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THE FLYING FIRE-ENGINE!—See Page 17

FALSE TRAIL

Common sense told the Rio Kid to ride out from the Lazy S—and keep on riding. Grit and determination made him stay to face almost certain capture by the rangers

Mr. Carfax Rides In!

"H-UI!" roared Colorado Jim, waving his stein.
The Rio Kid waved back. He looked tired and dusty, but he laughed as he rode his mustang in at the gate of the Lazy S Ranch.

Since the Rio Kid, alias Mr. Carfax, had been foreman of the Lazy S, his handsome, sunbaked face had generally been as bright as the Texas sunshine. On this particular morning, he seemed in uncommonly high spirits, though it was clear that he had ridden hard trails, and the prairie dust was thick on his cheeks.

The Kid was amused, though many guys would not have found the situation amusing. The Kid was playing a game with life and death, and he reckoned it was even chances whether he made the grade, or whether he came out at the little end of the horn. But there was something in that desperate game that appealed to his nature.

Common sense should have counseled the Kid to his farthest horizon, and hit it quick, when he learned that Mule-Kick Hall, captain of the Texas Rangers, was brother to Morris Hall, his boss at the Lazy S, and coming to the ranch with his troop! But the Kid had no use for horse sense if it meant that he was to throw down his new life on the sunny side of the law and ride the grey mustang back to outlaw trails. The Kid was holding on to what he had won, and holding hard.

But it was a strange double game that he had to play: ranch foreman to Morris Hall and the Lazy S bunch—wanted outlaw to the rancher's brother. Only when he knew that Mule-Kick was far from the ranch could the Kid venture to show up at the Lazy S. For once Mule-Kick's keen eyes fell on the Lazy S foreman—the game was up! But at the present moment, Mule-Kick and his men were twenty-five good miles away to the south, riding the Apache range in search of the elusive Kid—for which reason Mr. Carfax figured that it was a good opportunity to show up at the ranch, where his prolonged absence was likely to make the boss and the bunch wonder.

He drew in the grey, black-maned mustang with a clatter of hoofs, and smiled cheerily at Colorado. The horse-wrangler eyed him curiously.

"Say, Mr. Carfax, we sure been growin' what had become of you?" he said. "I was figuring that that Mexican boss thing had got you!"

"Not in your lifetime, old-timer," said the Kid. "I sure been trailin' that greaser that killed Panhandle's

By
RALPH REDWAY

point, but I guess he's got away into the Hatchets. I reckoned I'd ride in, seeing that the boss' brother is at the ranch, and I should sure hate Mule-Kick Hall to hit the trail without my giving him the glad hand. Where is that ranger?"

"You've missed him, Mr. Carfax," said the horse-wrangler. "He's out on the trail of the Rio Kid!"

"Ain't they got that freelin' yet?" asked the foreman of the Lazy S.

"Not so's you'd notice it!" grinned Colorado. "They say all over Texas that Mule-Kick Hall always gets his man, but I'm telling you that Kid is as easy to catch as a weasel, and then some."

"I ain't never seen him," he went on, "but I've heard a whole heap about him. He's no other than you, sir, I reckon, and about your left, from the description they give, only he don't sport no mustache like you do. And his eyebrows is blonde."

The Rio Kid was glad that he had given a mustache to sport on the Lazy S, and that walnut-juice on the eyebrows proved useful. Little changes like that were good enough for guys who had never seen the Rio Kid—though Mule-Kick, when they had met far out on the prairie, had known him sure at a glance.

"I'm sure surprised that Mule-Kick hasn't cinched the freelin'," he said. "I'll tell all Texas we don't want no Rio Kid sportin' around on these ranges. Ain't he even hole nos' hear of him?"

"I should smile," said Colorado. "He met up with him on the prairie, and got under his gun."

"You ain't telling me?" ejaculated Mr. Carfax.

"I'm telling you!" grinned Colorado. "And I'm telling you, Mr. Carfax, that that dogged Kid roped him to his cinch, and set him riding fast on the boss like a sack of alfalfa—ha, ha!" The horse-wrangler roared, and the Kid joined in the laugh.

"That sure must have got Mule-Kick's goat," said Mr. Carfax. "Then he ain't at the ranch now?"

"Last I heard, he was riding down to the Apache range, looking for sign of the Kid, and he's got his whole back along!" chuckled Colorado.

"They sure do think a heap of that Kid—sure'n twenty guys riding his trail with Mule-Kick. If you'd been to home, Mr. Carfax, Hall wanted you to ride with him. He was sure disappointed not to meet up with you here!"

"It's just too bad that we miss one another like this," said Mr. Carfax gravely. "But maybe we'll meet up later. If Hall trails down the Rio Kid, I sure want to be on the spot about that time!"

And leaving his horse to the wrangler, the Kid walked over to the ranch-house to have a word with his boss. Morris Hall was glad to see his foreman again.

"I got your message that you was riding the Apache range with Panhandle watching out for that Mexican horse thief," he said.

"Yes, sir," said the Kid. "But I figured I'd better hit the ranch." He did not add that it was the arrival of the rangers that had caused him to quit the Apache range suddenly, under cover of the dark. "I've been figuring that that greaser has got a hide-out in the hills, and I'll sure root him out later. Colorado allows that your brother's away just now, sir."

"Looking for that freelin', the Rio Kid," said the rancher, with a faint smile on his tanned face. "But I reckon he'll ride in at sundown. Carfax, my brother wants to meet up with you."

The foreman of the Lazy S made a mental note to be far from the ranch well before sundown. Tough as he was, he was tired from hard riding, but he put in the morning at his foreman's job, and not till after chuck did he retire to his cabin for a spell of rest.

He was careful to bar the door before he stretched his weary limbs in the bunk. Four good hours of sleep, he reckoned he could bank on. Then he was going to ride, and if Mule-Kick Hall hit the ranch at sundown, he would miss him again. The horse thief's trail was a good pretext for absence—and in the meantime, the foreman was at his post, and Mule-Kick, keen as he was, could never guess that Mr. Carfax was deliberately keeping away from the ranch. How could he, when he would learn, at sundown, that Mr. Carfax had been there the whole day?

It was a dangerous game, but the Kid reckoned that it was his safest play in the strange circumstances. Mule-Kick and the foreman, he figured, were going to keep on missing one another till, at last, the ranger gave up the hunt for the Rio Kid and hit the trail out of the Lariat country.

The Kid slept soundly. Voices of punchers, clattering of hoofs, clatter of pots and pans from the chuck-house, did not disturb his slumbers. Yet he awakened suddenly at the sound of a voice that was not loud, though very clear and metallic—awakened with all his wits clear, and his hand on a gun.

Then he stepped softly to the barred door. His grip convulsive as a 'gun-butt. And cool as he was, the Kid's heart beat a little faster as he realized that only that pinewood door stood between him and Mule-Kick Hall.

The man who was hunting him for his life had struck the ranch before sundown!

Face to Face!

MULE-KICK HALL stood leaning on a rail by the bunkhouse. He looked a tired man—tired and bitter. His lean, brown face was grimly sour. Hunting the Rio Kid, with failure after failure to his tally, defeat after defeat, had soured the ranger's temper.

Foaming punches glanced at him with keen interest. Mule-Kick was a famous man in Texas, and his long trail after the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande was the talk of every cow camp. Hall did not notice them. He stood talking to his brother, the rancher. His cold, metallic tones reached the Kid clearly. In the pine-wood door was a tiny chink—and the Kid's eye on the inner side of that chink watched the ranger.

Black and bitter as Hall's brow was, it was no blacker or more bitter than the glasses the Kid gave him through the chink in the door. He had spared Hall when the ranger was under his gun—the ranch foreman was not going to play the Rio Kid if he could help it. And now—The Kid's eyes were like blue flame as he watched.

"I guess it was a false trail!" he heard the ranger's words. "I reckoned the Kid had struck south, and I've left my men on the Apache range hunting him, but I guess they won't find him there. Duggone him! Maybe he's ridden for the border, and got across into Mexico." The Kid smiled. "But I don't reckon so! That streak is sure playing some game here in the Lariat valley, and he ain't the hombre to quit. I'll say to ain't far away."

And the Kid smiled again. "What'd be his game in the valley, Jim?" asked the rancher dubiously.

"Maybe riding with a ranch bunch. He's played that before, more'n once. I guess he'd changed his heels some when I met up with him—dark eyebrows and a mustache. That'd go with guys who don't know him as I do. I had to look at him twice afore I knew he was the Kid! He's got the gall to join up at a ranch where he wasn't knowns—thas here ranch as like as any other, Morris."

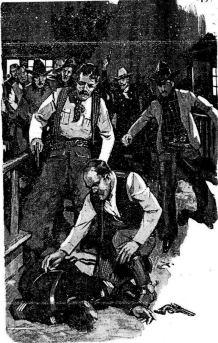
The rancher laughed. "I've never seen the Kid, but I guess I'd be wise to him if he showed up here," he said. "But I ain't taken on any new men—my foreman, Carfax, is the only new man here."

"I want to meet up with your foreman, but we don't seem to get together," said the ranger. "Is he on the ranch now?"

"Sure! He rode in this morning, after trailing a Mexican boss thief who lifted a plate from one of my punches. That's his cabin."

Hall's steady eyes turned on the door.

"I reckoned I'd see him last night,"



The Kid serves up as cool as ice. Until the ranger recovered he had nothing to fear.

he said. "We hedded down at the cowman's hut on the Apache range, and your man Pankardt allowed that Mr. Carfax had posed him there, watching out for that greaser. Maybe he got sign of him, for he lit out just afore we hit the hut. I'll be powerful glad to see that hombre Carfax. New guy here, is he?"

The Kid's heart almost missed a beat as he heard that question. Was there a vague spot of suspicion at the back of the ranger's wary mind?

"Yep. He materialized in two months ago," said Morris Hall. "He brought in my foreman, all shot up by rustlers, and I signed him on in the outfit. And after he saved a herd of two hundred head from the Bear Pass gang, I put him up as foreman."

"Two months ago!" said Hall. "That'd be about the time Rio Kid shot up Lariat." He paused. "I seen the Kid since then—got up in the old style, silver nuggets on his hat, and all. But when I rounded him out on your ranges, ten miles from here, Morris, he wasn't get up like no Rio

Kid. That time he had a mustache over his mouth, and I guessed why when I saw him with a mustache. Say, I'd be powerful glad if Mr. Carfax would ride with my bunch—I sure do want to see that galoot."

"He's resting in his cabin after a hard trail," said the rancher. "But I've put him wise that you'll be back here at sundown, Jim—be's sure to turn out at sundown to chew the rag with you a piece."

"I guess I'll wait to see him!" The rancher nodded, and walked away to the corral. Mule-Kick Hall stayed where he was, his eyes on the door of the foreman's cabin.

By the chink, the Kid watched the lean hard face. He could not read suspicion in it. But he read a new and determined business. Mule-Kick had been struck by the circumstance that Mr. Carfax had appeared at the Long S shortly after the Rio Kid had vanished from all knowledge. Suspicion was doomed by the fact that Mr. Carfax had rounded up the cow thieves in the Hatches, and was

False Trail

trusted by Morris Hall, who was nobody's fool. The ranger did not suspect. But it was his way to leave no chance untried. He was going to give Mr. Carfax the once-over, and let other matters fall he had done so.

The ranger sat on a bench outside the bunk-house. He was weary from hard and unsuccessful trails, and needed rest. But he chose that spot to rest—where he would see Mr. Carfax as soon as he came out of his cabin. His eyes hardly turned from the cabin door. But it was only kindness, not suspicion. Had there been actual suspicion, Mule-Kick's gun would have been in his hand.

The Kid breathed hard and deep. It wanted yet two hours to sunset. For two hours he was safe, so long as he remained with a shut door. But Hall, sitting those a dozen feet away, with steady, unswinking eyes, put paid to his plan of riding away from the Lazy S before the sun went down. Once that door was open, the steady eyes would be on him—and the Rio Kid would be known.

There was a chance that Hall might be called away, giving the boy another chance to burn the trail. The Kid could only wait and hope!

Lower and lower the sun sank to the distant Hachets, and shadows deepened on the wide ranges of the Lazy S. Hall sat on the bench, leaning back against the wall of the bunk-house, his legs, bare-legged from incessant riding, stretched out before him, almost like a figure of stone. He could be as patient as the Kid.

"Say, Jim!" Morris Hall leaned up in the dusk. "You're coming in for extra, old-timer? And I guess I'm calling Carfax—he sure is taking a long snooze, and he'll be ready for his horse."

The rancher rapped on the door of the cabin.

"Here, Carfax!" he called. "You coming out? Feeder, old-timer, and here's my brother Jim wanting to chew the rag with you."

The Kid gave a deep yawn, like a man newly awakened.

"I guess I'll be coming, sir!" he answered. "I'll tell a man I'm sore tired after trailing that prasser half-way to Mexico. Don't you wait for me now."

"Suit yourself, Carfax!" said Mr. Hall. "You coming, Jim?"

"I guess I'll follow you," said the ranger.

Morris Hall disappeared in the dusk again towards the bunk-house. Mule-Kick rose from the bench.

The sun was gone now. Light of kerosene lamps gleamed from the windows of the bunk-house. Mule-Kick stood, his eyes on the foreman's cabin, now a black mass of shadow. From within, he heard a yawn, and a sound as of a tired man settling down to sleep again in a bunk. The foreman, it seemed, was not coming out to "cut." Immediately, Mule-Kick turned slowly away in the direction his brother had taken.

The keen ear of the Rio Kid caught the sound of his receding footsteps, and the Kid breathed more freely. It was dark now. Once Hall had joined

his brother in the ranch-house, the coast was clear. From the ranch-house Mule-Kick could not see him in the dark.

Five minutes the Kid waited, then, softly and silently he removed the bar from the door, drew it open, and stepped out.

To reach the corral for his horse was a matter of a few moments for the Kid. But a man was leaning on the corral bar, looking in at the horses, when he reached it. In the dark he took the figure for that of the horse-wrangler.

But as the Kid stopped, the man turned and looked at him—with the keen, searching, steady eyes of Mule-Kick Hall!

"The Rio Kid!" Dark as it was, Hall knew him. His voice came in a furious roar that reached the punchers in the bunk-house and the rancher in the ranch-house. "The Kid—the Rio Kid!"

Hall's gun was out as he roared. But swift as he was a heavy gust-blast crashed on his head, and Jim Hall, stunned and senseless, crumpled on the earth, falling like a log at the feet of the foreman of the Lazy S.

"Saddle Up!"

"THE Rio Kid!" The name was repeated in a roar of voices as out of the lighted bunk-house the punchers came rushing into the dark, guns in hand. From the ranch-house piazza, Morris Hall leaped, and rushed towards the spot, finger on trigger. A score of excited voices roared:

"The Rio Kid!"

"That's Hall shouting—"

"Say, where are you, hombre?"

Exactly whence that desperate shout had come, the Lazy S men did not know, only that it came from somewhere near the corral. Guns in hand, they milled in the gloom, expecting to hear Hall calling again—or a shot! But there was no call—no shot.

"My brother!" Morris Hall joined the wildly excited crowd. "That was his voice. Where—"

"Say, sing out a few, Mule-Kick!" roared Colorado. "Say, you figure you seen the Rio Kid around? Spill it, Hall."

"Rio Kid nothing!" granted Yuba Dan. "I guess that firing ain't nowhere around this ranch! That guy Hall sure does let that outlaw try get his goat."

"Jim!" shouted the rancher, in anxious tones. "Speak out, Jim! Saunders, go and nose out Mr. Carfax."

"I guess I'm here, sir!" drawled a quiet voice. The foreman of the Lazy S leaned up in the shadows. "Say, what's this racket? Was that some guy shouting out that the Rio Kid was around?"

The Kid was cool as ice.

Mule-Kick lay a senseless lump in the darkness by the corral gate. Until the ranger came to his senses, the Lazy S foreman had nothing to fear. And the Kid knew how hard he had struck with the butt of his six-gun.

"It was sure Jim Hall, Mr. Carfax!" gasped Colorado. "I guess I knowed his foot! He sure reckoned he had spotted the Rio Kid."

"If Jim Hall reckoned he had spotted the Rio Kid, I guess the Kid is around," said Mr. Carfax. "Mule-Kick Hall ain't the guy to raise a false alarm! But where is that ranger guy? Seems to me he was fooling by the corral gate."

Cactus Joe pushed out of the bunk-house, carrying a flaring kerosene lamp.

"That light this-a-way!" called out Mr. Carfax.

"Jim!" pointed the rancher, as the lamplight streamed over a huddled figure by the corral gate.

The Kid felt a pang. Morris Hall had been a good boss to him, and it was his hand that had struck the boss' brother senseless. Yet but for that swift blow, the ranger's gun would have been blazing lead at him, the ranger's voice calling on the bunch to seize him. The Kid bent hastily over the senseless man—he did not want the boss to see his face at that moment.

"Dead?" The rancher's voice faltered.

"No, sir!" rapped the Kid hastily. "I guess Jim Hall's had a nasty cork on the calves, sir, but he ain't dead by long chalk, nor like to be. He's just stunned, sir."

The ranger's eyes were closed, he was white under the tan on his face, his features set. There was a streak of red running from under his thick hair. The blow that had stunned him had been a terrible one. Jim Hall was senseless, and likely to remain so for some time.

"Gosh! I'll say that guy has had a cork!" muttered Colorado. "I guess the Kid got him quick."

"But where's the Kid?" gasped Bill Saunders, staring round.

"I guess," said Mr. Carfax, "that Jim Hall spotted him here—maybe getting at a horse! There ain't no doubt that the Kid was around. I'm telling you, we got to get after that firing, pronto."

"You said it!" breathed the rancher. "Saunders, Yuba, carry my brother into the ranch-house—Carfax, I'll leave it to you to get after that firing. Shoot on sight if you ran him down."

"Saddle up, boys!" rang the voice of the foreman of the Lazy S.

Two punchers carried the senseless ranger into the ranch-house, followed by Morris Hall. Every other man rushed for his horse. Mr. Carfax was as swift as any man. Quickly he saddled and bridled the grey Mustang, and rode him out of the corral. Twenty excited horsemen gathered round him, to ride in search of the outlaw. They dashed out at the gate in a bunch.

That it was no false alarm—that the Rio Kid had been seen on the ranch—all the bunch were assured now. No other hand could have struck Mule-Kick down. But what had become of him since, no man knew—except that they reckoned he had fled into the night. No sound of

Biggles Goes to War!

"The count needed.
"I think that is the best thing you could do. A car shall take you to your hotel right away. When you have done all the things you mention, come up to the palace. Somebody will be anxious to thank you in person. Bring your mechanics with you. By the way, the one who was hurt is out of danger, I learn. We took him to the hospital."

"That was Carter," put in Ginger. "He got knocked on the head. I'll tell you about that later on."

Algy yawned.
"If we don't soon go somebody will have to carry me," he declared.

"I'll drive you down," offered Ludwig, as they moved towards the door.

There is little more to tell. The crisis passed, as Biggles had prophesied, as soon as the Levittian Government realized into what a dangerous position its prince had placed himself. It accepted the Russian ultimatum unconditionally, and the whole case was submitted to the League of Nations, who demanded that all preparations for war should cease while the circumstances were examined.

On the day following the events narrated in the foregoing chapter, the three airmen, with Smith in attend-

ance, reported at the palace, where they were graciously received by Princess Mariana, who thanked them in terms of sincere regard for what they had done, and with her own hands pinned on their breasts the Russian Order of Saint Peter, which was the highest decoration the country could bestow. She concluded by asking them to remain in the country until things were quite settled, and to occupy their time by organizing a Royal Air Force on British lines.

To this Biggles agreed readily, and his task was made easier when the League of Nations not only issued a verdict in favour of Grasse, but awarded an indemnity, to be paid by Levittana for what had transpired.

They were still in the country when the forthcoming marriage of Ludwig and his princess was announced, and they were invited to the ceremony. Belstein and Klein they saw only once again, and that was when they gave evidence at their trial for high treason. They were found guilty and sentenced to death, and in due course met their fate in the very courtyard where Biggles and Algy had so nearly met theirs. Zersovitch was permitted to return to Levittana after signing a document to the effect that he would never set foot in Grasse again.

Their work finished, Biggles at length asked permission to return to his own country, and this was, of

course, granted. The occasion was made a Bank Holiday, for the whole story having been published they were regarded by the entire nation, rightly perhaps, as the saviours of their country. The procession to the station was in the nature of a Roman Triumph, the princess, her consort, and the count accompanying them on to the platform, where they were the last to shake hands with them.

As the train steamed out of the station to the cheers of the populace, Biggles sank back on his seat and lighted a cigarette.

"Well, you fellows, I hope your craving for adventure has now abated somewhat," he murmured.

"I think we've had enough to go on with for a bit," agreed Algy.

Ginger smiled.
"Where do we go next?" he inquired.

Biggles shook his head sorrowfully.
"The trouble with some people is that they are never satisfied!" he said.

THE END.

The great adventure story, we say, as revealed by Biggles & Co. for a time. Mysterious you are hooked for some exciting moments in a fine new series of Shippard stories by popular author John Brearing. The first of these, MEN OF WARRENERS, will appear next week.

False Trail

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hoof-beats was heard; but maybe, the outlaw was leading his horse quietly, to mount at a distance. So it seemed to the Laxy 8 bunch, and so their foreman was content to let them think.

"Scatter, boys!" shouted the foreman. "That freeloar from the Rio Grande ain't far away—scatter, and hunt him all over the prairie!"

"You said it, sir!"

Mr. Carfax and the punchers scattered to comb the dark prairie all round the ranch. But if the eager bunch were hunting for sign or sound of the elusive outlaw, their foreman was not. With a sicker smile on his face, the Kid rode away at full stretch—and galloping hoofs and shouting voices, the cracking of guns fired at slavers, died away behind him.

In the ranch-house, Jim Hall lay on his bed, his brother at his bedside. Anxiously Morris Hall watched for a sign of returning consciousness. But it was half an hour before Jim Hall's eyes opened, and stared wildly in the lamplight.

"The Kid! They were the first muttered words, hoarsely muttered. "Have they cinched the Kid!"

He started up, but the rancher gently pushed him back.

"You got to lie low for a piece, Jim—you had a hard knock!" said Morris Hall. "They ain't got the Kid—but they're close on his trail, and I guess my foreman, Carfax, ain't the man to let him make his getaway! Carfax and the whole

bunch are riding after that freeloar." Hall groaned, pressing his hand to his aching head.

"He got me with his butt!" he muttered. "The Rio Kid—here on your ranch—stepping into the corral as if the ranch belonged to him. What'd that freeloar be doing here on your ranch, Morris?"

"You can search me!" said the rancher. "Unless he was after your scalp."

"Forget it! If he was after me, he could have shot me up as easy as giving me the butt—and easier! I don't get it!" muttered Mule-Kick. "I sure don't get it!"

He sank back on his pillow.

It was an hour later that the first riders came loping in, with no news of the Rio Kid. Man after man came back, with the same tale to tell—no sign of the outlaw. But the foreman of the ranch did not ride in. Mr. Carfax, it seemed, was still riding the prairie in search of the elusive Kid.

Shooting Up Fria!

JAKE WATSON, sheriff of Fria, sat in his office, frowning on the piazza of the cow town, and looked out into the sunset. Dandy pilgrims rode in from the prairie trails. Instantly, horsemen passed and re-passed before the sheriff's eyes. And these eyes lingered on a young puncher who came at a rapid trot into the piazza.

But the sheriff of Fria shook his head and grinned sourly. He was

not likely, he reckoned, to see the Rio Kid ride thus boldly into his home town, where he was known to every guy that located there, and where a hundred guns were ready to leap from their holsters at sight of him.

The young puncher who had just ridden into town checked his horse outside the Red Dog, glanced round, and then rode across the piazza to the sheriff's office. Jake watched him curiously. His steed was low over his horse, doubtless to keep off the level rays of the red sun—hardly more than his chin was to be seen. Something in the boyish outline of the little figure recalled the Kid to Jake's mind. But the horse he rode was a pinto—a "painted" horse—nothing like the grey Mustang with the black mane that was as well known in the Fria country as the Kid himself.

The horseman dismounted, passing out of the sheriff's view, as he latched the pinto to a post near the door of the office. Then there was a tramp of cowboy boots and a jingle of spurs, as he swung in at the door-way—and as Jake saw his face under the steed he reached for a gun.

He reached—but did not touch the gun! A long-barrelled Colt was looking him in the face before his fingers could touch the butt—and a face the sheriff knew smiled over it.

"Forgot it, Jake!" said the Rio Kid softly.

Jake forgot it promptly.
"The Kid!" he recalled. He sat and stared at the outlaw.

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"Stick 'em up, old-timer!" said the Kid pleasantly; and slowly Jake's hands rose above his head.

He still stared at the Kid as if he could not believe his eyes. Indeed, he hardly could.

"Surprised you a few, old-timer?" grinned the Kid. "I'm telling you, Jake, I'm kinda tired of them ranger guys roading after me, and I've come back to my own country to give them a rest. And I'll tell a man, all Frio is going to know that the Rio Kid is back agin. I'm sure going to make up this bang a few—and I'm starting with you, Jake! You got any objections to offer, old-timer?"

The sheriff, under the Kid's gun, stated no objections. The boy outlaw stepped closer to him, and dropped the loop of a rope over his upturned hands. He drew it tight, then belted his gun and knifed the rope. Then he knifed the rope round the sheriff's arms and threw the loop and over a roof-beam above Jake's lips opened—but they shut again.

The Kid dragged with all his strength and weight on the rope. The bulky figure of the sheriff swung off the foot, his feet a yard above the planks. The Kid knifed the end of the rope to the sheriff's heavy pin-wax' desk, then stood with his hands on his gun, grinning at the infuriated man.

He gave the wailing sheriff a

playful push, and Jake swung to and fro and yanked on the rope.

"I'll get you for this, Kid!" panted

the sheriff. "I'll sure get you!"

"Says you?" grinned the Kid.

"Jake, you do look a sight for sore eyes, and I'll say you'll have all Frio robbing at you! Tell the boys that the Rio Kid's back again and pining for trouble."

Laughing, the Kid stepped out of the office and vaulted into the saddle of the pinto. Before his feet were in the stirrups, the sheriff's frantic voice was heard yelling from his office.

"The Rio Kid! Watch out, you 'uns! The Rio Kid!"

There was a thunder of hoofs. The Rio Kid was riding. Right across the plaza he dashed, a gun in either hand.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The Kid's guns were roaring. Smash, crash, clatter, went the shining windows of the Red Dog saloon, smashed by crashing bullets. Bang, bang, the galloping hoofs. Up and down the sagged street of Frio rang startled yells.

"The Kid, shooting up the town!"

"It's the Rio Kid!"

With a thunder of hoofs, a lead rear of six-guns, the Kid dashed out on the prairie trail. A wild roar thundered behind him, with clattering hoofs and spluttering guns. But darkness and the prairie swallowed the outlaw who had so recklessly dared defiance at Frio and his sheriff.

Jake Watson, when he was out loose, rushed for his cabin, spluttering fury—and that night the sheriff of Frio and his men rode hard and long, hunting for the outlaw they had so often hunted before—and hunting in vain.

But all through the Frio valley the news spread like wildfire that the Rio Kid was back to his old haunts, and that he had come a-shooting. The citizens of Frio opined that there were going to be wild days and nights on the banks of the Frio and the Pecos.

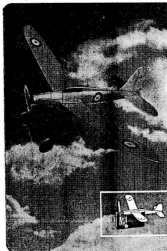
But the Rio Kid was not back again.

Thirty miles from Frio, in the rosy dawn, he turned the pinto loose and drew a grey Mustang from the cover of a timber clump. And as he rode Side-Kicker to the west, he grazed under the shade of his steed.

It would not take long for the news to reach Mule-Kick Hall that the Rio Kid was back in his old haunts. And he had reckoned that it was a Texas dollar to a Mexican cent that Mule-Kick and his men would pull out of the Larist valley prairie, to ride on a new trail for the man they wanted.

And then, the Kid figured, it would be all clear for Mr. Carfax to ride back to the ranch of which he was foreman!

Next scene, the Kid runs up against LEVINGER LAMB—comes across the rope the only man who knows his secret, and places his own life in peril!



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This illustration shows how easily these models can be wound for flight with the patent high speed winder.

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