DANDY PHOTO OF THE ENGLISH TEST PLAYERS—INSIDE!



SMASHING COMPLETE TALE OF WESTERN ADVENTURE

The RIO KID-SHERIFF!

RALPH **REDWAY'S** ROARING ROMANCE OF TEXAS.

***************** The Foes of Plug Hat!

HE Rio Kid hitched his holater forlittle ward, to bring the walnut butt of a gun nearer to his

The Kid was sitting at his case in a rocker on the wooden piazza of the Plug Hat Hotel, in the cowtown of Plug Hat. At a little distance was the plana, where the naphtha lamps of half a dozen saloons

flared, dimming the light of the stars. From the direction of the plaza a burly, red-bearded comman came striding, and he stopped at the rickety wooden steps that led up to the piazza where the Kid sat. It was the sight of him that made the Kid

was the sight of him that made the Kid shift his gun into easier reach.

Red Harris paused for a moment or two, and then came tramping up the steps, which creaked under his weight.

"Say, you're here!" he said, stopping in front of the Kid.

The Kid nodded cheerily.

"Right hyer," he assented. "If you're looking for me, feller, you've found me to home."

Pop Short, the landlord of the lumber hotel, looked out of the door, a frown on his fat face.

"Here you, Harris," he exclaimed, and you, Mister Texas Brown! You "and you, "and you, Mister Texas Brown! You step down into the street afore you begin burning powder. I sin't the guy to interfere with any gont's amusement; but I'm telling you, bullets ain't no respectors of persons and I'll say you can't do your shootin' on my piazza. You light down into the street."

"Can it you geck!" growled Red Harris. "I sin't come hyer a-shootin'. I got a message for this guy what call-

I got a message for this guy what calls himself Texas Brown."

"Spill it, feller," said the Kid

amably.

Red Harris eyed him surlily. The look on his hard tanned face showed how willing he was to pull a gun on this stranger in Plug Hat. But he did not touch a gun. The Kid, during the few hours he had been in Plug Hat, had beeten a better man than Red Harris;



and the burly rough-neck did not seek

and the burly rough-neck did not seek trouble with the puncher who had gone one better than Cactus Carter.

The Kid gave him a cheery smile.

"Spill it!" he repeated.

"I got a message from Cactus Carter," said Harris.

"I reckened so," assented the Kid.

"I kinder opined that that pesky horse-thief, Carter, wouldn't be satisfied with me bootin' him serous the plazs. I'm sure ready to boot him again if he ain't satisfied."

Red Harris made a gesture towards

Red Harris made a gesture towards the lighted plaza.

"Carter's waiting for you," he said. "You'll find him in the Red Flare; and you want to pack your gin when you go. And I guess Cactus is going to make you sorry you horned into Plug Hal."

The Kid nodded thoughtfully.
"Cactus is waiting for me in the Red
Flare, is he?" he asked.
"He sure is."

"And he's going to give me an even break, if I come a-huntin' him?" saked the Kid. "Sure."

"Sure."
The Kid laughed.
"I was raised in the Frie country."
he said, "and guys in that country are
born with their eyes peeled. Say, Mister
Harris, you hump back to Cactus Carter
and tell him not to wait. He won't see
me in the Red Flare this evening."
"You ain't coming?" saked the redharded comman.

bearded cowman.
"I surely sin't," answered the Kid.
"But if Cactus Carter is hunting me, feller, he sin't far to come. What's the

(Copyright in the United States of America.)

Red Harris.

"Feller," said the Kid placidly, "I ain't afeared of any two-legged guy in Texas. But I guess I ain't such a bonehead as to put my cabesa into a hornet's nest. No, sir! You tell Cactus I'm waiting for him here, and I'll step down into the street and meet up with him as soon as he wants. And tell him that if he don't come he's a yellow coyote, and I'll sure boot him again, same as I did before, next time I see him."

Pad Harris seconded and turned away.

Red Harris scowled and turned away, and tramped down the stops. The Kid watched him as he strode back to the Rod Flare saloon, and disappeared into the doorway.

Pop Short came out on the piszza, with a grin on his fat face.

"I guess that message will bring Cactus," he said.

"You reckon?" smiled the Kid.

"Sure! If he don't show up, I guess his jig is up in Plug Hat," said the landlord. "The whole burg's chewing the rag about the way you beat him to the draw and booted him for stealing." your cayuse. If Cactus don't shoot you up, feller, he may as well pull up stakes and slide out of Plug Hat. You was sure a jay not to plug him when you had him covered."

"I didn't want to spill his juice if he'd ride clear of me," said the Kid. he'd ride clear of me," said the Rid.
"I didn't come to Plug Hat hunting
for trouble. But I wasn't letting a
guy steal my horse right under my nose.
Say Mr. Short, I neuer struck a town
in Texas before that was packed so full
of horse-thieves as Plug Hat. They
THE POPULAR.—No. 601.

WHO'S WHO IN OUR GRAND SOUVENIR GROUP PHOTO OPPOSITE.

string up horse-thieves in Frio. where I was raised

Pop Short grunted.
"I guess half the town would be strung up if they was to string up the horse-thieves in Plug Hat," he answered.
"Cactus Carter and his bunch run the town, and the country, too, since the

town, and the country, too, since the last sheriff was shot up."

"Why don't you elect a new cheriff, and get that bunch rounded up?" asked the Kid.

Mr. Short grunted again.

"There sin't a man in Samafras rounty would take it on." he said. "It would be sudden death."

The Kid laughed.

"Here comes Colorado Bill," added Mr. Short. "I must he's not suthin' to

Mr. Short. "I guess he's got suthin' to say to you, Mister Brown."

The big cowman came up the wooden

steps and gave the Kid a nod and a gris. The Kid smiled. A few hours since he had shot a gun out of the burly rowman's hand, but that fest seemed to have carned him the cowman's esteem.

io have carned him the cowman's esteem.
"Say, Texas," said Colorado Bill.
"You want to keep your gun handy."
"I guess my gun's always handy," said the Rid. "Is that ornery horse-thicf Carter coming a-shooting!"
"Sure1 That's what I've come to tell you," answered Colorado, "and he won't keep you waiting long. You want to keep you waiting long. You want to step down into the street, Texas, and step down into the street, leads, and he'll be slong in two shakes of a coyote's

The Kid yawned, and rose from the

"I guess I'll be on hand," he said. And he descended the creaking wooden steps into the regged street of Plug ITat.

Gun to Gun!

NACTUS CARTER stepped out of the Red Flore saloon. In the plata of Plug Hat, the glaring naphtha lamps made it

as light as by day. Outside the saloon was a crowd of the citizens of Plug Hat, in a burz of excitement, and another crowd followed the gunnan out of the saloon.

The slim, hard-faced gunman was perfectly cool. Not a flicker of emotion

could be road in his cold face.

Yet more than one man in the cruwd had a suspicion that Cactus Carter, the "Killer," the man who was said to have shot more men than he had fingers and toce, distiked the task that lay

before him. Hitherto, Cactos had been monarch of all he surveyed in the cow-town; he was a dead shot, and quick as lightning on the draw, and absolutely ruthless in the use of the weapons of which he was a master. Many a hard-bitten desperado in the lawless covy-town feared the glint in the cold eyes of the gunman. He was undisputed king-pin of Plug Hat; it was an open secret that the late sheriff, who had sought to establish law and order in Sassafras county, had fallen by his hand. Among the desparate refugees from the law who found a hidingplace in Plog Hat, more than one had tried conclusions with Cactus, and he nover failed to fix his adversary for the rever raises to me his adversary for the camp cometery. And it was a matter of wonder in the wild cow-town, that a puncher who looked a mere lad had rome into town, beaten Cactus to the draw, disarmed him, and booted him acress the plaza.

The Popular.—No. 501.

The lawless authority of the king-pin of Plug Hat hung in the balance now. He had to shoot up the man who had booted him or fall from his high estate, to become an object of derision to those who had followed him and feared him. And for once for the first time in his savage career—the gunman was feeling doubte

But he dared not give way to his doubts. Once he backed down in a contest, his reign was over, and his place would be taken by some more reckless and desperate ruffian. It was the price of his position that he had to

The price of the period that the price of the bar, with his "bunch"—Red Harris, Yellow Dick, and Sandy Tutt, his three closest associates, ready for the Kid to horn in. And though the Plug Hat crowd dared not draw his enmity upon themselves, individually, by spoken com-ments, Cactus was well aware of what the mob of rough necks were thinking, and he had nerved himself to the task of seeking the Kid alone. His reputation, his standing among the wild orew of which he was "king-pin," reouired that he should meet and defeat his rival, playing a lone hand.

Never before had there been doubt in Cactus's heart when he set out to encounter an enemy. And now that he doubted, he hid his doubts well. He swing out of the saloon and walked down the plaza towards the lumber hotel.

On either side of him the erowd

surged.
Thirty yards away, the lights of the lumber hotel glared on the rugged street

In the centre of the street, full in view in the bright light, stood the Rio Kid-"Texas Brown" as he was called in Plug Hat. And had Cactus known the real name of Texas Brown, he would have known that he had reason for the doubt that so strangely chilled his heart

The Kid stood casily, his hands by his sides, within quick reach of the guns in the low-slung holsters. This was not a new game to the Kid; he knew every turn of it.

Ho waited, with a cheery smile on his face. If there was a doubt in the mind of the gunnan, there was none in the

Slowly, Cactus came up the rugged

The Kid was watching him warily from the moment he stepped out of the Red Flare. And he was watching not only Cactus, but with the tail of his eye he was keeping tabs on the throng on either side of the street. The Kid had sized up Cactus very keenly, and he did not expect an oven break from the gunman, if Cactos had a chance to double cross him.

Cactus was not touching a gun yet. Slowly, foot by foot, he drew nearer to the Kid, his eyes upon him, his hands empty. As he drew nearer and nearer, the buzzing in the excited growd died away to a breathless hush.
Ruch of the adversaries syed the other

like a cat, each ready for action as soon as the other made a movement to draw. Thirty yards had been reduced to thirty feet, and still neither touched a gun.

At twenty feet, the gupman, in sheer desperation, put his fale to the touch. In a single movement, that was so

rapid that the eye could scarcely follow it, he dicked his gun out and fired from the hip without raising the weapon.

Rapid as he was, the Kid was as fast, or faster.

Like magic, a gun was in the Kid's hand, and he, too, fired from the hip without westing a split second in lift-

ing his gon.
The Kid felt the wind of a bullet that clipped the edge of his Stetson bat; the gunman had fired too hurriedly. But the Kid's return bullet, so close that the two bullets sounded as one, went unceringly to the mark.

Cactus Carter staggered.

A rose burst from the Plug Hat crowd, silent till that moment in tense excitement.

All eyes were on the gunnan. The Rio Kid's bullet had gone home,

and the gunmon staggered, but he did not fall.

He stood unsteadily, his gon-hand sagging at his side, his face white as chalk. Every man in the street expected to hear the Kid's gun roar again and again, and to see his opponent fall riddled with bullets. But the Kirl stood gripping his smoking gup, with-out pulling the trigger.

"By the great horned toad, he's get him!" yelled Colorado Bill.

The gunman stood swaying. The gun dropped from his hand to the ground with a clatter.

A blaze of demoning rage came into Cactus's eyes. His right arm hung at his side, disabled by the bullet. With his left be dragged his second gun from his belt.

Bang!

The Kid's Colt roared again, and the gun spun from Cactus' he could use it. band before

A hoarse cry came from the gunman. He staggered, and fell to the carth.

"Cactus has got his 1" Colorado Bill.

"Aw, forget it!" drawled the Kid.
"Ho ain't got his, not worth a red
cent. I've jest tickled his fin, and
Cactus is worth a whole crowd of dead
men yet."
"The Kid!"

The Kid's smoking gun was still in his hand, his wary eye watching. He was ready for some member of the bunch" to take up the quarrel for the fallen gunman.

But the "bunch" were not boning for trouble with the puncher who had shot up their leader. They gathered round the gunman.

Cactus Carter was lifted, and carried back into the Red Flare. The Kid. atill wary and watchful, strolled back into the lumber hotal.

Not Caught Napping!

"CIDE-KICKER, old boss !" murmured the Kid.

The grey mustang turned his head and whinnied softly as the

Kid stroked his glossy neck.

The mustang was stelled in the barn behind the lumber hotel. And it was the Kid's intention to camp that night in the barn.

In a town like Plug Hat, the Kid did not care to trust his cayuse out of his own sight. Indeed, Pop Short made no secret of the fact that the mustang would probably be missing by morning. His own pinto had been lifted from that barn the same day; and the Kid had already learned that no man's horse was safe in Plug Hat.

Pop Short showed him into the barn

with a glimmering lantern.

"You figure you'll bed down hyer, Mr. Brown!" he asked.
"I reckon!" answered the Kid. "I sure don't want to wake up in the morning and find this hyer cayuse gone, feller."

"You're said it," agreed the landlord.
"I guess your hoss will be safer with
you along, sir. But you won't be so allfired safe yourself."

"How come?" asked the Kid.

Pop Short shook his head.

"You've laid out Cactus Carter," he said. "But Cactus is only one of a bunch—and a dog-goned tough bunch."

trouble remarked

"I guess they ain't honing for gun-play with the guy that's shot up the allfiredest gunman in Sassafras county. answered Pop Short.
"You're too mighty sudden on the shoot

the Kid.

to please that bunch, Mister Brown. But if you don't hear from them to-night, if you sleep in this barn, I shall sure be surprised."

"I guess it cuts no ice," said the Kid.
"I'm bedding down here along with my cayuse."

"It's your say so; you'd sounder behind barred door, reckon."

"I guess I'll sleep as sound as I want, feller."

And Pop Short, leaving the lantern hanging on a nail, retired, and left the Kid to his own devices.

comfort of his horse

lantern.

A glimmer of starlight in at the barred, unglazed window was light enough for the Kid.

There was a faint smile on the Kid's handsome face as he moved in the gloom of the barn.

of the barn.

The big door was closed, but the lock on it was out of action; it had been forced when the landlord's pinto was lifted that day. The Kid could have wedged the door fast as it opened inward, but he did not take the trouble.

He stepped to the barred window and looked out in the dim starlight.

The hour was late, and the lumber hotel was shutting. He could hear Pop Short bolting and barring doors and windows

From the plaza there was still a glare of light from some of the saloons. But the noise of the cow-town was dying away.

The Kid was in no hurry to turn in. He remained at the window for some time, looking at the stars and the shadows, thinking, and listening to the sinking noise of the town as saloon after saloon closed down.

All was darkness and silence at last. The Kid left the window and sorted

out a bundle of straw for a bed. On the bundle he arranged his blanket, stuffed with straw, where the glimmer of star-light fell in upon it from the window. He stacked straw round it, and smiled as he finished his task.

If any guy spied into the barn that night he would see, or figure that he saw, a sleeper rolled in his blanket in the straw. And if that dummy sleeper the straw. And if that dummy sleeper stopped a bullet or two it would not

greatly concern the Kid.

Beside the window, close to the wall and hidden in thick shadow, was a wooden bench. On that bench the Kid "They didn't seem to be honing for stretched himself to rest. The night was

on the butt of a gun. Then he lay with-

out motion, waiting.

From the stillness a faint whisper reached his ears.

"You figure he's there, Yellow Dick?"

"I guess so," came the soft answering whisper of the man peering between the bars. "I sure reckon he's there, Sandy."

"I know the guy was bedding down in a barn."came another voice. "Mexican the barn,"came another voice. Pote was watching, and he allowed that the guy went into the barn and never came out agin."

"He's sure there!" muttered Yellow



The Kid, having Pop Short started back in surprise at eight of the three captive guer looked a ft cr the home to die !" he yelled, "What you got than?"

always his first task put out the warm, and he did not miss his blankot.

With his head pillowed on his arm the Kid closed his eyes and almost im-

mediately sank into slumber. Where he lay he was invisible to anyone entering the barn; and he knew, too, that if the door opened, the creak of the rusty hinges would awaken him instantly.

He slept as peacefully as if he was rolled in the deepest cover of the chappearest. A couple of hours had passed when

the Kid awoke.

He awakened, as he always did, with his mind perfectly clear from the mists of sleep, and without a movement or a sound.

He lay still and listened.
He know that something had awakened him, and he listened intently to learn what it was.

A grim smile crossed his face as he saw a black shadow fall across the starlit space inside the little barred window.

It was the ahadow, grotesquely exaggerated, of a head outside the

window, blocking the starlight. A face was pressed to the opening between the wooden bars, peering into the dusky interior of the barn.

Silently the Kid's hand moved, closing

Dick. "And sleeping as sound as if he

"Wasi, carry me

was in a pesky hotel at San Antone."
The shadow left the window. But the three rough-necks of Plug Hat remained close, for the Kid, straining his ears, could still hear their whisper-

ing, husky voices. "What's the game, Red? I guess if we push open the door and run in on him—" muttered Yellow Dick.

"Guess again," grunted Red Harris.
"You 'member how them hinges creaked when we got Pop's pinto this morning. I guess they creak loud enough to wake a guy if he was alceping like a greater full of pulque."

"We got to get him!" said Sandy Tutt. "I'll say Cactus will be apt to get mad if we don't get him, Red."

"We're getting him all O.K.," answered Red. "There's light enough from the winder to drill him where he lies. I guess I'm putting lead through him from the winder.

"Say, it's pesky low-down to plug a galoot asleep!" muttered Sandy. "I guess I wouldn't stand for it, Red."

"You dog-goned jay, you want to wake him up and stand in front of his gun, after the way he shot up Cactus!"

THE POPULAR.-No. 601.

"I sure Jo not;" answered Tutt promptly. "Then quit chewing the rag and leave it to me."

A shadow darkened the window again. There was a glimmer of metal as the long barrel of a Colt was thrust between the wooden bars. A hand and an arm

There was no sound of whispering now; There was no sound of whispering now; all was still. Red Harris was taking careful, meticulous aim at the rolled blanket in the heap of straw, in the glimmering starlight. If the shot failed, the roar of the six-gun would infallibly wake the sleeper; and the Plug Hat bunch did not want to face the gun that had proved too good for Cactus Carter. Long and carsfully Red Harris dwelt on his aim before he pulled Harris dwelt on his aim before he pulled

trigger.

The report, when it came, came in the stillness with an effect of thunder.

Bang ! Right through the stuffed blanket in the straw tore the bullet, and following the shot came a deep groun in the barn.
The Ric Kid, from his corner in the darkness, added that realistic touch.
Hang! Bang!

Twice again the red-boarded rough neck fired, sending each bullet through the stuffed figure in the straw. But there were no more grouns; the Kid waited in silence now.

He heard a chuckle from the window. "I guess that's fixed him, you'uns!" "You bet !"

And the three ruffians, nothing doubt-ing, scurried along the barn to the door, shoved it open, and came crowd-

The New Sheriff! <u>□◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆</u>

HE Rio Kid did not stir. He had shifted his position a little, and was now sitting up on the bench in the dark corner,

a gun in either hand.
In that position he remained still and
In that position he remained still and
Side-Kicker had In that position he remained still and silent; watching. Side-Kicker had given a startled squeal, but was now zilent again. The three rough-necks gathered round the straw bed, on which the stuffed blanket lay, with three bulletholes through it. They stood clearly in the starlight that streamed in at the window; and the Kid, invisible in his dark corner, watched them curiously.

Red Harris, with a brutal laugh.

Red Harris, with a brutal laugh, stirred the rolled blanket with his foot.

"He's sure got his!" he remarked.

"He sure has!" chuckled Yellow

"He's sure got ins!" he remarked.
"He sure has!" chuckled Yellow
Dick, "and that cayuse is ours, you'uns!
I guess the guy was bedding down
hyer to make sure that that cayuse was
safe."

And he chuckled.

"Git hold of the cayuse," muttered Bandy Tutt. "I guess that shooting has woke up Pop Short, you'uns. We want

woke up Pop Short, you uns. We want to beat it!"

"Aw, forget it!" grunted Red Harris.
"I guess if Pop Short is woke up, he will be mighty careful not to horn in. I guess I'd shoot up Pop Short jest as soon as look at him."

"Hands up!"

It was a sudden voice from the darkoutside the space of starlight in

ness, outside the space of starings in which the three rough-necks stood.

The ruffians started convulsively.

Not for a moment had they doubted that the tranger in Plug Hat lay dead at their feet, riddled with bullets from Red Harris' six-gun. But it was the The Popular.—No. 601.

voice of the puncher that came from the gloom.
"Say."
"Say. who w
"Thunder!" stuttered Red Harris.

-what-

"Don't touch a gun!" came the quiet voice. "I've got two Colts looking at you, and if you touch a gun, fellers, it will be the last thing you'll do this side of Jordan."

"The puncher!" roared Red Harris.
"You've said it!" drawled the Kid.
"And I guess I shall want you to pay
for that blanket you've drilled boles in. Red. The atraw inside it belongs to Mr. Short, but I reckon that ain't damaged a whole lot. But I surely do dislike a guy using my blanket for pistol-practice."

The Kid stepped out of the darkness. His guns were at a level now, his eyes looking over them mockingly. The

three rough-necks faced him, panting with rage. There was a revolver in Red Harris' hand; but he did not von-

ture to raise it. "I guess I said hands up!" drawled the Kid. "I ain't waiting you'uns, want to reach for the roof, and reach pronto. Or—

Red Harris' gun dropped in the straw, and his hands went up over his head. More promptly still the hands of Sandy Tutt and Yellow Dick were elevated. They stared at the Kid, in deep rage, but still in more astonishment than rage. The ghost of the Rio Kid could hardly have startled them

The Kid holstered his last-hand guo. seping the other looking at the bunch f desperadoes. They eyed him of desperadors. They eyed him wolfishly as he stepped towards them. But they did not dare to lower their hands. Only too well they knew that the puncher could have riddled them with lead, before they had time to pull trigger if they reached for a weapon. They were three to one, and three of the toughest rough-necks in Plug Hat; but they stood before the Kid's gun like lambs.

With his left hand, the Kid drow away

With his left hand, the Kid drow away their weapons, tossing guns and bowie-knives into a distant corner, one by one. With their hands up, and savage sowls on their faces, the trie of rough-necks submitted to the inevitable. In a

neers summitted to the inevitable. In a few moments, they were disarmed.

"That's better for you!" drawled the Kid. "If you was to try to give me any trouble, fellers, I should have to spill your juice; and I sure don't want to must up Pop Short's bain."

"What's your game, durn you?"
hissed Red Harris. "You got us dead
to rights, you gol-darned puncher!
What you figure you're going to do?"
"You want to get that trail-rope,"
said the Kid, with a ned towards his
trail-rope that bung on the wall.
"I guess""And

"And you want to do it pronto," said the Kid. "I ain't honing to spill your vinegar, though you've shot three holes through my blanket. But if you holes through my blanket. But if you holes through the property filters you've don't jump to orders, fellers, you're gone coons, and I'm telling you so. Get that trail-rope, durn your hide!" He rapped out the order sharply, and

the gleam in his eyes over the revolver was enough for Red Harris. With a curse, the ruffian pulled down the coiled

rope.

"Now you want to tie up the paws of your pardners," said the Kid, "and you want to tie them safe, or you won't and Sandy Tutt. know what hit you, Mr. Harris. Jump to it—I an't waiting. I guees I'm some bonehead for not plugging you anyhow; and I'll sure plug you if you keep me waiting."

Letting us loose?" hissed Red Harris. And the question was accompanied by a string of oaths from Yellow Dick the released the rope from the book, and from the legs of the three ruffians. A jerk on the trail rope pulled them (Continued on page 10.)

Broathing fury, the rullian obeyed. The rope was knotted round the wrists of Sandy Tutt and Yellow Dick; and under the Kid's close inspection, the knots were safely tied. The Kid nodded approval.

"O.K." he said. "Now make a loop round your own paws, Mr. Harris, and I'll oblige you by pullin' it tight."

Red Harris, gritting his teeth, oboyed. The Kid pulled the slip-noose tight round the ruffian's wrists. Then, tight round the rulian's wrists. Anon, with a grin, the puncher holstered his gun. He took the rope, and knotted it afresh on the arms of the three ruffians, winding it round them, and securing them together in a row. Then the rope was wound round their legs, with an ample sllowance of knots; and finally the Kid tied the end of it to a book high up in the wall of the barn.

"Now I guess you'um are safe for the night!" he remarked. "I'm asking you to keep quiet, while a guy gets a little sleep." Red Harris gritted his teeth and was ailent.

The Kid turned away from the three prisoners. He dragged the bench along to the door, took his blanket and rolled himself in it, and laid down on the bench to sleep—sure to be awakened if any attempt was made to push open the door from outside.

Heedless of the three ruffians bound in the long trail-rope, the Kid closed his eyes, and was immediately asleep.

But there was no sleep that night for Red Harris, Sandy Tutt, and Yel-low Dick. They stood in a bunch against the wall of the barn, under the hook to which the end of the rope was tied. Long and savagely they wrestled with their bonds; but the Kid, who with their bonds; but the Kid, who knew how to tie up a dangerous steer, had tied them securely enough. They had no chance of wriggling loose. And after a time they gave up the attempt, and stood in a disconsolate bunch, breathless from their efforts, and mutacina disconsolate bunch. tering lurid curses in low tones—carefully low lest they abould awaken the Kicker.

The Rio Kid slept soundly. His eyes did not open till the sun was in the sky, and the new day was shin-ing down on the town of Plug Hat. Then it was a push on the outside of the door that awakened him.

"Mornin'!" said Pop Short.

"'Mornin', sir !" said the Kid.
"Say, your cayuse is still here," said
Mr. Short, with a glance at Sidekicker. "Sure !" said the Kid.

"Carry me home to die!" yelled Pop Short, suddenly catching sight of the three rough-necks tied to the hook in the wall. "What's that!"

"That?" said the Kid, with a smile. "I guess that's a bunch that called in to see me in the dark, and didn't find me so fast calcop as they figured. I guess I roped them up to keep them out of mischief."

Pop Short burst into a roar of laughter.

"Say, this beats the whole deck!" he yelled. "Say, this surely does beat the Dutch !"

"Say, you dog-goned puncher, you letting us loose?" hissed Red Harris.

came careering from the opposite direc-The driver touched his brakes to steady his machine round the bend; but he forgot that the surface of the road was slippery from the rain that still showered down.

They saw him get into a skid. The tail of his oar swung round, loaving two

great swathes on the road behind as it shashed dead in their path.

Jack pulled over to cut inside the other car, and in that instant the driver tried to get out of his skid, wrenching his machine in the same direction, so that it seemed that the two must crash.

Sid heard the tearing scream of the brakes on the chassis. Jack hauled the steering wheel over, as though to dive at the side of the road. Instead, the rear of the machine slithered round, spinning them to the middle of the road and sliding almost backwards. Again Jack twisted on the wheel, pulling the car broadside on, then he let the tail fling round, mining the other machine by a yard.

He pulled straight. They rolled on and came to a stop, just as a crash sounded behind them.

Sid, both hands clutching the rim of the scuttle, turned a scared face to

Jack.
"Thought we was goin' to smash!" he gasped, and added: "Might's well go back and be sacked."

Jack turned the chassis, and they olled slowly around the turn again. Jack turned the chassis, and they rolled slowly around the turn again. The car they had met was off the read. It looked as thought it had been trying to wrap itself around the telegraph post that atood these. The radiator was all battered, and a gentleman was dimbinately from the radiator. climbing slowly from the machine. On the opposite side of the road the car bearing Ben Moran and Mr. Lucas was just stopping.

"That's one of our new sports saloons. That's why I never recognised it from behind! They must ha' been tryin' it out." Sid exclaimed, as he saw the car, and a moment later they pulled up beside the wreck,

The old gentleman came across to

them as Jack climbed down from the bucket seat.

I thought we were going to hit one another. the gentleman said. "Did you skid like that intentionally-

you'd miss me?"
"Yes, sir," said Jack, and behind him Sid's eyes almost popped out of his head. But he believed Jack, because he know that Jack wasn't the sort to tell

"It was the smartest piece of driving that I've seen in my life, and I—"
A roar broke in on his words as

Moran and Lucas came charging from their car.

What the perishin' heck d'you think

DOWN BY THE SEA!

Look out for our representative at the Seaside resort you are visiting; he le giving away splendid prizes and thousands of dandy free gifts. Also, numerous competitions will be held for which attractive prizes will be given. Very large quantities of small gifts will be distributed to readers who are seen making a prominent display of The POPULAR.

you're doin' whoopin' about the road on that chassis!" Moran maried as he wagged a finger under Jack's pose. "You're sacked for that!"
"Control yourself, Moran. Let me doal with this," came the chill voice of the general manager. "Give an account of yourself, King."
York faced him: the roin driving

Jack faced him; the rain driving against his cheeks. But before he could get out a word, the man from the wreeked car said:

"I'm Baddeley Baron—Sir Baddeley Baron, an this boy has just shown a masterly piece of driving. Look at the marks!" He pointed to the broad sweeps left by the tyres on the wet road. "I got into a nasty skid, and he cer-tainly saved my life. If we'd hit, I should have been killed, without a doubt, and the whole thing is entirely the fault of that wretched car round the telegraph-pole."

He glared at the moking, steaming front of his machine as he spoke.

"Nothing but trouble since I've had it, and—" He broke off, then nodded to the chassis behind Jack and Sid. "Is that for aslo? Could you put me a body on it? If you can, I'll buy it, on one condition?"

"The machine is certainly for sale, Sir Baddeley," said Mr. Lucas, and his stony face melted into something resembling a smile.

"Very well, I'll give you a cheque on deposit now; but these two boys must not suffer for their or their impetuosity."

Mr. Lucas was too much of a business man to miss the sale of a thousand guines machine, just for the sake of sacking a couple of works boys, and be

oun consider themselves ad monished, Sir Baddeley, that is all."

The baronet amiled, then he shook hands warmly with Jack. If he would have said anything else, he didn't get the chance, because Jack and Sid elimbed back to the chessis in silence at

climbed back to the chassis in silence at a jerk from the general manager's head. The chassis rolled slowly and quietly away at a sedate twenty miles at hour, Ben Moran glaring after them. They travelled a mile or more before Sid said anything. Then he heaved a whistling sigh of relief.

"Ben Moran is a good driver," he said. "But I lay he couldn't ha handled a machine like you did. Jack, when we get back, I'll make you a wreath o' sparkin' plugs an' crowp you the 'Skid Kid?"

THE END.

(There's motor-racing thrills galors in "THE HILL-OLIMB HEROES!" next week's stirring story of the "Skid Rid," Order your POPULAR well in advance.)

THE RIO KID SHERIFF! (Continued from page 6.) *************************

to the door of the barn, where Pop Short stood yelling with laughter. "Beat it!" said the Kid tersely.

"Let our arms loose, you reck!" hissed Sandy Tutt. you gol-darned

The Kid shook his head.

"I guess it will make Plug Hat smile

"I guess it will make Ping flat smile some to see you fixed up like that," he answered. "Jest beat it! I'll sure help you with my boot."

The three rough-necks, still tied together in a bunch, only able to use their legs, staggored out of the barn. The Rio Kid's boot, vigorously applied, started them, and they staggored away as fast as they could. as fast as they could.

Loud yells of laughter greeted them Loud yells of laughter greeted them as they appeared in the street of Plug Hat and zigzagged their way along the rugged street towards the plaza, to reach the Red Flare, where they had friends to let them loose. With faces black with fury, gritting their teeth with rage, the bunch of roughnecks lurched and staggered along, amid roars of laughter that woke every echo of Plug Hat.

The Popular.—No. 601.

It was an hour later that the Rio It was an hour later that the Mo Kid, having finished his breakfast, came out on the plazza of the lumber hotel, and looked into the street. Pop Short was on the wooden plazza, and with him nearly a dozen other citizens of Plug Hat. The whole party made a movement towards the Kid, and the puncher, for a second, eyed them warily, and his hands slid towards his guns. But it was not a boatile move-ment. Every face was friendly, and every member of the numerous party raised his Stetson in salute to the Kid. And the Kid, who was politeness itself, raised his Stateon in acknowledgment of the greeting, wendering the while what this demonstration might portend.

"Mister Texas Brown!" said Pop Short, who had evidently been selected as spokesman. "This here is a delega-

tion of the most substantial citizens of Plug Hat, and they're sure proud to make your acquaintance.

"You do me proud, Mr. Short, sir,"
answered the Kid politaly.
"And this hore delegation," continued
Pop Short, "is here to put a request
up to you, Mister Texas Brown."
"Hear, hear!" said the delegation,
with any main.

with one voice.
"Shoot!" said the Kid.
"Shoot!" said the Kid. "This hero delegation," went on Pop Short, "requests you to stand for elec-tion for sheriff of Sassafras county,"

"Hear, hear !" repeated the substantial citizens of Plug Hat.

The Kid jumped. "Me for sheriff!" he gasped.

Jest you!" said Pop Short. last shoriff was shot up by Cactua Carter's bunch, and like I've told you, no galoot in this section is honing for the job since. Mister Texas Brown, this delegation of citizens reckons that you are the man for the job. This delegation asks you to stand, and will man their influence to met your in use their influence to get you in."

The kid gasped.

The boy outlaw of the Rio Grande had come to Plug Hat to keep out of the way of sheriffs. He stared blankly at the delogation of substantial citizens

of Plug Hat.
"Carry me home to dio!" he ejacu-

The Kid's eyes danced.

"Genta," he said, "you do me proud. I guess if you want me I'm your mutten, with the wool on. Gents, it's a cinch."

And a cinch it was. The Rio Kid, ones an outlaw, hunted by half the aheriffs in Texas, was the new sheriff of Plug Heat. THE END.

(Don't miss reading "BY ORDER OF HE SHERIFF!" next Tuesday's THE gripping tale of the Rio Kid-it's great, chums/)