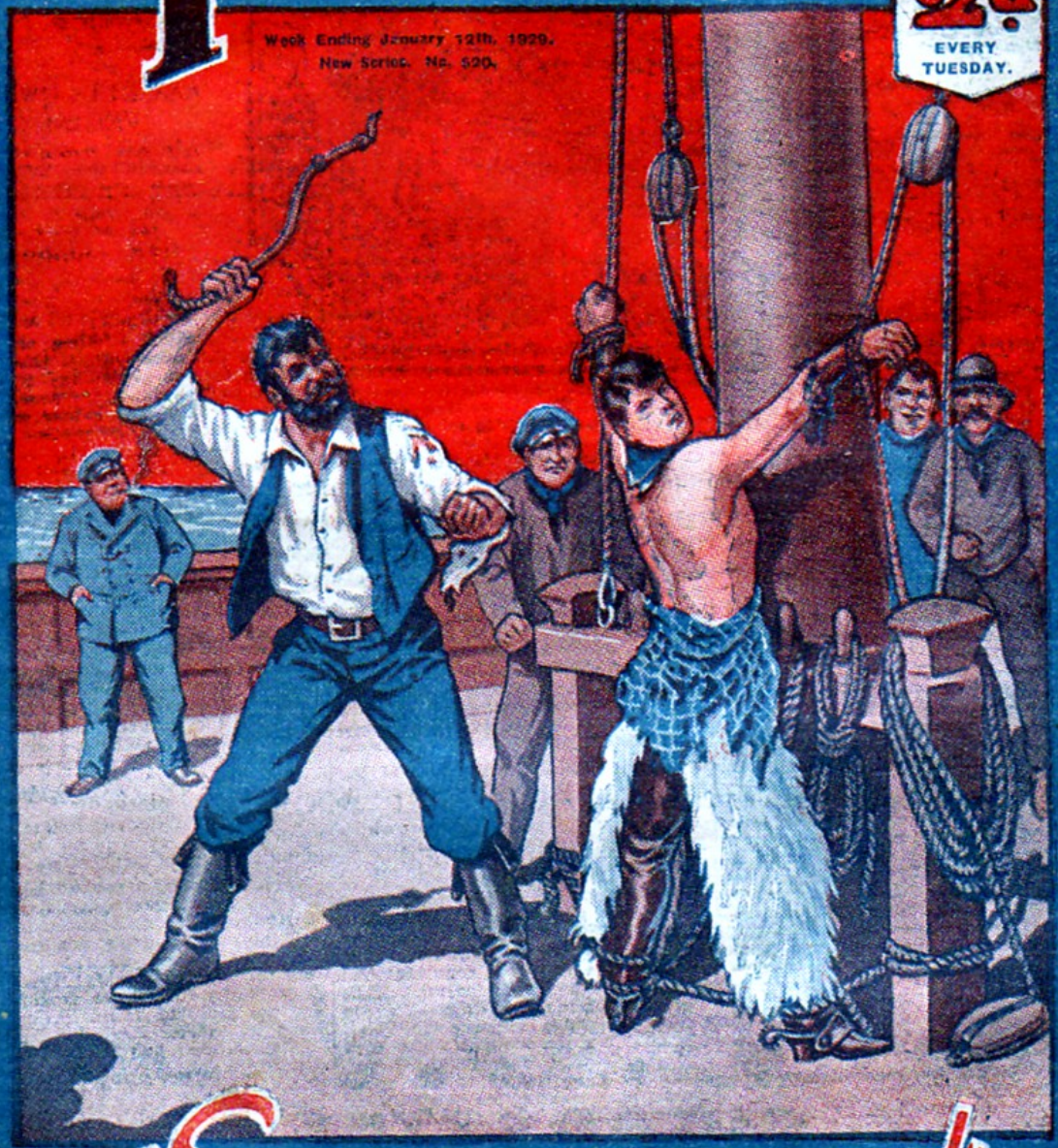


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The POPULAR

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EVERY TUESDAY.

Week Ending January 12th, 1929.
New Series, No. 520.



"SHANGHAIED!"

Sensational Story of The RIO KID, BOY OUTLAW, at Sea —

THE PLIGHT OF THE RIO KID!

The Rio Kid has been in many tight scrapes in his adventurous career, but never so amazing and perilous a plight as the one in which he finds himself this week!

SHANGHAIED!

By Ralph Redway



THE FIRST CHAPTER. Afloat!

WHAT had happened the Rio Kid did not know.

He knew there was a terrible ache in his head, and he knew that he was lying in black darkness, and that the hard boards on which he lay were in motion, rocking like a buck-jumper.

That, for a long time, was all he knew.

In that semi-conscious state, lying in darkness and pain, it seemed as if days, weeks, years, passed. But it could only have been a matter of hours. Twice or thrice he made a movement, only to sink back again. He was hurt. He knew that he was hurt. But what had hurt him, and why, he did not know, and was in no state for guessing.

Slowly, slowly his dazed mind struggled back to fuller consciousness. His head still ached bitterly, and his throat was dry with thirst. Blackness lay on him like a blanket. He was lying on hard boards, and for a long time his dizzy brain puzzled with the mystery of it, how those boards could be in incessant motion. He fancied that he must be dreaming. If he was lying on the floor of the bunkhouse that floor was as solid as the earth under it, and only in a fantastic dream could it be pitching like this. But his brain grew clearer, and he knew that it was no dream. He was in motion. At one minute his feet were higher than his head; the next minute his head was higher than his feet. There was no possibility of doubt, though it was inexplicable.

He tried to remember.

There was a nauseous smell about the place. The Kid did not know the smell of bilge. But he knew that this was no ranch smell. He was not at the Sampson ranch now. That was a cinch. But if he wasn't at the Sampson ranch where was he? In some building in the little coast town of San Pedro? But no building ought to have been rocking like

this, unless San Pedro, and the whole coast of Texas, was in the grip of an earthquake. Earthquakes were not unknown in the Rio Kid's experience. But he knew that this was not an earthquake; the motion was too regular for that. It came into his mind with a sudden flash that he was afloat.

Afloat!

He started up to a sitting position, and the pang of pain that passed through his bruised head was so sharp and terrible that he sank back again on the plank floor, dazed and bewildered, and for many minutes he did not move again. Could he have seen his face he would have seen that it was as white as chalk under its tan. But his thoughts were getting busy again; he knew that he was afloat on some vessel, and he was trying to figure how it had happened, and what he was doing there.

He remembered turning out of the bunkhouse at the ranch that morning. Jeff Barstow, the ranch foreman, had sent him and Santa Fe Sam down to San Pedro. Since the Kid had become Old Man Sampson's partner in the ranch he had still remained a member of the outfit, bunking with the rest, riding range with the rest, a cow-puncher, like the rest. Jeff had wanted two men to ride down to the coast town from the ranch with a bunch of cows that had been sold to a San Pedro man. The Kid remembered the drive down to the coast, the blue brilliance of the Gulf of Mexico in the sunlight. The cows had been handed over to the buyer. Santa Fe Sam wanted to roll round town a piece, looking for pulque in the Mexican posada there. The Kid had no taste for pulque, or any strong liquor, and he had strolled down to the inlet to look at the shipping, while he waited for Sam to rejoin him. They had left their horses hitched to the big ceiba that stood in the plaza of San Pedro, and separated, to meet again in an hour or two. That was all clear in the Kid's mind. It was what followed that had him beat.

OUR ROARING WESTERN YARN—STARRING THE RIO KID, BOY OUTLAW!

He pressed his hands to his aching head and wondered.

What in thunder did it all mean?

He could recall strolling along the bank of the swampy inlet that jugged in from the sea at San Pedro. There were a couple of luggers there, and a schooner, and three or four seafaring men had been hanging about. The Kid remembered that he had seen a seafaring man come stamping back from the town, swearing—a hefty man, with cross-eyes, who seemed to be in a rage, and from what he said, loudly and profanely, the Kid understood that he was mate of the schooner, and that he had been after two members of the crew who had got ashore and deserted. The Kid had reflected that it showed boss-sense on the part of the deserters to hustle ashore and vamoose, considering the extremely unpleasant looks of that cross-eyed man. The Kid had seen him take boat for the schooner and heard his profanity floating back across the sluggish water. After that—

After that the Kid's mind was a blank.

He had a vague recollection of the earth and the sky suddenly falling to pieces round him, and that was all.

That, of course, never had happened. But that recollection, coupled with the big bruise he could feel under his hair, and the pain of it, put him wise. He had been knocked on the head and stunned. Some sneaking coyote had dealt him a sockdolager from behind, and the Kid had fallen like a roped steer, insensible. He knew that now. The blank that had followed was explained; he had lain insensible since that fearful crash on his head. And now—the Kid's brain jumped to it—he was on board one of the vessels he had seen lying in the inlet. His thoughts, working further, figured it out that the vessel was now at sea. The Kid knew little of ships or shipping, but he knew that a ship would not be pitching like this in the waters of the San Pedro inlet. He was on one of those craft, and the craft he was on had put to sea while he was unconscious.

How long it had taken the Kid's aching head to work all this out he never knew—hours, as likely as not. But he had it all clear at last—he had been stunned by a blow from behind in San Pedro and roped in on board a ship, and the ship was at sea. The reason was still to seek. It couldn't be robbery, he reckoned. The Kid's roll was safe at the ranch, in Old Man Sampson's iron safe. He hadn't more than half a dozen dollars about him, and, anyhow, nobody at San Pedro knew anything about his roll. Besides, if they robbed him they would leave him where he was robbed. What would be the use of carrying him off to sea? It sure wasn't that. But what was it?

"Oh, shucks!" murmured the Kid.

In that corner of Texas, on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, three hundred miles and more from the Rio country, the Kid had felt certain that he was unknown, unsuspected. Nobody in that section knew that he was the Rio Kid, with a thousand dollars reward offered for him at Rio. To all who knew him there he was just Curfax, a puncher on the Sampson ranch. But had some galoot from the valley of the Pecos or the Rio Grande happened into town and recognised him? Had that galoot knocked him on the head, as the easiest way of cinching him, to carry him back to where he belonged, a prisoner, to be handed over to a sheriff?

It seemed unlikely, yet it was the only explanation that the Kid could think of. He was a prisoner on this vessel, that was certain, and it was only as the outlaw of the Rio Grande that he could be wanted.

His hand went to his belt. He was not surprised to find that his guns were gone.

Since he had joined the Sampson outfit the Kid, outlaw no longer, had still packed the old walnut-butted guns that had served him so well, though he had packed them chiefly for old times' sake. They were old friends, with whom he couldn't bear to part. They had been holstered to his belt when he came down to San Pedro, and they had been taken from him. The Kid was disarmed.

These galoots had lifted his guns, but had not taken the trouble to bind him, having him safe on the ship. But any man who had roped in the Rio Kid knowingly would have bound him fast enough. He concluded that it wasn't that, after all. It was no sheriff's deputy or reward-hunter who had cinched him. But what, and who, was it? The Kid had to give up that puzzling problem.

But his strength was returning now, and he rose from the hard floor on which he had been lying. There was a slightly uneasy feeling inside the Kid. He was not accustomed to the motion of a ship. The smell, too, was nauseous. He reckoned that this ship, whatever it was, wasn't a clean ship.

Having gained his feet, the Kid groped his way about carefully. In the darkness he felt the outlines of several bunks, not unlike those in a ranch bunk-house, but close packed. He stumbled at last on some wooden steps, and groped his way up them, and felt the outlines of a door. But the door was fast.

A lurch of the ship sent him stumbling down the steps, and he found himself on the floor again.

"Thunder!" ejaculated the Kid.

He picked himself up.

His head still ached, and he was dizzy. To get at the men who had made him a prisoner he had to get through that locked door. The Kid sagely opined that he could wait. Sooner or later they would come to

him; and then he would know what to do. Whoever they were, and whatever they intended, they would find a tough mouthful in the Rio Kid. That uncertain feeling in his stomach troubled him, too. The Kid groped to a bunk, crawled into it, lay down on a rough mattress, and slept.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Shanghaied!

SHAKK, shake, shake!
The Rio Kid opened his eyes.
He had slept soundly.

The strange position in which he had found himself had not disturbed the Kid's slumbers.

The Kid had slept soundly in a calaboose, with a torch mob growling round the walls. He had slept soundly in a dug-out in a chaparral, with a sheriff's posse hunting him, passing and repassing. And he had slept soundly in the bunk on the unknown ship on which he had been brought a kidnapped prisoner.

He opened his eyes on the light of day, as a rough hand shook his shoulder, and stared up at the man beside the bunk. With the first glance he recognised him as the cross-eyed man who had gone off in the boat swearing over the missing seamen.

The man glared down at him.

"You want to sleep all the way to Jamaica?" he bawled. "Say!"

"Oh, sho!" said the Kid. "I guess not! If you figure that I'm going to Jamaica, feller, you've got another guess coming. Dog-gone my boots if I know where it is!"

"Get out!"

The Kid stretched himself and yawned.

There was still an ache in his head, but it did not trouble him very much now. The Rio Kid was as hard as nails.

He rolled out of the bunk.

The cross-eyed man pointed to the steps, on which the Kid had stumbled the previous night. The door at the top was open, letting in light and air.

"Get on deck, you!"

"On deck?" repeated the Kid.

The Kid was quick enough on the uptake, but he was unaccustomed to nautical terms.

"Blue blazes!" howled the cross-eyed man. "You pesky puncher, don't you know what a deck is?"

"I guess I've handled a deck of cards," remarked the Kid.

"A deck of cards! Holy smoke! Git!" roared the cross-eyed man; and he followed up the order with a string of oaths.

The Kid eyed him for a moment. The cross-eyed man was a powerful fellow; but the Kid would have had no hesitation in handling him. But he decided to know more about this strange matter before he started anything. He tramped up the steps, and came out on the deck of the schooner.

Sunlight was on the rippling waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Far away to the west was a dim purple line, which the Kid figured to be the coast of Texas. Somewhere beyond that purple blur lay the Sampson ranch and the outfit he had been riding with. They were far enough away now. The Kid hoped that Santa Fe Sam had taken his mustang safely back to the ranch. It was like the Kid to think of his horse at that moment.

But his thoughts came quickly back to his surroundings.

The Kid knew a lot about horseflesh and saddlery and ranching and cows; but he knew little about ships and their

ways. Still, he knew that he was on a schooner; Santa Fe Sam had pointed out this craft to him in the inlet, and told him it was a schooner, rather proud of his knowledge.

Mainsail, topsail, and foresail were spread to the breeze, and were drawing; and the schooner was pitching at a good rate over the shining waters of the Gulf.

Five or six men stared curiously at the Kid and grinned. A cowboy in goatskin chaps was doubtless new on board the schooner.

On the afterdeck was a fat man in a peaked cap. He had a face tanned to a mahogany colour, a pair of fierce, sharp eyes deeply sunken, and a big Mexican cigar stuck, unlighted, in a corner of his mouth. The Kid, glancing at him, guessed that he was a man in authority. The fat man, for the moment, was staring up at the canvas, and did not heed the Kid.

A burly man who carried a whistle slung to a lanyard, came across to the Kid and stared at him.

"You been punching cows?"

"Sure!"

"Oh, thunder! Go and tell the old man."

"The old man?" repeated the Kid.

"The skipper, you durned hobo!"

"Skipper?" said the Kid.

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated the boatswain. "The captain, you dog-goned cowman!"

"Oh!" said the Kid. "I get you. Who's the captain?"

The boatswain pointed to the fat man aft.

"That's Captain Shack. Mind how you speak to him, if you don't want blazes knocked out of your carcass!"

The Kid's eyes glinted.

"I guess there'll be loose hair flying around, afore blazes are knocked out of me to any extent," he remarked. "So that's the captain, is it? I guess I'll ask him what this stunt means, anyhow."

The Kid walked aft.

On the pitching deck of the schooner it was not easy for a landsman to keep a steady footing. The Kid was accustomed to something more solid under his high-heeled boots. He gave a lurch as the schooner rolled and unexpectedly tumbled over, and there was a chuckle from the seamen who were looking at him.

The Kid picked himself up, a little breathless. He glanced at the grinning seamen, with gleaming eyes. The Kid had never felt clumsy before; but any landsman requires time to get on his sea-legs, on a small sailing vessel on a choppy sea. The Kid wished he could have had that bunch of cow-ponies on the Sampson ranch; he opined that the chuckle would have been on his side then.

But he was anxious to know what all this meant, and he continued on his way aft. A grip on a rail helped him to the after-deck without another tumble.

Captain Shack withdrew his gaze from the canvas aloft and shifted it to the newcomer.

He stared at him blankly.

"Who the thunder are you?" he demanded.

"You can call me Curfax," answered the Kid. "But I reckon it's me that's going to ask questions. I want to know what this hyer game is, and I want to know it quick!"

"What?" roared Captain Shack.

"I've been knocked on the head and brought here," said the Kid. "I belong to a ranch back of San Pedro, and I reckon I'm coming to get there, pronto."

I want to know who brought me here; I guess I'm going to make that galoot feel pretty considerable sick of himself!"

The captain glared at him and then shouted:

"Starboy!"

The cross-eyed man, who had come up out of the fore-castle, hurried aft.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"What's this?" roared Captain Shack, pointing at the Kid. "Mean to say you've shanghai'd a gold-darned puncher on board this hooker?"

"Ain't we four men short?" demanded Starboy. "Was it a time for picking and choosing? He's a handy lad, from the look of him, and can be licked into shape."

Captain Shack poured out a stream of profanity. The Kid looked at him. He had heard some tall language on the ranches, but he had never heard anything to equal this seafaring man's flow of eloquence.

"Licked into shape!" snorted the skipper, when he had come to an end of his expletives. "How long is it going to take to lick a cowboy into a seaman? I guess he'll be trying to cinch the helm, and hog-tie the binnacle. You durned goat, what's the good of a puncher on a ship?"

"Give me two days, and I guess I'll make a handy man of him," answered Mr. Starboy. "I've made a seaman out of a Jamaica plantation nigger. I'd make a seaman out of the Governor of Texas, if I had him on this hooker, with a length of rope. That boy's all right."

"Well, the job's yours," snarled Captain Shack.

"Leave him to me," said the mate. "I guess he won't look so durned unhandy when he's got them rags off, and some seaman's clothes on. Git back to the fo'c'sle, my man, and I'll tell the bo'sun to chuck you some dungarees."

The Rio Kid had listened, almost like a fellow in a dream. He hadn't known what to make of this strange turn of affairs, and even yet he did not quite know what to make of it. Of what went on in the rough coasting towns of the Texas seaboard, the boy puncher was quite ignorant.

"Let up a piece, you'uns," said the Kid, quietly. "I don't rightly get on to this. What's the game?"

The captain, who was turning away, turned back and stared at him.

"You don't savvy, you mossheaded puncher. You're shanghai'd!"

"Shanghai'd?" repeated the Kid.

The word was quite new to him.

"Blue bizies," gasped Mr. Starboy.

"He don't know what shanghai'd is."

"Put a pilgrim wise," suggested the Kid.

"You pesky mosshead, you're a seaman on this hooker now—can you understand that?"

"I reckon not," said the Kid. "I ain't looking for a berth on any hooker. I sure belong to the Sampson ranch."

"You belong to the Pond Lily, now," grinned the skipper. "Forget all about that ranch, my man, and turn to and obey orders."

"I guess I ain't obeying any orders in this outfit," said the Kid. "I reckon I ain't going to sea, neither. I'm asking you to turn this gold-darned tub round, and take me back to San Pedro, pronto."

Captain Shack eyed him for some moments, in dumb amazement. Then he burst into a yell of laughter.

"Take him away Starboy," he gasped. "Take him away! He's yours."

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Starboy tapped the Kid on the back shoulder.

"Git foward!" he rapped.

"Go slow a piece," said the Kid. "I'm asking you now, which galoot it was tapped me on the cabeza and roped me in."

"Here, Hacker," called out the mate. "This boob wants to know who tapped him one in the cross-trees." The boatswain came up grinning. "Give him another of the same, if he keeps fresh."

"You bet," said the boatswain.

The Kid looked at him. "It was you that gave me that sock-dolager, and roped me into this outfit?" he asked.

"Sure," answered Hacker.

"Then I reckon you're the galoot I want to see," said the Kid.

And with the spring of a tiger, he leaped at the boatswain of the Pond Lily.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Hard Measures!

CRASH! The burly boatswain of the schooner hit out savagely as the Kid came at him.

But that did not save him. The Kid's left came like a lump of iron into his eye, and as he staggered, the Kid's right drove on his jaw, and he went to the deck with a terrific crash.

He lay where he had fallen, gasping faintly.

There was a howl from the hands forward on the schooner. It seemed like a miracle to them, to see the burly boatswain handled in that style. Hacker, powerful as he was, was quite knocked out by those two fearful blows. He lay on the deck half-stunned.

The Rio Kid turned to the captain and mate, who stood rooted, as if in a trance with astonishment.

"If you'd left me a gun," said the Kid, between his teeth, "I'd sure wade in and wipe out this durned rustling outfit to the last dog-goned scallywag in it. Make me a seaman, will you, you dog-goned ginks! You'll rope me in and put me into this outfit whether I like it or not, will you, you gold-darned locoed jaspers! By the great horned toad, I reckon you've got another guess coming."

Captain Shack, gasping, dragged a revolver from his hip pocket. He backed off, and levelled it at the Kid.

"Hold on," shouted the mate. "Leave him to me."

"Ain't this hyer mutiny?" yelled the enraged Shack.

"I guess I'll farn him to toe the line, captain," said Mr. Starboy. "We only got six hands on this hooker, and we sure can't afford to throw a man into the Gulf."

The Kid was tensed for a struggle. He was watching the captain like a cat, ready for the shot if it came, ready to make a desperate attempt to seize the revolver. Once he had a six-gun in his grasp, there were not enough men on the Pond Lily to hold the Kid.

The Kid would have given all the roll that lay in Old Man Sampson's safe at the ranch, for a loaded six-gun, at that moment.

But Captain Shack was not intending to pull the trigger on the shanghai'd cow-puncher. It was fear for his own safety that had made him draw the weapon. Undoubtedly, he would have shot the Kid dead on the deck, had the puncher advanced on him. But the Kid knew too much to rush on a levelled six-gun.

The boatswain was sitting up on the deck, holding his head in both hands. He rocked himself dizzily, and groaned.

"You sure can use your hands some," said the mate, as if half admiring the prowess of the new member of the schooner's crew. "But you're too fresh, boy, you've got to farn. Git foward."

"Guess again," sneered the Kid.

Starboy grinned.

"You ain't obeying orders?" he asked.

"Not any."

"Hyer, you loafin' lubbers," shouted the mate, addressing the staring crew. "Get a hold of that man, and trice him up to the rigging."

And as the seamen came forward, the mate led them, with a jump at the Kid. The next moment, the Rio Kid was mixed up in a wild struggle.

There were six men to him, and all of them were husky fellows, rough and muscular. But the Kid was like a wild-cat in their hands.

By the time he was got down on the deck, every man in the crew had damages to show.

But he was got down at last, and a rope run round his limbs, and drawn tight, and knotted.

Helpless now, the Kid was triced to the rigging, and his shirt was torn away by a rough hand, leaving the back bare.

"Git a move on, Hacker," snapped the mate.

Hacker had staggered up now. He still seemed dazed, and one of his eyes was blackening fast, and almost closed. His rough stubbly face was convulsed with fury.

He knitted a length of rope, and stepped up to the bound Kid.

What followed was like an evil dream to the Rio Kid. He had been in many a "rough house" in the ranches, in the cow towns, in the round-up camps. But he had still something to learn, and he was learning it now. The roughest bulldozer on a ranch, or in a rodeo, was a gentle Rube compared with the boatswain of the Pond Lily. The boatswain's sinewy arm rose and fell in incessant blows. The Kid was hard as nails, and he shut his teeth to keep back a cry. But the pain of that fearful lashing was too much for flesh and blood, and at last the shanghai'd puncher hung fainting in the ropes that secured him, and the mate signed to Hacker to quit.

"Give him salt water," snarled out Captain Shack. "Give him plenty, and chuck him into the fo'c'sle."

Salt water was swamped over the Kid's scored back, and he was roughly dragged away and tossed into the fore-castle. He was only half-conscious now, and he lay where he had fallen.

Mr. Starboy walked back aft, smiling.

"That boy'll be useful yet, captain," he opined. "I've had 'em as fresh before, but in two days, I got 'em to feed out of my hand! He's sure fresh, but he'll toe the line, I'll tell a man."

"If he don't toe the line," said Captain Shack, with a string of oaths. "I'll make him believe that the deep pit is a pleasant place to this hooker. I sure will, and you can bet your bottom dollar on that!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Getting a Gun!

THE Rio Kid lay in a bunk in the dirty fore-castle of the Pond Lily, for the rest of that day, undisturbed. When the rough crew of the schooner came down, they looked at him and grinned, but gave him no other heed. With a captain and mate like Esau Shack and Bill Starboy the schooner was not likely to have a choice crew, and her company was made up of the roughest scum of New Orleans. The Kid crawled painfully out of his bunk for food and water, and crawled back

again, jeered by the crew, and answering no word. It was not till sundown that Mr. Starboy looked into the fore-castle, grinned at the Kid, and looked him over.

"You've sure had a rest," he remarked. "I guess we ain't running a hospital ship. It's you for duty."

The Kid made no reply. He had learned to school his emotions, and he gave no sign of the fierce and deadly rage that was burning like a flame in his breast. With his hands, good as they were, he could do nothing against the odds; he could do nothing till he got a grip on a six-gun. Until that happened the Kid had to talk turkey, and he knew it. But when once his grip closed on the butt of a gun—

"You obeying orders now, Carfax?" chuckled the mate.

The Kid followed the mate on deck, with his cowboy garb under his arm. Starboy waved his hand to the rail.

"Chuck them into the Gulf." The Kid hesitated. A moment's hesitation was enough for the mate. He clenched his huge fist and drew back his arm.

Splash! The cowboy garb went into the sea.

"Jest in time!" said Mr. Starboy

watch, and he eyed the Kid malevolently. Sick and weak as the Kid was feeling now, there was a look in his eyes that warned the bully to keep his hands off him. But all through that weary watch his savage voice was heard cursing and threatening.

The Kid said no word. What he was told to do he did, but his thoughts were elsewhere. Somewhere on the schooner were the old



STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER! "It was you that gave me that sockdolager and roped me into this outfit, was it?" said the Kid. "Then I reckon you're the galoot I want to see!" And he leaped at the boatswain. Crash! The boy outlaw's left came like a lump of iron into the ruffian's eyes, and the man went to the deck with a crash! (See Chapter 3.)

"Sure!" said the Kid. "What's the good of a cayuse kicking agin the wall of a corral?"

"I reckon that's boss sense," said the mate, with a nod. "You've had yours, and you've had it hard; and if it's taught you manners already, so much the better for you. I'm goin' to make a seaman out of you, boy; and afore we hit Jamaica I'm goin' to have you feedin' from my hand. You get me?"

"I sure get you," said the Kid.

"Tumble up, and get on deck."

"It's your say-so," said the Kid. He rolled out of the bunk quietly, though every movement cost him pain. The mate eyed his cowpuncher garb contemptuously.

"Strip off them rags and get into these," he said, and he threw down a dirty suit of dungarees. "Sharp!"

It was bitter to the Kid to discard his puncher outfit. But, for the present, the Kid was playing a soft game. There was nothing else for it, until he could get hold of a gun.

He stripped off the cowboy clothes and dressed in the dungarees. The change they made in his locks was remarkable.

"Bring them rags on deck," said Starboy.

grimly. "Only jest! You're farrin', boy—you're farrin' fast. How's your back?"

"Purty considerable painful," answered the Kid.

The mate chuckled.

"Nothin' like what it'll be if you don't jump to orders," he said. "I ain't holdin' it agin you that you was fresh when you come aboard. That was nat'ral, seeing as you was a puncher afore you took to the sea. But if you don't jump to orders now you're a seaman, I pity you, I sure do. You're in the port watch, if you've got savvy enough to know what that means, and you're under Hacker's orders. Chew on that!"

The mate strode aft.

It did not take the Kid long to learn that the crew was divided into two watches, port and starboard, alternately on duty; though he learned also that the Pond Lily was so short-handed that both watches were sometimes wanted together. There had been desertions at other places as well as at San Pedro; and the Pond Lily was large for a schooner, and needed a good many more hands than sailed in her at present. Hacker, the boatswain, was in the port

notched, walnut-butted guns that had been taken from him. The Kid thought of the guns with a fierce longing. Once they were in his hands he was ready to face the whole crew of the schooner, with a smile on his face, and show them how he had learned to shoot on the Double-Bar ranch in the Frio country. The captain and mate packed guns, he knew, but there was little chance of getting hold of them. More than once, during the watch, he eyed the boatswain. Hacker berthed forward with the men, and if he packed a gun—the Kid's thoughts ran on that.

The Kid heard eight bells strike, without knowing what it implied. The starboard watch came up, and the port watch went to their bunks; and as the Kid went with them, Hacker, who was going into the fore-castle, shoved him roughly aside.

For an instant the Kid turned on him with a blaze in his eyes. The boatswain caught that blaze and jumped back, his hand going to his hip.

The Kid went quietly into the fore-castle.

His heart was beating fast. THE POPULAR.—No. 520.

The boatswain packed a gun; that instinctive movement towards his hip-pocket told as much. There was a gun in the fore-castle, where the Kid bunked; and if the Rio Kid had not lost all his cunning, that gun would be in his grip before the night was out.

There were four men below—the boatswain, the Kid, and two seamen. There were bunks for twice as many, but the Pond Lily was short of hands. The Kid turned in very quietly, but not to sleep. The boatswain had flung himself into his bunk fully dressed as he was, and his deep breathing soon announced that he was asleep.

The Rio Kid's eyes were closed, but he had never been wider awake.

A dim, smoky lamp swung in the foul fore-castle of the schooner, shedding a dim light. From his bunk the Kid watched, while he waited. But he did not wait long.

The three men slept very soon. The night was warm, and the scuttle was open, and at intervals a sound of voices came from the deck. The Rio Kid slipped from his bunk.

He knew that he might be seen from the deck, but he had to take chances. Taking chances was not a new experience to the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande.

He stopped beside the snoring boatswain.

The ruffian was lying half on his back, the hip-pocket beneath him. To get at the gun without awakening him was impossible. The Kid had no weapon—nothing but his hands. With a grim

look on his face, a glitter in his eyes, he bent over the boatswain.

Hacker suddenly awakened, with a grip of iron on his throat. His eyes came wide open, and he glared at the Kid. Before he could utter the yell which trembled on his lips, the Kid had lifted his head and dashed it with fearful force against the wooden head of the bunk. It was a crashing blow that might have cracked a thinner skull, and it stunned the boatswain of the Pond Lily. One faint groan came from his bearded lips, and he collapsed insensible in the bunk.

"I guess I owed you that, feller," murmured the Rio Kid. "You was altogether too handy knocking a galoot on the cabeza from behind. I kinder reckon that puts paid to you, you dog-goned coyote!"

He rolled the huge body over, and groped for the revolver in the hip-pocket. His eyes danced as his fingers closed on it and he drew it out. He stepped back from the bunk, and examined the weapon swiftly. It was a heavy Navy revolver, six-chambered and loaded in every chamber. The Kid hummed a tune as his grasp closed hard on the butt. Two startled faces stared at him from two bunks. The seamen had been awakened by the crash of Hacker's hard head on the solid wood.

The Kid smiled at them pleasantly. "You 'uns want to keep quiet," he said in a soft drawl. "I ain't got any hunch for spilling your vinegar; but if you let out so much as a yaup, you get yours, and you get it sudden."

"'Jumpin' Moses!" murmured one of the men. "What do you reckon you're goin' to do with that gun?"

"I kinder reckon I'm goin' to talk with the galoots that shanghaied a cow-puncher, as they call it," said the Kid. "I've got a hunch that this outfit is goin' to turn right round an' take me back to San Pedro. I reckon that is a sure cinch, feller; and if you want to take a hand in the game, you only got to get on your legs and say so."

"No sugar in mine!" answered the scaman, with a grin; and he settled down in his bunk again, the other following his example.

"You're sure wise," said the Kid agreeably. "You're an ornery bunch of dog-goned coyotes, but I ain't got no hunch to spill your juice, if you stand clear of the rocks." But I'm sure honing to get a bead on that dog-goned mate and skipper. If you don't want yours, keep where you are, and don't horn in."

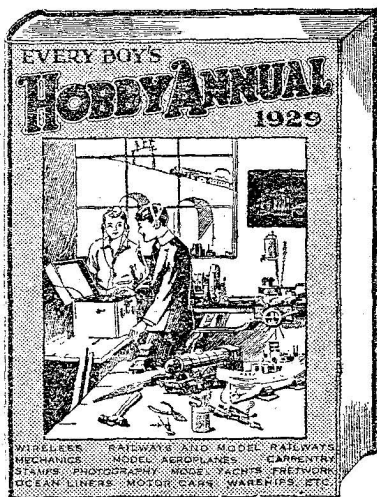
He stepped to the door of the fore-castle. From the deck came the sound of Starboy's rough voice, cursing one of the watch. The Kid listened and smiled. Overhead sailed a full, round moon. The schooner floated in a sea of silver. The Rio Kid ran lightly up the steps and stepped out on the deck.

THE END.

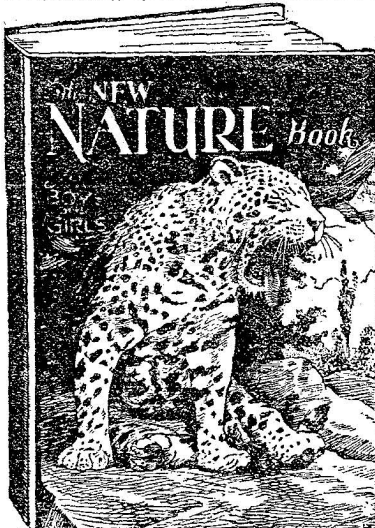
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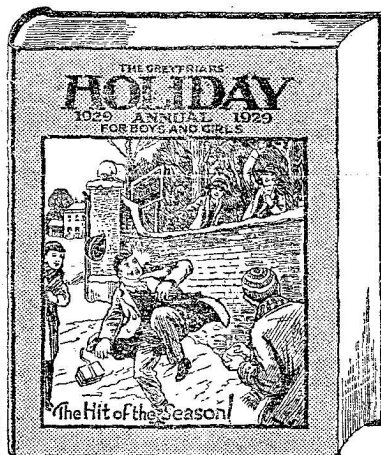
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