worst desperadoes in the southwest, and Bailey was their ally. The watcher eyed them, mildly curious, and it semed to him that they were as or the old man'll swear I been drinkbad a quartet as rumor had painted ing again, and I don't want to dissi--bad even for this country of bad pate no wrong impressions around." men. The sheriff was a fool for get- He winked gravely. Then, as the ting mixed up with such people. sheriff and his surly prisoners drove Shorty knew enough to mind his own off, he called: business, anyway, if others didn't. He was a peaceful man and didn't intend to get mixed up with outlaws. His 'em, for, outside of your wife, they're mellow meditations were interrupted the only ones in this outfit that didn't by the hourse speech of the sheriff, laugh at me."

to the long to the fore it works," he who had broken down into his rage thought, not the darkness velled the again and struggled madly while words measure of his potentions.

"Let me go, -- you! Let me free' I want to fight the coward that struck

that sweet creature of his dreams who had talked and smiled at him without noting his deformity!

An awful anger rose in him, and he moved out into the light.

"Han's up!" Whatever of weakness may have dragged at his legs, none sounded in the great bellowing command that flooded the room. At the compelling volume of the sound every man whirled and eight empty hands shot skyward. Their startled eyes beheld a man's squat body weaving uncertainty on the limbs of an insect, while in each hand shone a blue-black Colt that waved and circled in maddening, er ratic orbits.

At the command Marsh Tremper's mind had leaped to the fact that behind him was one man, one against five, and be took a gambler's charce.

As he whirled he drew and fired None but the dwarf of Bar X could have fived, for he was the deadliest hip shot in the territory. His bullet crashed into the wall a hand's breadth over Shorty's cowlick. It was a clean heart shot, the practiced whirl and flip of the finished gun fighter, but the roar of his explosion was echoed by another, and the elder Tremper spun unsteadily against the table with a broken shoulder.

"Too high," moaned the big voice "Dern the inquor!"

He swayed drunkenly, but at the slightest shift of his quarry the aimless wanderings of a black muzzle stopped on the spot and the body behind the guns was congested with deadly menace.

"Face the wall!" he cried. "Quick! Keep 'em up higher!" They suffenly obeyed, their wounded leader reaching with his uninjured member.

To the complacent Shorty it seemed that things were working picely. though he was disturbingly conscious of his alcoholic tack of balance and tortured by the fear that he might suddenly lose the iron grip of his fac-

Then, for the second time that night, from the stairs came the voice that threw him into the dreadful confusion of his modesty.

"Oh, Ross," it cried, "I've brought your gun." And there on the steps, disheveled, pallid and quivering, was the bride, and grasped in one trembling hand was her husband's weapon.

"Ab-h!" sighed Shorty seraphically as the vision beat in upon his misty conceptions. "She ain't hurt!"

In his mind there was no room for desperadoes contemporaneously with her. Then he became conscious of the lady's raiment, and his brown cheeks flamed brick red, while he dropped his eyes. In his shrinking, groveling modesty be made for his dark corner.

One of those at bay, familiar with this strange abashment, seized the moment, but at his motion the sheriff

screamed, "Look out!" The quick danger in the cry brought back with a surge the men against the wall, and Shorty swung instantly, firing at the outstretched hand of Bailey as it reached for Tremper's weapon. The landlord straightened, gazing

affrightedly at his finger tips "Too low," and Shorty's roice held aching tears. "I'll never touch another drop it's plumb ruined my aim."

"Cut these strings, girlie," said the sheriff as the little man's gaze again wavered, threatening to leave his prisoners. "Quick: He's blushing again." When they were manacled Shorty before what a laborious process it stood in moist exudation, trembling was. Probably that sheriff had got and speechless, under the incoherent into trouble. He was a fresh guy, any thanks of the bride and the silent admiration of her handsome husband. She fluttered about him in a tremor of anxiety lest be be wounded, caressing him here and there with solicitous pats till be felt his shamed and happy spirit would surely burst from its misshapen prison.

"You've made a good thing tonight." men descended. They were lighted by said Turney, clapping him heartly on the sardonic Balley, and they dragged his massive back. "You get the five a sixth between them, bound and help- thousand all right. We were going to Mexico City on that for a bridal Now, what had he been doing to trip when I rounded up the gang, but I'll see you get every cent of it, old man, If it wasn't for you I'd have been a heap farther south than that

The open camaraderie and good fetlowship that rang in the man's voice affected Shorty strangely, accustomed as he was to the velled contempt or open compassion of his fellows. Here was one who recognized him as a man,

He spread his lips, but the big voice squeaked dismally; then, inflating deeply, he spoke so that the prisoners "In fact, I might say he's been strictly chained in the corral outside heard him plainly.

"I'd rather she took it anyhow," blushing violently.

"No, no," they cried. "It's yours." "Well, then, half of ft." And for once Shorty betrayed the strength of Gibraltar even in the face of the lady, and so it stood.

As the dawn spread over the dust; prairie, tipping the westward mountains with silver caps and sucking the mist out of the cottonwood bottoms, he bade them adieu. "No: I got to get back to the Bar X

"Mr. Turney, take good care of them Trempers. I think a heap of

SING SING FIRE

Warden Quickly Stops Trouble in Prison.

DAMAGE REACHES \$200,000

One of the Convicts Told Clancy That Fellow Prisoner Started Fire Out of "Pure Devilishness"-Leaders of Riot Transferred to Another Prison.

Ossining, N. Y.-Following a fire in Sing Sing prison, the old structure in which many New York state prisoners are now confined, serious rioting and mutiny occurred among the convicts prior to the removal of the leaders of the disturbances to Auburn prison, a new state institution. The total damage caused by two tires, one of which beyond doubt was of incendiary origin, amounts to \$200,000.

The trouble at the prison followed close after the appointment of John N. Clancy as warden to succeed ex-Warden Kennedy, who has been indicted since his removal from office. The new warden, however, was quick to act, and the trouble was soon quelled, although several hundred convicts were confined in their cells for several days and kept on a diet of bread and

Efforts were made during an investigation which followed to ascertain the names of the convicts who were responsible for starting the fire in the prison. Several of the convicts were called in as witnesses. One of the men



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stated that he heard that the fire was started out of "pure devillshuess" by one of the prisoners.

WARDEN JOHN B. CLANCY.

It was learned that cocaine has come into the prison in considerable quantities in the sheets purchased for their cots by the convicts. These sheets are soaked in cocnine, and so are the leaves of books brought in to the prisoners. The prisoners suck the sheets or the leaves of the books to get the drug. Since the fire, it was sald, much cocaine had come into the prison in spite of the vigilance of the warden and keepers. It was said that this had been responsible for much of

It was learned also that the leaders of the disturbance were locked up in the so called "coolers." There are ten of these coolers, and they were all full. They are outside of the cell block, on a level with the Hudson river, and are dark, damp cells seven feet long, six feet seven inches in height and three feet three inches wide. They have two doors, the first of wire and the outside one of wood In the doors there are two little holes for ventilation, but they do not admit any light. These coolers figured in the presentments returned by the grand jury last June, and in view of this some surprise was expressed that Warden Clancy had made use of them.

BANK FOR NEEDY POETS.

Genius Can Draw Checks Without Making Deposit.

Paris.-All Paris knows that many struggling French poets, authors and artists have come to the capital only to succumb in the struggle to exist on the menger incomes of their early days. Starvation and illness have done for them before they could earn enough to live. But the path to artistic fame will in the future be made easier. A poet in need will be able to apply to the "poets' bank" and have

his immediate wants relieved. The bank is the idea of a number of young writers who have been successful. It will extend financial aid to needy poets and authors during their period of wooing fame.

Lightning Moves House,

Fort Smith, Ark.-In an electrical storm the home of J. W. Bexter of Fayetteville, a member of the state legislature, was struck by lightning five times within an hour. The first bolt knocked off a chimney. The second entered through a telephone and knocked Baxter unconscious. He had hardly been revived before the third knocked his wife senseless. The fourth stonned his mother, and the fifth knocked the house from its foundations