

THE WRECKER PLANE!— FINE CAPTAIN JUSTICE STORY

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BURNING THE OIL AT 100 M.P.H.!—See centre pages

They Called Him A Quitter

By
RALPH REDWAY

The Rio Kid had said that he would risk his neck for the films, ride his mustang down the waterfall, but for two days he had been missing. They said he had got "cold feet" and gone for good, but . . .

The Last Hope!

FOR the twentieth time, the Rio Kid exerted his strength on the rawhide thong that bound his wrists together. For the twentieth time, he failed to stretch it the fraction of an inch. There was cold, deep rage in the Kid's heart, and the gangsters who held him prisoner in that lonely, hidden cove on the Santa Monica Mountains, would have found him dangerous to handle, assured as he was, had his hands been free. But Spanish John and his gang had taken care of that.

He sat on a rude pierced bench in a rough shed, open on one side to wind and weather. Looking out, he could see most of the narrow gulf, high up in the mountains, shut in by walls of rock that seemed to reach the strip of blue sky. At a little distance was a more substantial cabin, the shelter of the gangsters.

On a bench in front of it, Pete Henry and the "Shooter" sat, playing cards. Spanish John the Kid had not seen for some time. Once or twice the two gangsters glanced across at him. But they had no doubt that the Texas preacher was safe. Besides the knarled rawhide on his wrists, there was another: a noose rope round his ankles, and the end of it was tied to the bench. The preacher could hardly have been more secure.

The Rio Kid had been cinched before in his time—Texas sheriffs had had him, and Texas Rangers—but he had never seemed so hopelessly hemmed as he was now. The Kid was set the gay to lose hope in the tightest of cinches, but he could see no way out of this.

He reflected, rather bitterly, that it was to ride clear of rangers and sheriffs that he had ridden his black-saddled mustang out of Texas. In the Los Angeles country in California he was unknown, except by name, and he had figured on riding a safe trail. He had reckoned on anything but danger when he joined Cyrus Fook's film crowd at the location at Bucking Bronco. Yet here he was—cinched more securely than ever he had been in the wild old days as an outlaw on the banks of the Rio Grande.

Without his horse, without his gun, he had not had a cigarette's chance when Spanish John got him.

And here he was—to await his fate at the hands of the gangster—who, as he guessed only too surely, jumped to the orders of Brian Bennett, the film star. It was the Handsome Hombre of the pictures to whom he owed this—and the Kid pursued to be within hitting distance of Bennett. He would have changed the Handsome Hombre's good looks a few, he guessed.

The sun was high over the mountains. Near at hand was a bucket of water, from which the Kid could drink, if disposed, by dipping his head to it like a horse. They were taking no chances with him.

It was a relief to the Kid, in the dismal monotony, to hear the sound of footstep coming up the rocky gulch, though he knew that it could only be Spanish John who was coming. His eyes glanced at the gangster as he appeared in sight. Pete Henry and the Shooter looked across and nodded to their chief, but went on with their game, as John stopped, facing the prisoner. There was a mocking grin on the swarthy face of Spanish John as he met the gleaming eyes of the Texas preacher.

"You enemy dog-goned lobo-wolf!" said the Rio Kid, between his teeth. "I guess if you loosen my hands for one minute, I'll wipe that smigger off your frontispiece."

Spanish John laughed. He leaned on a corner pole of the shed and lighted a cigarette.

"You been chewing the rag with that piece Bennett, I guess, went on the Kid. "What's he paying you to keep me cinched here this-way, you sayst? And him the pecky piece that I get out of your hands—I sure do wish a whole heap that I'd left him to you."

"You would have done more wisely, hombre!" grinned Spanish John. "Brian Bennett was worth fifty thousand dollars to me. You made no friend of him—and you made an enemy of me! I warned you that I should get you when you hopped into what did not concern you."

"You'd never have got me but for Bennett putting you wise!" snapped the Kid. "He knowed that I was climbing that arroyo at Bucking Bronco, and he gave you the office to wait for me at the top! If I'd had a gun on me—" His eyes glittered at

the gangster. "You seen that guy Bennett?"

Spanish John chuckled.

"I guess if I'd seen Bennett, he'd be here with you, Sencer Carfax. He is worth fifty thousand dollars ransom. Not The Handsome Hombre will speak to me only over a telephone-wire! But I have had news of Bucking Bronco. You have been misled—the good Fook is carried by your disappearance! He fancies that you have let him down, because you dare not undertake the ride you agreed to take—Pedro's Ride, as they call it, from my grandmother, the only man who ever rode it. It is reckoned at the location that you have shewn the white feather."

The Kid breathed hard with rage.

"The dog-goned stills!" he growled. "It was because Bennett dared not ride the arroyo with me that he put you up to this game! He's saving his face, gold-damn him, and leaving the goods on me."

"You're still it!" grinned Spanish John. "And so keen is Bennett to keep you clear that he will pay a hundred dollars a day so long as you do not return to the location. So long as the Gorgonzola Company remains at Bucking Bronco, you remain here."

"And after that?" muttered the Kid.

The gangster's black eyes glittered. "After that, Bennett will pay nothing. The 'Outlaw' film will be completed without you. The company will return to Hollywood. Cyrus Fook will figure that you deserted him, and if you see him again, he will give you nothing but a boot! But, consider yourself, you will not see him! You are the hombre that put the detectives on me and drove me out of Hollywood. I warned you that I should get you! You live so long as you are worth a hundred dollars a day to me. Bennett dare not let you return to the location. I keep you to keep him up to the scratch. But when he finds you no longer, and will pay no more, then—" Spanish John's white teeth

showed through his black beard, in a savage grin. "Then you will pay for the harm you have done me—you will hang from the branch of a tree! Chew on that, hombre, while you sit here a prisoner and repent that you made an enemy of John Valdez."



The Kid's hands shoot out, and before Shuster knew what was happening his gun had been taken from him.

the Kid could not know. But he knew that this was his last chance, and he waited, with the grim patience he had learned on many a wild trail in his outlaw days.

The Missing Man

THE atmosphere in the valley of Bucking Bronco in the Santa Monica Mountains was due to turn blue, in the view of every member of the Gorgessa Picture Company located there. Every man in Gorgessa, from Brian Bennett, the star, down to the humblest scene-shifter, had heard tall talk from Mr. Pook, but they had never heard such tall talk as Cyrus Pook blew off since the surprising and mysterious disappearance of Boy Carfax—alias the Rio Kid.

Cyrus "rased" the Texas rancher, the whole company in general and in particular, and even cursed Brian Bennett. The picture was hung up, because that dog-goned Texas puncher had chosen to disappear in the middle of it.

"Cold feet," was the general verdict at Bucking Bronco—and few were surprised at it. Cyrus, in his passion for realism on the screen, had planned a big punch for the "Outlaw" picture, that, to every mind but Mr. Pook's, was not only foolhardy, but quite loco. True, a Mexican outlaw had once ridden down the wild, rugged arroyo that split the soaring cliff from top to bottom. How he had made the grade no man knew, for it looked like a handspike to one up a broken neck.

But the Texas had agreed to ride it, in the character of the "Rio Kid" on the picture—no man at the location even dreaming that he was the celebrated Kid himself—and Brian Bennett had agreed to ride it in pursuit of the outlaw.

Standing in front of his office at the location, Cyrus stared across the valley at a towering wall of rock down which a torrent came spraying. He had cursed till he was out of breath, and was taking a rest, which the whole company agreed that he needed. Chick Chew, assistant director, winked at Brian Bennett behind Cyrus' pudge back. Chick was wondering how long Cyrus was going to be in making up his mind to the inevitable. That "big punch" had to be out.

"Dog-gone the whole pesky bunch!" said Cyrus. "I'm telling you, Chick, it's a punch that will 'got' the film world. Look at it! No fake about that scene—the real and genuine goods! And that dog-goned Texas guy goes off on his car and leaves me guessing! If he don't come back—"

Cyrus clung to the hope that some unexplained cause kept Carfax away, and that he would return to the location.

"His car won't come back," said Chick soothingly. "He's got only one neck, Mr. Pook, and I guess he wants it."

Cyrus cursed his assistant director for three steady minutes for that remark. Chick bowed his head to the stern, till Mr. Pook passed again for breath, then Brian Bennett struck in.

"I guess it won't buy you anything to turn the air blue. I'm not boss on that ride myself, but I'd ride it if we could work the scene. We can't without a man to play the other part.

With that, the gangster walked across to the cabin where his associates sat, and the Kid was left to himself again.

He knew what was coming to him now. Many a tight corner had the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande been in, but never so tight a one as this.

He dipped his head to the bucket of water and drank. In the water, he saw his reflection—a set, savage face staring back at him with grim eyes.

But the expression on that face changed slowly as an idea worked into the Kid's brain. A blaze came into his eyes. He shot a rapid glance towards the cabin—twenty yards away. Spanish John had gone into it and disappeared from sight—Pete Henry and the Shooter were deep in their game. The Kid's heart beat thick and fast.

He shifted his position so that he lay on the bench, his bound hands hanging down behind it, where the bucket stood. It was not an easy position, with his feet roped to the leg of the bench at one end. It put a strain on the Kid, but he could stand it.

If the gangsters glanced across at him, he looked as if, from sheer weariness, he had sunk down on the bench. There was nothing to excite their suspicions in that. Unless they came across, they could not see that his bound wrists were sunk in the water in the bucket.

That was the idea that had flashed into the Kid's mind—a remote hope, but his only chance. Backside, wet, would stretch. A cowman did not need telling that, though such a thought had probably never occurred to the tough. Whether it would stretch sufficiently to allow him to draw his hands loose; whether, even if it would, he would be greeted time,

They Called Him a Quitter

There ain't a man in the company would ride it, for fifty thousand dollars. You've pleased all over Los, and got them laughing. You've bitten off more than you can chew, this time, Cyrus, and you got to get wise to it. That Texas puncher's gone for keeps. Make up your mind to it."

"I ain't sure he's gone for keeps!" roared Cyrus. "He stinked that arroyo to get wise to the life of the land—and why he never came down again beats me to a frazzle. Seems as he got wings and flew away, god-damn him! I figured that Spanish John might have got him with a bullet in the back, but we ain't found a sign of him, and that mountain has been combed for him with a small comb! It's got me guessing. But I'm telling you that young guy meant to come back."

"Why ain't he come, then?" sneered Bennett.

"Aw, don't ask me fool questions! How'd I know?" roared Cyrus. "But I'm telling you. Ain't he left his cayuse here? I tell you, he was tender of that less than a twin brother. If he was going to light out to sure would have gone a-riding. Ain't he left his guns in his room at the saloon parlor? Why'd he run away leaving his horse and his guns. I tell you, he was coming back."

"See him coming, Chick?" asked Bennett sarcastically.

"No, nor don't reckon to!" answered Chew.

Two days and nights had passed since "Boy Carfax" had vanished, and even Cyrus had to doubt whether he aimed to return. Yet he had left his Mustang and his gun-belt at the location. It looked as if he had gone to explore the arroyo he had to ride for the picture, intending to be back in a couple of hours—yet he had not come back, and long and vigorous search had failed to find him.

Bennett shrugged his slim shoulders impatiently.

"The guy had cold feet and keeled," he said. "He ain't coming back, Cyrus. We're wasting time. You got to cut that scene, and the sooner you get that down, Peck, the better."

Cyrus Peck stood silent. To cut a big punch on which his heart was set was worse than having a tooth cut. He could not make up his mind to it. Yet to hang on, day after day, brought him nothing. Brian Bennett's well-cut lips curved in a sneer.

"Are we going on without Carfax?" he snapped.

"How are we going on with the 'Outlaw' film with the pesky outlaw missing?" sneered Cyrus.

"Plenty guys to play a part like the Rio Kid, if you cut out a scene that's outside the limit. You can't get any guy to ride Pedro's Ride with me, if you rubbed round from the Mexican border to Mount Shasta. Put a man in his place, and carry on."

"And cut that scene?"

"It's got to be cut!" rapped Bennett impatiently. "I'm the only man in

California that would side it, and I'm a fool for my pains. That puncher's jibbed at it, and no wonder! Cut it." "Naps!" said Cyrus.

"Then I guess I'll be heading it back to Hollywood," said the film star. "You can long-distance me if your puncher turns up again. I'll come up as fast as a car can move, if—"

Cyrus Peck breathed hard. "You stick here!" he said. "If he ain't back to-night, we cut it and carry on."

Cyrus had made up his mind at last to the inevitable.

"That goes!" said Bennett, and he turned and walked away to his hangar, a cardiac grin marking his handsome face. "Boy Carfax" would not be back that night, or any night—never, so long as the gangsters were drawing a hundred dollars a day for keeping him safe in the mountains.

The Hansome Humber had was his game, little as Cyrus guessed it. Not for any earthly consideration would Brian Bennett have dared to ride down that torrent. He had given his word, but he was not called upon to keep it unless Carfax appeared on the scene again. He had to ride it in pursuit of the escaping outlaw—that was the big punch. Without the outlaw, there was nothing to it, and the ride had to be cut. He had saved his face; it was the other man who had backed out, and left the Gorgeous director in the lurch. And the shame of a cowardly desertion, fastened on to the Texas puncher, gave an added zest to the film star's satisfaction.

But if Brian was satisfied, Cyrus Peck was not. He had agreed to what could not be helped—but it got his goat more sorely than ever. He walked across to the high wall of rock that shut in the valley, and stood staring up at the spraying torrent that tumbled down the rift.

He clenched his fat hands with rage as he stared. It was a big punch—the biggest punch ever—and it had to be cut, unless the Texas puncher came back that night.

Suddenly Cyrus jumped, started, and jumped again. Over the spraying, tumbling water, as it fell from rock to rock, appeared suddenly a stilet hat!

The Kid Gets Back!

THE Rio Kid had him slumped on the rough pinewood bench in the shed for ten or three long hours. Like long, long days they seemed to the Kid, while the ravine thong round his wrists soaked in the bucket. Every now and then he had tried his muscles on it, but it seemed as hard and fast as an iron band. At last he felt the knotted rawhide give a little.

It was but a trifle, but the Kid's heart beat faster, and his eyes, under his stonemason's steady brim, shot a glance towards the cabin. The game of snakes there was over. Pete Henry was leaning back on the bench, smoking. The Shooter was snustering aimlessly to and fro, no doubt fed up to the teeth by the

silence and solitude of the hide-out after the bustle and buzz of Hollywood. Spanish John was still in the cabin.

The gangsters had given the prisoner no food. They knew that he was safely tied and he was full in their view. They could not have dreamed that he had a chance of escape, or that he was even thinking of it. If they left him for but one more hour, the Kid felt that he would do his trick!

Suddenly Spanish John appeared at the cabin door. He gave a careless glance across to where the Kid lay slumped on the bench, and joined his associates. The three sat down to a meal. They ate and talked, then smoked cigars, heedless of the Kid. If they remained heedless, that was all he asked! But he knew that they would give him another meal that day—he had been fed twice a day, and his second meal was yet to come. Then his hands would be released for a time—with a gun touching his head, as a warning not to use them.

The Kid would have been glad to eat, but now he hoped that the meal would be delayed. For if they came to untie his hands, they could not fail to see what he had done, and could hardly fail to guess his purpose and put paid to it.

As Spanish John rose to his feet at last, the Kid strained once more at the knotted thong, and felt it give still further. But the "give" was not enough to free his hands, and he felt something like a pang of despair as the gangster moved.

But Spanish John did not approach the shed. He remained talking to his side-kickers for a few minutes, then strode away down the gulch the way the Kid had seen him come. His footsteps died away in the silence of the lonely hills.

The sun was sinking behind the high mountains towards the Pacific. But there were hours of daylight yet. The Kid breathed thankfulness as the two roughshocks sat down on the bench, and the soiled, greasy cards came into view again. They were playing again, and intent on their game—in no hurry to hand the Kid his evening meal. The Kid settled down to it, and another hour creaked by on leader feet.

And then, with a thrill of fever-heat, he realized that he was winning. The rawhide thong, thoroughly soaked with water, gave and gave, and as he exerted his strength on it, it stretched, and stretched—and, with a final desperate twist, his hands were out of it. He drew them free, leaving the knotted rawhide to sink to the bottom of the bucket.

He sat up on the bench, carefully keeping his hands in their former position to deceive a glance. They were cold from the water, numbed from the knotted beads, the wrists chafed, the fingers stiff. He rubbed them softly on his goatskin chaps to restore the circulation.

His eyes were fixed on the two roughshocks. To attempt to free his legs, he had to stoop and fumble with the cards—and he could not make the venture. To attempt it was to ask

for discovery of what he had done already. His fight for freedom, when it came, had to come while he was still tied to the bench—an unarmed man, with his feet tied, against two armed gangsters. But with his hands loose, the Kid figured that he had a good chance of making the grade. They could come within his reach now as soon as they liked.

But they were in no hurry. They played with the grime cards, and smoked, and chewed the rag. But, at length, Pete Henry rose yawning from the bench, and made a gesture towards the prisoner. The Kid's eyes shone.

Pete Henry shot out a can of beans on a tin platter. He added a loaf to it. They were not wasting much on the prisoner for whom Brian Bennett was paying them a hundred dollars a day.

Pete came bounding across, with the platter in his hands. The Shooter followed him, taking from his hip-pocket a revolver, to jam against the prisoner's head when his hands were untied. The Kid's longing eyes glistened at that hardware. But he sat, slumping as if utterly weary, and his hands, half buried in the goatskin chaps, looked as if they were still bound. Little chance as he looked to have, he was going, at least, to have the advantage of surprise.

"Say, you sure ain't in no hurry to feed your guests in this here boarding-house?" the Kid drawled, as the two gangsters came into the shed. "I'll tell a man, I sure got an appetite on me, and them some!"

"Aw, can it!" grunted Pete. "I guess you're more trouble than you're worth, puncher. We got no call to hang on around this hide-out, 'cept to keep tabs on you, dog-gone you!"

"I guess I'm willing to let the horizon, feller, just as soon as you like," said the Kid. "You only got to start me, and you won't see my heels for that!"

"You won't hit no horizon!" said Pete grimly. "When the boss is through with you, you go up on a bench!"

"And I'll say I'm just hating to pull the rope," said the Shooter, with a savage scowl at the Kid. "I sure limp ever since you three lead that night on the hill at Hollywood, when you got that gink Bennett away from Spanish John. I sure got a laugh coming the day you go up, dog-gone you!"

"Quit chewing the rag, and stick that gun at his crotch!" granted Pete.

The Shooter stepped closer to the Kid, to jam the revolver muzzle to his head, while Pete untied his hands. That those hands were already loose, neither of the roughnecks dreamed—but they discovered it in another moment. For those hands shot up swiftly, and before either of them knew what was happening, the Kid had grabbed the Shooter's gun by the barrel and wrenched it away.

The movement was so unexpected, so sudden and swift, that the gun was in the Kid's grasp before the Shooter realized that it had left his own. And the next second the last came crashing fall in the Shooter's startled face,



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THE PACE THAT KILLS.—I have secured a thrilling motor-racing story for next week's issue. It tells of a lone Britisher battling against three German cars for the Grand Prix of Morocco, pitting his wits against those of the drivers of German cars, fighting against their attempts to lure him into going the **PACE THAT KILLS.** The story is by Clifford Cameron, and if you can find time to drop me a line and tell me what you think of it I shall appreciate it.

TYPHOON TERROR.—One advantage of serving in a submarine is that you can dive below the surface, and seek safety below from storms. But that advantage is denied the crews of the Vulcan. The submarine's masters have been put out of action by a bomb, and suddenly a typhoon smashes down on the boat. Huge waves pound her, making her quiver in every rivet. But there is no escape. Crippled, she must fight it out on the surface! Stanton Higgs gives a vivid picture of peril at sea in this great story.

THE BIG KID'S escape from Spanish John has upset Winstar Bennett's plans. Now, unless he can get rid of the outlaw for good, he must make good his boat and undertake the breakfast movie ride—or brand himself the **FUNK OF THE FILM.** Ralph Redway has written a topping story around Bennett's dilemma, and it is coming to you next week.

STAND AND DELIVER!—Well knowing that Jonathan Wild has set a trap for them, Bob Eches and Cavalier Jack invade a gaming club, and order the gamblers to hand over their cash. But getting the cash and getting away with it are two vastly different matters, for outside wait Jonathan and his chief-takers, ready to arrest the highwaymen as soon as they show their noses. That's a situation that holds out promise of plenty of excitement, and John Braden has made the most of it in next week's old-time adventure.

O'MALLY FIGHTS ON!—Five and a half hours will see the runaway planet Nevis on its way off in space that all hope of bringing it and Captain Justice and his comrades back to earth will have vanished. That's the position when Steinhack offers to bring back the runaway for a fee of £10,000,000. Flanagan is all for accepting, but Dr. O'Mally says No. He's all for fighting, and the Irishman has his way. You'll meet him on the warpath in next week's stirring Captain Justice story.

TELL NEXT SATURDAY!

and he went backwards and fell like a log.

The Kid Makes the Grade!

THE Rio's Kid's eyes blazed as the Shooter went sagging back under that crashing blow. Swiftly he reversed the gun in his grasp, and his finger sought the trigger.

Pete Henry had laid the platter of beans down and was turning to him when the Shooter went backwards. Instantly he reached for his own gun, and it came whipping out.

How the prisoner had got his hands loose had Pete guessed, but they were loose, and a gun in one of those. Given a couple of seconds, Pete would have riddled the Rio Kid with lead as he sat tied to the bench.

But he was not given two seconds, or one, for the Kid's finger was on

the trigger, and he fired, and fired again. Pete gave one gasping groan and rolled over on the wretched floor.

The Shooter staggered to his feet, to stare at a levelled, smoking gun, with the Kid's blue eyes burning over it. He cast a wild glance at Pete Henry's gun, still in the fingers of the fallen man.

"Forget it!" The Kid's voice came terse. "Stand where you are, you dog-gone punk, or you get yours!"

The Shooter stared with almost unbellying eyes at the Kid.

"How'd you get loose, dog-gone you? I guess—"

"Pack it up!" said the Kid tersely. "I guess I'd as soon make it the last sickness for you as not. You reach for that guy's gun, and you got it coming."

The Shooter backed a step away. "I guess I can't stand where you are, feller!" said the Kid. "You

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take another step and there won't be any more to follow!"

The Shooter eyed him savagely, unobtrusively. The Kid was tied to the bench; he could not even rise to his feet. Once out of his range, the ruffian could have riddled him from a distance—there was a rifle in the cabin. But there was no chance, and he knew it. The swiftest leap would not save him from whirling lead.

"You got it clear?" grunted the Kid. "I'll sure pack lead in you if you want! I'd just as soon as not, you dog-goned gack! You got it?"

"You're the doctor!" growled the ruffian.

"You said it," agreed the Kid. "Now go down on your knees and untie that rope! You want to do it quick, and you want to do it as you're told, or you won't know what hit you, feller! Get to it."

The Shooter gave him one deadly glare, then obeyed. He dropped on his knees, close beside the Kid, to wrench at the knots of the rope that fastened the Texas puncher to the leg of the bench. Perhaps he hoped at such close quarters to have a chance of snatching at the gun. If so, there was nothing in it. The gun, was in the Kid's grip, and the muzzle was jammed against the Shooter's ball neck as he fumbled at the cords. His life hung on a thread—the Kid would have shot him up without compunction had he started trouble.

For long minutes he fumbled and wrenched at the rope—the Kid was well tied. But the knotted bands came loose at last, and the boy cut-

low rose to his feet. The Shooter eyed him wolfishly.

The Rio Kid gave him a cheery smile.

"Stick your paws in front of you and squat down," he said. "I guess I'll leave you for the cops, but I'd just as soon leave you for the buzzards. You got your choice, feller!"

The Shooter's choice was quickly made. He sat on the bench in the Kid's place, and the Kid hooped a cord over his wrists and drew it tight. Then, with the ropes that had been lately on his own limbs, he bound the ruffian to the bench, fastening every knot with a cowboy's skill.

"I guess that fixes you, feller," said the Kid. "If Spanish John blows in about a long-distance case to come for you, it's your good luck. But I'll tell a man, this here hide-out won't be a safe spot for John! So-long, feller!"

CYRUS PUNK rubbed his eyes, and rubbed them again. Like a man in a dream, he stared at the steatite hat in the steep arroyo. The Hispanic director planned for two guys to ride that break-neck path, one after another; but he well knew that few cared to tackle it even on foot. It was a surprise to see any guy descending that staircase of rock, washed by the foaming torrent, unaided. He dared not believe that it was the Texas puncher returning the way he had gone. He had a glimpse of the face under the steatite. Then he knew.

"It's the puncher!" breathed Cyrus. "It's sure the puncher, and he's back on time!"

Hue and Cry

(Continued from page 21)

"I will try."

"You will, I' faith! Godso! Well, Mehall is a sportsman. I lay you a thousand guineas, the horse's price, that you won't. Demmit! Master him, and the horse is yours—'pon my honor!"

"A bargain, Lord Mehall!" With that, Bob Eccles slipped one foot into the stirrup and swung lightly upon Black Night's back.

As though gifted with invisible wings, Black Night soared into the air at the touch of a lured human on his back. The crowd screamed and retreated. Lord Mehall alone stood his ground, taking snuff with a slightly ironical air, while Cavalier Jack held on to the rein and watched breathlessly.

Now on his forelegs and flinging his hind heels upwards as if trying to spurn the skies, now rearing on his haunches and tossing his lofty crest, Black Night tried every trick in his power to dislodge the human on his back. Bob sat in the saddle as if glued, a tight-lipped smile on his face. From flailing side mane to sweeping tail, the great black horse was a thing of foam-flecked fury.

"Kerned!" breathed the Earl of Mehall at last, lips parted in a smile of genuine admiration.

Cavalier Jack breathed a sigh of relief as the black horse crossed its

furious efforts. Bob applying the curb with a firm but gentle hand as it trotted round the Ring, shaking its glossy head and leaning as if acknowledging its master. A cry of delight rose from the ladies and gentlemen seated.

"Fore George!" exclaimed Lord Mehall, without a shadow of reticence, as Bob Eccles reined in the pawing thoughtless and swept off his laced hat. "The horse is yours, my man. You've won him fairly. Gad, I'd like to know the name o' the man who can master Black Night!"

He had his answer the same minute. The strings of Bob's neck had somehow become loosened in that stubborn contest, and even as he hesitated it fluttered to the trampled ground, disclosing to the surprised Mehall the battered and puff-up face of the youngster who had thrashed him in his first the previous night.

"Sink me!" cried the nobleman, in amazement. "It is—"

"Robert Eccles, the highwayman!" cried a slender, masked youth beside him, and even at that moment Bob recognized the shrill, cracked tones of his hypocritical cousin, Aubrey Crosby.

"A highwayman! A highwayman!" shouted the crowd.

"Come on, Bob—quick!" cried Cavalier Jack, releasing the rein and flinging in the folds of his ash for his pistols. "Gallop for't—before they can close the Park gates!"

The puncher came tramping out of the arroyo, and almost ran into Mr. Punk as he stood and stared.

"Say, you?" roared Cyrus.

Nevertheless, his boots straining water, the Kid halted and gave the slim director a cheery grin. Cyrus shook a fat hat at him. He was relieved—immensely relieved—to see him back, but that did not wash out two days of worry and chasing. He was as angry as he was relieved.

"You big stiff!" roared Cyrus. "Where you been? You been sitting at the top of that rift for two days, puncher?"

"I guess I been tied up in Spanish John's hide-out," said the Kid. "A guy in your gel-darned company put them god-darned wires where to lay for me. And I'm confiding to you that I'm going to beat up that guy a few."

"A man in this company?" gasped Cyrus.

"Sure!"

"Get moving! I want to see you beat up that guy!" howled Cyrus.

Cyrus started for the location in fact as he could tell. The Rio Kid strode by his side. Cyrus, he reckoned, would have another guess coming when he learned the name of the dog-goned, double-crossing polecat. But that out so ice with the Kid. Whether the director stood for it or not, he was going to handle the Handsome Bachelor, and he was going to handle him hard!

Bob's Redwing has written another happening story of the Rio Kid for next week's issue. The title is, **PUNK OF THE FILMS!**

Up rose Black Night on his hind legs once more, brandishing his forefeet, and those who had collected around the exposed highwayman recoiled before those glittering hoofs.

Swinging his whip, Bob charged straight on to his treacherous cousin. He meant only to frighten Aubrey, but with a screech his relative rolled over and over on the gravel, cowering in sheer terror as Black Night swept over him in a flying leap.

Neck and neck the two knights of the road rode out of the Ring, scattering the crowd as they spurred full-pelt for the gates at Hyde Park Corner.

"Highwayman! Stop the highwayman!" bleated Aubrey, picking himself up—and then his delicate crest was crushed in a grip of iron as Lord Mehall caught him by the throat.

"Ye yelping little mongrel!" snarled his lordship, glaring. "If Bob Eccles is your cousin, as you told me this morning, he's worth twenty of you! Faith, he's robbed me of the finest horse in my stable, and I'll see him hanged for't, but he's a sportsman, and, I' gad, he deserves to get away this time!"

With this rather incoherent remark, the Earl of Mehall halted Aubrey close over the palings of the Ring, to sprawl daintily on the turf, while his lordship turned to watch the exciting chase.

There were plenty of horse-riders in the Park, and one of these shared,