

A GENEROUS ENEMY!

Men have been heard to say that they'd rather face a pair of tigers than the Rio Kid's guns. - But the Kid has proved, on more than one occasion, that he can be as generous as he is dangerous to an enemy!

The RIO KID!

By
RALPH REDWAY



ANOTHER GRIPPING LONG COMPLETE WESTERN TALE, FEATURING THE RIO KID, BOY OUTLAW!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Meeting on the Trail!

THE bandage across the Rio Kid's handsome face covered a deep gash from the knife-like edge of a yucca*. The black-muzzled mustang had stumbled with his foot in a gopher hole, and the Kid had hit the yucca before he knew it. It was not a serious hurt, neither was it very painful; but the Kid had stopped to bandage it, to keep off the pressing attentions of flies and mosquitoes.

The Kid grinned at his reflection in his little pocket-mirror when he had finished. The bandage left little of his sunburnt face to be seen, from his mouth to his dark, keen eyes. It reminded the Kid of old days in Texas, when on certain occasions he had swathed his face in his neck-scarf to hide his identity—occasions which had led to great activity on the part of Texan sheriffs.

Those days were not long past, but they were over and done with; the Rio Kid was finished with outlawry now, if only folks would let him.

He wondered whether they would, in the new country for which he was riding through the enveloping hills in the north of Arizona, north of the Great Canyon of the Colorado. Fortune often favoured the Kid—in many ways he seemed the spoiled child of fortune—yet he had never been able to set himself right with his fellow-men. Fortune always failed him there, somehow.

The Kid was riding for Nevada. He was done with Arizona and the gold country, and he did not fear pursuit—the Great Canyon lay behind him now, between him and the enemies he had left. He rode with a price on his head, but that was no new experience to the Kid; and the swiftness of the grey mustang, and the accuracy of his six-guns, guaranteed that the price would never be earned.

As for foes from his own country of Texas, the Kid never dreamed of them. He was hundreds of miles from the Lone Star State. In his dreams, in his lonely camps in the sierra, his fancy often traversed those long miles,

THIS WEEK:

The Man from Texas!

and brought vividly to him the shining waters of the Rio Frio, the wide-stretching grass-lands, the old bunkhouse at the Double Bar ranch, the cheery bunch of which he had once been a member. But no Texas sheriff was likely to ride so far in quest even of the Rio Kid; and the Kid had left no sign for a foe to follow on his devious wanderings westward.

And yet, though the wary Kid did not suspect it, it was from far-off Texas that danger was dogging him.

The Kid was riding along a deep, wide canyon in the afternoon sun, when he sighted the weary horseman ahead of him. The Kid's hand dropped mechanically to his gun. He was in a lonely country, and his destination, Horse-Thief, was still twenty-miles or more ahead of him. And at his last stopping-place the Kid had been told that the Judson gang were out on the trails.

The Judson gang, from what the Kid could learn, were horse-thieves and rustlers of cows, and there were six or seven of them—information which did not make the Kid hesitate to ride onward through the hills.

The Kid's way had been wild; but he had a true cowpuncher's hatred for a cow-thief, and he had no great desire to avoid the Judson gang, if they chanced to come in his way. But he was keenly on his guard, and on the alert at once at the sight of a rider.

The horseman ahead of him looked weary, and his horse was limping. Some tenderfoot who had lost his way in the trackless sierra, the Kid figured, at the second glance, and he smiled and released his gun. He gave the black-muzzled mustang a word, and changed his easy trot for a gallop, rapidly overhauling the man who rode ahead.

The stranger turned to look round at the clatter of hoofs on the rocky trail. The Kid saw a young man, scarcely older than himself, with a

dusty, tired face under the shadow of the Stetson hat. The stranger's hand was on the rifle at his saddle, and the Kid smiled and waved his hand.

"Leave it alone, stranger!" he called cheerily. "You don't want it."

The young man halted, watching the Kid as he rode up, and evidently on his guard. His rifle was ready; though it would not have been of much use to him had the Rio Kid been hunting trouble. A fraction of a second would have sufficed for the Kid's six-gun to leap from the holster, and the stranger would never have brought his rifle to bear. But the Kid was not hunting trouble; he was trying to leave trouble behind him, persistently as it dogged his steps. His only thought now was to help a stranger who was plainly on hard tack.

"You don't want that gun, stranger," grinned the Kid good-humouredly. "Leave it where it is. I guess it wouldn't help you none, even if you did want it, feller."

The stranger eyed him. His glance rested curiously on the bandage that almost hid the Kid's face.

"You been in trouble, too?" he asked.

"Only a scratch from a yucca, I guess," answered the Kid. "But I reckon you've been hitting trouble?"

"Sure!"

"You're from Texas?" asked the Kid, quick to detect the lazy drawl of the Texan in the stranger's voice, and his heart warmed to the man.

His longing for his own country was sometimes like an ache in the Kid's heart; and anything that recalled Texas to his mind was a passport to his good graces.

"Yep! How did you know?"

"I guess I had you spotted," smiled the Kid. "You're a long way from your country, stranger."

"I guess I'm looking for a man who's as far, or farther," answered the rider. "You from Texas?"

"You've said it."

"Lost here, same as me?"

The Kid chuckled.

"Not on your life," he answered. "I guess I figured out you was lost, and rode up to put you wise. Where you heading?"

*A sub-tropical American flowering plant, with rigid lanceolate leaves.

"Red Rock. Far from here?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Kid. "I guess you want to ride twenty-five thousand miles, that-a-way, to hit Red Rock."

"Oh, gophers! Meaning that I'm riding away from the shebang?"

"Sure! I left Red Rock behind me this morning," said the Kid. "You want to ride back twenty miles. You've got your back to it."

"I guess my cayuse won't do it—he's lame," said the stranger. "It's camping in the hills for me. I lost my way riding away from a gang of fire-bugs, and I reckon I was too glad to get clear, to worry any about the way I went. A bullet clipped my horse, and he fell lame. I figured you was one of the gang when I saw you riding up, with that rag across your face. They was all fixed like that."

"Rustlers," said the Kid. "Likely the Judson gang that they told me about at Red Rock. You was lucky to get clear." He looked at the stranger's weary horse, with the eye of one who had nothing to learn about horseflesh. "You want to give that cayuse a rest, feller. You won't hit Red Rock this side of sundown—or at all on that cayuse if you keep on. What's the matter with camping?"

The stranger's eyes searched the Kid, and the one-time puncher of the Double Bar laughed.

"Forget it, feller!" he said. "I ain't a rustler, and if I was I guess you wouldn't be sizing me up this minute—you'd be on the ground with a bullet through your cabeza. I guess I could put three pills through you before you could get that Winchester going. Look!"

Like magic a six-gun seemed to leap into the Kid's hand, levelled at the stranger from Texas.

The young man stared at him with bulging eyes.

"Gee! I never saw a man so sudden on the draw!" he exclaimed. "You sure know how to handle a gun!"

The Kid laughed, and slipped the six-gun back into its holster.

"Does that make it plain?" he asked.

"Sure!"

"Light down, then, and let me look at your cayuse's leg. I ain't in any hurry to get on to Horse-Thief, and I guess I'll camp here, and set you on the right trail at sun-up. Is it a cinch?"

"You're a white man," said the stranger; and he dismounted from his weary horse.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Man Who Trailed the Kid!

UNDER the westering sun the Rio Kid picked a camp, where a tiny rivulet trickled down the rocky side of the canyon. He unshipped his slicker pack, fed and watered his horse, and shook out his bed-roll. Then he gave his attention to the stranger's horse. The hurt was slight, and the Kid doctored it with a skilled hand. The man from Texas sat on a boulder and watched him.

The Kid was humming the merry tune of a Mexican fandango, his face bright and cheery where the thick bandage allowed it to be seen. He was in a cheery mood. For days the Rio Kid had been riding a lonely trail, and it warmed his heart to find himself in company with the pilgrim who spoke in the soft drawl of his own country.

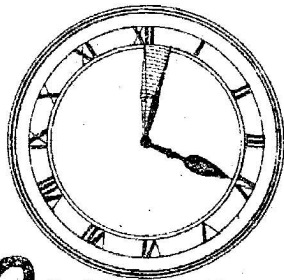
THE POPULAR.—No. 49L

The fellow was a stranger; nothing to him. But the Kid was always ready to help friend or stranger in distress; and he liked the young fellow's looks. And it was plain to the Kid, though not to his new acquaintance, that the Texan was not likely to get out of those barren hills alive without help.

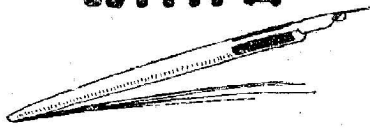
If the Judson gang had thought him worth their while, they were not likely to loose up on him; and at that very moment it was more likely than not that the gang were hunting him in the sierra.

"I guess I'll be building a fire," the young man said at last stretching his weary limbs. "There's brushwood here a-plenty."

The Kid glanced at him.



**2 MINUTES
WITH A**



**THAT'S ALL YOU'LL WANT TO
FILL IN THE**

Registration Coupon

on page 18 of this issue.

**TAKE THE TIP—sign at once on
the DOTTED LINE!**

"Did you ride all the way from Texas to look for a grave in the north of Arizona?" he asked.

"Meaning?"

"Those fire-bugs you got away from won't be long in leavin' their cards, I reckon, if they see the smoke of a camp-fire," answered the Kid.

"Sure, I forgot that! It's cold flap-jacks for supper, then."

"I guess I've got bacon and beans a-plenty," said the Kid. "But we ain't starting nary fire; these hills are as full of thieves as a Mexican dog of fleas. We ain't asking for trouble."

"Sure!" assented the man from Texas.

The sun dipped behind the mountains, and darkness thickened in the canyon. Through the gloom came the faint musical murmur of the little rivulet dropping on its steep way down the rocks.

Sitting at ease with his back to a rock, the Kid ate his supper, and shared cheerily with the man from Texas. All

the while his sharp ears were keenly on the alert.

"I guess we might swap names," the man from Texas remarked. "Mine's Casey."

"Casey?" repeated the Kid.

The name had associations for him.

"Yep. And you—"

The Kid laughed.

"I guess I'm travelling under the name of Smith," he answered. "This is a country where a galoot sure doesn't always carry the name he started with."

"That's so," said Casey, with a laugh. "Smith goes."

He helped himself to bacon and beans.

The Kid nodded and smiled. This man was from Texas, which meant that he surely had heard of the Rio Kid. And the Kid did not want to send news of himself back to his own country—the arm of the law was long. And it would not have comforted the young stranger to know that he was camping in company with the Rio Kid, once an outlaw on the banks of the Rio Grande. The Kid was not so black as he had been painted; but he had been painted black enough.

"Ever rode the Fric country?" Casey asked.

"I've sure seen it," said the Kid.

"Then I reckon you've heard of the Rio Kid?"

The Kid stared at Casey, and for a second his hand touched the walnut butt of a gun. For that second it seemed to him that he was known, and that this man from Texas meant trouble. But Casey's face was quite unconscious, and the Kid laughed.

"I've heard of him," he assented. "I guess there ain't a galoot in Texas that hasn't."

"You've said it. According to all accounts, the Rio Kid's cleared out of Texas."

"Sho!" said the Kid.

"They nearly got him when he was riding across the Staked Plain," said Casey. "But he has the demon's own luck that young fire-bug, and he gave them the slip and sure vanished. Some galoots say he went north into the sheep country, and some allow that he lit over the border into Mexico; but I figured it out from his trail that he was hitting for Arizona."

"You sure seem interested in the hombre," remarked the Kid.

"I sure am," said Casey. "He's the feller I'm hunting."

"You don't say?"

"I guess it's him or me for the great divide when I hit his trail," said Casey.

"That's why I'm in Arizona, hunting for the Rio Kid, and I reckon I'll raise his trail sooner or later."

The Kid looked at him, under drooping eyelids, curiously. The man from Texas was there hunting for the Rio Kid—hunting for the puncher who sat eating bacon and beans with him in the shadowy canyon. The situation struck the Kid as entertaining. But he was curious, too. He had a good memory for faces, and he was assured that he had never seen this pilgrim before, so his enmity was a little difficult to account for. True, the name was familiar—only too familiar.

"You got a feud with the Rio Kid?" he asked.

"Sure!"

"He's trod on your toes some time?"

"I've never seen him yet," said Casey. "But I got a good description of him, and a picture of him, that I got from the sheriff of Frio. I guess I shall know the galoot when I set eyes on him."

The Kid grinned under the bandage. It was that gash from the yucca thorn, and the bandage that covered it, that had prevented gunning when he first chanced upon this stranger. The Kid understood that now, and he was glad that his face was hidden. He did not want to have to shoot up the man from his own country, though he came as an enemy.

"You've never seen the galoot, but you're trailing him to shoot him up?" queried the Kid.

"It's a blood feud," said Casey. "If you know the Frio country in Texas, you may have heard of Two-gun Casey."

"Sure," he was a gun-man," said the Kid.

Casey flinched a little. "Well, I reckon he wasn't no saint," he admitted. "If the Kid had wiped him out in an even break, I guess I'd have sat tight and said nothing. But it was a gum-game, sabe, and Two-gun Casey was my uncle."

The Kid's eyes gleamed. "I've heard a lot of talk about the Rio Kid," he remarked casually. "But I never heard that he shot any man except fair and square."

"So they say," assented Casey. "Perhaps you never heard the way Two-gun Casey went up?"

"If I did, I kinder disremember." "He was after the Kid," said Casey. "Every man in the Frio country was after him more or less, if you come to that. The Kid got him, somehow, and roped him up at a camp fire, tied like a turkey, and gagged. He put his own hat on the man's head—and the Kid's Stetson was known all over Texas; he had a band of silver nuggets round it. The sheriff of Frio came on the camp, figured it out from that Stetson that it was the Rio Kid sitting there, and pumped him full of lead. That's the way Two-gun Casey went up."

The Kid nodded. "Well he remembered that incident in the chaparral, back in Texas, when the man he had saved from death had sought to sell him to the Frio sheriff, and had been left to the fate he had intended for the Kid.

The Kid had no regrets on that score; the gun-man had received his due, and no more than his due, from the intended victim of his treachery.

But the younger Casey was evidently a very different kind of man; and the Kid wanted no trouble with him if he could help it.

"You reckon the Rio Kid was to blame in that deal?" he asked.

"Sure," said Casey. "If he'd shot the man up in an even break, I guess I'd say nothing; but leaving him tied up to be pumped full of lead by the sheriff—I reckon I don't stand for that!" He set his lips. "I'm after the Kid, and I'll follow him across to California but what I'll get him. Say, have you



HIT! "Lie low, I keep on telling you," hissed the Kid. "You're asking for it by showing yourself—!" Bang! A sobbing moan, and Casey sank down behind the rocks, heavily against the Kid, his rifle slipping from his hands. (See Chapter 3.)

seen a galoot in these parts wearing a Stetson with a band of silver nuggets?"

The Kid shook his head with a grin. That adornment, by which the Kid had been known on the grasslands of Texas had been discarded when the Kid rode away from the Lone Star State to find a new life in a new country. The Kid was not likely to have left so easy a clue to possible pursuers.

"I reckon I'll get him, sooner or later," said Casey, rising from the boulder upon which he was seated and stretching his limbs. "The durned coyote can run as hard as he likes, but I'll sure get him!"

The Rio Kid's eyes glittered. It was upon his tongue, at that moment, to proclaim his identity, and draw his gun. But he checked the impulse. He had no fear of the avenger—the thought made him smile—but he had broken bread with the man from Texas, and that consideration kept his gun in his holster, so long as the Kid could leave it there. Not for a second did it cross Casey's mind that he was talking to the man he was hunting—that only the bandage hid from him the features he knew well from the Kid's picture.

"I guess we may as well turn in," said Casey.

"I reckon so," assented the Kid. "I'll sure put you on the right trail at sun-up, pardner. And we'll part friends."

"Sure!" Casey stepped across to his bed-roll.

As he did so the Kid made a sudden movement. He reached across and gripped the man from Texas by the ankle, and with a sudden jerk brought him down on the rocky ground.

"What the thunder—" panted Casey.

But he did not need to ask. A bullet struck the rocks, and dropped flattened, and the roar of a gun followed from the darkness.

"Holy smoke!" gasped the man from Texas.

The bullet had passed exactly where he had been standing; and only the Kid's prompt action had saved him from being shot through the heart.

"Cover!" breathed the Kid.

And he dropped out of sight among the boulders, his six-gun in his grip.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. A Fight in the Dark!

BANG, bang, bang, bang! From the darkness the shots rang fast, almost like one report, but the Kid's ears picked them out. Four rifles were blazing away at the camp among the boulders, and bullets crashed right and left.

The Kid lay low, in secure cover, unalarmed for himself. But he was not so sure of Casey. What sort of a fight the nephew of Two-gun Casey was likely to put up in these sudden circumstances the Kid did not know. He was obviously no gun-man such as Two-gun Casey had been, and the Kid doubted whether he was the man to keep his end up in a fight like this. In the darkness there were four savage foes, shooting to kill, and the darkness wrapped them as in a cloak.

In the camp it was dark, and the Kid guessed that the enemy had been guided by the sound of voices. The shot that Casey had so narrowly escaped had been well-aimed, yet the marksman could scarcely have seen him. Only a glimmer in the darkness had warned the Kid that the shot was coming, and given him time to save the Texan's life.

The Rio Kid lay, hardly breathing, every sense on the alert, his gun in his hand, ready for a rush of the Juuon gang. There was a stirring close by him, and he whispered tensely:

"Keep close, Casey! I guess they'll be shootin' at a sound—"

"I guess I'm in cover," murmured Casey. "Say, feller, that was a close call; you pulled me over just on time. I felt the wind of the bullet."

His voice was a faint whisper, but it was unshaken. The gun-man's nephew had pluck.

"Keep close!" breathed the Kid. The Rio Kid moved a little, with infinite caution. Bullets, crashing on the rocks round him, and against the canyon wall behind him, came incessantly. The Kid, in the darkness,

watched for a flash, and fired when he spotted it, and dropped instantly into cover again.

A wild, hoarse yell answered his shot; a hoarse yell suddenly broken off in the middle. The Kid smiled grimly.

"I guess that galoot's got his!" he muttered.

There was a shout of rage from the blackness.

"Say, you 'uns," yelled a hoarse voice—"say, you pesky coyotes, that's Hank Judson you've got! We'll cut you to pieces for that!"

"It's the Judson gang!" grinned the Kid. "Four of them here, I reckon—and the king-pin has got his ticket for scup. Keep in cover, feller—they know how to shoot!"

"So do I, if I get a chance!" muttered Casey. "You figure that that galoot you've plugged has got his for keeps?"

"I sure do; he ain't saying anything more about it, no-how," said the Kid. "Lie low, feller; lie low!"

Casey had raised himself, looking along his rifle, watching for a chance to return the fire.

"Lie low, I keep on telling you, hombre!" hissed the Kid. "You're asking for it! That darned gun-barrel has got a shine on it—"

Bang!

A sobbing moan, and Casey sank down behind the rocks, heavily against the Rio Kid. His rifle clanged down. From the darkness came a yell; the marksman knew that he had found his billet.

"Oh, shucks!" muttered the Kid, in disgust.

There was a groan beside him.

"You've got it!" muttered the Kid.

"Yep!" murmured Casey.

"Where you got it?"

"Right shoulder."

"Bad?"

"Feels bad."

"You sure did ask for that, feller!" growled the Kid. "You can't take chances with these pizen rustlers. Roll over to me, and I guess I'll fix you up with my neck-scarf."

There was no reply.

"You hear me shout?" muttered the Kid.

But Casey did not answer; and the Kid realized that he was either insensible or dead.

He gritted his teeth hard.

The man from Texas lay silent and inert—dead, for all the Kid knew to the contrary; severely wounded, at least. To tend him meant moving from cover, and such a move meant fearful peril, under the fire of three watchful, cunning rustlers. Yet if he still lived the Kid could not let him bleed to death. Bullets still dropped about him, and many of them dropped close. Alone, the Kid would have shifted his cover; the rustlers had the range too well to suit him. But he could not leave his companion—the man who had been hunting him for his life, and whose life now depended on the Kid.

Cautiously the Kid moved, sheathing his six-gun, taking the chance of a rush from the darkness finding him without a weapon in his hand. He groped over Casey, and his hand was wet with the blood that flowed from the wound.

THE POPULAR.—No. 491.

The Kid felt over the injury, bending over the insensible man; a faint moan came from Casey, and that was all. The Kid tore off his silken neck-scarf, and made shift to bind up the wound and stop the flow of blood. It was all that he could do, and he did it under terrible peril. He felt, rather than knew, that the Judson gang were creeping closer—only one rifle was cracking now, which told the experienced Kid that the other two of the gang were seeking to get to closer quarters, creeping like lynxes among the rocks. But he had to take the chance or let the Texan bleed to death; and he took it.

The clink of a pebble, an almost im-

Kid's keen ear its own story, and he wormed round the bush, and his six-gun touched a creeping form, and crashed out as it touched.

There was a groan, as a heavy figure slumped down in the black shadow of the mesquite.

"Three!" snarled the Kid.

Crack, crack, crack! The rifle was still ringing out at short intervals; the last man of the Judson gang was still firing, to cover the creeping advance of his associates, not knowing yet that they had been accounted for. The Rio Kid crept on, his eyes shining, and his teeth set. From the camp came the shrill squeal of a stricken horse. It was not the black-muzzled mustang—the Kid

would have known his cry. And he knew, too, that his horse was in good cover. Casey's steed had been struck by the bullet, and the Kid heard the animal squeal, and squeal again, till the squeals were hushed in silence.

The Rio Kid crept on, winding like a snake among the rocks, well to the right of the man who was firing, cautious and patient as a panther. The man was keeping in good cover from the front; but he was not aware of the Kid's advance. Long minutes passed—the Kid was patient; but at last the flash of the rifle gave him his prey. The six-gun roared again, and the last of the Judson gang shrieked, and fell forward on his rifle.

The Kid leaped to his feet then.

The Judson gang were wiped out; a task that had long baffled a dozen Arizona sheriffs. The Kid stood watchful, waiting, listening; but there was no sound of other foes—if there were more to the Judson gang, they were not on the scene—four had been tracking the man from Texas in the desolate hills, and the Kid had accounted for four. He slipped fresh cartridges into his six-gun, sheathed it, and hurried back to where he had left Casey.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. The End of a Feud!

DAWN flushed up over the mountains, and the man from Texas, stirring uneasily in his blankets, opened his eyes. He stared

round him dizzily.

"Keep still, pard!"

It was the Kid's cheery voice.

Casey stared at him.

"Where are they?"

"Who?"

"The Judson gang!"

The Kid grinned.

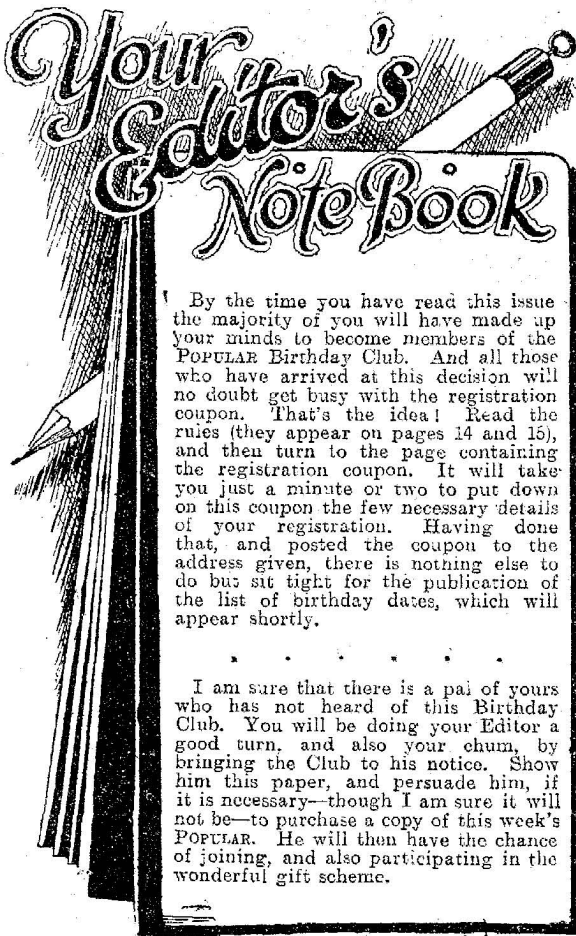
"Ask the turkey-buzzards," he answered carelessly. "I guess I shouldn't be sitting around so free and easy if they were still gunning after me."

"You wiped them out?"

"Just a few."

"Gee!" said Casey. "Look here, am I bad hurt? I see you've fixed up my shoulder, and it hurts something fierce. How about it?"

"I guess I got the lead out clean as a whistle," said the Kid. "You want to get to a bed and a doc; but you're



By the time you have read this issue the majority of you will have made up your minds to become members of the POPULAR Birthday Club. And all those who have arrived at this decision will no doubt get busy with the registration coupon. That's the idea! Read the rules (they appear on pages 14 and 15), and then turn to the page containing the registration coupon. It will take you just a minute or two to put down on this coupon the few necessary details of your registration. Having done that, and posted the coupon to the address given, there is nothing else to do but sit tight for the publication of the list of birthday dates, which will appear shortly.

I am sure that there is a pair of yours who has not heard of this Birthday Club. You will be doing your Editor a good turn, and also your chum, by bringing the Club to his notice. Show him this paper, and persuade him, if it is necessary—though I am sure it will not be—to purchase a copy of this week's POPULAR. He will then have the chance of joining, and also participating in the wonderful gift scheme.

perceptible sound, was enough for the Kid; his six-gun leaped to his hand.

Bang!

Within ten feet of him, a black, shadowy figure yelled and rolled over, and lay still. The Kid had not missed.

"Two!" muttered the Kid grimly.

Casey lay motionless, silent, his face glimmering white as chalk in the gloom. The Kid could do no more for him—no more, so long as he was still beset by watchful enemies. There was a gleam of blue flame in the eyes of the Rio Kid as he moved to deal with those enemies.

Leaving the insensible Texan, the Kid crept away among the boulders, cautious, silent as a cougar, worming his way, every sense on the alert. A rifle was still banging from a distance; but one man at least was seeking the Kid among the rocks—and now the Kid was seeking him in turn. The faint rustle of a dragging mesquite told the

blankets, opened his eyes. He stared round him dizzily.

"Keep still, pard!"

It was the Kid's cheery voice.

Casey stared at him.

"Where are they?"

"Who?"

"The Judson gang!"

The Kid grinned.

"Ask the turkey-buzzards," he answered carelessly. "I guess I shouldn't be sitting around so free and easy if they were still gunning after me."

"You wiped them out?"

"Just a few."

"Gee!" said Casey. "Look here, am I bad hurt? I see you've fixed up my shoulder, and it hurts something fierce. How about it?"

"I guess I got the lead out clean as a whistle," said the Kid. "You want to get to a bed and a doc; but you're

all right. You'll be riding the trails again in a few weeks."

"A few weeks!" muttered Casey. "And where'll the Rio Kid be by that time? This is sure hard luck!"

The Kid laughed, and fingered the bandage on his face.

"You figure on gunning after the Rio Kid when you get going," he asked.

"Sure!"

Again the Kid laughed. "You've saved my life, feller, twice over," said Casey earnestly. "I ain't forgetting a thing like that. I reckon you've got to save it again—I'll never get out of these hills without help." He glanced at the motionless body of his horse. "I'm on foot now, I reckon."

"Nope!" said the Kid. "I guess I'm putting you on my cayuse, to hit the trail for the nearest camp. I guess Red Rock is the nearest shembang where you can get a doctor. They say cow-punchers can't walk; but I reckon I've got to hoof it twenty miles alongside my critter. You'll sure have to hold on to the saddle."

"You're the whitest man I ever met," said Casey.

"Oh, shucks!" said the Kid laughing. In the rising sunlight, he fixed the wounded man in the saddle of the black-muzzled mustang. Casey was weak, and a little dizzy, but he was able to hold on and ride. The Kid walked beside the horse, as they moved down the canyon, back the way the boy puncher had ridden the previous day. A true cow-man hates to walk, and the Kid hated it as much as any other puncher; but he stepped out cheerily and briskly. Hours on rocky trails passed on leaden wings; the Kid was fatigued, though he did not show it; and the wounded man swayed in the saddle, and only the Kid's sinewy grip, time and again, kept him from falling. The noontday sun was blazing down on the hills, when the Kid led the grey mustang at last into Red Rock, and the wounded Texan was carried into the shack hotel, and the camp doctor sent for.

Leaving Casey to the doc, the Kid strolled out into the camp.

When he came back to the shack hotel, he went to Casey's room and found the man from Texas looking pale, but evidently better. Casey gave him a rueful look.

"Doc says I'm fixed here for a week at least," he said. "I guess I owe it to you that I ain't fixed for keeps, feller. I guess I ain't grumbling, but it's sure hard luck."

The Kid nodded absently.

"You hitting the trail?" asked Casey. "Yep! Arizona ain't healthy for me," explained the Kid. "I've been mixed up in a rookus down in the Gila Mountains, and there are sure a lot of pilgrims gunning after me. It's me for Nevada and the cow country. I reckon you're fixed all O.K. here?"

"That's all right," Casey hesitated. "I'd sure like to know the name of the galoot that pulled me out of the claws of the Judson gang. You've let on you're travelling as Smith; but—"

THE FAMOUS COMPANION PAPERS!

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"I guess I'm going to tell you," said the Kid soberly, "and then, if you want, I'll tell you where to look for me in Nevada. I'm sure going to put you wise about the Rio Kid and Two-Gun Casey. I brought you into this camp wounded on my horse, and I'm telling you that the Rio Kid did the same thing for Two-Gun Casey, back in the Frio country in Texas. The Kid picked him up in the chaparral, badly hurt, and toted him to camp, and cared for him and brought him round."

"Shucks!" said Casey incredulously. "Frozen truth," said the Kid quietly. "There had been trouble between them before, in a cattle camp on the Pecos. The Kid was ready to forget it, but your uncle wasn't. He was sure a bad hombre. He sold the Kid to the sheriff of Frio, and fixed it up for the sheriff to find the Kid sitting by his camp-fire, and rope him in or fill him with lead."

Casey's pale face grew paler, and his eyes fixed on the Kid with a curiously intent stare.

"That was the how of it," went on the Kid. "I'm giving you straight goods, pardner. The Kid was wise to the game; and he fixed up Two-Gun Casey, put his silver-nuggets on the galoot's head and left him to take his chance with the sheriff—same as he meant for the Kid. I reckon that was a fair break."

"I ain't believing it," muttered Casey. "I know he was a bad man, but he wasn't that pizen mean." His eyes gleamed at the Kid. "How do you know? Spill it!"

Slowly, quietly, the Kid unpeeled the bandage from his face.

Casey's eyes gleamed at him. The handsome, sunburnt face, with the scratch of the yucca thorn across it, was revealed.

Casey panted. "The Kid!" he breathed huskily. "The Rio Kid!"

"That very galoot!" said the Kid quietly. "The galoot you was gunning after, pardner, on account of a pizen

mean coyote who got just what he wanted from the sheriff of Frio."

Casey's hand groped along his belt. "Forget it," said the Kid. "If you're still for trouble, I'll tell you where to pick me up in Nevada—when you're fit and well, and can handle a gun. You couldn't shoot now worth a Continental red cent."

Casey licked his dry lips.

"You've said it," he muttered. "And you're the Rio Kid—the fire-bug I've been trailing all the way across New Mexico—the outlaw that's wanted by half the sheriffs in Texas. And you've saved my life, and stood by me like a white man." He breathed hard. "Why, I reckon a word to the hombres in this camp would bring a crowd on your back—"

The Kid laughed. "You ain't spilling that word?" he remarked.

"You'd shoot me up to stop me—"

"I guess I ain't shooting up a wounded man that can't handle a gun," said the Kid disdainfully. "Shout out all you want—I guess there ain't enough galoots in this camp to keep me from hitting the trail."

There was a long silence. "I guess if your face hadn't been covered, there would have been shooting on sight, when I met you in the hills yesterday," said Casey, at last. "But— You're a white man, and I'm believing what you tell me."

He held out his hand. The Rio Kid gripped it. "I reckoned you was white," he said. "I'm sure glad you don't want to know where to look for me in Nevada."

Casey grinned faintly. "I'm hitting the trail back to Texas when I get fixed for riding," he said. "And I reckon I shall forget to tell the galoots there that I met the Rio Kid in this country. You're a white man, Kid, and I'd sure be glad if you could ride back to Frio with me."

The Kid smiled and shook his head. "I reckon it would be the long jump for me," he said. "When you get back to Frio, feller, don't believe all they tell you about the Rio Kid. He sure ain't the bad egg they make out along the Rio Grande."

The Kid's boots and spurs clattered out of the shack hotel, and he unhitched the black-muzzled mustang from the rail and mounted. From a window a hand waved him farewell—the hand of the man who had trailed him from Texas to hunt him for his life. The Rio Kid waved back cheerily as he rode down the street. The man from Texas, with a strange look on his face, watched the graceful rider, till he vanished in the folds of the hills; hitting the trail once more for Nevada and the camp of Horse-Thief.

(You'll meet this amazing Boy Outlaw, the Rio Kid, in another breathlessly thrilling tale of the roaring Wild West next week, entitled: "The Hired Man at Horse-Thief!")



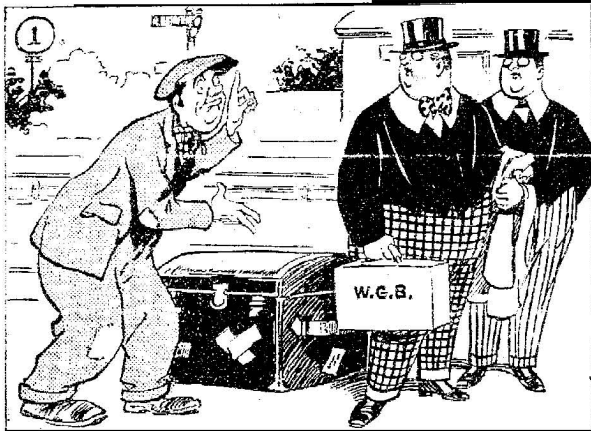


The BUNTER BROTHERS

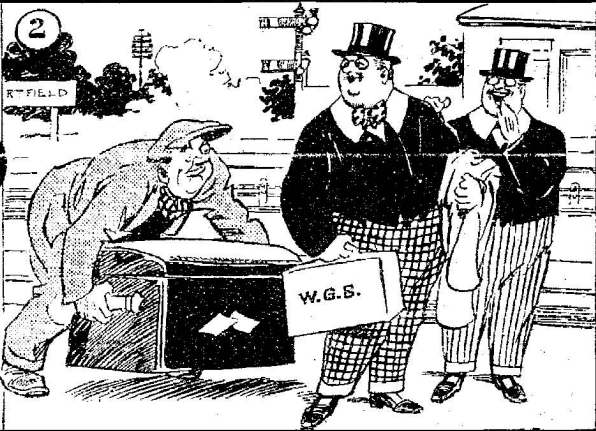
Merry Mirthmakers.



THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T TAKE "NO" FOR AN ANSWER!



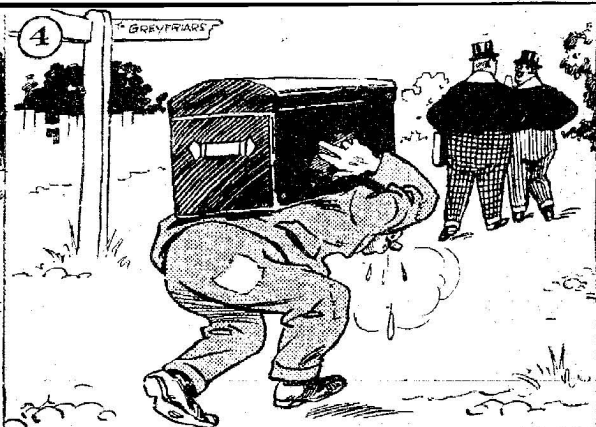
"Let me carry yer trunk, mister," said Jerry the odd-job laddie to Billy and Sammy Bunter. These two worthies had just embarked from the slow-motion express at their little, old station. "Trunk?" said Billy. "Oh, I see, that trunk!" "Yus, do let me carry that there trunk," persisted the man.



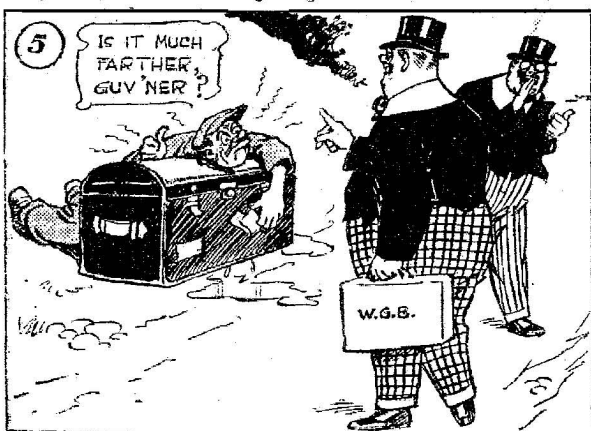
"Well, you can if you like," said Billy Bunter. "But I shouldn't if I were you." "Oh, you're thinking of the weight, eh?" grinned Jerry as he bent down and hoisted the hefty trunk. "Gee! This ain't 'eavy, bless yer." "But really, you know— Well please yourself!" said Bunter.



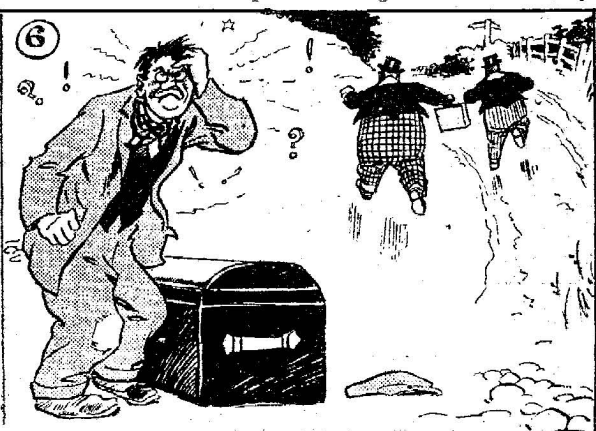
"Well, let's get going," said Billy, and he turned and left the station with Sammy. "Hope it ain't fur," muttered Jerry as he trudged along the road behind the Bunter Brothers to Greyfriars. "This 'ere is getting 'cavier and 'eavier."



One mile passed and the odd-job johnny began to bend almost double under the weight of that big, black trunk—and still the Bunter Brothers trotted along, chuckling loudly. "Wonder what them himps are cackling about," mused Jerry.



Crash! "Ow! Can't go another lineh!" groaned Jerry, and the trunk went with a crash to the ground. "Is it much farther, guv'ner?" "Ha, ha, ha! Miles!" chuckled Billy. "But really, I warned you not to come, didn't I—"



"Because, you see, that trunk isn't mine at all!" "Wha-a-a-at!" Then the trunk-carrier remembered Bunter's warning at the station, and he ground his teeth with rage. And Billy and Sammy, noting danger signals, beat a hasty retreat down the lane.