

*Mrs. L...*

GREATLY ENLARGED CHRISTMAS NUMBER

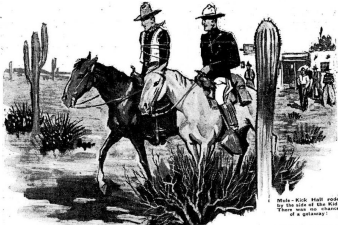
# The MODERN BOY

EVERY SATURDAY  
WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 11<sup>th</sup> 1937 N°54 VOL.20

2<sup>¢</sup>



FULL SPEED AHEAD FOR THE HOLIDAYS!



Mule-Kick Hall rode by the side of the Kid. There was no chance of a gateway!

# Mule-Kick Gets His Man

\*\*\*\*\*  
 \* Another fine \*  
 \* Adventure of \*  
 \* the Rio Kid \*  
 \* \*\*\*\*\* By \*\*\*\*\*  
 RALPH REDWAY

## The Ranger's Return!

THE sound of hoof-beats coming up the prairie trail was too common at the Lazy S Ranch for the Rio Kid to give it special heed. Every hour of the day punchers came and went on clattering broncos. The Kid, as he sat in the bunkhouse, heard those clattering hoofs with a careless ear, little dreaming what they betokened to him.

The Kid was feeling good that day. His handsome, sunburnt face was crimson as he sat resting after a hard day on the ranges, a can of coffee in his hand, talking cowboy talk with half a dozen Lazy S punchers, who had been on the ranges with him.

Anyone who had looked into the Lazy S bunkhouse then, and seen "Mr. Carfax," foreman of the ranch, talking to his bunch, would hardly have guessed that at other times, in other places, he had been known as the Rio Kid, the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande. Mr. Carfax had, indeed, almost forgotten it himself.

Weeks ago the Kid had ridden into the Lariat valley, hoping, in that remote corner of Texas, to throw off the pursuit that had been hot at his heels; to join up with some outfit where he was unknown, and to get back to the old game of punching

cows. His luck had been far beyond his hopes. Now he was foreman of the Lazy S, trusted by his boss, Morris Hall, liked by the whole bunch that rode at his orders.

He had had a bad job when the rancher's brother, Mule-Kick Hall, captain of the Texas Rangers, located at the ranch, hunting for the Rio Kid. Mr. Carfax had found business away from the ranch while the troop of rangers were there. But Mule-Kick and his men had hit the trail one sunny dawn—and on sunset of the same day, Mr. Carfax had resumed his duties at the Lazy S. Another day had nearly passed since then and the Kid had dismissed the rangers from his mind. They had had news of the Rio Kid on his old stamping ground at Frio, and had gone hunting him in that direction.

The rangers had come—and gone—and a clear trail lay before the Kid. In the Lariat country, only one man knew the Kid in his real name—Pedro Diaz, the Mexican horse thief. And Pedro had hit the trail for Mexico, grateful to the Kid for having saved his neck from the lynchers' rope.

No wonder that the Kid was feeling good.

Sitting on a pinewood bench, leaning back against the wall of the

bunkhouse, the Kid sipped hot coffee from his can, and never dreamed of danger.

A hazy figure darkened the doorway, as Colorado, the horse-wrangler, came in. Colorado dropped on a bench near the Kid and stretched out his long legs.

"Say, Mr. Carfax, sir," said the horse-wrangler. "You see that guy that's just rode in?"

"Sure," answered Mr. Carfax, carelessly. "I guess I heard a guy ride up to the house. Some lumber to see Mr. Hall, I reckon."

"Sure!" said the horse-wrangler. "And I'll say he will want to see you, too, Mr. Carfax."

The Kid glanced quickly at Colorado.

The sense of danger was only dormant in the boy outlaw, who had been hunted for his life. But he did not think of the rangers. Jim Hall and his men were gone—and gone, the Kid figured, for keeps. It was the thought of the Mexicans that came into his mind. He had saved, and spared, the life of Diaz, and trusted him to keep his chin stamped on what he knew. But if Diaz, after all, had spilled his knowledge—if it was Beth Hawk, the town marshal of Hatchet, who had just ridden up to the ranch— The Kid's heart

## Mule-Kick Gets His Man

gave a quick beat, and he shifted his position on the bench, to bring a gambutt nearer to his hand.

"You reckon?" drawled the Kid.  
 "I'm telling you!" said Colorado, with a nod. He paused to take a deep draught of coffee. Then he went on: "It was a queer thing, Mr. Carfax, that Mule-Kick Hall never met up with you while the rangers was here—and I guess he was plumb keen to chew the rag with you a piece. I'll say that ranger guy was sure disappointed when he had to hit the trail for Frio without meeting up with you, sir. But I guess you won't miss him now, Mr. Carfax."

"Mr. Carfax, cut very still.  
 "Say, that ranger guy ain't hit the ranch agin?" asked Panhandle Pete. "I sure reckoned he was riding into Frio afore this."

"He sure has," answered the horse-wrangler. "I seen him ride up to the ranch, feller. He ain't got his bunch with him—noble he's sent them on to Frio, to look for that degenerated firebug, the Rio Kid. But Mule-Kick Hall is sure back here—chewing the rag with Mister Hall in the piazza."

Mr. Carfax put down his unfinished cup of coffee on the bench beside him. His manner was quite casual as he rose to his feet. It was two minutes, or more, since he had heard the horseman ride up to the ranch. But for the chance that Colorado had come into the bunkhouse, he would never have thought of connecting up the horseman with Mule-Kick Hall. Was there time yet?

"Say, you ain't going, Mr. Carfax?" asked Panhandle.

"I guess I got to see to my cayuse," said the Lazy S foreman; and, with a nod to the punchers, he moved across to the doorway.

A dark shadow fell across the doorway—the shadow of a thickset, stocky man in a stetson. And Mr. Carfax paused. He knew that it was too late!

## "Hands Up!"

**M**ULE-KICK HALL, captain of the Texas Rangers, was in doubt as he rode the back trail to his brother's ranch. His long, hard brown face was set and bitter. Thirty miles on the trail to the Rio Frio had the ranger ridden with his men before he turned back. He was in doubt—but it was a doubt that had to be resolved before he left the Lariat valley for keeps. And yet, all the while, he knew that he might be wasting time—giving the man he wanted a free run.

More than a week the rangers had camped at the Lazy S, and twice the ranger captain had seen the Rio Kid—but failed to catch that elusive firebug. Then the news had come that the Kid was back at Frio—news that drew the rangers on a new trail.

During the stay at the ranch, Mule-Kick had never met up with Mr. Carfax, the new foreman. What had first turned his suspicions on that guy, he hardly knew—indeed, he

wondered sometimes whether his long, weary trail after the elusive Kid had got on his nerves and caused him to fancy the Kid's face under every stetson hat in Texas. And yet his suspicion was strong.

It was ten to one—a hundred to one—that Carfax was O.K., and that Mule-Kick was wasting his time in riding back. And yet he felt in his bones that while he stayed at his brother's ranch he would never see his brother's foreman! And why? Why—unless Mr. Carfax was indeed the Rio Kid at a new game.

Instinct, rather than reasoning, told the ranger that he was on the trail of the boy outlaw who had always escaped him. Anyhow, he was going to meet up with this Mr. Carfax—he was going to see the gay face to face and settle that haunting doubt. And, leaving his men to ride on to Frio, Mule-Kick had hit the trail back to the ranch, taking only three men with him. But those three he left at a distance when he rode up to the ranch in the sunset.

His eyes were keenly about him, his hand very near a gun, as he rode up to the ranch-house. But he saw no guy even remotely resembling the Rio Kid. He hitched his horse and went into the piazza, to be greeted by his brother, the rancher, with a surprised stare.

"You back, Jim?" exclaimed Morris Hall.

Mule-Kick colored faintly. Of his suspicions he had said no word to his brother; neither was he inclined to say a word now. If he was wrong—and he doubted that he was—he did not want to look a luncheon, dreaming that he saw the Rio Kid at every turn of the trail.

"Say, I'm sure glad to see you, Jim!" said the puncher rancher.

"But I figured you was in Frio by this time, roping in that firebug, the Rio Kid."

"I've sent my men on," said Jim Hall. "If the Kid's back on his old stamping ground, they will be looking for him. But I ain't a whole heap satisfied that he is, Morris."

"We got the news," said the rancher. "There ain't no doubt that the Rio Kid was shooting up Frio three or four days ago."

"You said it!" agreed Mule-Kick. "But I reckon I wouldn't put it past the Kid to ride over to Frio and shoot up the town just to put a gun on the wrong trail. I sure don't aim to be hunting that outlaw along the Rio Frio and the Pecos and him hiding out in the Lariat valley. I got a hunch that that foreman of yours is the guy to keep tabs on him, if he's still around the Lariat, and I've rode in for a word with Mr. Carfax. Is he back at the ranch yet?"

With all his self-command, Mule-Kick could scarcely hide his eagerness as he asked that question.

"Sure!" answered Morris Hall. "He hit the ranch at sunset yesterday. He was sure proved at having missed meeting up with you."

"I'll say he was!" said Mule-Kick grimly. "Is he on the ranch now?"

"Sure—in the bunkhouse, I reckon,"

answered the rancher unsuspectingly. "I guess he'll be glad to see you, Jim. I'll send him word that you're here—"

"I guess I'll go to the bunkhouse," said Jim Hall. "I sure do not want to miss that guy agin, after missing him so often."

"Come with me, then," said the rancher; and the brothers went down the steps of the piazza together.

Mule-Kick's hand rested on the butt of a gun as he walked across to the bunkhouse. Mr. Carfax had returned to the ranch the day the rangers had hit the trail—and Mule-Kick knew that he had expected to hear exactly that. But he did not expect to see Mr. Carfax if word was sent to him to come up to the house to meet the ranger captain! He figured that Mr. Carfax, on getting that word, might saddle up his cayuse, on some passing business at a distance from the ranch! Suspicion was new something like certainty in the ranger's mind—and yet doubt lingered.

His shadow fell across the doorway as he stepped a little in advance of his brother. Instinctively his gun came out as his hard, steady eyes swept the interior of the building.

The next instant his gun was at a level, aimed at a handsome, sun-burnt face, and his voice rang loud and sharp:

"Hands up! Hands up, the Rio Kid! Stick 'em up, pronto, or I'll drop you dead in your tracks!"

And, with a bitter smile, the foreman of the Lazy S lifted his hands above his head.

## Cashed at Last!

**T**HERE was a roar of surprise in the bunkhouse. Every man was on his feet at once, staring at the strange and startling scene. Only Mr. Carfax was not surprised. He stood with his hands above his stetson, the ranger's six-gun looking him in the face. There was no fear, but there was black bitterness in the Kid's face.

"Keep 'em up!" breathed Mule-Kick Hall. "I got you, Kid—got you at last! Keep 'em up!"

He stepped close, till the muzzle of his gun was hardly a yard from the outlaw's face. The Kid did not stir.

"Say, what's that game?" roared Colorado. "You gone loco, Jim Hall? What you mean by pulling a gun on our foreman?"

"I'll say that guy is plumb loco!" exclaimed Panhandle Pete. "And I guess our foreman has got side-kickers, if it's gun-play!" He drew his Colt, and three or four other guns were drawn.

"What's biting you, Jim?" gasped the amazed rancher, in the doorway. "What you pulling on my foreman for?"

"Foreman nothing!" snapped Jim Hall. "That guy is the Rio Kid! I'll tell all Texas, I've got my man at last!"

"That guy's my foreman, Carfax!" roared the rancher.

"Mebbe! He was the Rio Kid before that, I reckon! You've been

looked good and hard by that firing, but I've got him dead to rights at last! I'll tell you now that I suspected him a whole heap, and I reckoned your foreman would never show up at the ranch while I was around."

"You sure have played me for a sucker, Jim Hall!" said the Rio Kid quietly. "I never reckoned that you knew a thing, or that you was stringing me along when you hit the trail. Maybe the Rio Kid ain't so sure as he was when he was an outlaw," he added bitterly.

"The Lary S bunch stared at him. "Say, Mr. Carfax, what you spillin'?" exclaimed Colorado loudly. "You got friends here to stand by you, even if that degenerated ranger has got you under his gun. You ain't allowing that you're the man he calls you?"

"The Kid smiled faintly. "I guess what Hall says goes," he answered. "I reckon he could bring back plenty galoots here that know the Rio Kid, if he had to prove it. You can pack your hardware, Jim Hall," he added disdainfully. "I ain't pulling a gun. You got me, you degenerated bloodhound!"

"I guess I'm making sure of you, now I got you!" said Hall grimly. "You ain't slipping through my fingers again, Kid, like you done before. Men of the Lary S, I call on you, in the name of the law, to cinch that outlaw!"

"The Rio Kid!" said Morris Hall, almost dumbly. "What you giving us, Carfax? You allow you're that probing what's shot up more guys than he's got fingers and toes?"

"The Kid smiled bitterly.

"I guess the Rio Kid ain't shot up all the guys that's put down to his gully, Mr. Hall, sir," he answered. "They sure do hang on to the Rio Kid long plenty shootings and hold-ups that he never heard of. I reckoned I'd ride a new trail in a new country, sir, but I figured all the state that maybe there was a kick coming for me—and sure it's come!"

"You—outlaw and forger!" muttered the rancher. "You—the man I've trusted—the man I made my foreman!"

"The Kid's face flushed.

"I reckon you'll allow, sir, that you've found me a square man on this ranch," he said, in a low voice. "I'll still call Texas, I never wanted to be an outlaw—and that bloodhound, Jim Hall, knows as well as any member that it was a mistake and a false charge that drove me outside the law. They made me an outlaw—and I guess after that I had to be what they made me. And I've sure given the sheriffs as run for their money—and the rangers, too. Busted them when they thought they had me cinched!" The Kid's eyes flashed. "And I'd been Mule-Kick to it again, sir, if I wasn't standing in your bunkhouse on your ranch! But the outlaw and forger, the Rio Kid, ain't burning powder on men that he's rode and banked with—on the boss that's trusted him—sure ain't! It's the end of the Rio Kid's trail, right now!"

He glanced round at the staring bunch.

"You boys, you've knowed me for a white man while I was here," he said. "You know now what I was, and couldn't help being—but I reckon you'll remember me as a square man."

"You said it, sir!" muttered Colorado.

"And you, sir," said the Kid, his eyes turning on the rancher, "you got to allow that the Rio Kid—firing as they call him—has done his duty while he was your foreman, and you ain't got no kick coming. Me, I pack two guns, but I guess no guy here ain't seen me handling them premises. You pack a good roll, sir, but it ain't never been in no danger from the Rio Kid—hold-up man as they call him! They'll tell you in the cow camps that the Kid's an all-fired bushwhacker, but there ain't a cow raising from your ranges, sir, since I been foreman."

Morris Hall nodded.

"I reckoned," said the Kid, "that I'd done with outlaw trails—but it was too good to last! If I was the first that they call me, I guess I shouldn't be standing under Jim Hall's gun this minute—I've sure had him under my muzzle more'n once; but your foreman, sir, wasn't going to play an outlaw game on your ranch. I got it coming to me—and I ain't squealing none! You got me, Jim Hall—take my guns and chew on it that if you wasn't the boss' brother, you wouldn't live to take them!"

With his left hand the ranger lifted the two walnut-buttled guns from the Kid's lowland holders. And the Kid, saying no more, walked out of the Lary S bunkhouse, the ranger at his side, gun in hand.

#### Riding Back to Frio!

**D**ARK and gloomy was the brow of the Rio Kid as he rode away from the Lary S. He rode Side-Ricker with his feet tied to the stirrups, and his hands were bound down to his sides.

Mule-Kick Hall was taking no chances with the shrewd Kid now that he had cinched him. He rode by the captured outlaw's side, with his hand very near a gun—ready, and willing, to shoot him dead if he made any attempt to get away. Not that the Kid was likely to make it—bound, with the ranger leading his horse, there was little chance of a getaway. The latest chance would have been enough for the Kid, and the ranger's gun would not have stopped him from jumping at it—but here there was no chance—not the ghost of one!

The Lary S bunch watched him go with clouded faces. They had liked their foreman—and would have backed him up through thick and thin. And even when they knew that he was the Rio Kid—the hunted outlaw—they liked him still—and there was more than a chance that guns would have been pulled for him had the Kid

called on the bunch to stand by him.

That the Kid did not dream of doing, Morris Hall, in grim silence, gave the Kid a grip of the hand. Whatever he was, and had been, the rancher was going to remember him as a good and true foreman. But Morris Hall would have stood by his brother if it had come to gun-play. The Kid knew that, and not to save his liberty or his life would he have seen trouble at the Lary S.

In silence, he rode away with his captor—in silence, they watched him go—and the long trail through the waning prairie grass swallowed him from their sight.

On a prairie ridge, the Kid looked back—his last glance at the Lary S. Hall, glancing at him, pulled in his horse for a moment or two. Grim, hard, ruthless as the ranger was in pursuit of the man he wanted, he was not inhuman.

For a long minute the Kid looked at the ranch—the buildings and fences seen in the distance—the herds of cattle on the plain, a rider's steersmen hat here and there—looked with a heavy heart. Then he rode on again with Jim Hall.

Outlaw cases more—and riding back to Frio to be handed over to the sheriff there, and to take what was coming to him. But it was ninety miles to the banks of the Rio Frio—and the Kid was not handed over to Sheriff Watson yet! He had lost his freedom, but while there was life there was hope. If he could not ride the ranges as a ranspinner, he could ride the trails as an outlaw—if the grip of that grim-faced ranger loosened. On the Lary S, the Kid would not have burned powder; but if a chance came his way on the long ride to Frio he was not going to lose it, although at the moment any chance of escape was very remote.

In the Kid's holders, which he still wore, were the two walnut-buttled guns that had seen so much service. Hall had replaced them there, after carefully unloading them. Unseen to the Kid now, even had they been loaded—for the card on his wrists was safely knotted—Hall was not the man to give his prisoner a chance. And the Kid knew that Mule-Kick would not hesitate a split second to drive a bullet through his heart rather than run the constant risk of losing him.

That, indeed, the Kid would have chosen, rather than riding back to Frio tied on his man's back, to be handed over to the sheriff. But he was not at Frio yet, and hope was not dead in his breast.

But it came near dying when, in the last glimmer of the sunset, Austin Judd and two other rangers rode out of a timber clump by which the trail ran. The Kid's face darkened as he saw them. He realized now that Mule-Kick had not taken the back trail alone, though he had left his companions at a distance from the ranch. The three rangers stared hard at the Kid, and Austin Judd, who had seen him as "Mr. Carfax," without knowing that he was the wanted outlaw, blinked in surprise.

(Continued on page 22)

## Ghost of Gorse Grange

(Continued from page 2)

the chair was empty. Sir Humphrey had gone!

### The Mystery Solved!

FOR a moment, Uncle George was incapable of movement. Was this some tumbler, he asked himself wildly. Was the whole thing some stupid practical joke being staged at his expense?

It must be, he thought. It couldn't be anything else. But, by Jove, it had gone too far. Dusk it all, he thought furiously, there were limits!

Turning, he rushed from the room and dashed along to Sir Humphrey's room, intent on telling that gentleman exactly what he thought of him.

Sir Humphrey's room was fitted with electric light, as was every room in the grange with the exception of the haunted chamber. Gropping for the switch, Uncle George pressed it, then stood staring in astonishment at Sir Humphrey, who, propped on his elbow in bed, was blinking at him in alarm.

"What's the matter, Goffin?" ejaculated Sir Humphrey. "You're all right, aren't you?"

"All right!" roared Uncle George. "Yes, I'm all right, but I've had enough of this idiocy. You gave me your word you'd leave me alone to-night and not play silly tricks on me, but instead of that you've done your best to put the blessed wind up me and make a perfect fool of me!"

Sir Humphrey had swung his pyjama-clad legs to the floor. He looked very pale, thought Uncle George, although there was no sign of a wound about him. But, of course, those wouldn't be, reflected Uncle George wrathfully. The whole thing had been a put-up job.

"Listen, Goffin! Get a grip on yourself, man, and tell me exactly what's happened," said Sir Humphrey.

"You know what's happened, so don't pretend you don't!" burst out Uncle George furiously. "Giving me the fright of my life in the haunted

chamber, like you did, then riding out along the road and pretending to hold-up some of your half-headed pals in a stage-coach, and pretending to be shot. If you call that sort of thing playing the game, I don't!"

Sir Humphrey had risen to his feet. He approached Uncle George.

"Goffin," he said earnestly, "it's obvious to me that something's happened, but I give you my solemn word of honour that I have never moved from out this room since saying good-night to you just before midnight!"

Uncle George stared at him. He was momentarily speechless, for Sir Humphrey's words had staggered him.

"Do you—do you mean you've never been out of here at all to-night?" he asked.

"Oh my honour, I haven't!" returned Sir Humphrey.

Uncle George collapsed limply into a chair.

"Then who was that I've been with?" he whispered, staring at Sir Humphrey with distracted eyes.

"Tell me what's happened!" said Sir Humphrey quietly.

Uncle George told him, hoarsely and jerkily. Sir Humphrey heard him out in silence, then thoughtfully paced the floor.

"So that was how my ancestor died, was it?" he said quietly, turning at length to face Uncle George.

"Shot whilst he and O'Fin were holding up a stage-coach near here. Well, I'm not surprised."

"But—but you don't mean to say I've been with him?" gasped Uncle George.

"Listen, George!" said Sir Humphrey quietly. "I'm going to tell you something which, to spare your feelings, I didn't mention when telling the story of Sir Humphrey at dinner to-night. O'Fin's name was George O'Fin. When he was captured in London he'd changed his name. He'd tacked the initial of his Christian name on to his surname, making it Gofin—or Goffin, if you like!"

"Good gracious!" gasped Uncle George. "But that fellow I've been

with was so like you, Humphrey, that I was certain it was you!"

"I'm supposed to resemble that particular Sir Humphrey very closely in feature," said the other. "Anyway, I think we know now, George, that it wasn't O'Fin—or Goffin, as he called himself later—who shot Sir Humphrey that night. I'm convinced the mystery's been solved!"

"So am I!" gasped Uncle George.

"AND that," said Goffin, sliding off his stool at the backshop counter, "is why Uncle George never talks slightly of ghosts nowadays. Well, along!"

"Here, but wait a minute!" exclaimed Dawson. "Seeing that this O'Fin had changed his name to something like Goffin, and, seeing that the visitor to the haunted chamber appeared to know your Uncle George, it looks to me as though O'Fin must have been one of your Uncle George's ancestors!"

"That is what we all think," agreed Goffin blandly. "As a matter of fact, Uncle George is rather proud of it. Well, cheerio!"

The door closed on his retreating form. A moment later it opened again and the head of Goffin re-appeared.

"I might add," said Goffin, "that the ghost of Sir Humphrey never appeared again. It had succeeded in clearing the name of O'Fin, and was apparently happy. Ta-ta!"

The door closed again. There was a moment of silence. It was broken by Dawson.

"Well, I suppose it's possible," he said, picking up his ginger-beer.

"What's possible?" demanded Fetta sharply.

"That there has been a highwayman in the Goffin family," said Dawson.

"It's more than possible!" agreed the others.

Next week, Goffin's inventive uncle finishes the book of presenting AN ICE CHRISTMAS, with rollers lurking in the back-ground, trying to turn it into a complete frost!

## Mule-Kick Gets His Man

(Continued from page 12)

"Say, you roped in the foreman of the Lazy 8, sir?" said Jud.

Hull smiled sourly.

"I've roped in the Rio Kid, who was playing foreman on my brother's ranch all the time we were here," he answered curtly. "I guess you ought to have been wise to him, Jud, when you met up with him!"

"Search me!" said Jud. He knew now why the captain of the rangers had ridden back to the Lazy 8. He knew, too, that Hull had not been sure, or he would not have ridden alone.

At a gallop, they rode on. Lower and lower the sun dipped, and shadowless deepened on the shimmering grass. From a struggle of pine and

juniper, a horseman pushed out on the plain, little more than a shadow in the thickening dark. But the Kid's eyes noted the big Mexican sombrero—caught a glimpse of the dark face under it—and knew that it was Pedro Diaz—Pedro the Knife—whom he had spared, and whom he had allowed to ride. Mule-Kick recognized him at the same moment, and his gun flashed out.

But the Mexican, after a stare at the bunch of riders, wheeled his plate, and dashed away at full gallop. Hull's gun roared, sending a bullet whizzing after the disappearing horseman.

For a moment the Kid hoped that this was a chance—if the rangers delayed to deal with the Mexican bandit. And Hull, he could see, was loath to let slip the chance of roping

in Pedro. But the ranger captain shook his head.

"I guess that greaser will keep!" he muttered. "We got the Kid—and we got to keep him safe! Ride on!"

They rode on, and the headstuds of the Mexican's horse died away in the distance.

It was not till the night was old that they halted at last by a rippling spring in a timber island, camping under the branches of great cotton-woods. The Kid, weary from the saddle, was freed from his Mustang, and Side-Kicker was tethered with the rangers' horses, close by the camp. Black night lay on the prairie, and through the blackness came the red glow of the rangers' camp-fires. The Kid's hands were freed to eat his supper, but they were bound again

(Continued on next page)

## Mule-Kick Gets His Man

afterwards, and his ankles tied together. Then he was allowed to roll in his blanket—but round the blanket another rope was run, binding him in. The Kid smiled mockingly at Mule-Kick, with a sure and satisfied hand, knotted the rope.

"I'll tell a man, you ain't going to lose me, if you can help it, Jim Hall!" he remarked. "You sure do long to see this baby wife at Frisco."

"I'm taking no chance, Kid!" said Hall briefly.

The rangers rolled themselves in blankets. And the Kid, as they settled down to sleep, tried his strength on the ropes that fastened him—and tried it in vain. There was no chance—and he reckoned that he might as well sleep.

## Pedro de Cuchillo Remembers!

**T**HE touch that awakened the Kid was light. He did not stir as he awakened. His eyes opened, but saw nothing. Only a faint gleam of red came from the embers of the camp-fire. What had awakened him, what had touched him in the darkness the Kid did not know. But the long habit of wary caution kept him still and silent. Something was stirring, and something had touched him. Seeing nothing, hearing nothing, he lay still to puzzle it out. And he became conscious of a darker shadow in the darkness that beat over him, and at the same time of a glimmer of bare steel. And in the same moments he knew that the rope that knotted the blanket round him had loosened.

In utter wonder, he lay still. A knife had come silently through the knotted rope. In whose hand? Four Texas Rangers were round him, sleeping in their blankets. It was not one of them that had cut the rope—that was a sure cinch. Who was it that had crept into the rangers' camp, lay-eyes in the darkness, making no sound—so silent, so cautious, that he had not awakened even Jim Hall, who slept like a weasel. Not a foe—but a friend—but who, had the Kid guessing?

The Kid had hoped against hope for a chance of escape, but it had never crossed his mind to hope for help. Who, in all the larant country, could have come to his aid, risking life to help him? Not one of the Lary 8 bunch—the Lary 8 was left a good twenty-five miles away to the west, and no man from the ranch had followed the trail of Mule-Kick Hall and his prisoner. Yet it was the hand of a friend, seeking to save him, that cut the rope binding him in the blanket. The Rio Kid was lost in wonder, but he lay still, giving no sign.

The blanket slid away from him, softly and silently. His limbs within it were bound—and he felt a gripping hand, and the sawing of a razor-edged blade. From ankles and wrists the cut ropes dropped away, the Kid lay free—still from his bonds, but free!

He drew a deep, quivering breath. An unseen hand grasped his arm, and he rose silently to his feet. There was

a sudden gleam as the fire burned up for a second, and he saw the sleeping forms of the rangers rolled in their blankets, caught the gleam of a revolver in the hand of Mule-Kick Hall. Had the ranger captain awakened at that moment, the Kid would have fallen, shot through the heart. The momentary gleam died away again. Of his rescuer the Kid glimpsed only a dim shadow. The hand on his arm was drawing him away, and he yielded to the guidance.

His heart was beating hard. Freedom—life and freedom, if he was clear of the rangers' camp; but life was in the balance now, for Mule-Kick Hall would have hurled powder instantly had he found his prisoner escaping. A careless step—a slight sound—would have been enough. Step by step, inch by inch, feet by feet, the Kid crept, till a massive cottonwood was between him and the rangers' camp, and he breathed more freely. And then he drew to a halt.

He was free—but on foot. A gay had no chance on the boundless prairie; and even had there been a chance, the Kid would not have made his getaway without Side-Kicker. In the faintest of whispers, he breathed a word to the unseen shadow that drew him by the arm.

"I guess I want my cayuse, feller!"

"Si, si, señor!" came back a breath. And the Kid started. It was a Mexican who stood by him in the darkness under the cottonwood. It was a greaser who had run this deadly risk to save him! The grasp dropped from his arm, and the Kid moved silently to the horses.

A whisper to Side-Kicker was enough. He cast loose the trail-rope, and drew the mustang away. Saddle and bridle were off the mustang, and the Kid did not figure on seeking them in the rangers' camp. He had ridden backward often enough, and asked nothing better than to feel Side-Kicker's gloomy sides between his knees. The black muscle snaked under his arm, as the mustang followed him. Two long, silent minutes, and the Kid was outside the timber of the prairie island, knee-deep in the open grass, with the night wind blowing on his face, and the stars glittering over his head.

He breathed hard and deep in the fresh wind of the prairie. He had lost the shadowy figure of his rescuer; but now it loomed by his side again, and the hand touched his arm. From the rangers' camp came no sound. A smile played over the Kid's face, as he stopped softly away through the grass followed by his mustang, led by the shadow.

A dim form loomed up in the gloom—a tethered horse. The shadow loosed the cayuse, and slid into the saddle, and the Kid mounted Side-Kicker.

"Hide, señor!" came the whisper.

"You said it!" breathed the Kid.

Saddle and bridle mattered little to the Kid. He guided Side-Kicker with his knees. Side by side they dashed away across the dim prairie, and at the heat of the heels came a shout from the awakened camp.

Lead and savage rang the shout of

Mule-Kick Hall—loud and fierce the voices of his men—followed by dashes in the dark, and the roar of six-guns as the engaged rangers blazed away at random.

The Rio Kid laughed as he urged Side-Kicker to a gallop.

Little enough he cared for the rage of Mule-Kick Hall, or for the whining bullets from the rangers' camp. The grass flew under the galloping hoofs, as he dashed on at full speed by the side of the still-unknown rescuer.

From the darkness came the heat of hoofs. The rangers were mounted and riding, seeking the escaping Kid—riding at random, blazing away at shadows.

Thinking hoofs and roaring guns died away into the silence of the night as the Kid galloped on. Mile on mile flew under the tacking hoofs, till the Kid at last checked his galloping mustang. Many times, as he galloped, his eyes had turned on the dark figure riding at his side, dim in the gloom, shadowed by an immense Mexican sombrero. But under that sombrero he had had a glimpse of a swarthy, black-browed face, and he guessed.

"Pedro Diaz, I guess!" said the Kid, speaking at last.

The Mexican pulled in his horse and looked at him, grinning under the big sombrero.

"Si, señor. Did I not tell you, when you took the lynch's rope from my neck, that I should remember?"

"I'll say you did, feller!" said the Kid. "And I'll tell a man, you sure have paid the account, and a little over! I guess if them rangers had spotted you getting me away, they'd have filled you as full of holes as a colander, and then some."

"A life for a life, señor!" said the bandit. He looked curiously at the Kid in the gleam of the stars. "Your game is up at the Lary 8, señor?"

The Kid's brow darkened.

"Sure!" he said.

"My trail lies to the south—to Mexico! Hide with me, señor—there is safety on the other side of the border."

The Kid shook his head.

"I guess not, feller," he said, with a grin. "I make my own way. It ain't like the Kid and to know his mind, but I guess I'm still countin' my lucky stars I'm not roped up under a blanket, waitin' for some-one to be taken into Frisco tied to my own heels. You beat it your own way, Pedro. I guess this is a hot spot for both of us now."

The Mexican shrugged at the Kid gripped his dusky hand. A moment later Pedro de Cuchillo was riding for the south, leaving the Kid alone under the stars.

Hours later, when dawn streaked the eastern sky and the sun came up, it shone on the back of the Rio Kid, riding Side-Kicker hard into the west!

Mule-Kick Hall makes things so bad for the Kid, never giving him a moment's respite, that the big outlaw decides to quit Texas. Next week, with guns ablaze, he shows into Hollywood, crossing up the film city!