

# Rex Beach writes: POWDER

Fine Serial Fiction in a new form. . . . Three Prize Short Stories (of four instalments each) by a master story-teller. . . . They're Rex Beach at his best. © BY REX BEACH

**FIRST INSTALMENT**

Ben Furlong came to the Southern oil fields looking for work. He was very dusty and quite hungry when at last he stopped in at the Durham House.

This was a rather better-looking place than the average Texas homestead, and when he knocked at the kitchen door a girl appeared who was very much better-looking than the average Texas homesteader. She was, in fact, a very pretty girl. She readily fetched Ben a drink of water, and while he rested she talked to him. That was, no doubt, because of his smile. He informed her that he had been raised in the Pennsylvania fields and was a good, practical oil man.

There being no chores to do, Ben sat in the kitchen and chatted with the girl while she cooked something for him, and in the course of the conversation he learned that her name was Betty Durham, that her parents were dead, and that the farm belonged to her aunt, with whom she had lived ever since she was a little girl. The aunt had gone to Opportunity in the family flivver.

"Funny, you cooking for a tramp driller like me and your aunt owning acreage like this," Ben remarked. "Isn't this land on the structure?"

"Sure! It's worth a lot of money. That well over yonder"—fork in hand, Miss Durham indicated a derrick not far away—"belongs to us."

From where he sat Furlong could see that the timbers of the tower were still bright and unstained, thus advertising the melancholy fact that the well itself was not a producer, so he inquired:

"What's wrong with it? Dry?"

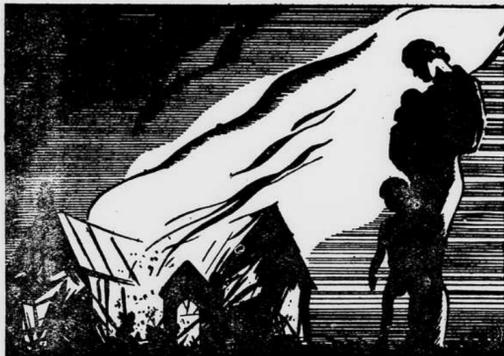
"Dry nothing! They're not down

**For Bad Feeling Due to Constipation**

Get rid of constipation by taking Black-Draught as soon as you notice that bowel activity has slowed up or you begin to feel sluggish. Thousands prefer Black-Draught for the refreshing relief it has brought them. Mrs. Ray Mullins, of Lape, Ark., writes: "My husband and I both take Theford's Black-Draught and find it splendid for constipation, biliousness, and the disagreeable, aching, tired feeling that comes from this condition." With reference to Syrup of Black-Draught, which this mother gives her children, she says: "They like the taste and it gave such good results."

**BLACK-DRAUGHT**

**This May Happen To You . . . ANYTIME . . .**



**FIRE . . .**

most destructive element--

FLOOD waters may wash away  
TORNADO winds may blow away  
LIGHTNING shatter and teardown—  
but FIRE destroys completely,  
consuming and devouring entirely—  
UNLESS YOUR PROPERTY IS FULLY INSURED, YOU ARE  
TAKING GREAT CHANCES OF HEAVY LOSSES.  
We represent the most stable and safest old line companies and  
can supply you with policies covering all property.  
Why not call us now, and let us help you with your insurance  
problems—no obligation.

We will appreciate your patronage.  
for INSURANCE call

**Ramsey Realty & Insurance Co.**

Phone 1968

Salisbury, N. C.

yet. They've got a fishing job—been at it for a couple of weeks."

"Gee!" The visitor shook his head. "That's running somebody in debt."

"When the first oil talk commenced we'd of been glad to get the farm drilled on almost any kind of royalty, but nobody would lease it. When they finally got ready, Aunt Mary wanted a bonus—two bits an acre—and she wouldn't listen to Uncle Joe's arguments. Bye and bye they offered two bits, but by that time she wanted a dollar. Then the companies got together, or the boom kind of petered out, or something, and it began to look as if Uncle Joe would be lucky to make any kind of a deal. He finally laid his ears back and leased a small block. Then he up and got killed."

"That's too bad."

"It was an accident. A powder wagon let go." The speaker's face grew wistful, she stared out across the arid countryside for a moment or two. "Uncle Joe loved me, but—Aunt Mary's his second wife; we're not really kinsfolks. It might just as well have been Maddox who got killed; he was as close to the wagon as Uncle Joe and yet he wasn't touched. Funny, too, because he's always been afraid of the stuff and has a hunch he'll be blown up. All you have to say to him is 'powder' and—"

"How'd your aunt come to put down this new well?"

"Maddox drilled the well on the lot we leased, and after Uncle Joe was killed he quit the company and sort of took charge of things for Aunt Mary. It wasn't a big well, but the royalty is enough to pay for this one. I won't cook any more ham and eggs, so you'd better make the most of these. Yes, and you'd better come and get them; they're done." Miss Durham set a plate on the table and Furlong drew up his chair.

With the curiosity natural to his calling, the visitor inquired more specifically about the nature of the mishap that had halted Maddox's progress, but he learned little. He inferred, however, that the royalties from the first well were dwindling at an alarming rate and that any considerable delay in completing the new well might therefore result in ruin to the owner. It was a prospect that naturally gave Betty and her aunt grave concern.

When Ben had finished eating he said: "Maybe I can give this driller of yours some help. I've worked on a good many fishing

jobs. D'you think he'd let me try?"

"He will if I tell him to," the girl declared. "He's tried everything anybody has told him to try. Who knows? Maybe you can do it."

The speaker put on her sunbonnet and together she and Furlong went across the valley to the well.

Tiller Maddox was a swarthy man of about thirty-five; his eyes were bold and black and set close together. He greeted the Durham girl with an easy familiarity, a suggestion of proprietorship that gave the visitor cause for thought, but towards Furlong he was none too cordial and when Betty explained the reason for the latter's presence Maddox frowned.

"Another wise guy, eh? Every ropechoker in ten miles has been tryin' to show us how smart he is. What d'you know about fishin', stranger?"

"Not much," Ben confessed, "but I've had some luck."

"Oh, I've had plenty of luck, myself!" Maddox asserted. "But I never had any good luck lettin' strangers monkey with my work. If you jim up the well, I take the blame."

"I won't jim anything."

"What'll you charge for this here miracle of yours?"

Impatiently Miss Durham exclaimed, "What's the difference how much he charges if he can do—?"

"I've been paid for any help I can give you," Furlong declared. "Probably I can't do anything, but so far I don't even know what's wrong. Do you mind telling me?"

"We've got a bolt in the hole."

"A bolt?"

"Sure! A six-inch steel bolt. It worked loose and dropped out of a tool."

"That's a new one," Ben admitted. "Why don't you drill it out, pound it to pieces?"



"You've been experimenting for two weeks at a hundred dollars a day—let Mr. Furlong have a go at it," said Betty.

Maddox grinned. "That's what we been tryin' to do, but it's tempered harder than the bit. It dulls every tool we use and all we been doin' for two weeks is sharp-en steel."

"Can't you drill past it?"

"How you goin' to sidetrack a six-inch bolt loose in the bottom of a hole?"

"You can drive it into the wall."

"Oh, you can, can you? We're into a stratter of iron pyrites and the rock's dam' near as hard as the bolt. It's much as ever a tool will cut at all. That bolt just shifts around in the bottom of the hole like it was a steel cup, an' it's too small to grapple. I s'pose we could get holt of it with some fancy kind of a magnet that would get holt of it." Again Maddox grinned.

Betty Durham was staring at Furlong with an apprehensive pucker between her brows. "Ain't that our luck, for a bitty old bolt to ruin everything? Can you think of any way—?"

"I can think of one way that won't cost much to try."

"I don't want any strangers experimentin' around—" Maddox began; but the girl exclaimed sharply,

"You've been experimenting for two weeks at a hundred dollars a day, haven't you? It's our well. Let Mr. Furlong have a go at it."

The driller executed an exaggerated gesture of acquiescence.

"Right you are, Betty! But if this feller puts it on the bum, don't blame me." Then to Ben he an-

nounced: "Help yourself, pardner. You heard the boss."

When Furlong had fully satisfied himself as to conditions he took off his coat and went to work. He knew of no fishing tool so designed as to pick up an object so small and as easily movable as a six-inch bolt, therefore he made one. He took a short length of steel casing of a diameter small enough to slip into the well, and in one end of this he cut teeth several inches long. It was a labor that consumed time; he was still at work when Betty reappeared at the well about dark and advised him that his supper was waiting.

Mrs. Durham had returned from town. She was a woman of indeterminate age. Her eyes were pale; her nose was hooked like the beak of a hawk; her lips were thin and set in avaricious lines. Immediately upon meeting Furlong she wanted to know whether he believed his experiment would succeed, how he proposed to go about it, how long it would take, and the like. Ben was noncommittal and he refused to raise her hopes. Before he had finished his meal he had convinced himself that the woman stood in some sort of dread of Tiller Maddox and that her fear of antagonizing him almost equalled her anxiety for Furlong's success. Ben wondered why. Another fact he discovered—Betty and her aunt were not on the best of terms.

After supper, by the light of a gasoline torch, Furlong resumed his work the while Maddox vainly tried, with the new device which his employer had brought out from town, to grapple that obstinate bit of steel a fifth of a mile beneath his feet. But it was blind work, monotonous work, dispiriting work; time after time the clumsy fishing tool was raised and lowered but its jaws refused to seize the troublesome bolt. It was a job as hopeless and as baffling as trying to pick up a pin with a pair of fire tongs attached to a string.

The engineer of the rig watched Furlong's work with the interest of a fellow machinist, and of him the latter inquired finally:

"Say! How come Mr. Durham to get killed?"

"He was blowed up. It was when the Planet Company was getting

"They figured some air current was responsible. Kind of a Godsend for Tiller, wasn't it?"

"Not to be killed? Sure—"

"Naw! To get in with the widder an' Betty. Lucky for them, too that he took to lookin' out for 'em. If he makes this well they'll be movin' into one of them Dallas mansions with marble bedsteads."

"Humph! He'll never make a well if he keeps dropping hardware in it. In my country a driller that careless would lose his job."

"Tiller won't lose his job," the engineer asserted positively. "He don't lose anything he goes after."

In the course of time Furlong finished cutting the end of his steel casing into a series of teeth, and these teeth he then bent slightly inward. This done, he attached the device to a tool and lowered it into the hole. Even Betty and her Aunt Mary, who looked on with growing suspense, understood now how he proposed to pick up that bolt. He had shaped those tapering teeth so that they resembled the curving fingers of a hand, and his delicate task was to drive the casing home against the bottom of the well until those fingers closed, until he clinched them over the obstacle. It was a task less difficult than it sounds.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

**Farmers Urged Not To Buy Work Stock**

Every year North Carolina farmers are buying outside the State approximately \$1,000,000 worth of stock that could be raised at home.

This is clearly a waste of money, in view of the fact that it costs almost nothing to raise a few horses or mules for farm use, said Fred M. Haig, professor of animal husbandry at State College.

When a mare drops a colt in the spring, she need be away from work for only a few days. In fact, it is better for the colt and for the mare to keep her at work, except for a few days at foaling time, Professor Haig stated.

On farms cooperating with the AAA crop adjustment programs, there is a considerable quantity of land which has been removed from the production of cotton, tobacco, wheat, or other basic crops.

This land may well be used to raise feed for work stock, Professor Haig continued. Four acres will produce all the feed needed by a horse or a mule for one year.

The number of horses and mules in the United States has been decreasing steadily, with the price going up, he pointed out. In North Carolina, the number dropped from 408,000 in 1925 to 339,000 at the present time.

Good work stock will always be in demand, he observed, and the price will remain high as long as the supply is low.

Unless North Carolina farmers breed and raise more stock at home, they will have to pay out large sums in the future for work animals, or else try to get along as best they can with an inadequate number of animals to do the work.

LAND POSTERS—For Sale at The Watchman Office.

**I Can't Sleep**



**YES -you can**

Are you one of these nervous people who lie awake half the night and get up feeling "all in"? Why don't you do as other light sleepers have been doing for more than two generations—take Dr. Miles Nervine?

One or two pleasant effervescent Nervine Tablets or two or three teaspoonfuls of liquid Nervine will generally assure a night of restful sleep. Perhaps you will have to take Nervine two or three times a day just at first.

Nervous people have been using Dr. Miles Nervine for Sleeplessness, Restlessness, Nervous Indigestion, Nervous Headache, Travel Sickness, for more than fifty years.

**Dr. Miles' NERVINE**  
Liquid and Effervescent Tablets

**How A. T. & T. Ownership Aids Your Service**

THERE is no mystery about the fact that the Southern Bell Telephone Company is owned by the American Telephone & Telegraph Company, and that the Western Electric Company is the manufacturing branch and supply agent of the entire Bell System.

The Bell System set-up is a natural one. It was created by the evolution of telephone service over a period of fifty years, as there developed a need for the various units. It has made possible the extensive and unequalled telephone service which North Carolina enjoys today.

Striking illustrations of its economy and value were given when a disastrous fire crippled the local and long distance service in Birmingham, Ala., when sleet storms devastated the telephone plant in the Carolinas and Tennessee and when floods and storms isolated large sections in the gulf states.

In each instance equipment, apparatus and supplies were speeded to the scene by truck and by train from Western Electric warehouses in Atlanta, New Orleans, Louisville and more distant points. Skilled Western Electric workers and experienced Bell telephone construction crews were rushed from far distant points.

The entire resources of the Bell System are available to the Southern Bell Company in any emergency. This relationship makes it possible to restore a vital service quickly and in an orderly and economical manner.

It is this coordination of effort and resources that has made your service so valuable and dependable, and such an important factor in the welfare and happiness of the people of this great State.

F. J. TURNER, Carolinas Manager

**Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Co.**  
(Incorporated)

Say, "I Saw It in THE WATCHMAN."

**MONEY NO OBJECT IF IT'S A QUESTION OF HEALTH**

Since 1799 thousands of people have regained their normal health after years of suffering from stomach troubles of all types, such as constipation, indigestion, gas, and sour stomach

which are the basic factors of such maladies as high blood

pressure, rheumatism, periodic headaches, pimples on face and

body, pains in the back, liver, kidney and bladder disorder,

exhaustion, loss of sleep and appetite. Those sufferers have

not used any man-made injurious chemicals or drugs of any kind; they have only used a remedy made by Nature. This marvelous product grows on the highest mountain peaks, where it absorbs all the healing elements and vitamins from the sun to aid HUMANITY in distress.

It is composed of 19 kinds of natural leaves, seeds, berries and flowers scientifically and proportionately mixed and is known as LION CROSS HERB TEA.

LION CROSS HERB TEA tastes delicious, acts wonderfully upon your system, and is safe even for children. Prepare it fresh like any ordinary tea and drink a glassful once a day, hot or cold.

A one dollar treatment accomplishes WONDERS; makes you look and feel like new born. If you are not as yet familiar with the beneficial effects of this natural remedy LION CROSS HERB TEA try it at once and convince yourself. If not satisfactory money refunded to you.

Try it and convince yourself with our money-back guarantee. One week treatment \$1.00 Six weeks treatment \$5.00 In order to avoid mistakes in getting the genuine LION CROSS HERB TEA, please fill out the attached coupon.

Lio-Pharmacy, Dept. 1265  
1180 Second Ave.,  
N. Y. City, N. Y.  
Gentlemen:

Enclosed find \$\_\_\_\_\_ for which please send me\_\_\_\_\_

treatment of the famous LION CROSS HERB TEA.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

**YOU SAVE 4c A MILE**

---when you ride Carolina Coach Company Buses instead of driving your own car.

---Private car operation seldom costs less than 6 cents per mile—usually much more.

---Bus travel costs

**1½c Per Mile**

and no more than 2 cents per mile.

Whenever you travel ride CONVENIENT, COMFORTABLE, HOT WATER HEATED BUSES OF

**Carolina Coach Co.**

Information

SALISBURY  
Union Bus Station—Phone 1751

CHINA GROVE  
Cline Hotel—Phone 80