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Week Ending  
July 20th, 1923  
New Series.  
No. 496.



"WHOA-BACK  
NEDDY!!"

## HE'S NO QUITTER!

The Kid's got his work cut out in fighting a deadly feud, and saving a ranch from ruin. But, then, the Kid never was a chap to count the odds!

# The RIO KID!



Another Roaring Long Complete Tale of the Wild West, featuring The Rio Kid, Boy Outlaw!

### THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Kid Does not Quit!

THE Rio Kid looked from a window of the shack hotel in the town of Wildcat, with a thoughtful expression on his face. A hot wind blew from the plains and filled the single street of the little Montana cow town with dust. Men who rode or lounged on the street glanced at the shack hotel as they passed, and especially at the window where the boy puncher from Texas was standing.

Across the street, in the shade of the wall of Henson's store, three cow-punchers were loafing. Farther down the street a group of three or four stood in talk, occasionally glancing towards the hotel. All of them, as the Kid knew, belonged to the Sparshott outfit, and he knew that there were more of that outfit in town that day. They circled the shack hotel, as if on the watch. And the Rio Kid knew for whom and for what they were watching. There was trouble brewing in the little cow town in the wildest section of the cow country of Montana, and the Rio Kid was the centre of it. The cheery grin on the Kid's sunburnt face did not indicate that it worried him.

He turned from the window at last and crossed the room to the plank-bed where Kent Loring lay on his blankets.

Kent, white and bandaged, looked up at him. Voices and murmurs from the street and the occasional crack of a gun fired in the air had reached the wounded cowman, and he knew as well as the Kid that trouble was on hand. For three days the Kid and his comrade had been in Wildcat, and in those days the wounded cowman had begun to mend, but it was likely to be a week or more before he was on his feet again. The Wildcat doc had done his best for him, but the cowman's healthy constitution was doing more. He was on the mend—if he was given time to mend. And the Rio Kid was there to see that he had it.

"Feeling chirpy?" smiled the Kid. "I guess I'm mending," said Kent. "But I reckon the Sparshotts won't give me time to mend, Kid. This is their chance to put an end to the feud, and I guess Eben and Rube Sparshott won't miss it. I guess they're in town now with most of their outfit."

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This Week:

## "THE KID'S LONE FIGHT!"

"Correct!"

"I guess I'm sorry you horned into the trouble, Carfax. It ain't healthy to mix in a cowman's feud in a cow country."

"I'm sure wise to that!" said the Kid cheerily. "But I reckon I'm seeing you through, feller. The Sparshotts ain't got you yet."

There was a thump at the pinewood door of the room, and it opened. McCane, the landlord of the shack hotel, stepped in. The Rio Kid turned towards him with a smile on his face, but with his hands very near the guns that were slung low against his chaps. There was an uneasy expression on McCane's face, uneasiness mingled with doggedness. It was plain that he had come there on an unpleasant errand.

"Uncork it, feller!" said the Kid. "What's the news?"

"I guess I'm wanting this here room," explained McCane. "I'm powerful sorry, but this here room was booked last week, and I plumb forgot it when I let you galoots in."

The Kid smiled. "Then ain't it lucky that my pard is well enough to shift into another room?" he remarked. "Point it out, feller, and we'll shift pronto!"

"There ain't another room!" explained McCane. "Every room in the shebang is took!"

"You've sure got an unusual crowd in Wildcat, then," said the Kid. "I ain't seen all them pilgrims around the house yet."

"They ain't all on hand, but the rooms is took," said McCane. "I'm sorry, feller, but you'll have to quit!"

The Kid smiled again, but there was a glint in his eyes that belied the smile. "You want us to quit?"

"Sure!"

"Mr. Loring wounded and all?"

"Can't be helped!" said McCane doggedly. "I want the room!"

"You've sure found out all of a sudden that you want this here room since the Sparshott outfit came to

town!" remarked the Kid. "I'll tell a man! You want an answer, I suppose?"

"I want the room!"

"Sure! Well, you ain't getting the room!" explained the Kid. "My pard, Mr. Loring, is staying jest where he is till he's mended, and I'm staying with him! You get me?"

McCane scowled.

He was a big and powerful man, and he towered over the puncher from the Rio Grande, sturdy as the Kid was. McCane was accustomed to dealing with a rough crowd; the Wildcat citizens were a rough bunch, and the punchers who came in from the ranches were rougher. The wounded man was helpless, and the Kid looked a mere boy; McCane did not figure that he had a difficult task on hand.

"I get you," he said. "Now you get me! You're vamooseing the ranch pronto! I give you half an hour!"

"Make it a week!" suggested the Kid.

He laughed lightly.

"Put it plain," he said. "The Sparshotts are in town gunning after Kent Loring. You don't want them gunning after him in this hyer shebang, and I sure don't blame you. You want to keep clear of the Sparshott feud, like all the other galoots in Wildcat, town marshal and all. But you see how we're fixed! We ain't going!"

"I guess I'll put it plain," said McCane. "The Sparshotts are like enough to burn the shack over my head if I keep a Loring here out of their reach! I ain't being burned out to please any galoot!"

"What about the marshal?" asked the Kid. "Ain't it his duty to keep law and order in this here-cow town? Call him in!"

"The marshal ain't horning into a cowman's feud," answered McCane. "He got on his cayuse and rode away for Singer when the Sparshott bunch began to collect in town."

The Rio Kid chuckled.

"He's sure a wise hombre," he said. "I guess you'd do well to get on your cayuse and ride after the marshal, feller!"

"You're going, both of you!" said McCane. "I've said I'm sorry, but I ain't any concern with the feud between

Sparshotts and Lorings! You're going!"

The Kid shook his head. "That's where you slip up!" he said. "But I'll tell you this—I've got a wad in my belt, and I'll pay for the damage when it comes. Is that good enough?"

"It ain't! You quit!"  
 "Guess again!" smiled the Kid.  
 "It ain't my way to take back-chat from any galoot!" said McCane.  
 "You'll walk out of this shebang here and now, and I'll send Loring arter you! Now, then, that's the way down the stairs!"

McCane was evidently determined. For ten years the feud between the Sparshotts and the Lorings had made existence lively in the Wildcat section of Montana. Shooting on sight had been the rule, and Wildcat had been the scene of more than one desperate affray. Of the Lorings, only Kent was left; of the Sparshotts, only two brothers. And now that the last of the Lorings lay helpless and wounded in the shack hotel, all the town knew that the Sparshotts were looking for the finish. And in that finish McCane did not want to have a hand. He wanted to keep clear of the feud, as all other citizens of Wildcat kept clear of it.

"Now, listen here, feller," said the Rio Kid in a tone of patient remonstrance. "Here's my pard wounded; they got him from behind a bush, the darned coyotes! They've burnt out his ranch and run off his cattle. I've brought him into town for the doc. I'm standing by him to the finish! He ain't moving! Forget it!"

"You going?"  
 "Nix!"  
 "I guess I'll see you do!"  
 And the burly McCane came at the Rio Kid.

The Kid did not touch a gun. He met the man with his hands, and it was a surprise to the big man who had handled hefty cowpunchers and teamsters in his time. The Kid gave grasp for grasp, and it was the burly McCane who crumpled up.

The wounded man on the bed had gripped a gun, but he only stared at what followed. There was a wild trampling and struggling for a minute or more, and then the burly McCane went whirling through the doorway in the grasp of the Rio Kid. On the little landing outside they struggled for another minute, and there was a terrific crash as a burly body went spinning down the rickety wooden stairs.

Crash on crash till McCane landed at the bottom of the stairs. There was a shout from below. Five or six startled faces stared up. The bar-keeper came on the scene with a gun in his hand. But the Rio Kid, looking smilingly down the stairs, had a gun in his hand now.

McCane did not rise. He lay groaning where he had fallen. His leg was twisted under him, and he was hurt.

"I reckon you want to pick up that jasper and carry him to bed!" remarked the Rio Kid pleasantly. "He reckoned that he was tired of my company in this shebang, but I figure that he has changed his mind now some!"

McCane rose on one elbow, his face white with pain and rage. He grabbed a gun from his belt.

Bang!  
 It was the Kid who fired, and the gun went spinning from McCane's hand and a spurt of blood with it. McCane sank back again with a yell.

"You're sure slow on the draw in Montana!" drawled the Kid. "Any more of you galoots looking for a little fancy shooting?"

"I guess not, puncher!" grinned the

bar-keeper, and his gun disappeared. "You take the pot!"

"That's plumb polite of you, feller!" smiled the Kid. "Take that galoot away and bandage him up, and tell him to be a good little man before something happens to him!"

The Kid hoistered his gun, and lounged back into the room. Kent Loring gave him a faint grin.

"Notice to quit withdrawn!" remarked the Kid. "McCane is heap scared of the Sparshott crowd, but I guess he's wise to it now that he's got a firebug in this shebang who's got a bigger bite than any Sparshott! You don't want to worry any."

And the Kid crossed to the window again and stood looking out into the hot, dusty street.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER. Money Talks!

WHEN the Rio Kid lounged out of the shack hotel and walked down the dusty street of Wildcat all the cow town seemed interested in him. From doors and windows of saloons, from store and smithy, the Wildcat citizens stared at the puncher from Texas, and harder still stared the crowd of punchers from the Sparshott ranch, who were loafing on the street in twos and threes. They were a rough bunch, and every man of them packed a gun, and had used it more than once, and the Rio Kid was on the alert for gun-play as he walked easily and lightly down the street.

Only too well he knew that there would be no intervention from the Wildcat citizens if gun-play came along. The town had stood strictly outside the Sparshott feud, taking neither one side nor the other, and no man in the cow town meant to horn in now, now that the feud was approaching its tragic climax.

Sympathy, probably, was with the last of the Lorings, who lay wounded at the shack hotel at the mercy of his many enemies. But that sympathy was not likely to take a practical form. The fight was between the two clans that had been at war in the Wildcat section for ten years, and it was no other man's business. The Wildcat citizens only wondered that that reckless puncher from Texas had horned into it. He had thrown in his lot with the losing side, and unless he slid out quick he was booked to "go up" with the last of the Lorings, in the general opinion of Wildcat. They marvelled to see him walking the street so coolly and easily, humming the tune of a Mexican fandango as he went.

But the Sparshott punchers did not draw. They stared at the Kid as he walked with his light, elastic tread, and muttered to one another and glanced after him, and some of the glances were admiring. The Sparshott punchers were backing up their boss, and they were a rough and lawless bunch, but some of them could appreciate grit when they saw it, and the boy puncher from Texas was clear grit all through.

It was not mere bravado that made the Rio Kid walk the street in sight of his enemies. He had business on hand. He stopped at a frame-house a block from the shack hotel, and kicked open a rickety wooden door and entered. A thin man, with a foxy set of features, in his shirt-sleeves, was picking his teeth with a jack-knife, while he read a paper three days old from Butte, and he looked up at the Kid.

"I guess this is where Lawyer Dunke hangs out, feller?" the Kid remarked.

"C'rect!"

"Is he on hand?"

"I guess so! I'm him!"  
 "Oh, you're him!" said the Kid, scanning the man, and then closing the door behind him. "Waal, I reckon I've some business with you, Mr. Dunke."

"Locating in this town?" asked Dunke, eyeing the Kid. "I guess all the real estate in this section this side of Singer is in my hands. You want to come right here if you're after a town lot!"

The Kid grinned.

"I ain't after a town lot, feller! I ain't locating in this section. I'm just hanging on to see my friend Loring through his little trouble with the Sparshott bunch, and when that's through I guess it's me for the trail!"

"Oh, you're the Texas puncher?"

"Sure!"

Lawyer Dunke cast a rather uneasy glance from his window. Three punchers of the Sparshott bunch passed the window and glanced in as they passed. The lawyer breathed more freely when they were gone. Like the landlord of the shack hotel, he did not want the shooting, when it began, to begin in his house. And all Wildcat knew that it was coming.

"You don't want to get rattled, Mister Dunke!" smiled the Kid. "The circus won't begin just yet! The Sparshott bunch are jest watching round; but the Sparshotts ain't in town yet, and I guess the band won't begin to play till they horn in."

"You sure came hunting for trouble, puncher, when you came up here from the Rio Grande!" said Dunke.

"I guess I struck a heap of trouble before I got as far as Montana, and I never came out at the little end of the horn!" answered the Kid easily. "But that ain't what I come about. I'm after arranging a mortgage, feller!"

"Not on Wildcat land?" asked Dunke.

"Yep!"

"You won't get it! You can try down at Singer or in Butte, and they'll tell you the same! It ain't easy to collect dues in this district!" explained Dunke. "The galoots are sure too handy with their guns!"

"So I've heard," assented the Kid. "Kent Loring has sure tried to get a mortgage on his ranch, and slipped up on it. But that's the land I want a mortgage on."

"Forget it!" said Dunke, shrugging his shoulders. "Kent Loring has been burnt out of his ranch, and I guess he will be got by the Sparshotts before the town's a day older! His land ain't worth shucks! The Sparshotts have ruined his ranch, and they'll get him! Forget it!"

"I guess you're going to fix up a mortgage for five thousand dollars on that ranch, all the same!" persisted the Kid.

"Loco?" asked Dunke.

"Nope! Money talks!" said the Kid. And he threw a wad of notes on the rough pinewood table in the office. "Count that out!"

The lawyer, in astonishment, counted the bills. He stared at them and stared at the Rio Kid.

"There's six thousand dollars here," he said.

"Correct! You'll give me a receipt for it and fix up that mortgage," said the Kid, "and you'll keep mum as an oyster! Kent Loring ain't going to know who's fixed it up for him! Savvy?"

"I guess money talks!" assented Dunke. "I can fix it up all right on them lines. But you're throwing your money away, puncher! The mortgage



of the brothers. Both had guns in their grasp, but they did not raise them. The coolness of the puncher from the Rio Grande daunted them. Across the street, from every corner of every building, excited and eager faces were watching, waiting for the trouble to break. It was the wildest night that even that wild cow town in the uplands of Montana had ever seen.

"What about it?" smiled the Kid. "You've called to see me, and you've found me at home!"

With an oath, Eben Sparshott threw up his gun and fired. The Rio Kid's gun roared before he pulled the trigger.

Bang!  
A bullet whistled by the Kid's head and cut away a lock of hair as Eben Sparshott, dropping his gun, sank down in the street.

A dozen guns were up the next moment as the Kid leaped back into the shack hotel and slammed the heavy pinewood door.

Crash, crash! rang the spattering lead on the thick pine planks. The Kid glanced round him. The big room was empty. The crowd had scattered by back door and window as soon as the shooting started. The Kid grinned. Not even the bar-keeper remained. With the butt of his Colt the Kid smashed the swinging lamp, and the room was plunged into instant darkness. Bullets crashed on the door, while the voices of the Sparshott bunch roared. The Kid heard the voice of Rube Sparshott, hoarse with rage.

"Eben's gone up! Have that puncher out! Follow me, and have him out!"

There was a roar, and the pinewood door swung open under pressure from without. From the darkness of the interior two walnut-butted guns, gripped in hands that never missed, began to roar, and a hail of fire met the Sparshott bunch as they crammed furiously in. Right and left stricken men reeled, and in the middle of the doorway, with a bullet in his heart, sprawled Rube Sparshott!

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.**  
**The End of the Feud!**

**W**ILDCAT town had seen wild nights, many of them, but never so wild a night as now.

Back from the blazing guns of the Texas puncher, the Sparshott bunch had retreated, firing furiously as they backed—but all of them did not go. Three men, desperately wounded, crawled away in the shadows, and one lay still where he had fallen. Across the street the Sparshott bunch halted and rained lead on the shack hotel.

In that building only three men remained—Loring on his bed, listening to the wild uproar, with beating heart; McCane held in his bed with a broken leg; and the Rio Kid, a gun in either hand, the glint of battle in his laughing eyes, watchful as a cat, fierce as a panther, ready for a rush of the Sparshott gunmen if it came again.

But it did not come. From across the street the gunmen rained bullets and roared threats, but the tiger in his lair would have been as safe to attack as the Texas puncher in the dark building, and they kept their distance.

Through the long, wild night, under the glimmer of the stars, the wild uproar went on, shot after shot ringing out, singly or in volleys, and the Wildcat citizens kept close within their cabins while the trouble lasted. It was not till the sun was gleaming over the Montana Mountains that the firing ceased at last, and the Sparshott bunch went to their horses. In the fight both

of the Sparshotts had fallen, and the feud was indeed at an end, though not in the way that the Sparshotts had intended.

In the light of dawn a puncher came across the street with a white rag tied to a rifle—a flag of truce—and he stared into the shack to find himself looking

now with the last of the Sparshotts. Had the bunch got at the Texas puncher during that wild night, they would have shot him up or lynched him without ceremony; but with the day came reflection. The Sparshotts were "gone up" now, and no man in the outfit had any hunch to carry on the feud on

**THROWN OUT!** On the little landing the Kid and the hotel-keeper struggled grimly. There was a terrific crash as a burly body went spinning down the rickety wooden stairs. A startled face peered up at the amazing scene of the defeat of big McCane at the hands of the boy puncher.  
(See Chapter 1.)



at the Rio Kid's gun, with the Kid's smiling face behind it. The Sparshott puncher made a hasty motion with the white flag.

"That goes, feller, if you 'don't try any tricks!" grinned the Kid. "You want to palaver?"

"I guess we want that, hombre!" The puncher made a gesture towards Rube Sparshott. "You've sure fitted him for the pine box, puncher, and we want to plant him decent afore we hit the trail. I guess the Sparshott feud is over now, and Kent Loring takes the jackpot. There ain't any Sparshotts left to carry it on, and I reckon this bunch will be hitting the trail to look for a new boss. You can put that gun away, stranger. You won't want it any more."

The Kid chuckled. "I guess I'll keep it in my fist till you 'uns have lit out of the town!" he answered.

Half an hour later the bunch rode out of Wildcat. The feud was dead

his own. Those in the bunch who looked back as they rode saw the Rio Kid standing in the doorway of the shack looking after them, but the sight did not tempt them to return; it rather hastened them on their way. And Wildcat town breathed more freely when the Sparshott bunch were gone.

The Rio Kid went up the rickety stairs and entered the room where Kent Loring lay, sleepless, pale in his bandages. The Montana cowman looked at him.

"That bunch have hit the trail," drawled the Rio Kid. "I guess there ain't any more feud, feller. There ain't any more Sparshotts, and that's the reason why. You want to get mended and get to your ranch, and you won't have any more cattle run off or fences burned or barns fired. There ain't any more feud."

When the Rio Kid strolled out on the street of Wildcat he was the cynosure

first; it was the sixth or seventh constable he had passed that afternoon, and he supposed that he was going to pass this one like the others. But on that point he was mistaken. The stumpy constable stepped into the middle of the lane and held up his hand.

Lovell's heart beat a little.

He "honked" emphatically on his horn as a hint to the man to get aside; but the representative of the law did not stir. In the middle of the road, with raised hand of command, stood the representative of the law, and Lovell had to jam on his brakes.

He jumped from the saddle as the jigger stopped.

"Look here," he exclaimed hotly, "what are you stopping me for?" "I've 'eard about you, I 'ave!" said the policeman, in a deep, husky voice. "You're the young rip what rides without a licence!"

Lovell stared at him. He had never had any great admiration for the perspicacity of the police. But, really, this seemed like magic. His lawless proceedings, apparently, were already known.

"I—I say——" he gasped.

"Where's your licence?"

"Can't you see it sticking on the machine?" snapped Lovell.

"I'm speaking of your driver's licence."

Lovell paused.

Many a fellow would have said that he had left it at home, but Lovell was not a fibber. He looked at the policeman and slid his hand into his pocket.

"The fact is——" he said slowly.

"Well, where is it? I've got to see it!"

"The—the fact is, I haven't received it yet!" stammered Lovell. "I've applied for it and paid for it, but it hasn't come along yet!"

"I've 'eard that story afore!" said the policeman, with a nod.

"It's true!" exclaimed Lovell indignantly.

"I dessay. That ain't my business.

My business is to take you into custody for breaking the lor!"

Lovell shuddered.

"I—I suppose that will make it all right?" he murmured.

And he tried to slip a couple of half-crowns into the official hand.

The official hand was jerked back.

"The police can't be bribed, young man!" said the plump constable, with a great deal of dignity. "I'm sorry, but I shall have to report this!"

"For goodness' sake!" gasped Lovell.

"I—I—— This will get me into a fearful row at my school! Go easy!"

"I can't 'elp that!"

"Look here, I'll make it a pound!" said Lovell desperately. "And—and I'll promise not to ride the jigger again till my licence comes!"

The policeman took out a pocket-book and wetted a stump of pencil.

"Offered me two 'arf-crowns, and then increased the bribe to a pound!" he murmured, as he scribbled.

"Oh dear!"

Arthur Edward Lovell fairly shivered. He had made matters worse instead of better.

"You come alonger me!"

"You've no right to take me into custody!" snapped Lovell. "I'm jolly certain of that! You can take my name and address!"

"Not arter you tried to bribe me!" said the policeman stolidly. "I shall 'ave to take you to the station now!"

"Look here——"

"'Nuff said! You wheel that there bike along, and come alonger me!"

Lovell glared at the impassive man in blue.

"Wheel it yourself, if you want to!" he growled.

The constable stepped to the scooter. He turned on sufficient gas to move it at a walking pace and started. Lovell walked on the other side of the scooter, a prey to deeply troubled thoughts.

The constable did not speak a word as he tramped on.

Lovell's steps lagged.

What was going to happen to him?

At the station he would have to give his name and address—Arthur Edward Lovell of the Fourth Form at Rookwood School. The charge would be motoring without a driver's licence and attempting to bribe the police. It would not be called "tipping a bobby," it would be called bribing the police—a very serious matter. What was the penalty? A fine—perhaps a heavy fine. Surely it couldn't be chokey! Lovell shuddered. After all, he was only a schoolboy and a first offender. No, it couldn't possibly be chokey. But the Head of Rookwood, of course, would be referred to. A constable would call at the school; and Lovell fairly shuddered as he thought of the interview with the Head afterwards.

He lagged still more.

The policeman did not seem to observe it. Perhaps it had not occurred to him that the owner of the scooter might think of abandoning his jigger. But that was, in fact, exactly what Lovell was thinking of.

He worked it out in his excited mind. Nine pounds had been paid for the scooter. But the fine might be more than that—ten guineas, perhaps. It would be cheaper to lose the scooter than to pay the fine. And if he could get clear that awful scene with the Head at Rookwood could be escaped.

Evidently Lovell's best move was to escape if he could, leaving the scooter in the hands of the policeman.

Lovell dropped quite behind, his heart beating fast. At the station he would have to give his name and address. But so far he was unknown. This man could not even know that he belonged to Rookwood at all. Now was his time.

The policeman glanced round.

"Keep moving," he said. "You're wasting time. 'Ere, you come back! Where are you going? My eye! Stop!" Lovell did not stop.

He had turned from the road, and was tearing up one of the little paths into the wood.

"Stop!" roared the policeman. Lovell vanished into the wood.

## "THE RIO KID!"

(Continued from page 11.)

of all eyes. The roughest gunman in the cow town made respectful way for him; men who lived on trouble wanted no trouble with the puncher who had faced the Sparshott bunch and beaten them to it.

But the Kid's manner was mild and inoffensive; he wanted no trouble with any man, though the walnut-butted guns were ready if trouble came. Day by day he sauntered in the street of Wildcat or rode the black-muzzled mustang, or watched by the bedside of the cowman; and McCane, who was hobbling about on a crutch, treated him with the deepest respect.

The town doc pronounced at last that Kent could leave his bed, and the Montana cowman was glad enough to climb into the saddle again and to ride the trails without fear of a bullet from behind a rock or a clump of mesquite.

And a day or two later Kent had news for the Kid—news to which the Kid listened with an air of surprise.

"I've got that mortgage!" the Montana cowman told him.

"Sho!" ejaculated the Kid. "I'll tell a man!"

"It's a cinch!" said Kent, with a bright face. "Lawyer Dunke came to see me, and he allows he's fixed it up

with a client of his to lend me five thousand dollars on the ranch."

"Search me!" said the Kid.

"It's sure the biggest lump of luck that ever came my way!" said Kent. "Mind, I sure figure that I shall pull through easy and pay off that mortgage, now that I can get to work without them pesky Sparshotts gunning after me. But it's sure a heap of luck, all the same, and I guess I'd be glad to know who's behind Lawyer Dunke in this hyer deal!"

"Ain't he told you?" asked the Kid innocently.

"Nope! Not that it matters; the galoot won't lose his money, whoever he is. Look here, Kid Carfax, I guess I'm going to make a fresh start, and I want to take you in as partner, and we'll raise beef together on the Loring ranch. What about it?"

But the Kid shook his head.

"I guess I've got a call to hit the trail, feller," he said, "but I'll sure see you fixed before I ride."

"When you're through with riding the trails come back to Wildcat and put in at the Loring ranch," said Kent.

"I sure will!" agreed the Kid, with a smile.

And for a couple of weeks longer the Rio Kid stayed on in the Wildcat country, and saw a new ranch-house rise on the Loring ranch on the ashes of the old building burnt out by the Sparshotts. And when at last he mounted the mustang to hit the trail, he left

the Montana cowman working with a busy outfit on a prosperous ranch.

The Rio Kid's face was thoughtful as he rode. He stopped by a mountain creek to draw a legal document from his pocket, and, after a glance at it and a smile, to tear it into fragments and scatter the fragments in the stream. He sat his mustang and watched the scraps of paper float away and vanish. Kent Loring was never likely to be called upon to pay off that mortgage.

Then the Kid rode on again with his face set to the south.

"Old hoss," he said, speaking to the black-muzzled mustang, as he often did on his solitary trail-ridings—"old hoss, we sure vamoosed out of Texas to dodge trouble, and we've sure woke up trouble every time since we pulled out across the Staked Plain. There's a country south of this, old hoss, where they raise sheep instead of cows, and where they don't pack guns, and we're sure hitting the trail for that country. You and me are hitting the sheep country, old hoss, where they don't pack guns!"

And the Rio Kid rode on, by mountain trail and grassy plain, heading for the sheep country—perhaps to have done with trouble, and perhaps to find there that trouble dogged his steps as of old.

THE END.

(Yes, the Rio Kid will sure give you a thrill in next week's roaring Western yarn.)