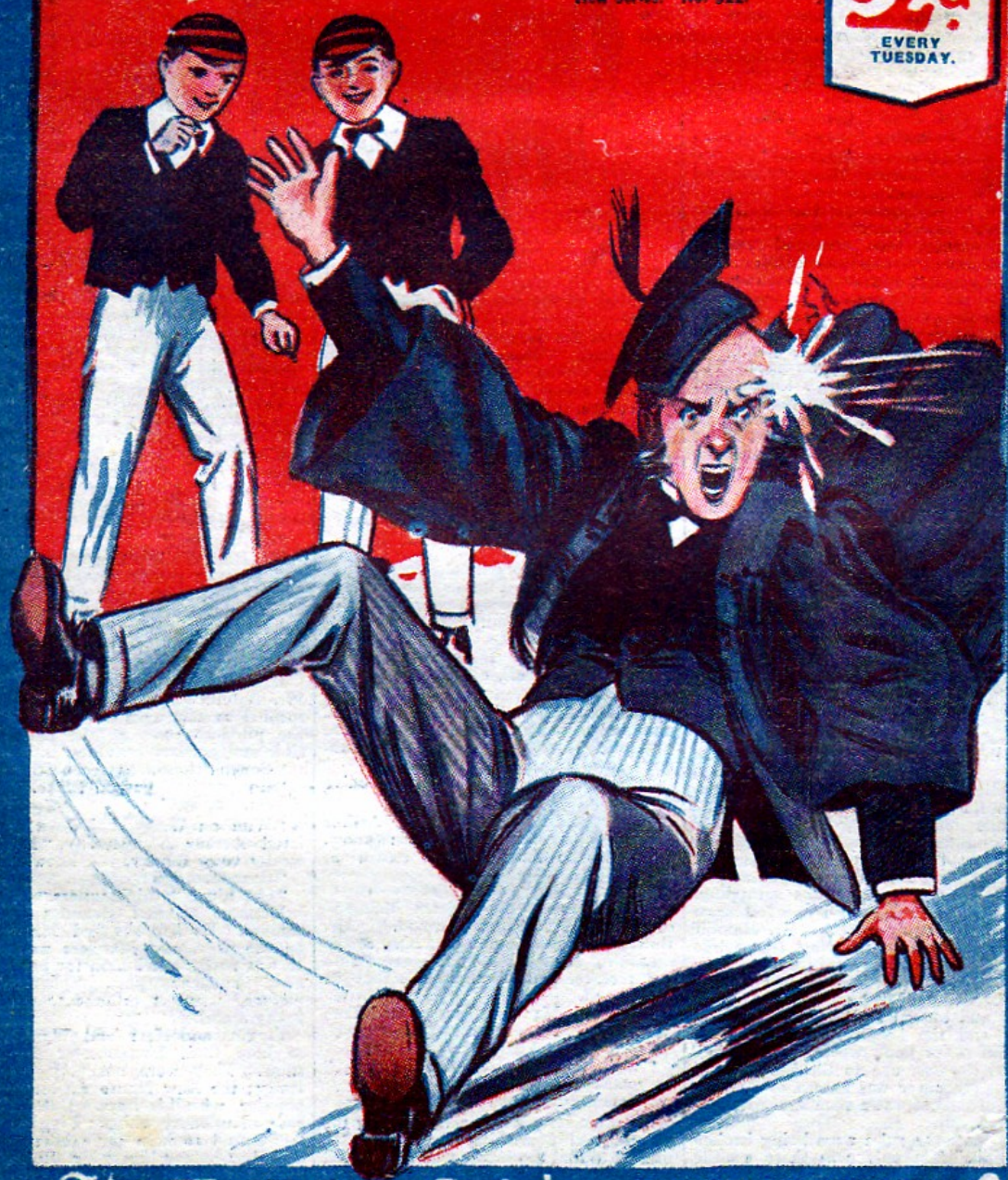


X STOOD THE TEST AND STILL THE BEST! X

# The POPULAR

Week Ending  
January 26th, 1929.  
New Series, No. 522.

2<sup>d</sup>  
EVERY  
TUESDAY.



The **FALL** of the **TYRANT!**  
*See the Special School Tale inside*



**FIT FOR FAY!**

Free from the clutches of Captain Shawk, of the schooner *Pond Lily*, the *Rio Kid* proceeds to punish his late captor in a very fitting manner!

# The RIO KID'S —



## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Shooting Up the Town!

**H**OOPS rang on the grassy trail that ran down the bank of the creek, from the Sampson Ranch to the little coast town of San Pedro. Old Man Sampson, with his tanned, grizzled face grim under his Stetson hat, rode his tall, bony pinto at the head of fifteen brawny punchers. Every man in the bunch packed two guns in his belt, and carried a rifle in the leader's sheath at his saddle. Some of the punchers looked as grim as the Old Man himself; some of them were grinning, as if in anticipation of a jamboree. As they drew near the coast town, they cracked their quirts like pistol-shots, and yelled in chorus. Seafaring men on a lugger and a brig anchored out in the inlet stared at them in surprised interest. But in the sprawling hamlet of San Pedro, as by the yellow blur of old, was tumult and alflight.

It was the third visit that Old Man Sampson and his bunch had made to San Pedro in as many days.

For three nights and two days the *Rio Kid* had been missing. *Kid Cayfax*, the Old Man's partner in the ranch, had disappeared at San Pedro. Santa Fe Sam had led his riderless mustang back to the ranch, unable to say what had

become of the Old Man's partner. Whether the *Kid* had been "knifed" by some greaser, or shot up by some cow-thief, robbed and murdered by some of the San Pedro toughs, or kidnapped on board one of the coasting vessels that put in at the inlet, nobody knew, any more than they knew whether he was still alive or dead. The town marshal either could or would tell nothing; but the town marshal was well-known to be no better than the rest of the place—a nest of smugglers, cow-thieves, shanghai men, and boot-leggers. Such law as was available was useless to the Old Man, and he had taken his own methods—methods which accorded with his fiery temper, and were fully endorsed by the bunch. "Shooting up" the town was the Old Man's method. He had announced in San Pedro that until the missing puncher turned up San Pedro was going to be put through a course of sprouts, and he was keeping his word. This was the third visit of the Sampson bunch, and when the San Pedro citizens saw them coming there was a general exodus on the other side of the town.

Only one man remained to meet the bunch as they avorted into the unpaved, weedy street. That was Seth Smith, the town marshal. The bunch came to a halt, surrounding the marshal.

"Eyer, you Smith!" hooted the Old Man. "You found my partner yet?"

"Dog-gone your pardner!" roared the town marshal. "I don't know nothin' about your gold-darned pardner, and don't want to. I want you to keep your bunch out of this hyer burg, or I'll sure get the sheriff down from Nuce with his posse to handle you."

"My pardner's been cinched in Olds' hyer den of thieves," said the Old Man, bending his grizzled brows fiercely on the marshal. "There ain't a galoot in this burg that ain't a cow-thief or a boot-legger, or at best a muvverter's hunter! You're wuss'n the rest! You got to hand out my pardner, *Kid Cayfax*, or there won't be much left of this town—no, sir, not a grace-spot to mark where it stood! You hear me shout?"

"You darned old bull-headed cuss——" snorted the marshal.

"That's enough from you! Git!"

The marshal of San Pedro was a tough man, and he packed two guns. But he did not venture to touch them, with the range riders cavorting round him. As for the sheriff's posse from Nuce, Seth was quite unwilling to bring them on the scene at any time, lest they should have found his substance stacked with boot-leg liquor. And the citizens of San Pedro were not the men to back him up in a free fight with a bunch of reckless punchers.

"Git!" roared the Old Man. And as the marshal did not "git," Jeff

OUR ROARING WESTERN YARN, SPANNING THE RIO KID, BOY OUTLAW!

# —REVENGE!

*By Ralph Redway*



Barstow, the foreman of the ranch, jerked out a gun.

Bang, bang!

Two shots struck the ground close by the marshal's boots.

"Dance, you galoot, dance!" shouted Jeff.

"Oh, gee-whiz!" gasped the marshal.

Bang, bang, bang!

There was a roar of six-guns as two or three of the punchers joined in the game of "fauning."

Fanned by bullets, the hapless marshal danced. He hopped and skipped and jumped leaping wildly to save his feet from the crashing lead. Bullets splattered on the ground round him, most of them missing his feet by an inch or less.

Bang, bang, bang!

"Let up!" yelled the marshal wildly.

"Let up, you galoots!"

Bang, bang!

"Git!" ordered Old Man Sampson.

He signed to his bunch to cease fire, and the marshal was only too glad to get. He raced away out of San Pedro gasping and panting, and did not stop till he was a hundred yards past the last shack.

"Now ride!" growled the Old Man. "Shoot up the town! I guess if they don't hand out the Kid we'll make them tired of this bunch!"

With a yell, the bunch galloped down the street firing right and left with their six-guns.

"Shooting up" the town, as a cowboy frolic, was no new thing in the cow country; but now it was no frolic. The Old Man was in deadly earnest, and his bunch entered into the spirit of the tang.

Not a window remained intact in San Pedro since the previous visits of the bunch. Not a door stood without bullet-holes in it.

Bang, bang, bang.

The bunch held possession of the town.

Riding up and down the single street, and round the plaza, firing into every window, splattering bullets on every door, chasing, with wild yells, every lingering citizen who was sighted, and fanning him with bullets till he fled for the prairie.

For an hour the bunch galloped up and down, to and fro, holding the town, with no man to say them nay. Out on the prairie—and glad to get there—the San Pedro pilgrims waited for them to go, so that they could creep back and see what damage was done. There was a good deal of damage for them to find when they got back. The bunch gathered finally before the marshal's frame house—the only frame house in the place. They yelled at the front of the house, sending lead searching through every room. Whatever had happened to the Old Man's partner it was as likely as not that Seth had a hand in it, or at least had connived at it, as he connived at most of the rascalities by which San Pedro lived and had its being.

"That'll do, boys," said the Old Man at last. "I guess San Pedro will be learning to let cowmen alone. If the Kid ain't turned up by to-morrow, we'll be in again and pull the marshal's house down in a heap. Ride!"

And the bunch with smoking guns, rode out of the town again by way of the trail along the creek. Then Santa Fe Sam gave a sudden yell which brought the punchers to a halt. He stood up in his stirrups, pointing at a schooner that had dropped anchor in the inlet.

"That's the outfit that sailed the night the Kid went," he shouted. "They've come back."

Old Man Sampson stared at the schooner. He more than suspected that the Kid had been shanghaied on board some coasting vessel short of hands.

"I guess we'll look into that outfit," he said. "You're sure that's the same shanghaied Sam?"

"I should smile," answered Santa Fe Sam.

"Hallo! There's the Kid!" roared Jeff Barstow.

"Gee-whiz!"

A boat had put off from the schooner. In the bottom of it lay a man, and a lithe figure in dirty dungarees was rowing shoreward.

"It's the Kid!" exclaimed the Old Man, storing. "It's sure Kid Carfax! They've had him on the ship! He's got on ship's rags! Hi-yi!" The Old Man put his hands to his mouth and gave the cowboy yell. "Hi-yi!"

The Rio Kid stared across at the bank.

At the sight of the bunch of riders his face lighted up. He waved his hand and grinned.

"Hi-yi!" he yelled back.

The boat bumped on the bank, and the Kid jumped out. He picked up the man who lay in the bottom of the boat and tossed him ashore like a sack of alfalfa. The next moment he was surrounded by the eager punchers of the Sampson Ranch.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### The Shanghaied Skipper!

OLD MAN SAMPSON wrung the Kid's hand. There was emotion in his tanned, grizzled face.

The fiery Old Man had a strong regard for the young puncher who had taken a partnership in his ranch. But he was not alone in that. There was not a man in the bunch who did not like the cheery Kid—and would have liked him none the less had they learned that he was the Rio Kid, the outlaw of the cow-country.

"You've got back, Kid!" exclaimed the Old Man.

"Sure!" grinned the Kid. "And mighty pleased to see you agin, sir—and all the bunch!"

"You been to sea?" exclaimed Santa Fe Sam.

"Yep."

"Shanghaied?" asked Jeff.

"That's what they call it," said the Kid. "I guess I was knocked on the head from behind and toted into that durned outfit they call a schooner and toted away to sea. I guess I had a thunder of a time till I got hold of a gun; after that they was like lambs."

There was a roar of laughter among the punchers. They could picture the feelings of the schooner's outfit when the Kid got loose with a gun in his

hand. Men had been shanghaied at San Pedro before many a time; but in the Kid the kidnapers had roped in a back-supper.

"And why did they bring you back here?" asked the Old Man.

"I kinder persuaded them," explained the Kid. "The foreman of the outfit—they call him the mate—is sure lying up for repairs, with cold lead in his inside; and the other galoots didn't seem to want to argue. I've brought the boss ashore with me."

"The captain?" yelled Santa Fe Sam. "Yep!"

The Kid stooped and grasped Captain Shack by the collar and jerked him to his feet. The sea captain's face was red with rage, his fat body quivering with fury. The punchers stared at him curiously.

"What you want with the damned noble, Kid?" asked the Old Man. "You figure on getting him?"

The Kid shook his head. "I've been near three days on that shbang yander," he said. "They was going to make a sennan of me; and I sure got the no-o-hand—ahore I got hold of a gun. That noble shanghaied

me, as he calls it. Well, now I've shanghaied him."

"What?" gasped the Old Man.

"He had me for near three days trying to make a sailorman of me," explained the Kid. "I'm going to have him for three weeks and try to make a cowpuncher of him."

"Gee!"

"They tied me up and quised me when I wouldn't play up," said the Kid. "I guess I can quize some myself if the galoot doesn't play up. He's got three weeks of it coming. You ain't objecting, Mr. Sampson?"

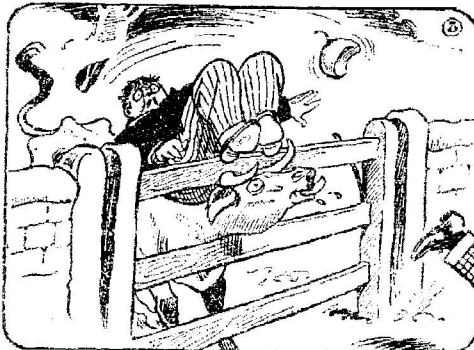
# THE BUNTER BROTHERS! *Mist Makers*



Sammy and Billy were feeling rather peckish. Smatter of fact, they hadn't scoffed anything for at least half an hour, and coming upon a field of nice, juicy turkeys, they waded in and hunked out a few prize specimens.



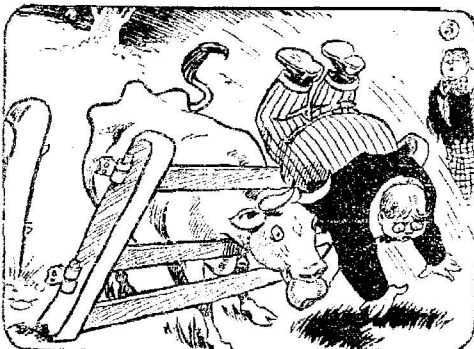
But hovering in the background was a feisty old bull. And at the sight of these two youths squatting on the gate he gave a hundred horsepower roar and started for that gate like one o'clock. But Billy saw him and gave the alarm.



"Mind your eyes!" wuffed Billy, his face full of anxiety and turnip. But, alas, before Sammy could skip off the gate the bull was upon him! Not quite, though, but nearly, for the bull's rush had fixed his head between the bars.



"Help, help!" howled Sammy horridly. "He'll toss me sky-high!" But he needn't have worried, for the bull was after that choice turnip that Sammy had dropped. The next moment the gate was clean off its hinges, as per above.



The bull made a dive for the turnip, with the unevitable result that Sammy took a grand swallow-dive to earth. "Bravo, Sammy!" wuffed Billy from his safe place. "You'll be a bull-fighter one of these days!"



But Billy changed his tune as the next moment Farmer Haysed appeared on the horizon bellowing as loudly as the bull. Major and minor did not stop to explain matters. "Run for it!" gasped Billy. And they did!

The Old Man was chuckling.

"Oblect nothing!" he said. "I guess it's a dub. I guess that galoot will turn out to steal men from the cow country again. Kid, it's the big idea!" The punchers roared.

"We've been shooting up the town every day since you was roped, Kid," said Jeff Barstow. "I reckon San Pedro is lookin' pretty sick. They'll sure be glad that you've trailed home."

The Kid laughed.

"You've sure some bunch, and I'm proud to belong to you," he said. "Any galoot going to rustle me a hoss? I'm sure hoping to sit in a saddle agin."

Santa Fe Sam slipped from his broncho.

"Here you are, Kid!"

"You got my mustang safe?" asked the Kid anxiously. "I sure been worrying a whole heap about that."

"Safe as shootin' at the ranch," answered Sam. "I took him home after I couldn't find you. Hop on my caysse, feller; I guess I can hoof it."

"You're a white man, Sam," said the Kid gratefully. "I sure am hoping to sit a cayuse agin."

Captain Shack made a movement to sidle through the punchers. His face was a study in mingled rage and fear.

Jack Barstow headed him back with a shove of a heavy boot.

"You ain't beatin' it yet, feller!" he said. "The Kid ain't done with you, by long chalks!"

"Don't you dare to detain me!" roared Captain



Shack. "I'm going back to my ship—"

"Forget it, feller," drawled the Kid. "You ain't going back to your ship for quite a piece!"

"The captain raved."

"I got to go back! I guess I'll compensate you; I'll pay you fair and square for damages. Them hands on my schooner will lose the ship and desert, with me gone, and Star-boy lying in his bunk with a bullet in him."

"That 'em!" said the Kid scoldly.

"I'm talking you—"

"Aw—forgot it!" said the Kid. "You spill too much, feller. You belong to me now, same as you said I belonged to you when you had me on that outfit of yours!"

"I guess—"

"Get a cinch on that bully-beef trap of yours! One of you boys lend me a rope," said the Kid.

"Ayer you are, Kid!" chuckled Jeff.

The Kid looped the lasso round Captain Shack, taking the other end in his hand, and mounting Santa Fe Sam's horse.

"I guess I'm ready to hit the trail now," he said. "Hop it, you man-stealing thief!"

"This is agin the law!" roared the captain.

"I reckon it was a piece outside the law to knock a cowpuncher on the cabsza and tote him into your outfit yonder," grinned the Kid. "You ain't got no kick coming on that score, Shack."

"You damned—"

"Hop it!" ordered the Kid.

"I won't!" roared the captain. "I tell you—"

"I guess you will, just a few."

The Kid set the broncho in motion, and the rope tightened. Captain Shack was plucked off his feet and sprawled headlong in the trail.

The Kid checked his horse and looked round.

"You comin' that-a-way?" he asked.

"I guess I ain't any objections, if you like it that-a-way. But you can sure loaf it if you like!"

The skipper scrambled wildly up.

A torrent of curses poured from his lips, drowned by the loud laughter of the punchers. The Kid started again, and this time the skipper of the Pond Lily took care not to be dragged over. He ran after the broncho.

With a yell, the bunch started for the ranch—and glad enough were the lurking citizens of San Pedro to see them go.

The Kid rode at a moderate pace to give his prisoner a chance; but Captain Shack had to run, and he ran, gasping for breath, streaming with perspiration. The Kid grinned back at him encouragingly.

"Hoof it, feller!" he said cheerily. "When we get to the ranch I'll sure teach you how to ride a bronco!"

"You pesky land-lubber!" panted the skipper. "I ain't never got on a darned four-legged critter in my life!"

"Oh, sho!" said the Kid. "I guess it's time you learned, then! You're getting it easy, you galoot; I was knocked on the head afore I was toted on to your outfit, and I sure ain't knocked you on the head—yet. I always was an easy-going galoot. Hop it!"



**BREAKING IN THE PRISONER!** At the first jump of the pony, Captain Shack let the reins go flying, and grasped the saddle with both hands, holding on for dear life. "Hide him!" shrieked the cowpunchers in great glee. (See Chapter 1.)

The skipper hopped it desperately, to keep pace with the trotting broncho, the laughing punchers riding round him. The wretched skipper howled an appeal to Old Man Sampson, who grinned at him.

"You're the captain of this crew, ain't you?" he howled.

"I'm sure the boss of this outfit, if that's what you mean, you crazy man-stealer!" snorted the Old Man.

"Give them orders to let me slip my cable, then!" howled Shack.

"I guess you're shanghaied!" chuckled the old man. "You know what that means, I reckon. You shanghaied the Kid, didn't you? Now he's sure shanghaied you—you ain't got no kick coming. If you can shanghai a cowman on to a ship, I guess the Kid can shanghai a seaman on to a ranch. We'll make a puncher of you!"

"Hop it!" grinned Jeff Barstow.

And all the way to the Sampson ranch the skipper hopped it, breathless, raging, gasping with fatigue and fury. He could scarcely believe that this was not some rough cowboy joke, but he had a misgiving that the Kid meant to do exactly as he had threatened. Many a man had the captain shanghaied in his time, and taught to obey orders with a rope's end or a capstan bar. It was the first time he had been shanghaied himself, and the justice of it did not appeal to him in the least. As he hopped and jumped and bounded after the Kid's horse, dragged by the rope, he nourished a hope of escaping by the time the ranch was reached. But by that time, the fat skipper was aching with weariness, and when he was cast loose, he had scarcely strength enough to stand on his feet, let alone to make any attempt to escape.

The Kid jerked the rope away, and surveyed him with amused contempt.

"You're sure a soft rube!" he said. "I guess it will do you good to work on a ranch, and keep away from the hooch. I'll show you your bunk in the bunkhouse, feller, and you can take a spell of rest—I'll call you when I'm ready to put you wise about punching cows. You was sure hard on me—but

I guess I'll go as easy with you as I can."

The skipper staggered into the bunkhouse, and collapsed into a bunk. There he lay, gasping with exhaustion.

Heeding him no farther, the Kid went to the corral to see his horse. The black-muzzled mustang whinnied with delight at the sight of his master, and the Kid fondled him and caressed his glossy neck. He forgot the shanghaied skipper for the time, but there was little danger that Esau Shack would escape. He lay like a log in the bunkhouse, and it was hours before he could stir a limb.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.**

A New Man in the Outfit!

"**B**URNING daylight!" roared the Rio Kid.

Captain Esau Shack, seafaring man no longer, but landman and cowpuncher, sat up in his bunk in the camp-on-a-bunkhouse.

It was morning.

The cook was busy in the chuckhouse, turning out breakfast for the bunch. The sun had looked up over the grassy plains of the ranch, and all the outfit were up. Men who had been on night rides were trailing home, to turn into bunks newly vacated. But one man in the Sampson outfit was not ready to turn out, and that was the new recruit, Esau Shack. The Kid—finder to his prisoner than Shack had been to him on board the Pond Lily—had allowed him to rest the first day, the fat skipper being worn out with tramping a few miles across rough prairie at the tail of the Kid's horse. The Kid, roughly as he had been handled on board the schooner, could be good-natured. But his intention was fixed, and his resolution was like adamant. As Esau Shack had done, so he was to be done unto, and, no doubt, it would be—as the Kid cheerily hoped—a lesson to him.

In the night Shack had awakened and contemplated for a few minutes the idea of escape. Only for a few minutes, for he was still fatigued, and the seaman who could have found his way anywhere about the Gulf of Mexico or the Caribbean Sea, had no idea of how to find his way about the untracked prairie. And the skipper really could not believe that the joke was to be kept up, that he really was to be kept at the ranch for three weeks as a forced recruit. To shanghai others was one thing; to be shanghaied himself was quite another—a really almost incredible thing. And who ever heard of a seafaring man being shanghaied on to a ranch?

Esau hoped that by the morning the punchers would be tired of their joke and would let him, as he expressed it, slip his cable, by which he meant hitting the trail. But when morning dawned he was still sleeping and snoring in his bunk, and he did not waken till he was shaken roughly by the shoulder, and the Kid's cheery voice shouted in his ear:

"Dawning daylight! Burning daylight, you galoot!"

Skipper Shack set up and rubbed his eyes. The Kid, already dressed, stood grinning by the bunk. On board the schooner the Kid had been forced into

dungarees, and had had to throw his cowboy outfit into the sea. But since he had become a partner in the Sampson ranch, the Kid had bought clothes, and had always been very particular in these matters—very natty and very neat, a model cowpuncher to look at. Now he was dressed in cowboy garb again, with a silken neck-scarf of gay colour, and goatskin chaps with the hair on, and high-heeled boots with clinking spurs, and a Stetson hat. Shack hardly knew him for a moment. But he knew the handsome, sunburnt face, with its cheery, mocking smile.

"Hop it lively, feller," said the Kid. "You reckon you're here to snore in your bunk while the other hands turn to!"

"Hands!" snorted Shack. "I ain't no hand, you darned lubber! I'm a pesky sea-captain, and I'm going back to my ship!"

"Forget it!" grinned the Kid. "You're under orders here, Shack. Hop out of that bunk!"

"I won't!" booted Shack.

"Sam, you galoot, throw over my quilt!" said the Kid.

Santa Fe, with a grin, threw the quilt across, and the Kid caught it by the bun as it whirled in the air.

He cracked the lash, like a pistol-shot.

"You turning out?" he demanded.

"Nope!" yelled the skipper furiously. "I don't turn out at the orders of any pesky puncher in Texas!"

Crack! rang the whip again, and this time across the shoulders of Esau Shack. There was a roar from the skipper, and he turned out of the bunk so fast that he lost his footing and rolled to the floor.

"I should smile!" said the Kid, tucking the quilt under his arm. "Get into your rags, feller. Pronto!"

Captain Shack staggered up, boiling with rage. He dressed himself in hot haste. The Kid pointed to the door.

"Beat it!"

Instead of beating it, Shack clenched his fists, and made a spring like a tiger at the Kid.

On board a ship; Shack, fat as he was, was a hefty man with his fists, and had knocked many a man into the scupperns for a saucy word or look. But on board a ship he was master, with a gun in his hip-pocket to back up his authority, and a bucko mate to stand by him. Matters were quite different in the bunkhouse on the Sampson ranch:

The Kid let out his left as Shack came at him, and the fist, like a lump of iron, caught the skipper on the jaw.

Shack went backwards as if he had been shot.

He sat up, nursing his jaw with both hands, gasping with anguish, and glaring at the Kid, while the punchers roared.

Esau Shack had knocked down many a man in his time. Knocking down was, however, a new experience for him personally. It was borne in upon his mind that it was a most unpleasant operation.

"You got yours, or do you want some more?" asked the Kid.

Shack caressed his jaw, and growled "Get up, you hobo!"

Shack staggered up.

"Now get out of the bunkhouse!"

The skipper did not make another attack. He yearned to plant his fists full in the handsome, sunburnt face, but he did not think of attempting to do so. That one sock-dragger on the jaw had been enough for him. He almost jumped out of the bunkhouse at the Kid's order.

The Rio Kid, smiling, followed him

out. Most of the punchers were at breakfast on the benches outside in the morning sunshine, and they looked at the Kid and his recruit with interest and entertainment. Shack stood with clenched fists and gritting teeth, eyeing the Kid.

"You can shift your bacon and beans," said the Kid. "You've got ten minutes for feed. Make the most of it!"

"I'm going out of here!" shouted the skipper.

"Forget it!"

"You darned, dog-gone puncher——"

The Kid sat down to the trestle table, where the cook piled bacon and flapjacks. He began his breakfast with a hearty appetite.

"You better feed," he said warningly. "When I'm through, I guess I'm putting you through it. If you want your fodder, now's your time."

Esau glanced round him wildly. In the distance was a gate that gave on the trail. With a sudden bound, he started for the gate. Esau was fat, and not very active, but now he put on a very good speed. He had a wild hope of escaping from the clutches of that merry bunch.

Whizz!

A lasso whirled through the air—a fifty-foot rope in the hands of the Rio Kid.

The loop settled over the shoulders of the running man, and he was jerked backwards with the force of his own rush.

His feet left the ground suddenly, and he came down on his back with a mighty thump.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the punchers.

"Ho, ho, ho!" roared Old Man Sampson, looking on from a window in the ranch-house, and holding his sides as he roared.

The Rio Kid stood up and pulled in the rope. He dragged it in with steady, resistless grip, and Captain Shack came rolling and bouncing along the rough ground towards him. In a breathless, spluttering heap the skipper of the Pond Lily reached the bench, where he lay gasping. The Kid sat down again to his breakfast, smiling at the enraged seaman.

"I guess you ain't hitting the horizon yet yet, feller!" he drawled. "Say, you want to feed? You ain't much more time."

"If I had a gun——" growled the skipper, as he picked himself up in a breathless and dizzy state.

"You had the gun on that shebang of yours, and I had to dance to your tune," said the Kid grimly. "Now I've got the gun, feller, and you're sure lucky that I don't let daylight right through your carcass. Sit on that bench and feed, afore I take the quilt to you agin."

The captain collapsed on the bench and fed obediently. He was learning obedience.

The Kid left him feeding, and walked away to the corral.

Shack cast a glance round, but half a dozen punchers were in sight, and he had had enough of being roped in by a riat. He stayed where he was.

The Kid came back, leading a horse, already saddled and bridled. Kindly, he had picked out the quietest animal the horse-wrangler could find for him. But no cow-pony was remarkable for quietness, especially to a man that couldn't ride.

"You ready, feller?" asked the Kid. "I ain't getting on that beast," said Captain Shack huskily.

"I guess you are."

"I tell you I can't ride!" shrieked the skipper.

"Well, I couldn't do any of the darned things you wanted me to do on your outfit," said the Kid, "and what did I get? I guess you remember—and you're going to get the same if you don't back that pony."

"I—I can't——"

Crack! rang the Kid's quirt, and the skipper gave a yell of agony. But as he hopped away from the quirt he hopped also away from the horse. What the cross-trees of the schooner had been to the Kid, the saddle of a cow-pony was to the seafaring man. He dared not make the attempt, especially as he caught a wicked gleam in the cow-pony's eyes, and saw the ears turned back.

"Sam, feller, hold that cayuse," said the Kid. "Jest, you got to lend a hand helpin' that mosshead on the critter?"

"You bet!" grinned Darstow. And he grasped the fat skipper in his powerful hands.

"Let up!" shrieked Shack. "I ain't going aboard, I tell you."

But he went aboard, plumped into the saddle by the grinning foreman. Then he contrived to get his feet into the stirrups and to get hold of the reins. His face streamed with perspiration, white with terror. Round him the punchers gathered, looking on and roaring with laughter. This was the best joke the bunch had ever known.

"Stick on that cayuse, feller," said the Kid. "You sure will get hurt if you fall off! Ride, cowboy, ride!"

He cracked his quirt, and the cow-pony started into action.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Breaking in!

"RIDE him!" roared the punchers. "Ride, cowboy, ride!" yelled Old Man Sampson from his window, his cheeks streaming with tears of merriment.

Captain Shack knew as much about riding, as Rio Kid knew about boxing the compass or steering a course by the binnacle card. At the first jump of the cow-pony, he let the reins go flying and grasped the saddle with both hands, digging his knees into the pony's flanks, and holding on for dear life.

"Ride him!" shrieked the outfit, in great glee.

A less good-natured galoot than the Kid would have picked out a buck-jumper for the skipper. In which case Shack certainly would not have escaped without broken bones, and possibly not without a broken neck.

But that cow-pony, though the quietest animal in charge of the Sampson wrangler, seemed the wildest of buck-jumpers to the unhappy skipper.

Captain Shack could have felt his feet on a deck slanting at an angle of forty-five, in a fierce gale in the Gulf. But keeping his seat on that jumping cow-pony was a different matter.

The cow-pony excited by the shouts of laughter and the jeers of the punchers, and realising that he had a man on his back who could not handle him, capered and capered.

A buck-jumper would have thrown the skipper in a few seconds, and probably fallen on him or trampled him. As it was, he contrived to hold on to the back of the chosen animal.

But how he held on he never knew,

At one moment the cow-pony reared on hind legs; at another moment his nose touched the ground as his heels flew into the air.

Gripping the saddle fiercely, digging his knees into the flanks, the skipper hung on wildly.

After exerting for a time, the cow-pony made a sudden rush for the gate, as if to leap it and gallop down the trail.

At the gate he came to a sudden stop, standing motionless, his forefeet planted firmly on the earth, his head down. That sudden stop was quite unexpected on the part of the skipper. He shot over the horse's head like a bullet from a gun.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar as he flew over the gate and dropped with a crash into the trail outside.

The horse lifted his head, blinked at him, and trotted back to the corral. The Kid raised no hand to stop him. He was doubled up with merriment, like the rest of the bunch.

Captain Shack sat up dizzily in the trail. For some moments it seemed to him that it was the end of the world, and that the universe was falling in fragments about him.

"I guess this hyer circus is wasting time," said Jeff Barstov at last; and the chuckling bunch dispersed to their various duties. The Kid went down to the gate and opened it, and called the skipper in. The crack of his quirt was enough to make Shack hurry.

"Beans, old hoss," called out the Kid, to the cook, who was grinning from the door of the chuck-house. "I guess I got to hit the trail, and that new man of mine ain't learned to ride yet, darn his boots, and he ain't no ornery use on the range. I guess I'll lend him to you for the day, if you'll see that he don't vamoose the ranch."

Beans snickered gleefully. "Now you're talking," he said. "I can do with a man to help in the chuck-house, as I've told the Old Man more'n once. I guess if he tries to light out of this shebang I'll take a saucepan to him. Hyer, feller, come in and make yourself useful."

"You—you—you—you swabs!" yelled the wretched skipper. "Do you reckon I'm going to work in the cook's galley?"

"I don't rightly know what a galley is, feller," said the cook, staring at him. "This hyer is a chuck-house, if you don't know. Where in thunder was you brought up if you don't know a chuck-house when you see one?"

"I guess he'll learn, Beans," said the Kid. "I'll sure leave him with you, and don't let him laze."

"I should sniffe!" said the cook.

The Kid walked away for his Mustang. He was to ride range that day, and though he had intended to take Esau riding range with him, the skipper's exploits with the cow-pony showed that that was impracticable so far. But the ranch cook was glad of help in the chuck-house. There was an immense stack of crockery to be washed, a task at which Beans, like all ranch cooks, grumbled. Now he had a washer-up at his orders, and he was highly pleased. While the Rio Kid rode away from the ranch with the punchers Beans pointed out to the skipper what he was to do, receiving in response a glare that it looks could have killed, would have laid the cook dead on the floor of the chuck-house. Beans being quite impervious to looks, however, only grinned.

"You want to get going, feller," he said. "I sure reckon I ain't carrying any passengers in this chuck-house. Go to it."

Captain Shack drew a deep, gasping breath and got going. All through the morning he washed dishes and plates and pots, and then he was set to scouring pots and pans. Once, when he turned a desperate eye on a cook's knife on the table, Beans caught up a saucepan and dealt him a terrific crash on the side of the head, simply as a warning. It was all the warning that the skipper of the Pond Lily needed. After that he was ready to feed from the cook's hand.

"I guess," said the ranch cook, "that you're going to learn to jump on this ranch, feller! You sure are going to learn to jump! Now get down to that stove, and don't you forget that if you leave a spot of grease on it I'll take the saucepan to you!"

Beans sat and smoked a cigar while the skipper worked. Beans' idea was to cut the alfalfa while it was dry; in other words, to make hay while the sun

shone. He had a "help" for only one day, and he made the most of him. That day the chuck-house and everything it contained had such a cleaning and a scouring as it had never known before since the Sampson Ranch had had a local habitation and a name.

When the Rio Kid rode in at sundown he looked round for the skipper of the Pond Lily.

"You ain't hit that scallywag beat it, Beans?" he exclaimed.

Beans chuckled. "I sure ain't," he answered. "I reckon that that scallywag couldn't beat it none, if there was a conger a-biting him behind. Look! See?"

"Oh, gophers!" said the Kid, as the cook pointed out the new recruit.

Esau Shack, worn out with toil, was lying in the grass beside the bunkhouse, half-asleep, and wholly exhausted. He was still thick with grease and dirt, too tired even to think of washing. He stared up at the Kid with look-lastre eyes as the young puncher came over and stood looking down at him.

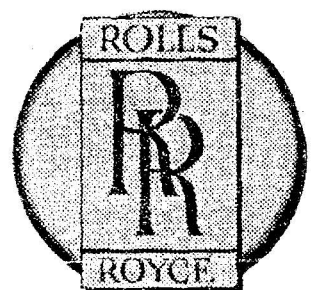
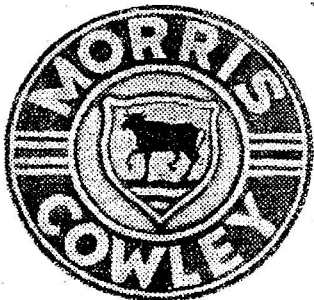
"Hyer, hombre, I got time now to put you wise about riding a brone," said the Kid.

The skipper only groaned. The Kid grinned and turned away. Esau Shack was in no state for a lesson in riding. The Kid considerably put it off till the morrow, and let him lie. Shack, acting in every limb, lay in the grass and groaned. He was scheduled for three weeks on the ranch, and of twenty-one days only one day had passed so far. There were twenty more to come, and the skipper shuddered at the prospect. If ever a ruffianly skipper repented of having shanghaied a man Esau Shack repented now, now that he was shanghaied in his turn. He lay and listened to the buzz from the bunkhouse, and to the Kid's cheery voice singing a cowboy song, and groaned—and groaned.

THE END.

(But Captain Shack is determined to get away from his captor at all costs. How will he accomplish that difficult task? See next Tuesday's thrilling long Western yarn, entitled: "THE NEW RECRUIT OF THE SAMPSON'S RANCH!")

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