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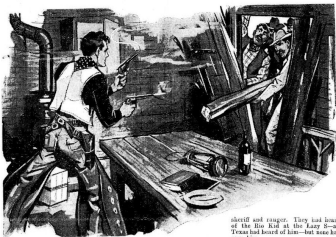
MODERN BOY 2^o

EVERY SATURDAY
WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 2nd 1937
NO. 504, VOL. 20.



The Lonely Hut

There was something sinister about the hut that stood on the empty range. The Rio Kid sat in the silence awaiting trouble . . . and it came!



"Take His Guns!"

"BURNING daylight!" roared a voice as the Rio Kid's ear, and he jerked up in his bunk in the bunkhouse of the Lazy 8 Ranch.

Colorado Jim, horse-wrangler of the Lazy 8, looked down at him with a grinning face. The Kid was accustomed to wake in the chaparral, rolled in his blanket, his muskrat at his side. It was long days since he had dozed down in a ranch bunkhouse. In the mist and shadows of sleep, he had forgotten where he was—had been dreaming of being hunted by the Texas Rangers. So his hand went instinctively to his gun.

"Say, you won't want your hard-won, kambar!" grinned Colorado; and the Kid, grinning, too, relinquished the walnut butt.

"You said it!" he agreed, and he rolled out of the bunk. "If you've called me for cats, feller, I guess I won't keep you waiting men's a piece."

"Six on cats!" said Colorado. "I guess Master Hall's waiting to see you. He sure wants to know about that gay you toted into the ranch last night, all shot up by the rangers. Cats can wait."

The door split open and the buttering-cars came through. Instantly the Kid scot a tonnage of shots whizzed from his gun.

"O.K.!" said the Kid cheerfully.

A dozen men of the Lazy 8 bunch looked rather curiously at the Kid as he came out of the bunkhouse with Colorado. The boy outlaw's manner was easy. He was always at his ease, though he never knew from moment to moment whether a guy's six-gun might not leap from the holster at the sight of him. With a single rapid glance he took in all the lean, star-browed faces; but there was no hint of recognition in any of them.

To the Lazy 8 bunch, the Kid was what he looked—a handsome boy puncher. On his looks, no man could have guessed him to be the outlaw of the Rio Grande, hunted by

**By RALPH
REDWAY**

sheriff and ranger. They had heard of the Rio Kid at the Lazy 8—all Texas had heard of him—but none had seen him.

The Kid was glad of it as he walked with Colorado towards the ranch-house. He had had to take the risk of recognition when he brought the wounded ranch foreman in. But he would have hated to hit trouble at the Lazy 8, for it was in his mind that in this remote corner of Texas, where he was not known, he might clinch a chance of joining up with a range-riding bunch, punching cows as in the happy old days before a false charge had made him an outlaw.

Rancher Hall sat in a rocker on the piazza of the ranch-house—a lean man with a hard but not unkindly face and keen eyes that stared searchingly on the Rio Kid as he came up the steps with Colorado. A man with a dark, handsome face and a bandaged right hand stood near him, and scowled at the Kid as he came.

"Hyer's the guy, boss," said Colorado; and the Kid swept off his steeton to the rancher, with a wary eye at the same time on Harbison Harris, the puncher with the bandaged hand.

"Morris, sir!" said the Kid cheerily. "I guess I got to thank you for leave to bed down with your

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hunch, Colorado allows that you want to clear the rag with me a piece."

The rancher nodded, still scanning the Kid's unshaven face. Colorado leaned on the rail at a little distance, and the Kid noted, with amusement, that his hand hung close by his gun. He noted, too, that Bill Saunders and a couple more long-limbed punchers loaded by the piano steps. He sensed danger in the air, but it did not worry him. Danger and the Rio Kid were old acquaintances.

The Kid's manner did not indicate that he noticed anything. He was not known as the Lazy S—they had no notion that an outlaw was in their midst—but he was an object of distrust, that was plain.

The rancher's gaze from under his iron-gray brows was penetrating. The Kid met it with a smile.

"Last night you toted in my new foreman, Dunn, who was shot up by the ranchers on the trail from Larist," said Hall abruptly.

"I sure did," agreed the Kid. "How's that guy coming on?"

"He has not spoken yet—or recovered consciousness."

"That's bad!" said the Kid. "I sure did all I could for him, rancher, and toted him home. But I reckon he was hard hit. That ruttler guy, Scar Face, sure meant to wipe him out!"

"I'm wise to that!" groined Hall. "My last foreman was shot up, and now the new man's ambushed on the way here, and shot up, too. You were found with him on the prairie, miles from the ranch, by three of my bunch. You allowed that you were bringing him here. But there's only your word for that. You pulled a gun on a Lazy S man——" He made a gesture towards the puncher with the handgaped hand.

The Kid laughed. "I guess if I hadn't, rancher, I shouldn't be showing the rag with you this here minute," he said. "Your man Harris pulled on me, and I beat him to it. I guess the other guys will tell you so."

"That's a cinch, boss!" said Colorado. "Handsome pulled on him, figuring that he was the ruttler what had shot up Mr. Dunn."

"Melbe," said Hall. "But it's got to be proved that he isn't. Melbe Harris was too quick with his gun—but he don't seem to have been so quick as this guy. You call yourself Coffin?" he added, bending his knees on the Kid again.

"Sure!"
"Where are you from?"
"I guess I've punched cows in the San Pedro country," drawled the Kid. "That's the other side of Texas! Any guy know you this side of Larist?"

The Kid's eyes danced. There was one man who knew him that side of Larist, and that was the wounded man he had brought to the ranch. And that man knew him as the Rio Kid—the only man in the Hall country who did! If that guy, when he came round, talked too much, the Lazy S bunch would know more of the Kid than he wanted them to know.

"This is new country for me, boss," said the Kid, smiling. "I ain't met up with a lot of old-timers in the Larist valley yet."

"And what were you doing on the trail from Larist?"

"Hittin' for this ranch to ask if you wanted a good man for your bunch," answered the Kid. "I can sure ride a piece, and punch cows so good as the next man, and your man Harris will tell you that I can shoot a few! Ain't that so, lumber?" asked the Kid, with a smile at the man with the handgaped hand.

Handsome Harris' black eyes glinted, and his left hand dropped to his belt.

"Don't!" said the Kid. He was still smiling, but his eyes were like cold steel, and his hand was as a butt with a movement too swift for the eye to follow it.

"You durnd ruttler!" breathed Harris. But he did not pull the gun. "Aw, forget it!" snapped the Kid. "I'll tell a man, I don't like being called a ruttler, and I ain't standing for it. Pack it up, feller, before suttin' hits you sudden."

"Snap that, Harris!" said the rancher sharply. "I want no gun-play here. If this guy is telling the truth, he's saved my foreman's life, and if he wants a place in my bunch, it's his for the asking. If he's one of the gang that shot up Dunn, we shall know when the man speaks—and then it's a rope and a branch for him! You'll be detained here on suspicion till Dunn can speak," he added, turning to the Kid. "If you're white, you've got nothing to fear. Colorado, take his guns!"

Before Colorado Jim could detach himself from the piano rail, the guns were in the Rio Kid's hands, and both of them lifted.

"Go slow!" said the Kid quietly. "I'm out of feed of those here six-guns, and I ain't parting with them none. I guess any guy that reaches for this hardware won't get the guns—but he'll sure get what's packed inside!"

With a swift movement the Kid backed to the wall of the house, so that he could not be taken from behind.

Standing there, he looked at Rancher Hall and his men over the levelled guns, the smile gone from his face now and his eyes gleaming defiance.

Dunn Speaks:

A GUN was in every hand now. Handsome Harris, his black eyes glinting, had drawn a Colt with his left—Colorado was hardly a second later. Bill Saunders and the other two punchers came stamping up the steps, gun in hand. From the direction of the bunkhouse six or seven punchers came running, pulling as they came. Only Rancher Hall sat unmoved in his rocker, his hand, grim eyes on the Kid. There were five faces in front of the Rio Kid—and others coming fast. But his steady eyes did not falter, as they looked over the levelled six-guns.

"Hold in!" roared Hall.

For the moment, a fearful affair hung in the balance. A sign from the rancher, and Colts would have been roaring, and bullets whizzing, and men falling right and left. The Kid had been through such a fight before, and he still rode the trails! But it was with deep relief that he heard the rancher order his men to hold in. These were not the men on whom the Kid wanted to burn powder—men with whom he would gladly have shared the rough, wild life of the cattle trail and the bunkhouse.

"Cut that out, puncher!" went on Hall. "You figure that you can stand off all the Lazy S on their own stamping-ground?"

"I guess I'd stand off all Texas sooner's part with my hardware," said the Kid coolly. "I ain't hunting trouble here, and I guess if you're tired of my company I'm ready to saddle up my critter and hit the trail. But you don't bulldoze me on this here ranch."

"You won't ride till it's cleared up about my foreman!" said Hall grimly. "You're handy with your guns, puncher, but I guess it wouldn't buy you anything, if I was sure you was one of the Scar Face gang. But if what you say is the truth, you ain't going to be hurt on the Lazy S. Pack your guns!" he added, to the punchers.

Slowly the Colts went back to the holsters. Not till the last one was holstered did the Kid pack his own guns.

"Where's that puncher's horse, Colorado?" asked Hall.

"In the corral, boss."
"Keep it there! See that he don't get a ruyuse! Pass the word round to the boys to shoot him dead if he tries to quit!"

"You bet!"
Hall gave the Kid a look.
"You can beat it," he said tremely. "Keep your guns—they won't help you a heap if we want you. Don't go too near the gate—maybe one of the bunch might figure that you was breaking and let daylight through you. You got to be on hand when you're wanted."

"I reckon if I wanted to hit the trail, rancher, there ain't a ranch outfit in Texas that would hold me!" said the Kid coolly. "But don't you worry none—I sure like your bunch too much to spill their vinegar all over your ranch, Colorado, old-timer. I'm ready for them cats, if you know the way to the chuckhouse."

Colorado grinned, and there were grins on other faces, as the Kid walked away from the ranch-house, in the midst of half a dozen punchers. Three minutes ago, they had been facing each other, gun in hand—now the Kid seemed to have forgotten that hostility had even been thought of.

But as he sat on a bench at the door of the chuckhouse and ate his breakfast with a good appetite, the Kid mentally called himself every sort of a benchhead and a dogged dog.

Colorado had gone to the corral to his duties as horse-wrangler. The

Kid's Mustang, Side-Kicker, was in the corral, and if he had a bunch to mount and ride, he did not need telling that Colorado's gun would be in the way. Bill Saunders sat on the bench by his side as he ate—friendly and chatty, but with a wary eye open. Yuba Dan sat on the gate, with a Winchester rifle across his knees; grinning cheerfully, but ready to spray bullets if the suspected puncher attempted to make a break. Other eyes were on the Kid, from a distance—some of them hostile, but all of them watchful.

It was an open question, so far, at the Lazy S whether this young puncher had rescued the foreman from the Scar Face gang, or whether he was one of that gang himself. But if the Kid attempted to leave the ranch before the doubt was settled one way or the other, he had to fight his way out—and even the Kid doubted whether he would make the grade, if he did.

His fate depended on what the wounded foreman said when he came to consciousness. That he would say that the Kid had saved him from the Scar Face gang was certain. But what else might he not say?

He knew the Kid—the only man in the Lariat Valley who did! The Kid figured that, after he had saved the man's life, the guy would surely not denounce him as the Rio Kid, the outlaw who was wanted by a dozen sheriffs in other parts of Texas. He was sure—almost sure—but he could not count on it as a cinch.

Sitting there in the bright Texas sunshine, his face calm and cool under the shade of his visor, the Kid called himself a horsehead, a gink, a geek, and many other things. He had walked into this horse's nest, taking his life in his hands, to save a man who was a stranger to him, and at whose word, denouncing him by name, every face round him would be the face of a foe! Once the name of the Rio Kid was whispered, it was capture, or a desperate fight for freedom and life. All depended on whether the wounded man told, and though the Kid reckoned that he would not, how could he be sure?

Early in the morning a buggy drove down the trail from Hatchet, the nearest town to the Lazy S, and Yuba Dan got off the gate to let the doctor in. Doc Cook, from Hatchet, disappeared into the ranch-house, where the wounded foreman lay. It was half an hour before he drove away again, and the Kid wondered how he had left his patient. Dan had been hard hit; the Scar Face gang had thrown him freely, and three bullets, at least, had been left in him. The Kid had known the man for only a few hours, but he had stood by him in a fierce fight, and he would have been glad to hear that he was out of danger. And if, when he spoke, he spoke the name of the Rio Kid— The Kid's hands unconsciously moved towards his guns at that thought. That sunny morning held life or death for the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande.

He sat up on the bench, his eyes

alert, as he saw Rancher Hall come out of the ranch-house and stride towards him.

The Kid rose from the bench. Bill Saunders rose at the same moment, his eyes on him. Yuba Dan, on the gate, half-lifted the Winchester. Colorado Jim stepped out of the corral, his hand on a gun. Nine or ten men moved up from different directions—alert, ready to draw.

The Kid drew a long, deep breath. His hands rested on the guns in his low-slung holsters. If Hall came as an enemy, the most desperate fight of his life was at hand.

It required hardly a minute for the rancher's long strides to cover the intervening space. But never had a minute seemed so long to the Kid. Freedom or capture—life or death!

The rancher came to a halt in front of him. Alert eyes watched from all sides.

"Spill it, Mr. Hall!" The Kid's voice was an easy drawl. "Say, has that guy Dunn sat up and cleaned the rag?"

"Yes," said Hall. The rancher's face broke into a faint smile, and he held out his hand to the Kid. "He's got me wise that you stood by him when the Scar Face gang had him dead to rights, and saved his life. And I guess, puncher, that if you're looking to fix up in a ranch outfit, you don't want to ride farther than the Lazy S."

The Kid breathed hard and deep. The wounded foreman had spoken, and he had not named the Rio Kid! For a moment he stood very still. Then he smiled.

"I guess, sir, that if you let me ride with your bunch, I'll do my best to earn my beam!" he said.

"You sign on this morning," said Hall.

The Range-riders

"I'll say you look like you'd lost a Mexican coat and found a Texas dollar, horse!" grinned Colorado Jim.

The Kid grinned, too. For days he had ridden and barked with the Lazy S bunch, and life seemed good to him. They were a cheery and contented bunch at Hall's ranch. In all the outfit he had only one enemy, and even Handsome Harris had no bunch for more trouble with him. Saddling Side-Kicker, in the gateway of the corral, under the rising sun, the Kid looked as if he found life good, as the horse-wrangler remarked.

"Here comes Handsome," went on Colorado, his grin broadening. "He sure looks like he's got a grouch, Carfax."

The Kid glanced at Harris as he came striding from the ranch-house towards the corral for his horse, a black scowl on his face.

"What's got him?" asked the Kid carefully.

Colorado chuckled.

"I guess he's been chewing the rag with Old Man Hall again, about the foreman's job," he answered. "Handsome surely does figure that

he's the guy to ride herd over this bunch. But the Old Man don't cotton to it. He put in for it when Jake was shot up, and he's put in for it again, now the new man Dunn's been tated off in the doc's buggy. But there ain't nothing to it! I guess Handsome won't never be foreman of the Lazy S."

"He's a good puncher," said the Kid.

"I should smile," agreed the horse-wrangler. "As good a man with cows, or a rope, or a gun as any guy between the Staked Plains and the Rio Grande. But I guess the bunch wouldn't stand for it if he was made foreman—and the Old Man don't like him a heap, either."

The Kid looked curiously at the handsome puncher as he came striding up. The Lazy S was still without a foreman, and it was a standing joke in the bunkhouse that Harris was keen on the post. The Kid could not wish him luck, for he figured that it would be bad medicine to take orders from the same man in the outfit who was his enemy.

Handsome Harris alighted past him into the corral, and called to his horse—a black bronco which the Kid, who had an eye for horse-tail, figured was none so good a day as his own Side-Kicker. The horse shied, and Handsome, gripping the bridle with his left, brought down the quirt in his right, with a cruel lash, on the bronco's flank. As the bronco started and squealed the quirt lashed again, more savagely than before.

Colorado shrugged his broad shoulders, and the Kid's eyes flashed. It was against all the laws of the cowboy code to interfere between a man and his critter, and the Kid said nothing. But it got his goat to see a man ill-me a horse. The Kid had noted that Harris was not popular in the bunch, and he guessed now that he knew why. There was a yellow streak in the handsome puncher—only a man who had yellow in him would wreck his evil temper on a horse.

The Kid was to ride with Harris that morning, and he would have chosen any other company rather. But he was on the Lazy S to jump to orders, and as Harris mounted the black bronco the Kid swung himself into Side-Kicker's saddle. They rode away from the ranch together, heading west, where, in the far distance, the Hatchet Hills barred the horizon towards New Mexico.

Fifteen miles from the ranch-house lay the range where the two punchers were to take over a herd. The Hatchet range was the least liked on the Lazy S, for it lay nearest to the hills, haunted by the Scar Face gang of rufflers. A cow-man riding that range had to keep his eyes peeled and his gun handy.

The Kid reckoned that he would have to keep his eyes peeled, not only for the rufflers but for the man who was riding range with him. Handsome's gun-hand was needed now, and the Kid had a bunch

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that he might see it, given an opportunity.

They rode in silence. The ranch buildings and fences sank out of sight behind them, and they rode in a sea of waving grass. For the first few miles they passed, every now and then, a rider on the plains, and the Kid exchanged a cheery "Hi-yi!" or a wave of a steek with them. But as they drew nearer the hills no other rider was to be seen, and they sighted at last the lonely stockman's hut.

It stood, with the corral attached, on the bank of the Lariat—a mere rivulet where it flowed down from the hills. It was a single-roomed building of pine planks and poles, with a corrugated iron roof and an iron chimney. No smoke was rising from the chimney, and the Kid guessed that the two men they had come to relieve were out on the range.

Within a quarter of a mile of the hut Harris pulled in his horse. The Kid pulled in Side-Kicker, and glanced at him inquiringly. So far, Handsome had not spoken a single word since they had left the ranch, and the Kid wondered whether he was going to play dumb all the while they were riding the Hatchet range—which was going to be for a week. But Handsome broke his sullen silence now.

"I guess you can make the hut, Carfax, while I look for the boys on the range and put them wise that we're here," he grunted. "They'll be glad enough to heat it for the ranch, I guess—no guy likes this range. I guess you'll get the stove going, and eat ready, agin I ride in."

"Sure?" assented the Kid.

"Waal, ride on, headhead!" grunted Harris.

The Kid looked at him. Harris was the man who had pulled a gun on him without warning the day he had struck the Lazy 8.

"Fellow," said the Kid amiably, "I guess when Mister Hall makes you foreman of the ranch you can spill orders, and I won't be the last guy to jump to them. But you ain't foreman yet."

The puncher gave him a dark look, put spurs to his horse, and dashed away without another word. The Kid sat Side-Kicker and watched him gallop. Far in the distance two steekon lute holdded against the browns of the hills—the two rangers whom the Kid and his companion had come to relieve. The Kid would have liked to exchange a word with them, but he had no doubt that they would heat it for the ranch as soon as Harris gave them word.

For a long minute the Kid sat in the saddle, watching Harris as he galloped away, noting with a knitted brow that he used both quiet and spur freely. Then he rode on towards the hut.

He dismounted at the door, which swung loose on cowhide hinges. The corral was vacant. The Kid turned Side-Kicker into it, then went into

the hut. It was hardly more than a shack, with earthen floor, a bench, a couple of boxes, and an iron stove, and little else. With a more agreeable companion, the Kid would have asked nothing better. But he reckoned he had struck a bad patch in getting a week on that lonely range with no company but Handsome Harris.

He banked the rusty iron stove with pine chips, and soon had a fire roaring. He sorted out cooking utensils and bacon and beans from the locker. "Kats" were going to be ready when Handsome rode in. The Kid was going to avoid trouble if he could.

When all was ready the Kid looked from the doorway.

He expected Harris by that time, but there was no sign of the man on the prairie. It was chuck-time, and the Kid had no lunch to wait. He looked after Side-Kicker last, then he pulled the bench to the doorway, and sat down to his solitary dinner, his eye on the plains for the puncher. But Handsome Harris did not appear, and the Kid wondered what had become of him.

He was still wondering when a blue jay, resting on a perch that grew at the corner of the corral, suddenly squawked and flew. The boy outlaw needed no more warning than that! He went backwards of the bench into the hut, and the bullet that came from behind the corral fence missed him by a yard. The Kid picked himself up, slammed the paneled door, and jammed the iron bar into place across it, and a gun was in his hand as six or seven roughnecks came rushing round the corral fence, loading off lead as they came.

Facing the Music!

BULLETS splattered and splintered on the door of the stockman's hut.

Within, the Rio Kid stood, his grip on his gun, his eyes gleaming. The attack had been sudden and swift, and quite unexpected. Wary as he was by habit and nature, the Kid had very nearly been caught napping—but not quite! For a mile or more over the rolling prairie, he would have seen any horseman riding up to the lonely hut; and he knew that the enemy must have left their horses at a distance, and crept on foot through the high grass, keeping the corral between them and the hut, to take him by surprise. But for the squawk of the startled jay, they might have got him.

From a chink in the wall, the Kid peered out and saw half a dozen stubby ruffians in steekon, with cow-tills and hold-up man written all over them—and one man with a face so covered with ugly scars as to be scarce recognizable as a human face at all. That grim, grisly face was not to be forgotten by any eye that had once fallen on it. It was the Scar Face gang who were after him—the gang from whom he had rescued the Lazy 8 foreman.

The Kid had reckoned that they would not forget him, and that if

they hit his trail again, he would want his guns, and want them badly. But a black and bitter suspicion was in his mind, as he peered at them from the chink. Where was Handsome Harris all this time—and how did the Scar Face gang know where to look for him?

"Daggon him!" He caught the muttered words, through the thick board of the scar-faced man. "He was sure spy in hunting cover, that gold-darned puncher!"

"I guess it won't buy him anything, Scar Face!" grunted another of the gang. "We got him dead to rights."

"We sure have!" said the scarred ruffler. "Get hold of the pole from the corral—there's only one bar to the door, and I guess it won't stand the racket."

The roughnecks tramped across to the corral gate. That gate was a single heavy pine pole across the gateway. It had a rawhide hinge at one end, which was swiftly slashed through by the keen edge of a bow-knife.

The Rio Kid stood waiting. He was as cool as ice, and there was a faint smile flickering on his sun-burnt face. The Scar Face gang figured that all they needed was to get at the bay puncher of the Lazy 8. Had they been aware that that puncher was the Rio Kid, the outlaw of the Rio Grande, they might have been less keen to get to close quarters. The Kid hinted that the cow-thieves of the Hatchet Hills were going to learn something about shooting before many more minutes had passed.

Four of the rufflers came tramping back with the long, heavy pole. The other two stood back, with Scar Face, ready to pump lead into the hut as soon as the door was down.

The improvised battering-ram came on the door with a terrific crash, and the whole hut shook with the shock. The door groaned and cracked and split. The four ruffians retreated for another rush.

"I guess one more will do it!" came from Scar Face.

The Kid guessed so, too, and his guns were ready, finger on trigger, his eyes gleaming over them. There was another rush, and another heavy crash on the door. The split widened, and the end of the pole came through, with a glare of sunlight into the dusky hut through the opening. At the same moment, the Kid was firing, both six-guns blazing at once, and so swiftly that the reports were blended into one, as he fired again and again, and yet again.

The pine pole crashed down as the men who held it reeled right and left under the whizzing bullets. There was an uproar of hoarse cries, yells, and heavy groans, and a sound of running feet.

The Kid stepped swiftly to the split door. The pine pole lay on the ground, and round it lay three of the ruffians who had borne it. The rest of the gang were running for the cover of the corral fence, and the Kid threw lead after them as they ran. One of the running men rolled over like a rabbit, and lay where he fell. Another scold took a fearful yell as a

bullet ploughed through his shoulder as he layed into cover.

The Kid laughed—loud and long. "Say, Scar Face!" he shouted. "You sure are spry in hunting cover, like you was a prairie rabbit! Pack a gun, don't you, you yellow coyote? I guess I'm here, if you want me—I'm your antelope, hombre, with the horns on! Ain't you looking for any more gun-play?"

A yell of rage came from behind the corral fence. But no head appeared in view round it.

"You sure are peacable guys!" chuckled the Kid. "I guess gun-play ain't your long suit, tobeow, and I'll sure take my quiet to you. You wait a small piece, and you'll see me coming."

The Kid removed the bar, and dragged open the broken door. From the other side of the corral fence came a sound of running feet. The Kid was coming—but the rustlers were not waiting for him.

The Kid walked back, grinning, to the hut. The Scar Face gang had hunted him, and found him—and they were not the first bunch of rough-necks who had woke up the Rio Kid for a gopher, and found him a tiger, all teeth and claws.

The Kid's Warning!

A COUPLE of hours later, a horse-man rode up the bank of the Lariat to the stockman's hut. The Kid's sunburned face was grim, and he watched Handsome Harris keenly as he came. The Lazy S puncher rode slowly, and under the wide brim of his stevedore hat, his eyes were gleaming with watchfulness, and his hand was very near a Colt. Watching him, the Kid figured that Harris was doubtful of his reception at the hut, and that he would not have been surprised if the new puncher had met him with a gun in his hand. And what had been suspicion in the Kid's mind was very near a certainty now.

Harris dismounted, turned his horse into the corral, and came towards the hut, still more slowly and uneasily. The Kid stepped into the doorway, facing him, and instinctively the puncher's grip closed on his Colt.

"Fergit it, hombre!" said the Kid quietly.

The handsome puncher's hand came away from his gun. His eyes were questioning on the Kid's grim face.

"You been having trouble here?" he asked, with a gesture towards the broken door.

"I'll tell a man!" agreed the Kid. "And you know just as much about it as I could tell you, you deggoned lobs-wof. Where you been all this time?"

"Riding range!" granted Harris.

"Yep! I guess you been riding as far as Scar Face's hide-out in the hills," said the Kid, "and I guess you put them wise where they could meet up with the guy that got Mr. Hall's Sweeney away from them. I'll tell all Texas that you're no better'n a side-kicker of that near-faced galoot."

The Kid was watching Harris closely as he spoke. To his surprise, there was something of relief, as well as of sullen, bitter hostility, in the



The Editor Talks

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MORE FREE STAMPS.—With this issue you are getting the second fine free packet of stamps, and this is just to remind you that you're in luck for three more weeks yet, with splendid packets in each issue, until you have the whole collection of fifty-eight.

A SPLENDID OFFER!—If you know a good thing when you see it, you'll soon be sending off your reservation form for the fine Stamp Collector's Quilt offered on page 11. It's a splendid bargain! The "Sterling" Stamp Album alone is worth more than half-a-crown—but for that sum you are getting in addition a packet of five hundred stamp hinges, a magnifying glass, aluminium trowels, and a duplicate book for "swaps." All you have to do is to send in the Reservation Form, which will tell us to put an outfit down to your name. Then you collect the tokens which are printed down week to week at the bottom of page 27, attach them to the special form, and when you have six tokens, send them in with the Label and Token Voucher and a Postal Order for 2s. 6d. And when the postman comes knocking at your door with the complete outfit, won't you give yourself a pat on the back for deciding to get it!

MOO NLIGHT STAMPEDE.—The Rio Kid is in some pretty tough situations, too, and next week you'll find him in the midst of a charging herd—maddened beasts in a furious stampede which no human power can stop. Any minute the Kid may be under those thrashing hoofs, but he's determined that the rustlers shan't win through!

THE MYSTIC EYE.—Strange things are happening in Tibet, some of Captain Justice's latest adventures. It's young Widge who plays a big part next week. Wearing the strange jewel dropped at Station A by Dargell's companion, Widge finds that one flash from its gleaming depths works wonders.

ALLY FOR JIM HOBDEK.—Only a glimmering yet of the strange mystery into which he has stumbled has come to Jim Hobdek, but it is enough. Wished ashore after a terrific fight with the sea, he finds an ally, and they vow that they will unravel the puzzle that is behind THE THREE-COLOURED FRENCH.

There is also another thrilling instalment of Percy F. Westerman's STANDISH ON THE SPOT.

SEE YOU NEXT SATURDAY, WITH ANOTHER FREE PACKET OF STAMPS, AND DON'T MISS THAT OFFER ON PAGE 11!



TOUGH ON RIGGLES!—Victors of the first air battle with the Air Force of Lovitana, Diggles and his comrades land—to face not only a chilly reception, but the grim realization that there are traitors within the gates. RIGGLES GOES TO WAR is developing on lines that make it one of the most gripping yarns we have published yet.

puncher's look. Harris had looked for suspicion of treachery; but it seemed as if he had feared something more, though what it was, the Kid could not guess.

"I ain't joined this outfit to shoot up any of Mr. Hall's bunch," went on the Kid, "or I'd sure make you pull your gun now, you deggoned double-crossing polecat. But I ain't trusting you none. I got to ride this range with you, because that's Mr. Hall's orders, and it ain't for a puncher to kick any orders from his boss, but I'm riding clear of you, Mister Handsome Harris. I'm leaving you the hut—I guess I can camp on the prairie—and if you know what's good for your health, you won't come within a gun's range of me!"

The Kid picked up his pack, left the hut, and called his horse from the corral. Handsome Harris stood watching him as he mounted the grey mare, and rode away at a gallop—and twice, thrice, his hand closed convulsively on the butt of a Colt. But he did not draw it, and the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande disappeared from his sight behind a fold of the rolling prairie!

The Kid had hoped to settle down to a peaceful existence, riding for the Lazy S. But things aren't working out that way. Danger is still dogging him, and there's no extra special dash in next week's adventure. "MOONLIGHT STAMPEDE!"