

'THE FAILURE OF FERRERS LOCKE!

G. H. Lawrence

Amazing 'Tec' Yarn Inside!

# The POPULAR

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EVERY  
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2d



## PLAYED, SIR!

**THE KID IN HOT WATER!** The Rio Kid, now a successful gold-miner, looks round to enjoy life. But there is no rest for the Kid. There is, in fact, a whole thunder-storm of trouble blotting out his bright future!

# The RIO KID by RALPH REDWAY



ANOTHER ROARING WESTERN YARN, FEATURING THE AMAZING BOY OUTLAW, THE RIO KID.

*This week:*

**"THE HIDDEN HAND!"**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Whipped!

**T**HAT the Rio Kid was hunting trouble, no one would have guessed from his looks.

He leaned his elbows on the bar in Cassidy's place in Los Pinos, and surveyed the crowded saloon with a smile on his tanned face.

Occasionally he sipped at the glass of lemonade that stood on the lead counter at his side.

Hardly a man in Los Pinos took soft drinks; it was seldom that Cassidy or his bar-tenders were asked to pass anything of the sort across the bar. Indeed, it was scarcely safe for a man to ask for soft drinks in Cassidy's. Such a sign of softness was liable to draw upon him rough jeering, likely enough to be followed by rough handling. But the Rio Kid never took anything else, and the Los Pinos men knew better than to jeer him. The boy puncher who disdained whisky, and sipped lemonade in the sight of all the town, had shot up Two-gun Peters, the most dreaded gunman in Los Pinos; after which he could drink anything he pleased without adverse comment. For the Kid, cheery and pleasant as he looked, packed two guns, low-slung

ready to his hands if he wanted them; and he had proved that he could shoot better on lemonade than Peters on whisky. So if any man in the Red Eye saloon grinned at the soft drink that stood by the Kid's elbow, he was careful to turn his face away before he grinned.

The Kid had his quirt under his arm. In his chaps and high-heeled boots and clinking spurs, the Kid looked the cow-puncher he was—and not at all the successful mine-owner that he also was. A kid puncher from Texas they called him in Los Pinos—Kid Carfax of the Gambusino Mine—never dreaming that he had been known along the Rio Grande as the Rio Kid, with a price on his handsome head. Los Pinos, in the mountains of Arizona, was a far cry from Texas; and the Kid had left his name and his fame behind him on the other side of New Mexico.

He had resolved to leave trouble and gun-play behind him, too, if he could; but that had not been in his power. Trouble haunted the footsteps of the Rio Kid. And, in spite of his careless manner and his pleasant smile, the Kid was hunting more trouble at this very moment, and that with the most powerful man in Los Pinos—Jas Drew, the agent of the Arizona Consolidated Gold-Mining Company of Tombstone.

The mills in Los Pinos had closed down for the day, save for the graveyard shift at the Yellow Dog Mine, which kept on an unceasing roar. Men from the mines crowded in at the Red Eye saloon, rough men from the stamp mills, rough teamsters from the trails; gunmen and gamblers; men in store clothes from the offices on Main Street, loafers and loungers of all sorts. A motley crowd. Rube McCoy, the town marshal, stood looking at the faro layout, which it was his duty as town marshal to suppress—a duty that McCoy never dreamed of performing. The faro lay-out did not tempt the Rio Kid. He was a rich man now, since he had struck the Gambusino Mine in Golden Canyon; but he did not see any sense in throwing his ample dollars away on

a gaming table. The rest of the crowd were at the Red Eye for pleasure—or what they called pleasure—but the Kid was there on business. And occasionally he glanced up at the big gilt clock over Cassidy's bar. At nine o'clock Jas Drew was accustomed to lounge into the Red Eye; and it was close on nine now.

There was a stir and a murmur when the agent of the Arizona Con appeared in the doorway, and the Kid's eyes glistened.

Jasper Drew, slim and well-dressed in store clothes, with the whitest boiled shirt in Los Pinos, sauntered in. His hard, keen face was almost expressionless, as it generally was; but little interest as he seemed to take in his surroundings, few things escaped his keen eyes. Almost his first glance fell upon the boy puncher idling at the bar, and a gleam shot into his black eyes for a second. But he took no open heed of the Kid's presence; certainly he never dreamed that Kid Carfax had come there specially to hunt for trouble with him. Men made way for the agent, who controlled half the mines in the vicinity of Los Pinos, and whose company owned most of the buildings in the town.

Jas Drew's word was law in Los Pinos. He ran the town, and he ran the town marshal; and if he was hated and feared more than he was liked, at least no one ventured to display hatred openly. Slim, well-dressed, debonaire, quiet in his manners, the agent carried no gun that could be seen; but some knew that he packed a six-shooter in his breast-pocket, and that on occasion he could draw as fast as any gunman in the mountains.

Drew was greeted on all sides, and he nodded to many acquaintances as he strolled across to the bar. Cassidy hurried to serve him—he was too important a man to be left to a bar-tender.

The agent leaned an elbow on the lead bar, and glanced over the motley assembly in the saloon, quietly, but with

an unmistakable air of being monarch of all he surveyed. And the Rio Kid detached himself from the bar, coolly finished his lemonade, and strolled across to where the agent stood, his manner cool and careless, but a mocking gleam in his eye, and the quirt under his arm ready to slip down into his hand.

"Evenin', feller!" said the Kid. All eyes were upon him at once. Jasper Drew glanced at him. He gave a brief nod, without answering the greeting.

"I guess I've ridden into town to speak to you, hombre," went on the owner of the Gambusino Mine.

Drew raised his eyebrows slightly. "Business?"

"Sure."

"Come to my office to-morrow, then," said Drew. "I don't do business in here in the evening, Puncher."

"I guess my business won't wait."

"I guess it must wait."

"That's where you slip up on it," declared the Rio Kid. "Fact is, I want all these galoots to hear my business with you, Jas Drew."

There was a buzz of voices, and a gathering round. Poker games stopped at the little tables; even the dealer at the faro lay-out paused as the players turned from the game to stare at the two men at the bar. It was seen at once that Kid Carfax was looking for trouble—and it almost took away the breath of the Red Eye crowd. There were "bad" men in Los Pinos, plenty of them; but the most reckless of the bunch never sought for trouble with the agent of the Arizona Con. And this

kid puncher from Texas was asking for it.

Drew looked at him with a glitter in his eyes.

"You moseyed along to the Gambusino Mine one day, and made me an offer to buy," said the Kid.

"The offer's still open," said Drew.

"You allowed that the Arizona Con had figured on buying me out, and wouldn't take no for answer, Mr. Drew."

Drew shrugged his shoulders. "You was kind enough to warn me that galoots who refused to sell when the Con wanted to buy were liable to meet with accidents."

The agent smiled faintly. "Now, you were sure some prophet," said the Kid agreeably, "for soon after that I came mighty near being crushed under a falling rock?"

There was a buzz in the crowded saloon. Drew shrugged his shoulders and gave the Kid no farther heed. But the Kid's voice went on—not loud, but clear in every corner of the great building.

"After that a greaser took a pot-shot at me at the door of my house, and it was sure a close call."

No sign from Drew.

"Then this very day," went on the Kid, "a gunman laid for me on the trail, and I had to shoot him up or he'd have done mischief."

Drew's eyes gleamed.

"So I figure it out that you was some prophet, Mr. Drew," said the Kid lightly. "You told me accidents would happen, and they sure did. I've come to Los Pinos to tell you that I'm fed-

up with these accidents—fed up to the back-teeth, Mr. Drew."

"You are not accusing me of knowing anything about your accidents, Mr. Carfax?" asked Drew contemptuously.

"Just that, feller."

"If you think so, there's law in Los Pinos," said Drew. "The town marshal's yonder, and he will sure give you a hearing. If you can prove up your charges—"

The Kid laughed.

"I guess no galoot has ever been able to get the goods on the Arizona Con, Mr. Drew, so far as legal proofs go. The facts are enough for me. You put a man to heave a donick on my cabsen, you hired a greaser to shoot me up in my own camp, and you sent a gunman on my trail. You're a double-crosser, Jas Drew, and a yellow hound! Got that?"

The words were barely out of the Kid's mouth when there was a surging back of the crowd out of the line of fire. For a tenth part so much offence all Los Pinos knew that Jas Drew would shoot a man dead in his tracks. Astonishment at the defiance seemed to hold the agent dumb and still for a second. Then his hand flashed into the breast of his coat.

The hidden revolver came out, and was fired almost in the same moment. But the Kid knew what was coming to him.

He did not touch a gun. He had not come to the Red Eye for gun-play. His quirt flashed up, and the gun went spinning from the agent's hand even as the trigger was pulled. The bullet crashed into the ceiling; the gun clanged on the floor. For a moment the agent stood disarmed, panting, glaring at the Kid, his mask of calmness completely dropped, his features convulsed with fury. The next moment the Kid's grip was on him, and the agent was struggling. But the grip of the puncher from Texas was like iron, and the agent crumpled up in it, and the heavy quirt in the Kid's right hand rose and fell with fierce lashes.

Lash, lash, lash!

Jasper Drew squirmed and struggled and fought like a wild-cat, but the fierce rain of blows continued without a pause. There was a roar in the Red Eye.

Poker and faro, even the drinks on the bar, were forgotten now. With staring eyes the Los Pinos men crowded round, gazing spellbound at the scene. Jas Drew, the most powerful man in the Los Pinos valley, the boss of the town and the district, was crumpling and squirming in the grasp of a cowpuncher, shrinking and howling under a rain of blows from the cowpuncher's whip.

The Kid was not smiling now; his handsome face was hard and set. He lashed and lashed again without mercy. The heavy cattle-whip fairly rang on the squirming, yelling man. Cassidy stared across the bar like a man in a dream. The crowd had fallen silent; they gazed on with eyes almost bulging. McCoy's hand sought a gun, but he did not draw it. It would have been difficult to shoot without as much risk of hitting the agent as the Kid; and even the town marshal, too, dared not outrage public opinion too far. There was little law in Los Pinos; but there was lynch law for a man who shot down a pilgrim unawares. McCoy looked on grimly. Mingled with the amazement in many faces was a grim satisfaction; Jas Drew was feared, and no man dared to cross him, but he had more secret enemies than friends in the crowd. There were many who were glad to see



**HORSE-WHIPPED IN PUBLIC!** The next moment the Kid's grip was upon the agent, and the heavy quirt lashed through the air. Lash! Lash! Lash! Jasper Drew struggled and squirmed like a wildcat, but in the Kid's iron grasp he was powerless. (See Chapter 1.)

the puncher "beat up" the man who held Los Pinos in the hollow of his hand.

Jas Drew was screaming now, helpless in the puncher's iron grip, dazed and tortured by the rain of blows from the heavy quirt.

The Kid flung him away at last, and he crumpled up against the bar, panting, exhausted, white as a sheet, helpless.

The Kid's eyes were fixed on him.

"I guess you've got what was coming to you, Jas Drew," he said quietly and clearly. "If you want gun-play you know where to find me, and you'll find me at home. I guess I've warned you now not to set any of your hired killers after me; and you can chew on it that you'll never get hold of the Gambusino Mine; I guess I'd blow it sky-high before I'd let the Arizona Con get a grip on it."

The Kid's quirt was under his arm again now; his hands hung loose near the walnut butts of his low-slung guns. He was ready for gun-play if Drew's friends chose to chip in. But not a hand was raised. It was remembered only too well how Two-gun Peters had gone down under the Kid's fire in the Red Eye. The Kid glanced round and smiled.

"Gents, the circus is over! I want all Los Pinos to know that that lobo-wolf Drew sent his hired killers on my trail, and I've quirted him as a warning to let up on that game. Gents, there's the bar—and the drinks are on me."

The Kid tossed a bag of gold-dust on the bar, and there was a crowding up to accept the invitation. Jas Drew staggered to his feet, his face colourless, his eyes burning, his mouth twitching. McCoy made a movement; his impression was that the agent wanted to borrow a gun. But Drew did not heed him. Under the stare of all the saloon he limped to the door, and a buzz of amazement followed him.

"Taken water?" breathed Cassidy. "Jas Drew's taken water—afore a kid puncher from Texas! Waal carry me home to die!"

And the Rio Kid rode homeward to his camp under the stars, humming a tune, and wondering whether the trouble with the Arizona Con was over, or whether it was only just beginning.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Trouble at the Mine!

JUD CLAY, foreman of the Gambusino Mine, tramped into the Kid's frame house, with a deep frown on his brow.

The Rio Kid, seated in a rocker by the window that gave a view of the camp, was cleaning a six-gun.

He glanced up at Jud and smiled.

"What's wrong at the mine, Jud?"

Jud Clay slumped into a seat.

"Trouble," he said briefly.

"You looked it," smiled the Kid.

"Vein petering out?"

The foreman shook his head.

"I guess you can tell me, if my ten-



THE KID CLOSES HIS MINE! "This mine is closing down, Jud," said the Kid. "Put up the notice on the wall!" The notice was pinned up for all Gold Brick to see and read: **SHUT DOWN! NO HANDS WANTED!** (See Chapter 5.)

strike isn't so all-fired rosy as I figured," grinned the Kid. "I guess I know that these surface strikes don't always pan out good at depth."

"There's nothing wrong with your mine, Mr. Carfax," said Jud. "It's the richest strike ever made in this part of Arizona, and the deeper we drive, the richer the vein."

"You sure sing a good tune, feller," said the Kid.

"It ain't that," said Jud. "It's the hands."

"Trouble with the miners?"

"Yep."

The Kid looked from the window.

In a few short weeks a camp, almost a town, had grown up facing the Gambusino Mine. A hundred or more log cabins and shacks, two saloons, a lumber hotel, a blacksmith's forge, a store, and many other buildings, ranged along the canyon, where a few short weeks before all had been solitary, and the Kid had fought with the thief-Apaches from the Red Desert. A "boom" town in the mining country does not take long to grow; and the Gambusino boom was at its height. Already the camp had a name, and was on its way to becoming a town rivaling Los Pinos itself. A stamp mill was in the course of construction; the Kid aimed to do his own crushing, all the more because he knew that Jas Drew had the power to close the Los Pinos stamp mills against him if he cared.

Gold Brick was the name of the camp—an allusion to the rich nuggets that were constantly taken out of the Gambusino Mine. Fifty men worked in the mine now, and of all the half-hundred not one had any cause of complaint. Miners' wages were high in the sierra; but the Kid, growing richer day by day, paid higher rates than any other mine; twice the men had demanded higher pay, and the Kid had conceded it. Now he wondered if the trouble meant a fresh demand; which he did not intend to concede. Careless good-nature was very easily mistaken for weakness; and the Kid did not mean to have his mine run by anybody but himself.

The Kid noticed now that the miners were not at work; they were gathered in a crowd before the Gold Brick Hotel, and a man in a red shirt, mounted on a

barrel, was haranguing them. There was trouble brewing, that was clear; but the Rio Kid did not seem concerned. Sometimes he thought that he thrived on trouble.

His glance turned back to the troubled brow of the foreman.

"Spill it, Jud!" he said cheerily.

"I guess it's a strike."

"What do they want now?" smiled the Kid. "They're drawing two dollars a day more than any mine crowd at Los Pinos."

"It's the greaser."

"The greaser!" repeated the Kid.

"That's it. They sure allow they won't have a greaser in this camp."

"Feller that does the chores here?"

"Yep!"

The Kid laughed.

"That's thin," he said. "They want to give trouble, and they're hunting for an excuse."

"Sure," assented Jud Clay. "They've been got at, of course. A man was beat up last night and robbed, and they allow that your greaser did it."

"Jose hasn't the grit to beat up a jack-rabbit," chuckled the Kid.

"That's a cinch. But they want trouble; and they allow that they won't handle a singlejack in the mine again till the greaser is fired!"

The Kid's jaw squared.

"Who's stirring up the trouble?" he asked.

"The ringleader's Big Hank Carter; but I guess there's a man behind him pulling the strings."

"Jas Drew?"

"For sure."

The Kid looked through the window again at Jose the Mexican, who was rubbing down a horse. He smiled grimly. Jose did the chores in the Kid's frame house, and he was the most in-offensive greaser that the Kid had ever seen.

"They're coming to see you about it, Mr. Carfax," said Jud Clay. "They allow you've got to fire the greaser. And if you fire him there'll be something else to-morrow. Drew's pulling the strings, and he's out for trouble. I guess half the hands are in his pay already; and the other half's led by the nose. Work's stopped at the mine."

The Kid nodded thoughtfully.

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Since he had quitted the Arizona Consolidated agent at Los Pinos there had been no more accidents, no more trailing of Kid Carfax. Open hostility seemed to have ceased. But tampering with the hands that worked at the Gambusino Mine was a new move, and it was easy enough to stir up trouble there.

"They're coming!" said Jud, with a dispirited glance from the window.

"Let 'em come!" said the Kid.

The Gambusino men were coming across to the house in a straggling crowd. Big Hank Carter, the man in the red shirt, led them.

The Kid lunged out into the porch to meet them.

"Hallo, you-uns!" he called out cheerily, as the strikers came to a halt before the porch. Jose the Mexican, with one scared look at the crowd, bolted into the house like a rabbit into a burrow.

The Gambusino crowd eyed the Kid as he stood in the porch, smiling and good-tempered.

"Spill it, fellers!" said the Kid.

"What's the trouble now?"

Carter strode forward.

"You've got to fire that greaser of yours, Mr. Carfax!" he said.

The Kid's eyes gleamed.

"Got to?" he repeated.

"That's the ticket! We allow that he beat up a man last night, and we ain't gone on greasers, anyhow. We don't want the man in camp, and we sure ain't letting him stay! You get me?"

"I got you!" assented the Kid.

"Well, I ain't sacking Jose, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it."

There was a growl from the crowd.

"Jose never beat up a man in his life," said the Kid. "But if you've got any evidence, hand it out."

"I guess he never called in any galoot to see him doing it," snorted Carter. "He's a greaser, anyhow, and he's going."

"I guess not!"

"You hear that, boys?" roared Carter. "He's keeping on that greaser who beats up white men after dark!"

There was another growl.

"You mean that, Mr. Carfax?" demanded Big Hank.

"Sure!" said the Kid contemptuously.

"Then not a man handles a pick in the mine agin'!"

"I guess you're not the only crowd of singlejack handlers in Arizona!" said the Kid coolly. "Get out, if you choose; I can sure get a fresh crowd from Los Pinos."

"You won't get nary a man from Los Pinos," said Carter. "That's all fixed up on you, Mr. Carfax!"

"Los Pinos isn't the only town in the sierra," said the Kid. "I'll get a fresh crowd, if I have to bring 'em in cars from Tombstone!"

There was a roar at that. The rough crowd surged nearer to the porch, and threatening glances were cast on the Kid.

The Kid stood without flinching. A scornful smile played over his handsome face.

"Say, you, Carter, what has Jas Drew paid you for stirring up trouble at my mine?" he asked coolly.

"Is that greaser going?" roared Carter.

"Nope."

"Then no man in Gold Brick handles a pick again in the mine, and we sure won't let any new crowd handle a pick, either!" said Carter. "You bring your fresh crowd from Tombstone, Mr. Carfax, and there will be shooting in this camp. You hear me shout!"

"Search me!" said the Kid cheerily. "I guess I could hear you if I was way THE POPULAR.—No. 487.

back in Texas, Carter! Now you've told me the news, get out! And chew on this—if there's any shooting in Gold Brick, I can sure handle a gun myself, and I shall be there when the fur begins to fly. Now git!"

"What?" roared Big Hank.

"Git!" repeated the Kid, with a gleam in his eyes. "You sure make me tired. Vamoosed the ranch, the whole bunch of you!"

The Kid's hands dropped on his guns and his eyes flashed fire. More than one hand in the rough crowd had dropped on a weapon; but the flashing glance of the Kid daunted them, and slowly the angry crowd surged back, across the street to the Gilt Edge Saloon.

The Kid went back into the house, his brow thoughtful. The Rio Kid was a man of resource; but for the moment, at least, he did not see how he was going to counter this new move of the Arizona Con.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### The Kid Puts His Foot Down!

"JOSE!"

The Kid shouted, but he shouted in vain.

Jose, the greaser, always industrious at his chores, prompt to obey his master's call, did not reply.

It was time for the Kid's dinner; and he shouted thrice. Then he went to look for the Mexican.

He did not find him.

The kitchen was vacant, the stove cold. He looked in the Mexican's room, and saw signs there of hurried packing, but no other sign of Jose. The Kid burst into a laugh.

"Vamoosed. I reckon."

The Kid cooked beans and bacon for his dinner with his own hands, as he had often done on the trail. Jud Clay came in to dinner and found him thus engaged.

"What's the matter with your galoot?" he asked, in surprise.

"He's beat it!" grinned the Kid. "I guess that mob this morning scared him stiff; he figured that there would be a necktie party if he stayed. I reckon he's half-way to Mexico by this time."

Jud whistled.

"I guess if he's gone, that lets down that crowd over at Gilt Edge," he said.

"I'll put 'em wise after dinner," grinned the Kid.

And after dinner the Kid strolled across the street to the Gilt Edge saloon, the headquarters of the strikers. He found Big Hank Carter haranguing his followers there, mounted on the barrel outside the saloon. Carter was a skilful hand at stirring up labour troubles, and the Kid easily guessed that Jasper Drew had hired him for that very reason.

Dark looks were turned on the Kid as he came up. Many of the crowd were in Drew's pay; but the greater number were led away by the agitator's rough eloquence. Kid Carfax was a man who backed up murdering greasers was the burden of his song, and it was a popular topic.

That the Kid would submit to dictation in his own household Carter knew was very unlikely; and for that reason he fancied that he had the Kid in the hollow of his hand. The Kid nodded and smiled in response to the black looks that greeted him.

"I guess you-uns don't want my greaser in Gold Brick," he remarked. "I've moseyed in to tell you he's gone."

"Gone!" repeated Carter.

"Lit out like he was sent for!" smiled the Kid. "If you-uns are tired of trouble, you can get back to the mine. That greaser sure will never be seen in Gold Brick again!"

Big Hank stared at him, quite taken aback. But the sullen looks of his followers were clearing. The bone of contention was removed; the pretext for the strike was gone. Carter, with a single glance round, saw that his hold on his dupes was weakening.

"I guess you knew you had to toe the line, Mr. Carfax!" he jeered. "I guess I knew you'd sack the greaser and come over to talk turkey to us!"

"You knew a lot, didn't you?" said the Kid pleasantly. "You-uns lining up at the mine again?"

"Sure!" said a dozen voices.

"We got to have this straight first," said Carter. "You don't have no more greasers in this camp, Mr. Carfax. That so, boys?"

There was a shout of assent.

"That goes," said the Kid, with undiminished pleasantness. "No more greasers—if you boys want me to cook my own bacon and beans, I'll sure do it to oblige you."

There was a laugh at that.

"And no victimisation," said Big Hank. "Every man that came out goes back to his job."

The Kid paused for a second. His hands were aching to be on the paid agitator, to roll him off his rostrum, and beat him up. But it was only for a second that he paused.

"Every man!" he assented.

"Meaning me?" persisted Carter.

"Sure!"

The strike leader was at the end of his resources. He was left not a single pretext for trouble; and those in the Gambusino crowd who were his dupes, were already turning away from him. The dozen or so who, like himself, were in the pay of Jas Drew, looked to him for guidance. There was nothing doing, and he knew it; most of the crowd were already starting for the mine.

"It's a cinch, then," he said. "We only want fair play, Mr. Carfax."

"I guess I know what you want," assented the Kid, and he turned his back on Big Hank, and walked back to his house.

That afternoon, pick and shovel clanged again in the deep, golden-ribbed adit of the Gambusino Mine.

The trouble seemed to be over.

That it was not over, the Kid knew only too well. Big Hank had lost the first round; but he was not beaten. A strike at the Gambusino Mine was the card that Jas Drew was playing, from his office on Main Street at Los Pinos; and he was not likely to give up at the first rebuff.

But for several days there was peace at Gold Brick; the picks rang cheerily in the adit, the waggons stacked with ore trundled away down the canyon to Los Pinos and the stamp-mills.

The Kid wondered what the next move would be; and in the meantime, he waited patiently. The next move was not long in coming. From Jud Clay, he learned that Big Hank was giving trouble in the mine; more and more trouble and more and more insolence; till breaking point came at last, and one morning Big Hank left the mine office sprawling, with Jud Clay's heavy boot behind him, and was kicked all the way across the street before the enraged foreman let up on him.

"I guess I had to fire him, Mr. Carfax," said Jud. "He asked for it a round dozen times afore I let fly at him."

"I guess so," assented the Kid. "That's the next move in the game. Man howls for trouble, and when he gets it, it's victimisation, and then the whole bunch roar for a strike."

"That's the ticket," said Jud ruefully. "Trouble's coming."

It did not take long to come. In the red sunset, a crowd of grim-faced men gathered before the Kid's frame house, and roared for him to come out. Carter was not with them this time; the lead was taken by one of his associates, Dirk Roper. The Kid stepped out cheerily.

"What's the worry now, boys?" he asked.

"You figure that you can put in a foreman to kick a galoot across the street?" demanded Roper. "This bunch has decided not to work under that Jud Clay, not another stroke of a singlejack. We want you to fire Jud Clay!"

"That's the tune this time, is it?" said the Rio Kid.

"That goes! You fire Jud Clay, or not a man steps into the Gambusino Mine agin, and we sure won't let any other galoots step in either, Mr. Carfax!"

The Kid laughed softly. "I reckon I've given you-uns all the rope I'm letting out," he said. "Now you listen to me a spell. I ain't firing Jud Clay, not if I know it. Hank Carter's fired and he stays fired. You're fired too, Roper."

"Me!"

"You," assented the Kid, "and every man that isn't on time in the morning, in this bunch, will be fired the same. Got that?"

There was a roar of wrath. "Oh, get over to the Gilt Edge, if you want to howl like coyotes," said the Rio Kid contemptuously. "Chew on what I've said—every man who stands off to-morrow morning, stands off for keeps. I'll close the mine down before I go back on that. Now git."

With a deep growl of rage, the strikers surged away; and that evening the fire-water flowed freely at the Gilt Edge saloon, and Big Hank Carter and Roper harangued the strikers till their throats were husky; and at midnight a wild crowd gathered outside the Kid's frame house, and there was a roar of angry voices, and threats of burning him out. Five or six guns were fired, and bullets cracked the windows. The Rio Kid gave no sign; but his gun was ready if the mob should attempt to rush the house. But the strikers stopped short of that, and at a late hour they tramped away, and there was quiet at last in Gold Brick camp.

The Kid turned in then, and the noisy crowd still buzzing at the Gilt Edge saloon would probably have been surprised had they seen how calm his slumbers were. The noise died away at last; but before it died away, the Rio Kid was sleeping as soundly as he had ever slept in the old bunk-house at the Double-Bar ranch.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Gun Talk!

BRIGHT and early in the morning the Rio Kid turned out. After an early breakfast, which he ate with his usual good appetite, the Kid walked across to the mine.

The mine office, and Judson Clay's dwelling, were the same building; a timber shack at the mouth of the tunnel. The foreman greeted the Kid with a gloomy brow. Obviously, he had no expectation of seeing the hands turn up to work that morning; neither did he believe that the strike at the Gambusino Mine would be conducted peaceably. All this was new to the Kid, though he was adapting himself

to strange surroundings very rapidly. But Jud had been through gold-mine strikes before—he had seen crowds armed with revolvers and shot-guns attacking mine buildings; he had seen unpopular mine officials swung up at the branch of a tree; he had seen State troops turn machine-guns on roaring mobs of frenzied strikers. All that he knew of labour troubles in the wild West occurred to his mind now, and darkened his brow with gloom. Gold Brick was far from the realm of law—it was fifteen miles from Los Pinos, and Los Pinos was a wild town in the pocket of Jas Drew of the Arizona Consolidated; twenty miles away was the nearest sheriff who could have afforded protection, and that sheriff was not likely to ride thirty miles with his posse to keep order at the Gambusino Mine. Not that the Kid would have wanted it. He had had too much trouble with sheriffs in the old days, to think of calling on one for aid.

The cards were stacked against the Rio Kid. Jas Drew, in his office in Los Pinos, pulled the strings. In the wild camps of the Gila Mountains a strike mob was liable to turn into a lynch mob at a moment's notice, and well Jud knew it. He could not understand the smiling cheeriness of the Rio Kid as the latter walked into the mine office. Jud had little expectation of seeing the sun set that day, unless he turned craven and rode away for his skin, leaving his young boss to face the music alone. And that the Gambusino foreman did not think of doing.

"Any galoot on time, Jud?" the Kid greeted.

"Nary a galoot."  
"Then they mean business?"  
"You bet."

The Kid stood in the doorway of the mine office and looked on the sunny street. At a distance, outside the Gilt Edge Saloon, a crowd was gathering. Big Hank Carter was already on the orator's barrel. Miners and loafers, the workers and the seam of Gold Brick, were gathering round him, listening to fierce and fiery words.

He had been fired—so ran his tale—for standing up for the rights of labour. Were the men of Gold Brick going to stand by and see him wronged, victimised? An enraged roar answered him in the negative. More than half his hearers were honest, hard-working men. The word "victimisation" was enough to inflame their passions. Loyalty to a comrade engaged them to stand by a comrade who had been victimised. It was easy for a cunning trickster to play on the simple chivalric feelings of simple men. The Kid looked long and earnestly at the crowd across the street, and noted the growing excitement, and turned back at last to his foreman.

"They're sure gettin' their mad up, feller," he remarked. "But it's got to come to a grip. I gave them enough rope, and if I gave them more it would come to the same thing, with a darned skunk behind the scenes pulling the wires to make them dance. The poor fish reckon this is a strike. They'll never tumble that they're being used to help a big corporation get hold of this mine. Jud, old scout, if you want to light out while the going's good, I guess I shan't hold it against you."

The Gambusino foreman shook his head.

"If you fire me, Mr. Carfax, I'll quit."

The Kid chuckled.  
"Nary a fire, old boss. Shucks! Why didn't I put a ball through Jas

Drew instead of quiting him? I guess I've always been too easy for my own good, Jud; but I sure hate to wipe out a galoot. I reckon I'll make it square with Mister Drew another time, though. You ain't quitting?"

"Nope."  
"I guess we'll pull through all right," said the Kid confidently. "They can mosey out, and be darned to their hides! I'll get new men from Tombstone, and shut down the mine till they come. And if they want to damage the mine, Jud, I reckon they'll have to walk up my gun to do it."

"I'm with you, Mr. Carfax," said Jud. "And I guess I'm the only man in Gold Brick that is! Here they come!"

There was a roar from the crowd across the street, a cracking of half a dozen guns fired in the air, and then the strike mob came across towards the mine office in a surging crowd.

The Rio Kid stepped out to face them.

"You-uns coming back to work?" he queried, smiling. "I guess Jud Clay is waiting ready to sign you out."

There was a roar.  
"You fired that Jud Clay?" shouted Big Hank Carter.

"Nope."  
"You going to fire him?"  
"Not by a jugful!"

"Then we'll have him out, and ride him on a rail outer camp, and you arter him!" roared Carter. "Rush the office, boys!"

There was a forward swing of the crowd, more than seventy men, with a fringe of loafers behind, ready to enjoy the trouble, and join in any looting that was started. Up from his holsters flashed two six-guns in the grip of the Rio Kid, and over the levelled barrels his eyes gleamed like steel.

"Go slow!" he rapped.  
"You burn powder here, and we'll lynch you and your foreman along with you!" roared Big Hank.

"Git!" said the Kid. "You're standing on my property, and if you ain't here to work you're trespassing. Git, before I pull trigger and let daylight through the whole bunch of you!"

Behind the Kid stood Jud, with a Winchester in his hands. But it was the flashing eyes and levelled guns of the Kid that daunted the mob. They ceased to surge on. They backed—and they backed farther. Their leaders could have led them on in face of the threatening guns, but their leaders were "wise" to it that they would get the first lead that flew, and they backed faster than their followers. There was a wild swaying, and furious hesitation, and then the whole mob surged away across the street, yelling as they went; and the Kid smiled and dropped his guns back into their holsters. He had stalled off the attack on the mine—for the present, at least.

"Them galoots sure don't like gun-talk, Jud," he chuckled. "This mine's closed down, feller. Put up the notice on the wall."

Ten minutes later there was a notice on the wall for all Gold Brick to read:

**"SHUT DOWN! NO HANDS WANTED!"**

It was oil to the flames, and all day long a wild mob paraded and roared in the camp; and every man knew that when night came there would be wild work in the Golden Canyon.

THE END.

(Next week's rousing story of the Rio Kid is entitled: "FACING THE MUSIC".)