

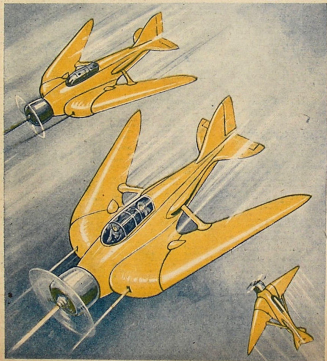
STORIES BY THE BEST BOYS' AUTHORS!

The MODERN BOY

EVERY SATURDAY,
Week Ending November 12th, 1937.

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PLANE THAT DOES A SWALLOW DIVE!—See page 15

NIGHT ALARM

From the darkness came a stab of flame, the report of a shot. The Texas Rangers leapt to action—thundered down the trail in search of the Rio Kid



Keeping Clear

"YOU done let a greaser lift your cayuse?" exclaimed Colorado Jim, horse wrangler at the Lazy S

Ranch.

"How'd I help it, you gink, with a six-gun looking me in the eye?" roared Panhandle Pete. "I'm telling you, that dog-goned greaser lifted my pants, and I've hooded it seven miles!"

Colorado Jim grinned. Two or three punches laughed. Panhandle glared round in wrath. After tramping seven miles of rugged prairie in high-heeled cowboy boots, Pete was tired, dusty, perspiring, and as mad as a hornet.

"You bunch of geeks!" he bellowed. "You want to snicker! I guess I'd pull a gun on you if that god-darned greaser had let me a gun—"

"You done let him lift your gun as well as your cayuse?" grinned Colorado. "I guess that Mexican was awfully glad to meet up with you, Pete."

Panhandle Pete breathed wrath. "If I ain't got a gun," he roared, "I guess I got a fat, and I'll sure put you wise to it, Colorado, you snickering hunchback."

"Can it, you 'uns!" Mr. Carfax, foreman of the Lazy S, came across from the corral and interposed

"Drop that gun!" ordered the Kid. The startled Mexican tumbled to his feet, the gun dropping from his fingers.

between the horse wrangler and the angry puncher. Mr. Carfax, alias the Rio Kid, pushed Colorado back with one hand, Panhandle with the other. "Say, what's this hyer trouble?"

"Panhandle's done made a greaser a present of his horse and his gun," grinned Colorado.

"I'm telling you, he had me covered with a six-gun!" roared Panhandle Pete, "and I'm telling you, Colorado, I'll sure show your ear off—"

"Forget it!" interrupted the Kid. "There ain't going to be no ears chewed off on this ranch, Colorado, old-timer, you get a cinch on that lally-head trap of yours, and pan, Panhandle, tell your foreman what's happened to your cayuse. Spill it," he rapped.

Mr. Carfax seemed to have a grutch that morning, though the bunch did

By

RALPH REDWAY

not guess why. That day Morris Hall, the boss of the Lazy S, was expecting a visit—his brother, Captain Hall, of the Texas Rangers, was riding to the ranch with his troop. The Lazy S bunch were keen to see Mule-Kick Hall, the famous captain of the rangers; and they did not know that he was the last man in Texas whom their foreman wanted to see. Ever since he had learned that Hall was coming he had been beating his brains for a pretext to get away from the ranch for a few days.

On the Lazy S they never dreamed that Mr. Carfax had been known in other parts of Texas as the Rio Kid. Some of them had seen the Kid's picture posted up in the cow towns, with the offer of a thousand dollars reward for him; but Mr. Carfax, with his darkened eyebrows and little mustache, differed a good deal from these pictures. But he doubted whether that change in his looks would pass muster under the keen eyes of Mule-Kick Hall. And if Mule-Kick recognized him, it meant gun-play.

The Kid knew the best thing he could do was to saddle up his gray mounting and ride before the rangers struck the ranch. But he was in want of a good reason to be given to Mr.

Night Alarm

Hall. He had been thinking it out when the angry voice of Panhandle Pete reached his ears.

"Spill it!" he repeated. "Where's your cayuse?"

"Half-way to Mexico by this time, I guess!" snorted Panhandle. "That leg-gassed greaser got me on the Hatchet range—coming through the timber belt. He got a gun on me, Mr. Carfax, and I allow I put up my hands like I was told."

"The timber belt," said Mr. Carfax thoughtfully. "That'll be seven miles, Panhandle."

"All of seven, and I guess I've hunted it back," said the puncher.

"I'll say I'm going to catch a fresh horse and a gun and go looking for him. I sure am going to fill up that horse this week with lead—"

"You sure ain't, Panhandle," said Mr. Carfax crisply. "You're saddling up a fresh critter, and heading it for the Apache range, and you're doing it quick."

Panhandle Pete looked at his foreman, breathing deep and hard, as the verge of rebellion. Then, breathing hard, he trumped into the corral for a horse.

Mr. Carfax watched him ride away, then walked across to his cabin, which adjoined the bunkhouse, came back to the corral with a saddle under his arm, and called to his mustang.

"You ain't riding, sir?" asked Colorado, in surprise.

"I guess so," answered the Kid, as he saddled Soda-Kicker. "I reckon there ain't no room for Mexican horse thieves on the Lazy S ranges, and I'm sure going to pick up sign of that greaser that lifted Pete's bronc."

"But Captain Hall's riding in to-day!" exclaimed the horse wrangler. "I guess you want to be around when the rangers ride in."

The Kid smiled.

"I'll say I should sure hate to miss seeing Male-Kick Hall," he remarked,

"but I ain't letting that boss thief get away with Pete's critter ashore. I'm getting back that Lazy S cayuse if I have to trail that greaser all the way to Mexico." The Kid vaulted into the saddle. "You put Mr. Hall wise that I've gone on the trail of that boss thief, Colorado, when you see the boss."

"Sure!" said Colorado.

The Kid dashed out at the gate and broke into a gallop. In a few minutes he was lost to sight, galloping to the westward, where the dim line of the Hatchet Hills barred the horizon.

The Trail of the Horse Thief

THE Kid had ridden away from the Lazy S to get clear of the Texas Rangers. Hunting for the horse thief was only a pretext. All the same, he was keen on the trail of the greaser.

In the timber belt, half-way between the ranch and the Hatchet Hills, he had picked up sign of Pete's pinto and of the man who had checked it. The Mexican had been on foot—his foot-marks were left for the most casual eye to see.

The Kid, who had been hunted oftener than he cared to remember, could feel a certain sympathy for a hunted man. But he had little use for greasers, and none for horse thieves. That horse thief was going to be trailed down, and he was going to part with Panhandle's pinto.

The trail led away to the Hatchet Hills. The Kid was not surprised at that—he figured it was likely that the greaser would hunt cover in the hills. But he was surprised when the trail turned off to the south, close to the Hatchets, where the earth was harder and more stony, the grass more sparse, and the signs far from easy to pick up.

More slowly, but just as surely, he followed in the new direction. For long, slow miles he picked up the trail on the stony ground by the foot of the Hatchets, then it swerved to the east. And westward from the Hatchets lay the Lazy S Ranch, fifteen miles away.

The Kid stood by his mustang and scanned the trail, surprised and puzzled. For what reason the horse thief was heading towards the ranch to which his stolen horse belonged was a mystery. Surely he could not aim to hit the Lazy S? But the trail was unmistakable to the Kid's eyes, and he followed it, puzzled and perplexed.

The Kid was doubly wary and watchful now. Whatever the horse thief's object, he could not intend to ride on the Lazy S mounted on a stolen Lazy S horse, in the light of day. The sun was sinking, but there were yet two good hours of light. The Kid reckoned it likely that his quarry had halted and camped, and so he came in sight of a bunch of post-oks and pecans tangled with mesquite and Spanish moss, he was as watchful as a hawk. On the edge of that prairie island, his searching eyes picked up a movement, and he was ready for the shot when it came.

The report of the Colt followed the shot, rebounding away over the plain. The Kid was deep in grass, his mustang beside him—both safe from further shooting.

For some minutes the Kid lay there, a smile on his face. He had trailed the horse thief down—run him to his camp. The Mexican was camped in that island of post-oks and pecans, though why he had chosen to camp on Lazy S land, within ten miles of the ranch-house, was a puzzle to the Kid. But there he was, and the Kid guessed that he was going to get him. But he did not rise to his feet.

Leaving his mustang where he lay, the Kid moved off on hands and knees through the tall, thick grass. No stirring of the grass told that a creeping form was winding its way, slowly and stealthily, towards the timber. Neither did the Kid advance directly towards the spot whence the shot had come. He aimed to hit the prairie island at a distance from that spot.

After fifteen minutes of winding cautiously through the grass, without showing as much as an eyelash, the Kid reached the trees.

Once in the trees, he drew himself to his feet. The prairie island was

thickly grown, great tufts of Spanish's beard hanging from tangled branches, mesquite and juniper filling the spaces between the trees. Softly the Kid picked his way, a gun in his hand, a smile flickering on his unshaven face. He was now behind the man who watched the plain for him, and he reckoned that he was going to surprise that guy a few.

A pinto bronc, tethered to a tree, came under his eyes at last. He had reached the horse thief's camp—it was Panhandle's cayuse that he saw. A few moments more and his eyes were on the horse thief—a figure almost hidden by an immense Mexican sombrero, kneeling on the edge of the timber, a half-lifted Colt in a dusky hand, watching the prairie. The Mexican was still watching the spot where the Kid had dropped into the grass at his shot, wondering perhaps whether the shot had told, ready to burn powder again the instant the puncher rose from the grass, never dreaming that that puncher was now in the timber behind him.

Softly the Kid stepped towards the kneeling man. And Pedro of Cuchilla, horse thief and cow thief, gave a hoarse, gasping cry, and jumped to his feet as a hot-throated horse on the seat of his trousers.

"Drop that gun!" said the Kid quietly. "Drop it, and drop it quick, greaser! You hear me!"

A dark, swarthy face turned towards the Kid—black eyes burning with rage under the shiny sombrero. The Colt dropped into the grass from the dusky hand. For a second the Mexican glared rage as the Kid's gun covered him and he realized that he was at the mercy of the Texan. Then rage changed to surprise and recognition.

"The Rio Kid!" breathed the Mexican.

Marching Orders!

THE Rio Kid!

That name, which the foreman of the Lazy S had hoped never to hear again, dropped from the lips of the Mexican horse thief as he stared. And at the same moment the Kid knew him. He had seen that swarthy face before—knew Pedro of Cuchilla, or Pedro the Knife. The wild trails of the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande had made him many acquaintances when the foreman of the Lazy S would gladly have forgotten. Dark as night grew the Kid's brow.

The Mexican was grinning now, disregarding the gun that still aimed him.

"It is you, senior—the Rio Kid," he said. "If I had known I would not have pulled trigger! Pack your gun, senior—dog does not eat dog, as you gringos say."

The Kid did not pack his gun. His eyes glared and glittered over it as the grinning, swarthy face. He had dabbled with the idea of remaining on the ranch to face the rangers—to trust to the change in his looks to see him through. It was well that he had not done so, for if this scoundrel knew

him at a glance, still more sure would Mule-Kick have known him.

The grin faded from the Mexican's face, as he read the dark menace in the eyes that glistened at him over the six-gun.

"Sensor, hold your hand!" he growled. "You know me—Pedro Diaz—Pedro el Cuchillo! Do you take me for a ranger, or a sheriff's deputy? Soy amigo, sensor—say amigo?"

"Cut that out!" said the Kid, between his teeth. "You dog-goneed horse thief, you're no friend of mine!" But he lowered the gun. The Rio Kid could not burn powder on a man with empty hands.

The Mexican, reassured by the lowering of the gun, shrugged his shoulders, and grinned again.

"That's a Lazy 8 cayuse!" growled the Kid, with a nod towards the tethered pinto.

"My own cayuse, I lose him to a shot from the rangers," said Diaz. "I escape on foot—but I meet a puncher—"

"You been mixing it with the rangers?" asked the Kid, with a start. "Mule-Kick Hall's troop?"

"Si, sensor!" The Mexican's black eyes glistened at the name. "Mule-Kick—your enemy and mine, Kid! In his hands, once, the rope was round my neck—"

"I guess it would be there agin, fast enough, if Mule-Kick Hall sighted you on these rangers," growled the Kid. "You want to beat it for the other side of the Rio Grande, hombre, and you want to beat it quick?"

"You know the Lazy 8?" asked Diaz, his black eyes watching the Kid's clouded face curiously.

The Kid breathed hard. This rascal did not know, did not dream, that he was foreman of the ranch. The Kid reckoned that he was not going to know, either. Had the Kid been the desperate gunman that rumour reported him, he would have known how to keep that secret safe. But he could not drive a bullet through the swarthy rascal. And he could not rope him in, and run him a prisoner to the ranch after the rangers were gone, as he had reckoned on doing—not now that he had found an old acquaintance in the horse thief. He had to let the rascal run and he was only anxious to see the last of him.

"The rangers are there!" went on Diaz as the Kid did not speak. "Did you know that, sensor? Mule-Kick Hall came to the Larist country to hunt for you. He has been combing the hills—now he is at the Lazy 8 with his troop. They are looking for me, Kid, but Captain Hall would not lead me, or a dozen such, if he knew that the Rio Kid was around. You are in more danger here than I."

"I guess that's my funeral!" snipped the Kid. "And I ain't heeding to cheer the rag with a guy of your holt, Diaz. You got to beat it, and beat it sudden. I got a gun here what says so."

"And why?" asked Diaz. "I have business here on the Lazy 8, sensor—and it does not concern the Rio Kid if a Lazy 8 puncher loses his cayuse."

"I guess I never had any use for a

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horse thief," said the Kid. "Chew on this, feller, you got to burn the trail for Mexico. I'm telling you that if I raise you on these rangers agin, you got yours so sudden you won't know what hit you. You get me?"

"And what is your game here, that you do not want an old acquaintance to see?" muttered Diaz.

The Kid did not answer that. He stepped back a few paces.

"You hearing it, like I said?" he rapped.

Diaz shook his head.

"Then pick up your gun, you cayote, and it's you or me!" said the Kid.

With his revolver he gestured towards the Colt lying in the grass. The Mexican picked it up—but only to thrust it into his belt. His teeth fashed as he grinned at the Kid.

"I have killed men in Mexico and Texas, sensor," he said. "But I do not want gun-play with the Rio Kid. Pedro el Cuchillo knows when he is beaten. If you say quit, I quit."

"Quit, then," snipped the Kid, "and ride for Mexico without pulling rein."

The Mexican, for a moment, paused. The Kid's eyes blazed, and he half-raised the gun. Diaz stepped quickly to his horse.

The Kid watched him glacially. Unless the ruffian faced him, gun in hand, in fair fight, he could not shoot—and that Diaz dared not do. It got the Kid's goat sorely to let him ride away on a stolen Lazy 8 bronco—but it had to be, if he was to see the last of

the black-browed rascal. He left a chill at the thought of Lazy 8 ponchoers rounding up the horse thief, and learning from him that their new foreman was the Rio Kid—the outlaw whom Mule-Kick Hall was hunting for his life.

The Mexican gave his horse the spur, and dashed out of the timber, riding to the south at a gallop. The Kid stood watching him, with a somber brow. The big sombers disappeared at last, beyond a fold of the prairie, far in the distance, and the Kid walked back to the spot where he had left his mustang. The sun was sinking deeper over the Hachets; shadows darkening on the prairie. The Kid led his mustang into the timber, to camp for the night. At dawn, he figured, he would ride on the horse thief's trail, and make sure that he had quit. As he bedded down for the night, by the side of his mustang, he did not guess that the Mexican, under cover of darkness, was riding for the Lazy 8.

The Shot from the Dark!

MULE-KICK HALL stood in the piazza of the Lazy 8 ranch-house, leaning on the rail, chewing an unlighted cigar. Morris Hall, the rancher, sat in his rocker, smoking. Bright starlight fell on the ranch, barred here and there by black shadows of the buildings. From the open doorway of the bunkhouse, at a little distance, came a flare of light from kerosene lamps, and a buzz of cheery voices. There were rangers in the bunkhouse, with the punchers—twenty men had ridden to the ranch with their captain.

Morris Hall smoked in silence. It was years since he had seen his brother, the ranger captain, but neither of them was a man of many words.

It was the ranger who broke a long silence.

"That foreman of yours ain't hit the ranch agin, Morris?"

"Naps!" The rancher peered at him in the starlight. "Colorado allowed that he was hitting the trail of some pesky Mexican horse thief. I guess he'll get his man, too. That guy Carfax is no slouch."

"I'd have liked to meet up with the man that rounded up the rustlers in the Hachets!" said the ranger.

"You'll sure meet up with him to-morrow—I guess he'll be glad to see you, Jim."

There was another long silence, while Morris Hall smoked, and Mule-Kick chewed the butt of his cigar.

"I reckoned he might be a useful man to me," said Jim Hall at length.

"I reckoned he might have helped trail the Rio Kid."

"You sure have got a big grouch agin that young freitag, Jim!" remarked his brother.

Mule-Kick's face was dark and bitter.

"It used to be said that Jim Hall never failed to get his man," he said, "but that Kid sure has slipped through my fingers."

Night Alarm

"I guess he's turned the wind out of the Lariat country, Jim," said the rancher.

"Mebbe," said Mule-Kick, "and mebbe not! I got to ride back with another failure to my tally, and it sure does get my goat a whole heap. There ain't been nothing heard of the frobing around this ranch?"

Morris Hall laughed.

"Not likely?" he answered. "There ain't a lot of strangers in this country, Jim, and I reckon the Kid would be known if he was seen. Seth Hawk, over to Hatchet, would be sure glad to put salt on his tail."

"I've known him join up with a ranch outfit under a new name," guessed Mule-Kick. "I'm riding out of the Lariat valley to-morrow—but what gets my goat is that I may be leaving him behind me. Mebbe he's hiding in the Hatchets, or even panicking cows, like he used on the Double-Bar at Frio before he was outlawed. I guess I want to chew the rag a piece with your foreman, Carfax, about that! From what you've told me of him, I'll say he's the guy to keep an eye open for that frobing, and get wise to him if he rides trails in the valley of the Lariat."

"Sure!" said the rancher. "And I guess Carfax will jump to it, too. But I reckon the Rio Kid won't be raised in the part of Texas."

"I ain't sure of that!" muttered Jim Hall. "I got to ride—but I ain't sure I'm not leaving the Kid behind my crither's tail."

Mule-Kick broke off suddenly, with a gasping cry, and pitched forward from the rail. He dropped at the feet of the rancher in the rocker—and a bullet, whizzing by, struck the wall of the house. The report followed on the instant, ringing through the night.

Morris Hall bounded to his feet, dragging a Colt from his belt. From

the bunkhouse a startled crowd roused." In the darkness there was a sharp beat of horse's hoofs. The man who had fired at the ranger from the dark was already mounted and galloping.

"Jim!" called the rancher. But Mule-Kick was on his feet in a moment. A stream of blood was running down his bronzed cheek. The shot, aimed from the dark at the ranger as he stood leaning on the piazza rail, had gone close—though not so close as the marksman intended. The bullet had grazed the ranger's bronzed cheek, drawing blood, and then crashed into the timber wall. It was a deep scratch, but the ranger captain did not heed it. Disregarding his brother, he leaped to the rail and shouted hoarsely:

"The Kid—the Rio Kid! Get your revolvers—the Rio Kid!"

"Say, you're hit!" gasped Ranger Austin Jud, staring up at the lean brown face splashed with blood.

"I guess I'm scratched—that's my funeral; get your revolvers and mine!" roared Jim Hall. "I tell you it's the Rio Kid!"

There was a roar of excited voices. Rangers and ranchers rushed to the corral for their horses. Far out on the shadowed prairie hoof-beats could still be heard—growing fainter as the man who had fired on the ranger galloped for his life. The rancher caught his brother's arm.

"You're hurt, Jim!"

"Nothing! I guess he meant it to be keeps!" said the ranger between his teeth, as he dabbed at his cheek. "I'll say the Rio Kid doesn't often miss—but even the Kid ain't a cat to see in the dark."

There was a trampling of hoofs before the ranch-house. Hall was hurriedly binding a neck-scarf over the cut in his cheek. His steady eyes, under his knitted brows, were gleaming. There was something like

triumph in their gleam. On the morrow he would have ridden out-of the Lariat valley, leaving the Rio Kid, as he had departed, behind him—but he was not going to ride out now!

For he did not doubt that it was the Rio Kid who had loosed off that shot in the dark—the Rio Kid whom he had hunted so hard, and who had reckoned on stopping the hunt in the surest way. For his wound, for his narrow escape, the hard-bitten Ranger cared nothing—he was once more on the trail of the Kid, and that made his heart beat with fierce joy.

But none had seen the man who fired; none knew that it was a black-bronzed Mexican, who was quaring and spurring a stolen horse far out on the prairie, riding for his life.

Mule-Kick Hall threw himself into the saddle, and rode at the head of his men; a dozen ranchers of the Lazy S mounting and riding with them. Every man on the ranch was keen to join in the hunt for the celebrated outlaw of the Rio Grande.

The hoof-beats of the man who fled had died in the silence of the night, but if there was a remote chance of riding him down in the darkness, Mule-Kick Hall was not the man to lose the chance. With whip and spur he urged on his horse.

Riders of the Night

THE Rio Kid lifted his head and listened. He had been sleeping as soundly under the branches of the prairie island as in his bunk at the Lazy S. But he wakened at distant sounds that came nearer and nearer—the echo of ringing hoofs, of horsemen riding in the starlight.

For a long minute the Kid lay on his elbow, listening. Then he drew himself in his feet, stepped to the edge of the timber, and scanned the plain—shimmering silvery in the gleam of the stars. Louder, clearer, came the crash of galloping hoofs—from the direction of the distant ranch, drawing nearer and nearer to the lonely spot where the Kid had camped.

Grimmer and grimmer grew his face as he listened and watched. Horsemen—ten or a dozen of them, he reckoned—were riding in the night, riding from the Lazy S, where Jim Hall and his men had arrived that day. If they were rangers riding, it spelled danger to the Kid. In the dimness he could see nothing yet—but his ears told him that they were heading for the prairie island—why, had him guessing, but he knew they were coming.

Quietly he rolled his blanket and saddled Side-Kicker. He was ready to ride—if he had to ride! Standing by his horse's head, holding the bridle, he watched the plains again. Now he made out stobos, lute that bobbed like dancing shadows in the dim star-gleam. Nine—ten riders, and dim as was the light, the Kid's keen eyes picked out the stocky figure of Jim Hall.

The Kid's hand closed on a gun butt, and his teeth came together hard. Hall, he had told himself, could know nothing, could suspect nothing, so long as he did not see the foreman

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of the Lazy 8—yet he was here! The Kid's grip on his gun was almost convulsive. In the Lariat hills he had spared his enemy. He would not spare him now, if it came to a show-down.

Jim Hall, five or six rangers, and three or four punchers of the Lazy 8—he picked them out now. Big, brawny Colorado, on his rawhide horse, was riding a little ahead. The horse wrangler dashed up to the prairie island and drew in his horse. As he halted, Colorado shouted back to the men behind:

"Say, watch out, you 'uns! I guess if the Rio Kid's here, the first thing you'll hear from him will be a gun talking."

The Kid's heart almost missed a beat. Was all known, then, on the ranch? But, even so, how did they know where to look for him? They had not trailed him, as he had trailed the Mexican—they had come at a gallop. The whole bunch pulled in their horses with a clatter and a jingle, and Jim Hall's voice came loudly to his ears:

"I guess he's making for the hills. But I reckon we'll give that timber the once-over. Shoot on sight!"

They did not know that he was there, then! They were hunting at random. The Kid could not guess why, but as five or six of the riders came pushing into the timber he knew that he could not remain undiscovered—he had to face the music. There was a sudden startled snarl from Colorado as he glimpsed a shadowy figure. But from that shadowy figure came a cool voice that the horse wrangler knew.

"Say, Colorado, old-timer, what's biting you? You aiming to throw lead at your foreman?"

"Great jumping pointers!" gasped Colorado. "That you, Mr. Carfax?"

"You said it!" said the Kid. Five or six shadowy horsemen leaped round, and there was a gleam of guns. But the horse wrangler shouted:

"Let up, you 'uns! It's Mr. Carfax, our foreman." He peered in amazement at the Kid. "Say, Mr. Carfax, what you doing here? I guess I come near shooting you up for that freeing the Rio Kid."

Mule-Kick rode closer to the trees. Two eyes like sharp steel peered at the Kid, deep in the shadow of thick branches. Mule-Kick saw little more than a stevedore hat and goatskin chaps. He was not going to see the face under the stevedore—unless, at the same moment, he went down with a bullet in his heart!

"Say, who's that you've raised in the timber?" he rasped.

"O.K., sir!" Austin Jud answered. "Colorado here allows that it's his foreman—"

"Carfax?" exclaimed Hall.

"Sure!" said the Kid. He made his voice a little husky as he answered—he knew how low were the ranger's ears! "I guess I been on the trail of a greaser that lifted a Lazy 8 capture. Say, you boys out looking for that horse thief?"

"Horse thief nothing!" snapped Hall. "We're after the Rio Kid—but I guess he's burning the wind for the

KEEP-FIT STAMPS

By DOUGLAS ARMSTRONG

BITAIN is in the midst of a keep-fit campaign, but so far our very conservative Post Office has not decided to "say it with stamps," or even to provide a slogan postmark in support of the movement.

It is otherwise in New Zealand, where for some years past special stamps have been issued annually in the interests of the national health. Sold by post offices for twopence each from October to February, one penny represents the actual value for postage and the other a contribution to keep-fit centres.

Since 1929 seven of these health stamps have been issued, an eighth will soon appear, and a very interesting list they are.

On the first issue is a portrait of a hospital nurse beneath which are the words "Help Stamp Out Tuberculosis," the proceeds going to help sanatorium camps for children. The head of a laughing boy, brimming over with health and spirits, appears against a background of typical New Zealand lake and mountain scenery on the 1921 edition, together with the simple word, "HEALTH," whilst a classical picture of "Hygieia," the Goddess of Health, adorns the stamp issued in 1932. Next we have a symbolical design of a Red Cross Knight, mounted on his charger and carrying a banner also inscribed "Health."

WITHIN a frame shaped like a keyhole is seen a youngster darning his lathing costume all ready for a dip in the briny on the health stamp of 1935. The title of this picture is "The Key to Health." Glimpses of typical health camps and a portrait of a beaming girl looking through a lifebuoy labelled "Safeguard Health" constituted the design of the last issue for 1938.

This year we have a striking picture of a peaceful hiker resting against the summit of a rock, very finely reproduced by the Note Printing Branch of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, at Melbourne, after the design of Messrs. G. Hall and J. Berry, both of Wellington, N.Z. The stamp will be sold in aid of the Children's Health Camps from October 1st, 1937, to February 28th, 1938, inclusive.

How many of the New Zealand health stamps are in your collection? Some of the earlier issues are already rising in value, being catalogued at 2d. and 1s. each, which is a big increase upon the 2d. for which they were sold in the first place.

DOUGLAS ARMSTRONG will answer FREE all Stamp Queries sent to the Editor. If you care, enclose a stamped, addressed envelope for reply by Post.



The Hiker, on a New Zealand Health Stamp.

Hatchets. You seen any guy this-a-way, Mr. Carfax?"

The Kid grinned under the shadow of his stevedore.

"I guess there ain't no guy around except this baby," he answered. "I sure bet that greaser, but I was aiming to pick up his trail again at sun-up. You figure that that freeing from the Rio Grande is around?"

"I know he is!" rasped Hall. "An hour ago he fired at me on the piazza of my brother's ranch, and came near getting me, too!"

The Kid jumped. "Not the Kid?" he exclaimed.

"Ain't I said so?" snapped Hall. "We've lost the dog-gone scallywag in the dark, but I've scattered my men to hunt for him, and I'll get him yet!"

"I sure wish you luck," said the foreman, "and I guess I'll bet up on that horse thief and ride with you."

"Follow me, men!" rasped Hall, and he put spurs to his horse again. Skirting the timber, he rode away towards the hills, followed by the rangers. The foreman of the Lazy 8 rode out of the dense shadow of the

branches, and followed on, with Colorado and the punchers.

"Run the wind, you 'uns!" said the Lazy 8 foreman. "I guess if there's a chance of catching the Rio Kid, we ain't letting no rangers beat us to it."

"You said it, sir!" agreed Colorado. And the horse wrangler and the punchers rode like the wind after Mule-Kick and his men. But the foreman dropped behind in the race. Unnoticed in the gloom, he wheeled his mounting and was quickly lost in the night. The Kid realized that he had been so near Mule-Kick Hall as he wanted to be—and he had no bunch to let the ranger see him in the starlight. And his heart was lighter when the thimble of lead died away towards the Hatchets, and he was left alone on the prairie!

Remember that the Kid's own postmark will have saved him from detection. But he has not seen the last of Mule-Kick. Next week, the Ranger hunts him down, re-enters mine shaft, and then... but we'll leave you to discover what happens there when you read the story!