

Thrilling Tales of the **GOLDEN WEST!**

The POPULAR

EVERY TUESDAY.
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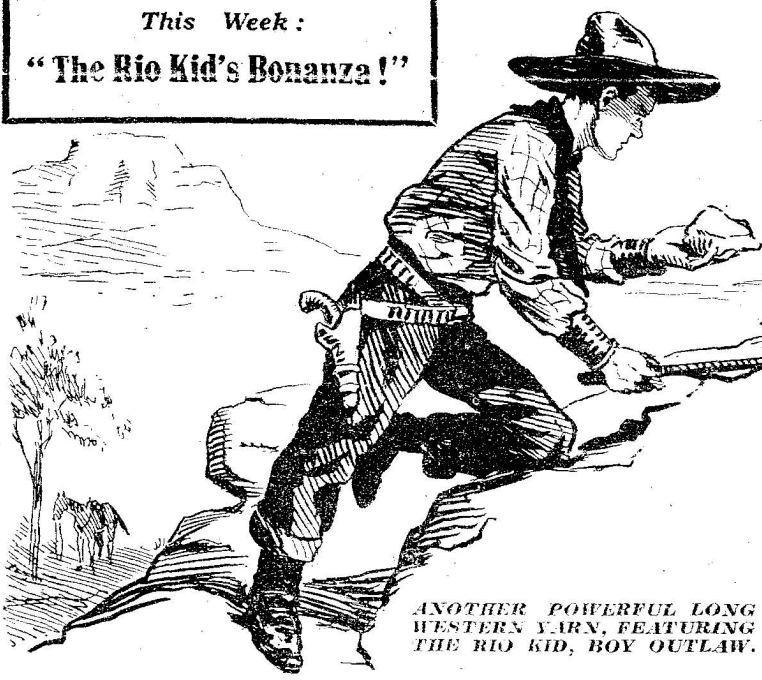


"GOLD!"

A GREAT GOLD STRIKE! Gold, gold — the greatest strike in Arizona — untold wealth in the hillsides of the Gold Canyon, and all the Rio Kid's. It's his reward after braving many fearful perils!

The Rio Kid! ^{By} RALPH REDWAY

This Week:
"The Rio Kid's Bonanza!"



ANOTHER POWERFUL LONG WESTERN YARN, FEATURING THE RIO KID, BOY OUTLAW.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
At Los Pinos!

"GOLDEN CANYON?"

"Yep!"
"Stranger, hyer?" asked Cassidy, staring across his bar at the puncher.

"Sure!"
"I reckoned so, or you'd know Golden Canyon," said Cassidy. "Any hombre in Los Pinos will tell you. Looking for lost cows?"

The Rio Kid grinned.
The Kid was in Arizona prospecting for gold; but never had a mining prospector looked the part less. From his jangling spurs and baggy chaps, to his silken neckscarf and Stetson hat, he looked a cowpuncher. His hands were used to the reins and the quirt, and the grip of a gun; but seldom had they handled pick or shovel.

Cassidy, who kept the Red Eye saloon at Los Pinos, supposed that he was a cowman down from the Arizona cow country; but his inquiry was a jest. Lost cows never strayed so far from the cow country as that township on the edge of the Red Desert.

"Nope," said the Kid cheerily. "Prospecting."
Cassidy laughed.
All sorts of pilgrims came to Los Pinos to prospect for gold in the foothills on the edge of the desert. But a boy cowpuncher in spurs and chaps, with a quirt under his arm, was the unlikeliest-looking fossicker that Cassidy had ever seen.

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"Forget it, boy," said Cassidy. "You ride back to the ranch and ask your boss to take you on again. You been fired?"

"Sort of fired!" chuckled the Kid.
He did not tell Cassidy how he had been "fired"; that he had ridden out of Texas, leaving baffled sheriffs behind him, and a reward of five hundred dollars on his head.

All that was dead and buried now.
The Rio Kid, the outlaw of the Texas grass-lands, had ceased to exist. Kid Carfax had come to life in his place. In the Arizona gold country they had never heard of the Rio Kid; and they never would hear of him, if the Kid could help it.

"I got a hunch that I'm sure going to strike pay dirt in this sierra," the Kid explained.

And Cassidy chuckled again.
"You won't strike it in Golden Canyon, I reckon!"

"Why?"
"Because it ain't there," said Cassidy. "Last year the Arizona Con sunk a shaft in that very canyon, and sunk thousands of dollars on it, and gave it up again. The old shaft's still there, filling up with water."

"What's the Arizona Con?" asked the Kid.

"You sure are some greenhorn if you ain't heard of the Arizona Consolidated Gold Mines!" said Cassidy pityingly. "I calculate they own half Los Pinos and some more!"

"Never heard of them," said the Kid carelessly. "I reckon there's a store in

this burg where I can get a mining outfit?"

"Next door," said Cassidy.
He turned away to spin bottle and glass across the lead counter to a customer.

The Rio Kid, leaning on the counter, looked over the saloon.

He was new to the mining country, and all that he saw there interested the young puncher from Texas.

The hour was yet early; but the Red Eye had a good crowd already. From the street came a red glare of the sun-set and the roar of the stamp-mills, that filled the valley with incessant noise.

State laws to the contrary notwithstanding, Cassidy sold all varieties of fiery liquors across his bar; in that matter, as in many other matters, Los Pinos was a law unto itself. Every man in the Red Eye packed a gun; it was no place for a tenderfoot, and the Rio Kid, to the eyes of the rough men of Los Pinos, looked the veriest tenderfoot.

Near him a poker party sat at a little table, playing for high stakes, with set, grim faces. The faro lay-out had already started business, though the table was not yet crowded, as it would be later in the evening. There was an incessant hum of voices that mingled with the buzz of machinery floating in through the open doors.

A tall man, with a short black beard and two low-slung guns, came in at the door and lounged across to the long bar; and the Kid noticed that the patrons of the Red Eye made respectful way for him.

The Kid knew the type well enough; he had happened on plenty of gunmen in his own country. Cassidy's manner was very respectful as he served the tall man with drinks, and the Kid smiled faintly.

The gunman glanced at the Kid, and glanced at him again, not liking the cool glance the puncher gave him in return. He contracted his brows and stared hard at the Kid; and the Kid, with a faint smile of amusement, returned his gaze steadily.

A tap on the arm, however, caused the Kid to look round. It was Cassidy.

"Spill it!" said the Kid.

"You slide out, boy," said Cassidy, in a low voice. "Two-gun Peters don't like being stared at."

"That long galoot?" asked the Kid.

"Sure! Slide out, I tell you!"

"I guess not!"

Cassidy shrugged his shoulders and went about his business. He had put the tenderfoot wise, and if the tenderfoot did not choose to take the hint he could get what was coming to him.

The Kid looked thoughtful.

His resolve to dodge trouble in this new country was weakening. The aggressive look of the gunman irritated the Kid: he was not the man to be scared by aggressive looks. But, after all, he had dropped into the Red Eye in search of local information, and certainly not in search of trouble.

It was wiser to pull out without a "rookus." And the Kid, having bitten on that, kept his glance away from the gunman; and Two-gun Peters, having stared at him with grim aggressiveness for some minutes without drawing a glance in return, shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, and gave him no further heed. Out of the tail of his eye the Kid noted that contemptuous shrug, and his eyes gleamed for a moment. But he let it pass.

A dusky figure in a tattered blanket lurched in at the door. Many eyes turned upon it, among them the Kid's.

The newcomer was an Indian—an Apache. The dust of the desert grimed him from head to foot; his moccasins were ragged, his leggings dusty and torn, his blanket a rag. But there was a certain dignity in the way the Redskin draped the tattered blanket round his tall figure as he strode into the saloon.

The Kid knew Indians, and he figured that the Redskin was a chief, one of the "wild" Apaches, who preferred the hard, savage life of the desert to the confinement of the Indian Reservations. On that point the Rio Kid could sympathise with him, though he shared the general opinion of his race that Indians were "pizen."

"Hallo, Rainy Face!" said Cassidy across the bar, with a grin.

Evidently he knew the Apache.

The Indian gave him a dignified nod. "Set 'em up!" he said, in a guttural voice, and he laid a little bag of gold-dust on the bar counter.

The Apache had come into the Red Eye for the potent fire-water—the insidious enemy that was exterminating his race.

"Three fingers?"

Rainy Face nodded.

Cassidy spun over the glass. The Redskin was about to pick it up when Two-gun Peters reached across and knocked the glass spinning into the sawdust on the floor.

"I guess you don't drink here, Injun!" he said. "Git!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Kid Chips In!

THE Rio Kid breathed hard. The gunman had come into the Red Eye in an aggressive mood, looking for trouble. The Kid had steered clear of trouble with him—unwillingly. All the other men in the saloon either gave him a wide berth, or treated him with marked deference. Nobody, it was very clear, wanted trouble with Two-gun Peters.

From sheer swaggering aggressiveness the ruffian had picked on the Apache.

The Redskin was unarmed; no Redskin from the desert would have dared to come armed into Los Pinos. Un-

armed as he was, he turned a fierce, furious glare on the gunman and his dusky hands clenched.

The gunman grinned at him.

He stood leaning on the bar, his hands loosely at his sides, within easy reach of the guns low-slung from his belt. He half-expected the savage Apache to spring at him like a tiger; but had Rainy Face done so, he would never have reached the gunman; he would have rolled in the sawdust on the floor with a bullet through his heart.

"Shooting up!" a Redskin was a trifling matter in Los Pinos.

Two-gun Peters made a gesture towards the door.

"Git!" he said. "You don't drink here, Injun! Hit the trail, lively!"

The Apache stood motionless.

"You ain't going?" grinned Peters. "I guess I'll stir you, Injun!"

He drew a revolver from his right-hand holster. There was a scurrying back out of the line of fire. The Apache's eyes blazed, but he did not speak, and he did not stir.

Bang!

The gun roared, and the bullet crashed on the floor within a fraction of an inch of the Indian's ragged moccasin.

Rainy Face jumped clear of the floor. "Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter from the crowd in the saloon. This kind of gun-play was a jest in the Red Eye at Los Pinos.

Bang!

The gun roared again, clipping a strip of ragged fur from the Apache's moccasin. Again the Indian jumped; the bullet had taken off a strip of skin as well as a strip of fur.

"Beat it, Rainy Face!" called out Cassidy.

Bang! Bang!

Two-gun Peters was enjoying his joke. "I guess I'll make him dance!" he chuckled. "Dance, you Injun thief, dance!"

The Indian did not dance, but he leaped wildly to escape the bullets that crashed round his feet. Only his leaping saved him, for Peters was aiming at the ragged moccasins now.

The Rio Kid set his teeth.

He had no call to intervene; he liked Redskins little enough, and he had seen this kind of game played before, many a time. But the bullying aggressiveness of the gunman got his goat. If the Apache had been a little less active, the bullets would have crashed through bone and sinew; and the Kid decided that it was not good enough.

"I guess that game's gone far enough, feller!" drawled the Kid, facing round at Two-gun Peters.

"What?"

"Let up on the Injun!"

Two-gun Peters stared at him. He could hardly believe that this boy puncher was talking to him.

The Kid smiled back at his enraged glare. His hand was very near his gun, but he had not touched it yet. Many a man along the Rio Grande could have told the bully of Los Pinos how fast the Kid was on the draw; but in Los Pinos they did not know the Kid. It seemed to the staring crowd in the Red Eye that he was asking for sudden death, and some of them gave him commiserating glances, though not a man thought of chipping in. Two-gun Peters was a bad man to cross.

"You talking to me, puncher?" gasped the gunman, at last.

"Sure! You'll be damaging the Injun with that gun-play," remonstrated the Kid. "Let up on it, feller."

Two-gun Peters clicked his teeth. He did not speak again, but his gun, which had been aimed at the Indian, swung round towards the Kid.

Crack!

It was not Peters' gun that barked. It seemed like magic to the Red Eye crowd; a split second before, the Kid's gun had been in his holster; now it was in his hand, and it had barked out sharply before the gunman could draw a bead on him.

There was a yell from Two-gun Peters.

The gun spun from his hand to the floor, and a shower of crimson spattered the sawdust.

The gunman clasped his right hand in his left.

He backed away, and leaned heavily on the bar, his face whitening. There was a bullet-hole clean through his hand.

The Kid smiled at him.

"You sure asked for it, feller," he said.

The gunman released his wounded hand, and his left groped for his other gun. The Kid's .45 came up to a level.

"Drop it!" he said tersely.

The gun clanged to the floor.

"That's sure better," smiled the Kid.

"I guess I don't want to fix you for a funeral, Mister Two-gun Peters. Kick that gun over this way."

The gunman, sullen, savage, subdued, obeyed. The Kid stamped his heavy heel on the gun, putting it out of action.

"You sure won't want a gun for months to come, feller," he drawled. "You want to take that paw of yours round to the doc. You Injun, I reckon you can soak up your pizen."

The Apache fixed his black eyes on the Kid, with a strange glance.

"Little white chief big medicine!" he said gutturally. "Rainy Face no forget!"

He stalked up to the bar again, draping his tattered blanket round him. The gunman, white as death with the pain of his wound, was staggering towards the door. Faces that had been subdued when he came in, were grinning now—Two-gun Peters had lost his terrors for the men of Los Pinos. A laugh followed him as he staggered into the street.

"They sure taught you to shoot on your ranch, puncher!" exclaimed Cassidy.

"They sure did!" agreed the Rio Kid. And he walked cheerily out of the Red Eye, leaving the saloon in a buzz behind him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Golden Canyon!

IT was a couple of days later that the Rio Kid rode into Golden Canyon.

He had put in two days at Los Pinos, picking up knowledge of local topography, and laying in supplies for his trip.

Miner's tools were added now to the slicker pack that the Kid carried behind his saddle. The Kid was ready for fossicking.

In Los Pinos, many eyes had turned on the graceful figure of the Kid, when he walked the street, or shopped in Baker's Store. Few who were told could believe that this boy from the prairie had shot up Two-gun Peters. The two-gun man was laid up in his cabin, with a bandaged arm in a sling, and a temper on him that made it unsafe for the curious to ask him questions. With his right hand he would never shoot again; and there were many in Los Pinos glad to know it. The gun-

fighter was dreaded, but he was not popular. Los Pinos stared at the Kid so long as he remained in the town; but he did not remain long. With a miner's outfit added to his pack, he rode out of the town one morning and vanished into the foothills.

The Kid looked round him, in Golden Canyon, with a rather grim eye. Some hopeful pilgrim had doubtless given the place its name; but its look was not promising—a rugged wilderness of wild, rocky walls, with trickling water here and there, and in one place looking out on the deadly desert—the Red Desert, the Jornada de la Muerte of the old Spanish days.

The hot breath of the desert reached the Kid as he came over the divide into the canyon, reminding him of the day when he had ridden into the waste of death to rescue the Mexican gambusino. That had been a kindly deed; the Kid carried in his wallet the map the dying gambusino had given him, in the same wallet a bundle of gold nuggets, proof that the gambusino had indeed found gold in the Golden Canyon as he had told the Kid. Most of the nuggets the Kid had sold to pay for his mining outfit and to fill out the roll in his belt. The Kid had a fat roll these days, and it was good to think of; though probably he would have changed it freely for a cowboy's pay on the old Douhie-Bar ranch in Texas, could the past only have been blotted out.

"So this hyer is the place," the Kid murmured, as he rode into the wide, shallow, rocky canyon, encompassed by a wilderness of barren rock.

Fifteen miles from Los Pinos lay the Golden Canyon, where the wandering gambusino had struck it rich—the gold-seeker who had made the Rio Kid his heir.

The Kid thought of him now. Long and hard had been the gold-seeker's trail, and he had found riches only to perish. In the barren hills food and water had failed him, his horse had perished, yet in his desperate attempt to get back to the settlements he had carried a heavy sack of nuggets. He had wandered in the Red Desert, losing his way; his fate had been upon him; the Kid had saved him from the desert, yet a ball had struck him down; it seemed like destiny to the Kid when he thought of it. He did not even know the Mexican's name—only he knew that the gambusino was from Old Mexico, a stranger in Arizona. And the Kid was heir to the mine he had found, if the gambusino had not dreamed it, as the Kid half deemed. The sack of nuggets spoke for themselves; but the rich mine, of which the Mexican had babbled—that was perhaps a figment of a sick man's imagination. Anyhow, the Kid was there to see. If the mine was there he would find it.

Wild and desolate looked the canyon, dusty with the dust that blew on the hot wind from the desert. The Kid halted where a ruined wire fence still partly stood, and misshapen wrecks of abandoned machinery lay red with rust. The opening of the old shaft showed there—a gaunt, yawning pit, uncovered to the rains; a proposition that had been taken up and then abandoned by the Arizona Con—the most powerful gold-mining company operating in that part of the country. A rich company had tried there, and failed; the mine was left derelict after it had eaten up thousands of dollars. Not a good augury for the Rio Kid's quest.

In Los Pinos they had warned him to keep his eyes peeled when he went into Golden Canyon. The wild Apaches

from the desert had been sometimes seen there, he had been told, and a lonely prospector, far from help, was likely to meet with short shift at the hands of the outcast Redskins. The war-trail was a thing of the past long ago, the days of wild Redskin warfare almost forgotten, but a solitary white man who came on a gang of thief-Apaches in the desert was not likely to ride home again. The Kid heard the warning, and heeded it; but he rode alone to Golden Canyon, all the same. He could not afford to have eyes on him when he sought for the mine that the gambusino had discovered and marked. A hundred men would have followed him, had they even suspected that the Kid held a clue to a rich strike. A hundred guns would have been ready to riddle him with lead for the secret. But that the Kid held a clue nobody suspected. He knew how to keep his own counsel; and as for such a prospector striking it rich on his own, Los Pinos laughed at the idea. Cassidy, at the Red Eye, expected to see the young puncher come trailing in, dusty and broke, if he did not die of thirst in the desert, or hunger in the foothills. And the Kid was quite willing to leave that impression behind him at Los Pinos; he did not want watching eyes upon him while he sought for the gambusino's gold.

The Kid drew rein and regarded the abandoned mine of the Arizona Con with a thoughtful eye. Wild and desolate it looked, weeds and grasses growing among shattered cabins, snakes creeping among the thickets. He rode on again at last, down the canyon towards the Red Desert.

He camped by a little spring, where a big cottonwood-tree grew, in a patch of green round the spring. He fed his horse and himself, and then he drew from his wallet the strip of leather on which the gambusino had drawn the map of the bonanza. It was not an easy map to follow. The Mexican had drawn it for his own guidance in returning to the spot; to a stranger's eye it was puzzling. It was drawn in scratches from the sharp point of a knife on the hard leather—scratches and lines, with only one word, scratched deep—the Spanish word "Oro"—gold! That word indicated the strike, the Kid figured out, but there was no scale on the map, no landmarks that he could recognise.

That the bonanza was in the canyon he knew, for the gambusino had told him so. But the leather map seemed little guide. But the Kid was patient. If there was a fortune to be found in that wilderness of rock, he was going to worry it out somehow.

For three days the Kid quested.

He left his horse camped by the spring, taking an easy time, while he explored the rocky canyon on foot, little as he liked foot work. He would study the map scratched on the leather by his camp-fire, at night, and gradually he drew more meaning from the blur of scratches. He worked it out that a scratched circle indicated the shaft of the old mine of the Arizona Con, that another circle indicated the desert on which the mouth of the canyon looked. Between the two was the distance of a mile, and that gave him, roughly, the scale of the map. On that scale the spot marked "oro" was half a mile from the old mine, and the Kid was glad to see that. If he struck it rich he did not want to strike it on land that was already taken up, the property of a powerful company, though they had ceased to work it. But if the mine was half a mile from the abandoned shaft he was on safe ground.

On the fourth day the Kid broke camp in a hopeful mood. Leaving the black-

muzzled mustang in the grass by the spring, the Kid shouldered his pick and started on foot once more. He knew enough of mining to know pay rock if he struck it, and, though he had not struck it yet, he did not allow his hope to die. But that day he was to be busy in matters far other than fossicking for pay rock.

On the sloping side of the great canyon the Kid worked his way, every now and then stopping to test the rock, the clang of his pick ringing and echoing far through the vast silence of the canyon. In the clear mountain air sound travels far and fast, and so it was that the Kid heard the shrill squeal of his mustang at a great distance. And at that sound—the warning of danger—the Kid forgot all about fossicking and leaped upon a boulder to stare back at his camp by the spring in the bottom of the canyon.

His teeth came together hard.

By the cottonwood-tree five or six ragged figures were gathered, with dusky faces, and feathers stuck in their matted black hair.

"Injuns!"

The Kid muttered the word between his teeth.

His eyes blazed.

The black-muzzled mustang, lossoed by one of the Apaches, was struggling helplessly in the rope. The Kid gripped his guns.

There was a clatter of hoofs in the canyon.

A score of tattered riders came into his view and grouped under the towering cottonwood.

The Kid released his guns.

Five or six of the thief-Apaches would have been enough, even for a good man like the Kid. There were nearly thirty of the desert wanderers in sight now; more out of sight, as likely as not. The Kid's horse was taken, and the Kid realised that he was in a bad way. His first thought had been to hit for camp and handle the bunch of Redskins there and get his horse. But he abandoned that idea now. Nearly every man in the Indian gang carried a rifle, and the Kid did not need telling that they knew how to shoot. He knew that he would be riddled with balls as soon as he left the cover of the rocks on the hillside. He stayed where he was and watched.

The mustang was roped in and tied to the tree. The Kid had no fear for him; he was a valuable prize for the Redskins. The Apaches were seeking sign now, and staring round the canyon with their wild, black, gleaming eyes. They knew that the mustang's master could not be far away, and they had little fear of his escaping them without his horse. The Kid's face set more and more grimly. He felt nothing like fear, because fear had been left out of the Rio Kid's composition, but he knew that if he lived to see the sun set that day he would be a lucky puncher. A white man, alone in the foothills, far from help, was fair game to the thief-Apaches, his guns and his mustang valuable plunder to them, his scalp a trophy to be taken back to their hidden lair in the Red Desert. There were a score and a half of the ruthless savages, and they were picking up the Kid's trail.

"I sure reckon you're for it, Kid," said the Rio Kid to himself, coolly. "Those galoots back in Los Pinos knew what they were talking about when they chewed the rag about the Apaches. But I reckon some of that gang will come to the happy hunting grounds along with me."

His guns were in his hands now.

The whole gang of Apaches were crossing the canyon towards the rugged hillside, where the Kid lay among the

rocks. With a grin the Kid stuck his Stetson hat over the rocks, and in an instant two bullets crashed through it. There was a yell from the Apaches as the lead flew. Then the whole gang came on at a push—which was exactly what the Kid wanted. They were rushing on in the open, yelling. And the Kid's guns spoke death from the cover of the rocks.

Bang! Bang! Bang!
Three shots he had time for, and every shot rolled an Apache in the canyon and silenced his yelling for ever. Then the Apaches hunted cover, and the Kid ceased to fire.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Striking Gold!

CRACK!
Crack! Crack!
Not a feather was to be seen of the Apache gang that had sunk so suddenly out of sight under the fire of the Rio Kid's guns.

farther on, almost perpendicularly, so that a coyote or cougar could scarcely have found footing there.

The Kid retreated among the rocks, crawling from boulder to boulder; but perforce his retreat drew him farther and farther up the rugged slope. It was the only way to prevent the creeping enemy from closing round behind him.

A bullet joited the Stetson hat on his head; another grazed his shoulder. The Kid's face was white and set now, but it was anger and the fierce fighting

shown his head, as he sought to fire, rolled back down the rocks with a bullet in his brain.

His death-yell was answered by a fierce whoop from the rest of the gang, and for an instant the Kid expected a rush—a rush in which he knew that he must go down, but in which he was grimly determined to take at least six or seven of his foes with him across the dark river. But the habitual caution of the Redskins sobered. They did not rush. But he knew they were creeping on like wild-cats; and he worked his way farther and farther



THE GUNMAN'S JOKE! "I guess I'll make you dance!" growled Two-gun Peters, and he dragged out his gun and pumped bullets at the feet of the Redskin. Rainy Face gave a howl, and leaped into the air. Bang! Bang! Bang!
(See Chapter 2.)

But if they could not be seen they could be heard. Worned their way among ragged rocks and boulders, ever closer and closer to the spot where the pugner lay, the Apaches loosed off shot after shot as they crept and sprawled, and some of the lead whizzed uncomfortably near the crouching Kid.

"I guess I got to get out of this," mused the Kid, and he jammed his guns back into his holsters.

There was no retreat from the canyon open to the Kid. His only chance was to keep in cover of the rocks on the sloping side. Behind him, as he faced the enemy, the canyon wall rose higher and higher—at first in an easy slope;

spirit that whitened it. It was a fight to the death between the Kid and overwhelming odds. A scene familiar enough in the desolate foothills, where men took their lives in their hands in the hunt for the precious yellow metal.

The fight in the Red Eye saloon at Los Pinos, which had made the crowd open their eyes, was child's play to this. Gladly enough the Kid would have exchanged his present foes for Two-gun Peters, or a dozen of him. But the Kid was a bad man to crowd, as the Apaches were learning. Twice a bullet had narrowly missed him; but when the Kid burned powder again he did not miss, and an Apache who had

back among the rocks, to keep from being surrounded.

Had he been able to choose his way it would have been well with the Kid; but with that gang of yelling fiends almost circling him he had no choice; he had to retreat where he could. And so it was that he came up against a rugged wall of rock that cut off all farther retreat, and the triumphant yell of the Apaches told that they knew that he could go no farther. In his exultation, one Redskin lifted his head above cover and glared towards the Kid, and the next instant dropped back dead. The Kid was fighting mad now, and

more dangerous to crowd than a grizzly bear in his lair.

And then fortune, which had frowned so blackly on the Kid, seemed to smile again. In the rugged wall of rock that barred all farther retreat, a deep crevice opened, and the Kid backed into it promptly as soon as he saw it. It was a fissure in the rocky wall of the canyon, two feet wide at the most, but it widened out into a "pocket" farther on. The interior of the crevice was a jumble of rocks, affording ample cover. The opening was too narrow for more than one man to enter.

The Kid chuckled as he crouched behind cover at the extremity of the crevice and watched the opening. A dusky head and a bunch of feathers appeared there, and the Kid's gun roared, and the Apache dropped like a stone. A burst of yelling, and a scrambling of moccasins among the rocks, told the Kid that the gang were gathering round the fissure, but they did not venture yet to push in.

The Kid had a breathing space. High over his head the fissure closed in solid rock. On either side were rocky walls. He could be attacked only in front. In such a position the Kid would have undertaken to hold off all the Apaches in the Red Desert, so long as his cartridges held out. He longed to see them rush him, and give him a chance for gun-play; but the Redskins were in no hurry for that.

Minute followed minute, and there was no rush. The Kid shrugged his shoulders. He had little expectation that the Apaches would throw away their lives crowding into the narrow fissure so long as the sun lasted. When the darkness came it would be a different tale. It was only a respite that the desperate Kid had gained.

He rested and waited, and his eyes fell upon an object that lay among the rocks where he had taken cover. It was a Mexican machete. The keen blade was dulled, red with rust. And the Kid's glance lingered on it strangely. Someone had been here before him—a Mexican, by the weapon—and he had left the machete there. The Kid thought of the gambusino. Undoubtedly it was the lost gold-seeker he had found in the desert who had left his machete in that hidden fissure of the canyon wall. The Kid's eyes gleamed. Where the gambusino had been using his machete was where he had been seeking gold—where he had found it. The Kid knew that now, in the hour almost of death, he was close on the trail of the Mexican's bonanza.

Crack, crack, crack! Bullets whizzed into the fissure, crashed on the rock, and dropped flattened. At every shot there came a fierce yell from the Apaches. They fired and yelled, but they did not rush. The solitary white man, cornered in that hole in the canyon wall, daunted them. Five of the gang had fallen under his fire, and dread of his guns was mingled with the Apaches' longing for vengeance. Bullet after bullet crashed in, chipping the rocks, and scattering fragments over the Kid as he crouched, wary, watchful.

"Oro! El oro!" The word on the Mexican's leather map seemed to leap to the eye of the Kid as the chips of rock fell round him. He picked up one of the larger fragments.

It gleamed yellow to the eye. "Jerusalem!" The Kid caught his breath. He turned his startled eyes upon the canyon wall behind him. Gleam after gleam of yellow caught his gaze. The

rock that was chipped away by the crashing bullets was thick with ore.

"Oh gum!" breathed the Kid. "To hit on the bonanza with that yelling gang of fiends jest going to put me over the range. Oh shucks!"

The Rio Kid had found the bonanza. Riches untold lay in the rocks round him. An adit driven into the hillside would unearth a fortune, and that fortune was the Rio Kid's. And he was doomed to die there, and his scalp to hang at the belt of some dirty thief-Apache of the Red Desert. The gambusino's gold-mine was the grave of the gambusino's heir.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Rainy Face!

THE long, hot day was drawing to a close, and still the Rio Kid lay in cover in the fissure, watchful as a cat; and outside, among the rocks, the Apaches hemmed him in and waited for nightfall. The Kid had heard the trampling of horses in the great canyon, and he guessed that more of the gang had arrived, that foes almost without number crowded the rugged hillside, barring and blocking every possibility of escape.

Some vague hope he had had of help coming—of white men hearing the firing and coming along to see what the "rookus" was. But the Golden Canyon had for years been abandoned and untroubled. No prospector ever trod it now.

Within fifteen miles of the roaring stamp-mills of Los Pinos, almost within sound of the busy machinery, the Rio Kid was to be done to death by a mob of Apaches. And still he was cool as ice as he watched and waited for the deadly rush that he knew would come with the dark. And suddenly, in the red sunset, a voice shouted to the Kid—a guttural Indian voice that seemed to have something of a familiar ring to his ears.

"Paleface!"

"Hallo, you!" called back the Kid cheerily.

"Let the paleface listen to the words of his red brother," came the guttural voice from outside the fissure. The Indian was standing close, but he was not showing as much as a feather for the Kid's fire.

"Spill it!" jeered the Kid.

"Wah! I have seen the horse that was roped by my warriors," went on the chief's voice—evidently it was a chief who was speaking.

"Then you've sure seen a good cayuse, Injun," said the Kid.

"I have seen the horse another day, ridden in the street of Los Pinos by a little white chief."

"What about it?"

The Kid spoke over levelled guns. He suspected that he was being kept in talk to divert his attention for a sudden rush to be made.

"The rider of the black-nosed horse is the friend of Rainy Face," went on the chief.

The Kid started. He knew the name, and he knew the voice now. The Redskin who was speaking was the tattered Apache he had saved from the gun-play of Two-gun Peters in the Red Eye at Los Pinos.

"Rainy Face!" he exclaimed.

"Let the paleface listen. If he is the little white chief of Los Pinos, he is the brother of Rainy Face. Let him speak."

"I guess I'm that little white chief, Injun," grinned the Kid. "But what does it come to, getting down to cases?"

"Rainy Face came, because he received news that his warriors were in fight with a white man," said the chief.

"But when Rainy Face saw the black-nosed horse, he knew it. The little white chief is the brother of Rainy Face. Let him put up his guns and come to his friends."

"Oh, Jerusalem!" murmured the Kid. He pondered it.

It might be a trick to get him out of cover, but he did not think so. There was a ring of sincerity in the voice of the Apache. In the Red Eye he had said that he would not forget.

"If my white brother does not trust the Red man, Rainy Face will come to him with no weapons in his hands," said the chief.

"That's talking turkey, chief. Hop in!"

The tall, dignified figure of the Apache chief stepped in at the fissure without a moment's delay. His hands were empty.

The Kid lowered his guns.

"I guess I trust you, chief," he said; "but—"

"My young men will not touch the little white chief. Rainy Face has given his order."

The Kid smiled.

"I guess your young men don't feel too friendly to me, chief, after I've made it last sickness for half a dozen of them. Let them bring my horse, and stand back while I ride."

"The little chief has spoken!" said Rainy Face.

He turned and called to the tattered gang of thief-Apaches in his own tongue. There was a murmur, and the chief called again, in hard, stern tones, and the murmur died away. There was a clattering of hoofs among the rocks. The Rio Kid waited, his heart beating. The sunset was red and deep. It wanted less than an hour to dark. Rainy Face had arrived on the scene only in time to save his life—for the last desperate struggle could have ended only one way the Kid was well aware. Truly he had done well for himself when he had chipped in between the Apache chief and the bully of Los Pinos.

Rainy Face made a gesture.

"Let my white brother take his horse," he said.

He stepped back. The Kid followed him from the fissure into the open of the hillside, in the flood of crimson light from the setting sun. The Apaches had fallen back to a distance. Wild, dark, fierce eyes gleamed at the Rio Kid, but not a hand was raised.

If the chief was playing him false, the last fight might as well come in the open. But the chief was not playing him false. The Redskin's memory was as long for a benefit as for an injury. Rainy Face, who would have butchered any other white man in the desert without compunction, was more concerned for the Kid's life than for his own.

The Kid slid into his saddle. It was sheer joy to feel his mustang under him again. Rainy Face made a gesture of farewell. The Rio Kid waved his hand, and rode clattering up the canyon.

"I guess that was a close call, old hoss," the Kid remarked, as he hit the trail for Los Pinos, and galloped. "It was sure a close call, old-timer. I reckon we've got a claim to stake out, old hoss, and a title to register at Los Pinos. And the galoots there will sure stare when they see the Rio Kid's bonanza."

And the Kid galloped on contentedly as the stars came out, gleaming in the velvety sky.

THE END.

(Another roaring Rio Kid yarn next week, chums, entitled: "THE RIO KID'S GOLD-MINE!")