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The Triangle Ranch

By Charles Dorian

IN the shadow of Baker Mountain lies a city where life flows furiously gay. Not that we care how fast or how shady—our purpose is to use it only as a landmark pointing the location of a drama on the sky line. We do not even care about the name of the city—Baker will do very well.

Baker Mountain is timbered to its crest. The valley in its shadow is half a mile above the sea, narrow where the rapid river hisses through, but stretching out in flat lands here and there or rising steeply into hills that roll away into the clouds.

What are known as homesteads on the prairie rank resoundingly as ranches in British Columbia. Baker stood sentinel over a hundred of them. Prosperity came but slowly to most of them and to three it did not even bow.

There was XE ranch, where no man remained long enough to harvest his garden truck, though only six miles from Baker.

Adjoining were the AX and — (Bar Pick) ranches, notorious for the sudden deaths of their short term incumbents. Their dark fame spread throughout the valley until they lost all appeal to the prospective settler.

Then strangely they all became invested at once.

A young man, slenderly made, anaemic, black-haired and blue-eyed, drifted into Baker and made a splash. He had made similar splashes since coming to British Columbia but this was final. The source of his income, some baronial possession in Merrie England, played erratic and left the errant Reginald S. Furlow to his own poor resources.

Fortuneless, he might be driven to work for a living. His daintily gloved hands and bespattered feet did not hold much hope for that, however, and his delicate chin promised less.

It seemed a marvel that he should know his way about. Yet he had an unusual scent for the sporting palaces of the gaudy west and he no sooner found the one in Baker than he began to make the aforesaid splash and get in deep. He cast his last dollar to the roulette winds and emerged fumbling his loose change in one pocket and a pearl-handled pistol of mean calibre in the other.

When a thin-featured, pale and blue-eyed human man begins to feel dejected he looks it in every lineament. Our Reginald was done. It was just a matter of working himself down to the proper stratum of despondency to sink into hateful oblivion.

No use standing there in the open street; best to hie beyond the city limits and stroll a space into the country, he argued with himself. It was a dismal stroll. The darkness and the silence should have brought him to his senses. He had manipulated the toy in his pocket and rehearsed his last act so thoroughly that it became self-hypnosis.

It might have had a better result, a finish. As it was it left him only deeply unconscious with a tiny furrow up one side of his scalp.

Ravens coyotes cried out dolefully in response to the sharp report and in another moment the night was silent as before.

Daylight evolved from the mountain edges and rolled back into the valley, revealing the splendors of spring creation and that dull spot on the roadside.

This was the road which led to the triangle ranches of uncanny fame, a deserted road save for Indian scouts looking for wolf heads on which hung profitable bounties.

It was not an Indian who drove out in the early daylight hours that morning. Much of the Indian grace and poise had she but her face was as the snow-capped peaks with the sun glinting rosily upon them.

Much of the spring freshness was in the song she carolled which ceased when the horse shied and she glimpsed the object on the roadside. A long sigh escaped the man when she bent over him.

"You poor idiot!" exclaimed the girl, not without pity, as she picked up the pistol at his hand. The blood had congealed over the wound in his head but as he stirred it started oozing out in little bubbles. She took a handkerchief from his pocket and tied it round his head.

Knowing little what else to do she loosened his collar and rubbed his hands gently. Everything combined restored him.

"I've made a mess of it," he groaned.

"You sure have," she agreed. "Get up and forget it."

His eyes opened wider and they seemed to contain a deeper blue. His face was terribly pale but his chin did not look so weak as he sat up and listened to the girl.

"You don't need to tell me anything—I'm a good guesser," she told him. "Now, if you go back to the city you'll be pulled in for a would-be suicide, so you'd better come on out with me to the Bar Pick ranch and let me fix that wound up so it won't look so conspicuous. Then if you like you may stay there until the wound has healed or return to the city this evening."

"You're a deuced good sort," he said, earnestly, as he stumbled into the buggy.

"Never mind the nice talk," she reminded him. "You've a serious job in sight."

"That's the trouble, Miss —"

"Dorna Waters, without the Miss, suits me."

"That's the trouble, Dorna Waters, I've no job of any sort in sight and I can't do much anyway."

"Bad bringing-up, Mr. —"

"Reginald Furlow, if you don't mind."

"I sure do mind. 'Reginald' is enough to kill any self-respecting creature. Your bound to look a Reggie with the name following you around. Haven't you a substitute?"

"Well, my middle name is Strong—Reginald Strong Furlow, to be exact," he explained.

"That's better; Strong Furlow should be your name. Why not discard the Reggie and live up to the Strong?"

"Oh, I say, would you advise that?" he asked.

"Try it," she recommended. "It will have a stimulating effect."

"By Jove, you're a brick, you know," he praised.

"Just about that hard," she laughed.

"It must be very early in the morning," was his next comment. "Would you mind telling me about your rawneck?"

"Don't say rawneck!" she chided. "Do try to talk straight Canadian. You're wondering, I suppose why I'm driving out so early. Well, the ranch isn't fixed up yet. My brother is running it. He is going to put up a log house for my sister and me, but meantime I live in town and come out to get the meals. When the log shanty is up I intend to take out a



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