

Rex Beach writes: POWDER

Three Prize Short Stories (of four installments each) by a master story-teller... They're Rex Beach at his best.

IN FOUR INSTALLMENTS

SYNOPSIS

Ben Furlong, a young but practical oil man and driller from the Pennsylvania field, drifted into the Texas oil country, broke and looking for work. Finally he fetched up at the Durham home where live an elderly aunt, shortly widowed by the explosion of a powder wagon, and her niece, pretty Betty Durham. Perhaps because of his smile, Betty cooks some food for Ben and while he eats he learns the aunt, in town on business, has an oil man, Tiller Maddox, sinking an oil well for her. A short 8 inch bolt worked loose from the rigging and is in the bottom of the well. Work has been suspended for days as the crew fish for the bolt and operating funds dwindle away. Furlong offers to give a hand but Maddox objects. Betty insists and overrules Maddox so Furlong fashions a tool which he has just lowered into the well, hoping to fish out the bolt.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

SECOND INSTALLMENT

Furlong himself handled the rig during this operation, and even Maddox could find no fault with the way he did it. When, after what seemed an interminable time, the wire cable began to stream up out of the depths and wind itself in smooth, black layers upon the drum, the women pressed in upon the derrick floor. Out of the well-mouth finally slid the fishing tool; it stopped, hung motionless with the lower end at the level of their eyes. The teeth had been bent inward, jammed together by the blows from above; inside the basket thus formed and tightly fitted between two of those prongs was a battered six-inch piece of steel.

When Furlong had finished washing up he found Betty Durham waiting for him. "Come over to the house," she said. "You must be tired."

"I told you I was lucky," the young man declared, with a grin. "Lucky, nothing. You've got sense."

"Simple, wasn't it? I wonder Maddox never thought of it."

Betty stirred; impatiently she exclaimed: "Oh, he's too busy thinking about something—I say! We've got an extra room, Aunt Mary says it wouldn't look right for you to sleep here. Don't that make you tick?"

"How about the barn?" "That's what she proposed, come on. We'll fix it somehow."

It was dark; the trail through the cactus and the mesquite was dim, but Betty knew it by heart, and where its meanderings were indistinguishable she took Furlong's hand and guided him.

"I suppose you think Aunt Mary's crazy, risking all her money like this," she said. "I sure do," the man admitted. "This thing will show you a chance she's taking. Suppose that bolt had been something else, something we could get hold of? There's a thousand things can happen to a well."

"I know. But she's—greedy. She always was. Tiller talked her into it after Uncle Joe died, and she wouldn't listen to me."

"It's a lot safer to let the big companies do the drilling, and satisfied with a royalty."

country, this one had been allowed to run down, and with the exception of some chickens and a few spirited cattle there was no live stock left upon it. There still remained, however, some old fodder; it was dusty and musty, but suitable enough for a bed, and Furlong announced that he was delighted with these sleeping arrangements. He set the lantern down and walked to the door with Betty. There he said:

"You've been mighty nice to me. I wish that fishing job had been harder."

"Why?"

"It would have taken longer."

The girl's face was dimly illuminated as she smiled up at Furlong. She was the prettiest girl he had ever known and he felt a great liking, a great sympathy for her. The clasp of her warm hand as she had guided him along the dark trail had affected him in an unaccountable manner, and now it affected him again in the same way when she laid it in his. A sudden recklessness overwhelmed him and before he knew what he was doing he had bent forward and kissed her.

The girl was startled, but she did not recoil. Curiously she inquired: "Why did you do that?"

"I don't know. I couldn't help it, I guess. I didn't intend to, but—"

Betty floundered; she felt his face burning hotly.

"Tiller tried and I slapped him. I've known him a long time, too."

Miss Durham shook her head, apparently more perplexed at her own lack of resentment than surprised at Furlong's boldness. "I must like you pretty well."

"I wish you would—did. I think you're wonderful."

"Queer!" Betty turned to go. A moment later she called back through the gloom, "I'll call you when breakfast is ready."

Furlong was not altogether surprised when, on the following morning, Tiller Maddox offered him a job. Maddox, it was plain, was acting upon orders, and he took no pains to conceal his dislike for the new hand; nevertheless, Ben accepted the proffer. Aside from the fact that he needed work, his interest in Betty Durham was now sufficient to make almost any sacrifice worth while.

In the days thereafter he tried to fathom the peculiar relationship existing between Maddox and the two women, but he did not succeed very well. The driller, it was evident, had his heart set upon Betty, and in his attempt to win her Mrs. Durham was his ally; nevertheless, for some unknown reason the aunt disliked and distrusted the man. About all that Ben could make sure of was the fact that in some manner not readily apparent the oil well was being used by Maddox as a weapon; that somehow it had become the stake in a three-cornered game.

Furlong and Betty meanwhile managed to see a good deal of each other, but they met clandestinely. Neither of them openly referred to this fact, and, although the girl pretended that it was her aunt whom she feared, Ben very well knew that it was Maddox. No longer, by the way, did he apologize when he kissed her and their stolen moments together had become very sweet.

Work on the well progressed as rapidly as could be expected. Inch by inch, foot by foot, the heavy steel bits cut through the rock; length after length was added to the casing, and as it neared the level of the oil-bearing structure 'indications' became evident; occasional sighs and gurgles issued from the well mouth as gas gathered and released itself. Its odor was at times quite strong.

It was at this time that Maddox and Furlong clashed.

Some new tackle was being slung and Ben had been sent up aloft while the forearm issued directions from below. It was heavy work. Ben was forced to cling to the derrick timbers or to balance himself upon a narrow plank, and his progress at times did not suit the elder man. Maddox was in a surly mood, anyhow, and he became profane. Furlong was hot and irritable. He answered back, whereupon the man below flared out angrily:

"You do like I tell you an' don't argue, or I'll come up there an' give you a dam' good beatin'!"

The rigging was finally secured in place and Maddox was occupying himself with something else when he felt a hand upon his shoulder. He turned to find Furlong at his side. The latter's eyes were blazing. In a voice ominously harsh and vibrant was fury he said: "I came down to get that beating. I want it now."

The other members of the crew froze in various attitudes and staret suspense. The two men stared at each other.

Furlong was a burley, thick-necked youth; he was as hard as iron and in his gaze at this moment was an evil quality quite unexpected. His enmity for the driller had finally foamed over. In proximity to this flaming passion Maddox's smoldering dislike gave off no heat; nor at short notice could he fan its embers into a blaze. After a brief survey, pregnant with possibilities, he turned his head and winked at the other men. In a feeble effort at jocularity he said:

"I told you I'd come up there and give it to you. I never ast you to come down here an' get it."

He guffawed loudly at his own humor and walked away. Furlong stood shaking in his tracks.

That evening Maddox went over to the farmhouse. Evenings in this thirsty land, like evenings upon the desert, were cool, refreshing, beautiful. The brazen sky cooled, a blessed breeze played through the scrubby bush and brought faint fragrances unnoted at other hours; the harsh outlines of unlovely objects were softened;

birds twittered; Nature filled her lungs and took on new vigor.

Mrs. Durham was rocking upon the little front porch and of her the man inquired: "Where's Betty?"

"Her and Ben have gone to town."

Maddox scowled. "I allowed they had."

"He's gone in to buy himself some clothes and she took the car—"

"He won't need no more clothes than he's got, on this job," asserted the driller. "He is all through an' washed up."

"What's happened, Tiller?"

"We had a row. I was a fool to put him on, in the first place but his week's up Friday."

Mrs. Durham ceased rocking, her sallow face became more yellow. With an effort she said:

"He's a right smart hand, Tiller. I'd ruther you didn't fire him."

"The hell you'd ruther!" Maddox exclaimed angrily. "What you got to say about it?"

"Why, it's my prop'ty, my well—"

"Is it?"

"You—You know what I mean. He's smart, I tell you. Didn't he fish that bolt?"

"Sure! An' didn't you hire him straight off, so's to spy on me?"

"Tiller! It's no such thing. Why should I spy on you? What you been doin' that you need spyin'—?"

"Shut up an' listen to me. He's fired Friday, night an' he gets off this place the next mornin'."

So that's that! Saturday, sometime, the powder wagon'll be here an' early Monday the men are comin' to shoot the well. We got a big one; I will bet my life on that. I can tell! Why, she's makin' gas an' trying her best to let go, but—"

the speaker paused, then finished slowly, distinctly—

"there ain't agoin' to be no well whatever until I'm took care of."

The widow's colorless eyes fixed themselves hypnotically upon the swarty face of the man before her. He continued:

"I wasn't gettin' along any too good with Betty before this

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The widow's colorless eyes fixed themselves hypnotically upon the swarty face of the man before her. He continued:

"I wasn't gettin' along any too good with Betty before this

feller showed up, but since he came she won't have nothin' to do with me."

"I did the best I could," Mrs. Durham declared, nervously, "but she says she won't marry you. She goes hog wild every time I talk about it."

"There's ways to make a girl marry. You got to make her marry me before that well comes in, or it's just like I said—"

"it ain't comin' in!"

"Tiller!" gasped the woman. "You dasset do—anything to it. Not now!"

"Oh, dasset I? Who'll stop me? You won't. That little old bolt made a lot of trouble, didn't it?"

"Well, that's nothin'." It just shows how easy it is to—"

(Continued Next Week)

KENANSVILLE NEWS

(Continued From Page 2)

offering will be taken for S. S. Extension and Religious Education. The gift will be dedicated by the Supt., Mr. L. Southerland. The pastor, Rev. F. L. Goodman, will hold the "Installation of the new S. S. officers and teachers."

Miss Margaret Williams and her sister, Mrs. Wilbur Adams, nee Miss Ruth Williams, were joint hostesses here in the home of their parents, on Thursday afternoon and again that night to their friends here. On Thursday afternoon at Three o'clock three tables of bridge were in play. Mrs. L. A. Beasley made high score after several interesting games of contract, for which she was presented a couple of lovely guest towels. Mrs. W. J. Pickett was presented one toward for "Consolation."

On Thursday night at eight o'clock there were five tables of players. At this time, Mrs. P. D. May was presented a bottle of perfume for high score, and Miss Ruth Stephens a box of dusting powder for the consolation. On each occasion the hostesses served tempting refreshments consisting of Blushing Salad, with accessories, accompanied by an iced fruit drink.

NOTICE OF SALE

Under and by virtue of power and authority vested in the

undersigned commissioner by a recent certain judgment in the Superior Court of Duplin County entered in a certain civil action entitled "Charles H. Moore, et al vs. C. E. Stephens, Administrator of the estate of Richard Moore, et al," the undersigned will offer for sale and sell for cash to the highest bidder at the courthouse door in Kenansville, North Carolina, Duplin County, on OCTOBER 30, 1935, at or about the hour of twelve o'clock noon, the following described tract or parcel of land:

Beginning at a stake in the Bowden line, L. Middleton's corner, and runs thence S. 60 W. 28 poles to a stake, Oliver and Emma Humford corner; thence that line 30 1-2 W. 43 poles to a stake, A. Shaw Phillips' corner; thence his line N.

84 1-2 E. 38 poles to a small pine, his corner; thence S. 14 E. 32 poles to the beginning, containing 7 1-4 acres, more or less.

Advertised this the 28th day of September, 1935.

ROBERT C. WELLS, Commissioner.

Oct. 3-10-17-24

WATCH AND JEWELRY REPAIRING - ENGRAVING - Diamonds - Watches - Jewelry

A.J. CAVENAUGH WALLACE, N. C.

666 checks MALARIA in 3 Days COLDS first day Tonic and Laxative

Liquid - Tablets Salve - Nose Drops

Hectic Days Sleepless Nights

IF YOU are nervous today, you probably will not sleep well tonight. If you don't sleep well tonight, you will probably be nervous tomorrow.

Don't allow yourself to become nervous. Take Dr. Miles Nervine. It will relax your tense nerves and let you get a good night's sleep.

Irritability, Restlessness, Sleeplessness, often lead to Nervous Headache, Nervous Indigestion, Hysteria—sometimes to a nervous breakdown and organic trouble.

Some of the people, whose letters are printed below, were as nervous as you are—probably more so—yet they have found relief.

Three years ago I was so nervous I could not bear to go out in company and could not sleep nights. A friend recommended Dr. Miles Nervine. I now enjoy myself thoroughly and sleep every night. Miss Juliette Currier, New Market, N. H.

I have used Dr. Miles Nervine in liquid form and find it the best medicine for the nervous I have ever used. Christine Lanier, Middleton, Tennessee

Whenever I have over-indulged and feel restless I take one or two Nervine Tablets just before I retire. In the morning when I awake I feel like a new person and can go about my work as usual. Dr. Miles Nervine Tablets quiet your nerves, brace you up and are the simplest, most convenient tablets to take I have ever found. Miss Grace Redman, St. James, Miss.

Before using your Nervine I was very nervous and irritable. Since I have started to take it I feel so much better that my family notice the difference. I still take it from time to time and the good result is wonderful. J. H. Redding, 1037 18th Ave., Rock Island, Ill.

Dr. Miles Nervine

Liquid and Effervescent Tablets

Sell Your Good Tobacco Now

in

WALLACE

THE BEST LITTLE MARKET IN THE STATE

We know we can sell your good tobacco just as high, if not higher, than any market in this belt. All we ask is the chance. Bring us your next load and be convinced.

WE MUST PLEASE YOU
Bring us your next load of tobacco and if after it has been sold you are not entirely satisfied that it has sold here just as high as it would on any other market in the state, we will take it up, place it back on sticks and send it to any market in the belt you specify, ABSOLUTELY FREE OF CHARGE. Could anything be fairer? Then give us a chance to prove that ours is one of the best markets in the State, by bringing your next load to us.

Sell Your Tobacco With Us. Plenty of Floor Space— Full Set of Buyers ---Courteous Treatment to All.

WALLACE OFFERS YOU
The most economical place in the State to sell your tobacco. You don't need to make long hauls and expensive lay-overs when you bring your tobacco here. We can sell it for you the same day—in fact you will probably be able to sell here and get home before dinner. Good roads lead into Wallace from all directions. Merchants here carry large stocks of merchandise enabling you to "kill two birds with one stone" by doing your shopping at the same time you sell your tobacco.

Sell Your Tobacco In WALLACE And Save Expenses

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BRICK WHSE.

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Harvest Time . . .

is always hardware time. Check up on your equipment today and then come to see us. We carry a complete stock of repair parts for McCormick, Massey-Harriss, Johnson, Osborn and Moline Mowing Machines. Also repair parts for Hay Rakes in addition to our full line of Hardware for every purpose.

Come in and let us show you our complete line of ALADDIN LAMPS—table and floor models. We also redeem Octagon and Luzianne coupons—full line of premiums.

BUY YOUR HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSES HERE
Combination \$3.10 -- State \$2.10 -- County \$1.10

A. C. Hall Hardware Co.
WALLACE, N. C.