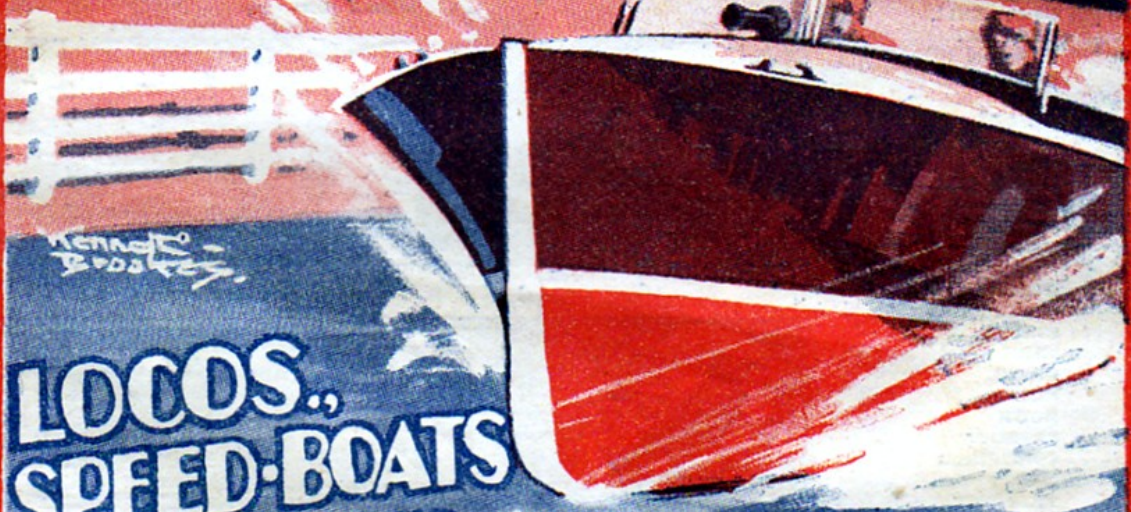


WOULD YOU LIKE A SPEED-BOAT, LOCO., OR AEROPLANE ?

WONDERFUL MODELS OFFERED INSIDE!

The POPULAR

2¢

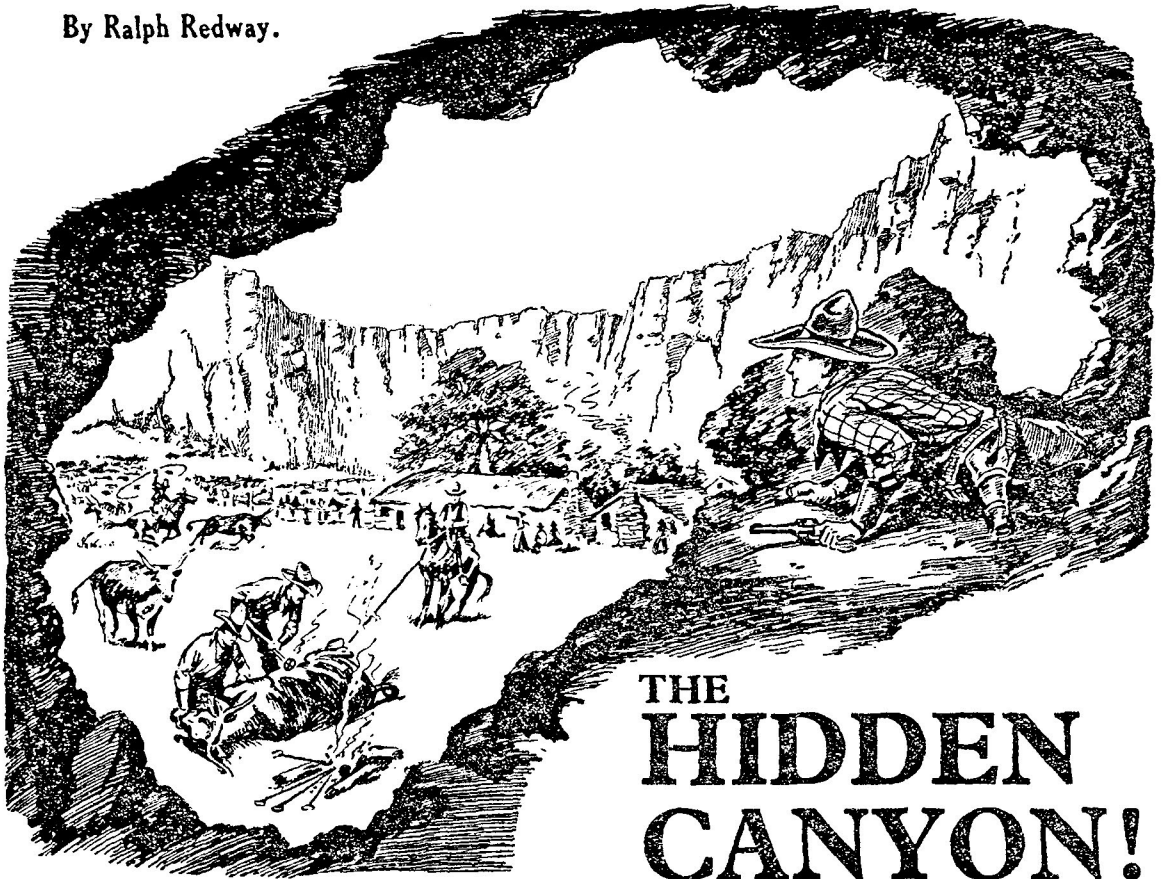


LOCOS.,
SPEED-BOATS
AND PLANES

MUST BE WON!

ANOTHER WESTERN THRILLER.

By Ralph Redway.



THE HIDDEN CANYON!

Baffled!

DOG-GONE it!" growled the Rio Kid. The Kid hated to be beaten. But it looked, this time, as if Cactus Carter and his crowd had beaten him to it.

The Kid stared round him, in the lonely, rocky arroyo in the heart of the buttes, with exasperated eyes.

The shadows were lengthening in the sunset; in the golden west the sun was sinking behind the buttes. For long, long, hot hours the Kid and the Plug Hat outfit had searched up and down the rocky ravine for the rustlers they sought.

But Cactus Carter and his crowd had vanished—vanished as completely as if the rocks had swallowed them up. And the secret way of escape from the arroyo was so secret that even the Kid's eyes could not penetrate it.

Yet it was there! Only the day before five hundred cows had been driven off the Bar-2 ranch, and the trail of the herd was clearly written in the gulches and up the narrow ravine.

There they had vanished as if into the air. And the rustlers, whom the Kid and his outfit had exchanged shots with in the arroyo, had vanished also, leaving no clue behind. It got the Kid's goat, and it got it sorely. He had led his posse from Plug Hat to

recover the stolen cattle and round-up the rustlers; and at the very moment when he had looked for success he had been beaten to it. It was enough to get the Kid's goat.

"I guess that guy Cactus has got his eye-teeth cut," he said, to Colorado Bill. "He knows these buttes like a book. I guess he knew where to hide them cows when he rustled them off the Bar-2!"

"You've said it, sheriff!" grunted Colorado. "I sure did calculate we'd got that crowd, when we got near enough for burning powder. But they done give us the slip."

"They ain't fur away!" grunted the Kid.

you're a whole heap of a sheriff," said the Bar-2 puncher. "They surely allow that you're a whole team, and a cross-dog under the wagon. But you ain't cinched them cows yet."

"Not yet," allowed the Kid. "You figure that you're going to?" asked Buck.

"Sure!" "Search me!" said the puncher, shrugging his shoulders. "It don't look like it to me. I guess you'll still be foolin' around when Mohave Dave gets here with the Texas Rangers!"

The Kid knitted his brows. "I guess Mohave has hit Blue Grass afore this," went on Buck, "and I allow that Mule-Kick Hall won't let a lot of grass grow under his feet afore he hits these buttes with his Rangers. He surely is the man to put paid to Cactus Carter!"

The Kid made no answer. For reasons of his own—which would have surprised the Plug Hat posse had they known them—he was extremely unwilling for the

Texas Rangers to come on the scene. For Mule-Kick Hall would have needed only one glance at the Sheriff of Plug Hat to recognise him as the Rio Kid, the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande.

"Say," went on Buck, grinning at the Kid's clouded face, "I guess you want to slide out, and leave a man's job to growed-up men, feller! This here job is some sizes too large for you!"

THE POPULAR—No. 606.

A Hole in the Mountain-Side

Leads the Boy Sheriff to an amazing discovery.

"Nope! But—" Colorado stared round at the rocks and the patches of scrub, and shook his head. "I guess I'm beat to a frazzle!"

Buck Peters, the Bar-2 puncher, lounged over to the Kid, as he stood talking to his chief deputy. There was a mocking grin on Buck's face.

"Say, Mister Sheriff Texas Brown!" he drawled.

The Kid gave him a look.

"I guess they say in Plug Hat that
(Copyright in the United States of America.)

"You durned, pesky bonehead!" growled the Kid. "What sort of a hand did your bunch make of it? Didn't Mohave run his bunch right under the guns of the rustlers and get half of them wiped out, and didn't the rest of you hit the horizon, hell-for-leather? You was riding, when I saw you agin, as if you was riding for a prize in a rodeo."

Colorado chuckled and Buck Peters scowled. His hand moved towards the gun in his belt.

But he did not touch the gun. Whether the boy sheriff could handle the rustlers or not, all Plug Hat knew how swift he was on the draw. The Bar-2 puncher thought better of it in time.

"Waal, I guess I ain't fooling around no more," he grunted. "I'm hittin' the trail, to meet Mohave and bring the Rangers here. I guess we'll find you moseying around like a bunch of rubes—if the rustlers ain't chawed you up afore we get here!"

And the Bar-2 puncher tramped down the arroyo, mounted his horse in the gulch below, and rode away for the prairie.

The Kid gave him no heed.

Once more he moved along the steep arroyo, scanning the rocks, the fissures, the sign of men and horses and cattle. The sun sank lower behind the buttes, and the shadows deepened.

Darkness was falling; and what had not been found in the daylight was not likely to be found in the dark.

The sheriff of Plug Hat rejoined his men at last.

"I guess there ain't nothing to it!" he growled. "But we ain't beat yet. I guess I'm on this trail till I get Cactus Carter and get them cows back for the Bar-2! There ain't going to be no cattle-rustling in Sassafra county so long's I'm sheriff! You'uns are going to ride back to town."

"And you—"

"I ain't quitting," said the Kid. "I guess I'm bedding down in these buttes till I hit the trail of Cactus Carter. Mebbe the guys will show up agin when they figure that the coast is clear. I'm going to keep doggo, and watch out; and when I want you I guess I'll get you word. Take my cayuse with you, and hit the trail. So long as there's a crowd hyer you can bet them rustlers will lie as close as fleas in a Mexican dog!"

Ten minutes later the Rio Kid was alone in the darkness that was now thick in the arroyo.

At the bottom of the ravine there was a trampling of hoofs, a jingling of spur and bridle, as the Plug Hat posse mounted and rode away, taking the Kid's mustang with them.

The clatter and the jingle died into the night, and silence fell on the lonely buttes.

Hands Up!

MORNING dawned on the buttes, and a long, sunny day drew towards its close.

In that wilderness of rock and stone and stunted scrub and cactus there was no sign of life, save the lizards that crawled on the rocks, and sometimes a gaunt, hungry coyote that crept and whined.

The lonely arroyo lay silent, lifeless, baking with heat as the sun rose higher in the blue sky, passed the zenith, and sank to the west.

THE POPULAR—No. 606.

From the gulch below a coyote crept up the rocky ravine; a wolfish-looking beast, with flaming, greenish eyes, sniffing.

It stopped at the spot where Yellow Dick, the rustler, had fallen in the fight the day before, and sniffed and whined. But the Plug Hat men had "planted" the slain rustler decently, and the scavenger of the buttes scratched and whined in vain. Then it crept from rock to rock, from bush to bush, sniffing; and finally thrust its pointed head and sniffing nose into a clump of pecan and juniper and wild vine that grew in the cleft of the rocks.

To all appearance that clump was as lifeless and deserted as any spot in the buttes; but the coyote gave a sudden angry and scared snarl, and withdrew his sniffing nose, as if it scented a foe there. And the Rio Kid, hidden in the tangled scrub, cursed the coyote under his breath, and longed to draw a six-gun and loose a bullet on the brute; but he dared not. For the Kid's game was silence and caution.

The coyote snarled and sniffed round the clump. Fluently, but silently, the Kid cursed the sniffing brute.

For a night and a burning day the Kid had lain in that close cover; silent, patient as an Apache watching for an enemy. He had food in his wallet and water in his can; and he waited and watched, heedless of the long hours that rolled slowly.

Under cover of darkness he had hidden himself there; and in the daylight he was invisible—watchful and wary. Sooner or later, the Kid figured, the rustlers would show up; and when they showed up the keenest eye in Texas would be upon them. If it was a weary task the Kid had set himself, it was no new game. Many a time had the boy outlaw lain deep in cover for a whole day, while the Rangers hunted and passed within a few paces of him. And now that he was a sheriff he had not forgotten his old patience and cunning.

But the coyote sniffed and sniffed, and whined, lurking round the clump where the Kid lay in cover. A shout, even a shout, would have sent the hungry brute scuttling away in fear; but the Kid could not venture to utter a sound, for he knew that at any moment there might be ears to hear. And he cursed the sniffing brute whose hungry curiosity brought him danger of discovery.

Suddenly from the sniffing animal came a shrieking howl. The Kid started. The next second the report of a revolver echoed through the arroyo.

The Kid caught his breath.

Through the interstices of the clump of thicket he could see the coyote rolling over on the rocks.

"Search me!" murmured the Kid and his eyes glinted.

He was no longer alone in the arroyo. Someone had seen the coyote, and shot the brute down. In a few moments the wolfish brute stretched out, still and silent. There was a sound of footsteps and voices. The Kid lay close, watching, listening.

"Say, what's that, Sandy?" called out a voice the Kid knew—the voice of Cactus Carter, once the king-pin of Plug Hat, now the cattle-lifter of the buttes. "Say, what you burning powder for, you jay?"

"I guess it's a coyote, Cactus."

"You durned bonehead, guess you gave me the jumps!" growled Cactus, with an oath.

"Aw, forget it!" said Sandy Tutt. "The coast's clear, you mutt; the Plug Hat bunch was home in town afore

dawn. There ain't hide nor hair of them left in the buttes."

The speakers were within a dozen feet of the Kid. He scarcely breathed as he lay and listened, and peered through the leafy screen that hid him.

There was a trample of hoofs, a jingle of a bridle. Cactus Carter was leading a horse out of a fissure in the rocky side of the arroyo. The Kid watched him with glinting eyes.

The fissure was not more than four or five feet wide, seven or eight high—a natural split in the rock, left by volcanic action from distant ages. It was one of dozens that rived the rocky sides of the ravine; and it opened like a tunnel in the cliff. It had been searched by the sheriff and his men the day before, along with every other nook and cranny; and they had found only an impenetrable wall of rock within.

But the Kid knew now the way the rustlers had gone. At the back of the fissure was some outlet that was carefully hidden from sight.

There could be no doubt about it, as Cactus Carter led his horse from the opening. Another man followed, and another, each leading a horse. It was a strange enough sight to see man after man emerging from the apparently solid cliff that rose to a height of a hundred feet over the fissure.

The Kid lay silent in the thicket and watched.

Cactus Carter mounted his broncho, and the two men who had led horses out after him mounted also.

"Keep the rock shut, Sandy," said Cactus, "and keep your eyes peeled while I'm away to White Pine."

"You bet!"

"I'll tell a man that dog-goned sheriff ain't through yet, and I'll be powerful glad when we get the cows off our hands!" said Cactus. "I guess I can fix it up with the cattle-buyer at White Pine. He don't ask a lot of questions about cows when he can buy them cheap. And I guess when they're turned into beef the Bar-2 boys can hunt for them all they want."

"You've said it!" chuckled Sandy.

Cactus Carter and his two companions rode down the arroyo, with a clatter of hoofs and a jingle of spurs.

Sandy Tutt stood looking after them, lighting a cigarette as he watched the horsemen disappear down the ravine.

He threw away the match, blew out a cloud of smoke, and turned back into the fissure from which the rustlers had emerged; and as he did so the Rio Kid drew himself, softly and silently, from his cover.

Silent as he was, Sandy Tutt perhaps heard some faint rustle, for he turned round, his hand, from habitual caution, falling on a gun. And he gave a convulsive start as he found himself looking into the barrel of a levelled six-gun.

"Hands up," said the Rio Kid quietly, "and jest you give one yaup, Mister Sandy Tutt, and it's the last yaup you'll give this side of Jordan! Hands up, you geck, and keep your bully-beef trap shut!"

The Rustlers' Secret.

SANDY TUTT stared blankly, almost unbelievably, at the sheriff of Plug Hat. The ghost of the Rio Kid could not have startled him more.

For an instant his hand closed convulsively on the butt of a gun. The

Kid's eyes, over his levelled Colt, glinted.

"Don't!" he said softly.

And Tutt did not draw the gun. There was death in the grim, levelled tube only three or four feet from him; death in the clear, steady eyes that glinted over it.

Had the gun left his holster the red-haired rustler would have fallen a dead man before he could lift it, and Sandy Tutt knew it. Slowly, his eyes burning with rage, he relinquished the gun and lifted his hands above his head.

"That's hoss-sense!" said the Kid approvingly.

"Dog-gone you!" muttered the rustler, his voice thick with rage. "Dog-gone your hide, you pesky lobo-wolf! What you doing here?"

The Kid smiled.

"I guess I'm holding up a gol-darned bush-whacker!" he answered. "And I guess I'm sure going to give him his ticket for soup if he speaks above a whisper! You give one yaup, you pesky gink, and it's you for the coyotes and the buzzards!"

The rustler panted with rage; but he kept his hands above his head; and he did not venture to call out. His life hung on a thread, and well the rustler was aware of it.

The clattering hoof-beats of the riders had died away in the distance. Little dreaming of what was happening in the arroyo, Cactus Carter and his companions were riding by lonely gulches and mountain paths, for the distant camp of White Pine. But how close at hand the rest of the gang might be, the Kid did not know—all he knew was the fissure under the cliff led into the secret den of the rustlers.

He drew nearer to Sandy Tutt, keeping him covered, and jerked the revolver and knife from his belt, and dropped them into a deep crevice of the rocks. Tutt did not venture to resist, though his eyes burned at the Kid.

"I guess you're better without your hardware, feller," said the Kid amiably. "Keep them paws in the air. I ain't honing to spill your juice; but if you got a kick coming you're a dead lobo-wolf, and you don't want to forget it!"

The Kid jerked off the rustler's neck-scarf.

"Now turn round, you geek, and put your paws behind you!" he said.

"I guess—"

"I'm waiting!" said the Kid, and he made a significant gesture with the Colt. "If you'd rather be left here cold meat you only got to kick. I ain't pertickler; I guess I'd blow your roof off as soon as not!"

Cursing under his breath, Sandy Tutt turned his hands behind him, and the Kid bound his wrists securely together with the scarf. The rustler was a helpless prisoner now, and the Kid holstered his gun.

"You sure are a good little man, and know how to do as you're told," said

the Kid amiably. "I reckon you'll live to be hanged yet, if you keep on being careful! Now I guess you're going on a leetle pasear with this baby."

Tutt faced him again, gritting his teeth.

"You figure you're getting me to Plug Hat?" he hissed.

"Not in your lifetime, old-timer! I ain't taking you anywhere—you're taking me!"

"I guess I don't savvy!" muttered Tutt.

The Kid laughed.

"We're going into the locked canyon, feller," he answered; "the shebang that you and Cactus was talking of.

tently as he moved along the rugged fissure, holding the rustler by the arm. Whether the retreat of the rustlers was near at hand, or at a distance, he did not know; but he was ready for a foe at every step.

He peered about him in the gloom, with a grip on the rustler's arm. He felt a quiver run through Sandy Tutt, and knew that he was thinking of tearing loose and making a sudden break in the darkness. And suddenly Tutt felt a sharp point pressed to his ribs. It was the point of the Kid's bowie-knife.

"You want to be good, feller!" murmured the Kid.



The Kid bound up the rustler, and then gagged him with strips of his own clothing. "I guess this'll keep you from yapping and giving the alarm!" grinned the young sheriff.

And I guess this is the way to the front door!" added the Kid, with a nod towards the fissure in the cliff.

"You're missing your guess!" muttered Tutt. "I shore don't know a thing about any locked canyon—"

"Why, you pesky gink," said the Kid, "ain't I wise to it that you've got a secret way out of this arroyo, and ain't I been watching from cover ever since I sent the boys home to Plug Hat last night? I guess I'd have found it without your help now that I know where to look; but I reckon it will save time if you guide me. Get a move on!"

"I'll tell a man—"

"Quit chewing the rag and get a move on, feller!"

The Kid grasped the rustler's arm and moved him on into the fissure. At the opening there was a glimmer of light from the sunshine that streamed down into the arroyo; but, farther on, the fissure was gloomy and shadowy. When the Kid had searched it the day before, he had found only solid rock at the end of it, as in a score of other fissures that rived the rugged sides of the arroyo. But the Kid knew now that there must be a way through.

The Kid watched and listened in-

Tutt shuddered.

"I guess it's your say-so, sheriff!" he muttered hoarsely.

"Keep chewing on that!" advised the Kid.

The Kid's eyes gradually became accustomed to the dim twilight that reigned in the rocky fissure under the cliff. He moved on slowly with the rustler in the gloom.

When the Kid had explored the fissure the previous day it had extended about fifteen feet into the cliff, and there ended, to all appearance, in solid rock. But now, when the Kid had paced that distance the way ahead was no longer closed.

The fissure narrowed more and more, till there was scarce space for a horse to be led through, or a cow driven. Then it suddenly widened into a cavern hollowed in the heart of the mountain. Far in the distance the Kid caught a glimmer of daylight, where the great cavern evidently had another outlet.

"Say, this sure is cute!" said the Kid.

Sandy Tutt grunted savagely. "I sure guessed you might have left the door open, as you was going back,"

smiled the Kid. "That's sure why I jumped on you sudden, feller. I guess you've saved me the trouble of hunting it."

Where the fissure ran into the cavern a great rock had barred the way; but it was now rolled aside.

The Kid examined it curiously.

It was a huge mass, far beyond the strength of one man to move. A couple of stout pine saplings stood leaning on it, and the Kid guessed that they were used as levers for shifting the big rock.

"I'll say this is cute!" said the Kid admiringly. "I guess a galobt might hunt around for a week and never get wise to it that that rock would shift! I allow that Cactus Carter has got his eye-teeth cut, feller."

A muttered curse answered him.

The secret of the rustlers' retreat was plain to the Kid now. Evidently Cactus Carter had hit on the fissure leading into the cavern, and had figured that it would make the safest hiding-place in the buttes, with a rock to close it against pursuit. And when the rock was closed it made an immovable barrier.

"I guess," said the Kid, "that I'd have had to blast that rock with giant powder if I'd found it shut, feller. But I guess I'd have done it, once I knowed this was the way into your den. But you sure have saved me a heap of trouble."

"You goin' on?" muttered Tutt.

"Sure!"

The Kid caught the glitter in the rustler's eyes, and laughed softly.

"I'm sure goin' on," he said; "but I guess your pards ain't going to shoot me up, Sandy; not if this baby knows it. Say, when Cactus comes back I guess he gives a signal to be let in. That rock can't be moved from outside. If it could, I'd sure have found it out yesterday. Say, what's the signal?"

"Three taps on the rock with the butt of a gun!" grunted Sandy Tutt.

The Kid looked round. The farther opening of the cavern, where the daylight gleamed, was at least three hundred yards away.

"Then I guess you keep a man on guard here," he said. "A tap wouldn't be heard from the canyon yonder."

"You've said it," grunted Tutt. "There's always a man on guard in the cavern; we done take it in turns to keep watch here, when any of the bunch are out of the shebang."

"There ain't a guy here now, I reckon, only you. I figure you was going to keep watch?"

"Yep!"

"Waal, I guess I'm leaving you here, and you can keep watch all you want," said the Kid cheerily. "I'll leave the rock open, because I might want to quit sudden; but I reckon the guys yonder won't know; they'll sure figure you're keeping tabs here. You're going to take a rest, hombre."

Sandy Tutt cursed, softly but luridly, as the Kid, with strips of the rustler's own clothing, bound his legs, and laid him down on the rocky floor of the cavern. But his cursing ceased as the Kid gagged him, carefully and scientifically.

Leaving the rustler lying on the rocky floor, the Kid, gun in hand, went forward through the great cavern, heading for the gleam of daylight far ahead.

A Surprise for the Kid!

"**S**HOT!" murmured the Kid. He had reached the opening of the cavern and, keeping in cover, looked out at what lay beyond.

What the Kid saw was a "locked" canyon; that is, a canyon surrounded entirely by high cliffs, shut in by inaccessible rocks. It was, perhaps, a dozen acres in extent; and the cliffs rose round it almost like walls.

Down one cliff came leaping a stream from the uplands high above, in a mist of spray, forming a pool where it fell, and flowing away across the canyon. Along it grew trees, pecan, and cottonwood, and over almost the whole extent of the locked canyon the grass was thick and rich. It was one of those fertile spots, of which there were many, hidden away in the remote recesses of the arid buttes.

The Kid watched the scene before him with keen, interested eyes. There were cattle feeding in the hidden canyon, or lying at rest in the grass—hundreds of them; and some of the cows were near enough for the Kid to discern the brand of the Bar-2 on them. He was looking at the herd that had been run off from the Bar-2 ranch a couple of days ago.

"Sho!" repeated the Kid.

At a short distance from the cavern's mouth was a group of huts, under the wide-spreading branches of a huge cottonwood-tree, evidently the quarters of the rustlers.

Three or four men were in sight, sitting on a log, playing poker with a deck of greasy cards. Another could be seen among the horses in a roughly-built corral. Others, doubtless, were in the huts. From one of these—probably used as a cook-house—smoke was rising. The Kid's eye followed the thin spiral of smoke as it rose.

Before it reached the height of the towering cliffs that surrounded the canyon it was dispersed by the wind; there was no danger of the smoke betraying the hidden den of the rustlers.

"I'll say Cactus knows his business, from A to izzard!" the Rio Kid murmured to himself.

Lying at the mouth of the cavern, from which the ground sloped gently down into the canyon, the Kid watched, unseen. His eyes ran over the herds that fed or lolled in the grass.

Five hundred cows had been driven off the Bar-2; but there were at least a thousand head of cattle in the canyon. The Kid's keen eyes picked out several brands—the White Star, the Lazy Nine, the Flying-O, and several others, as well as the Bar-2.

There had been many raids on the ranches in Sassafras county and the stolen cattle had disappeared without leaving a trace behind. The sheriff of Plug Hat knew now how and why.

But the cows, the Kid figured, did not remain long there—there was not feed enough for a large herd for a long time. He figured that the brands were blotted, and the cows driven away by secret paths through the buttes, to be disposed of at a distance to dealers who bought cheap and asked no questions.

A fire was burning near the huts, and occasionally one of the rustlers threw a handful of fuel on it. A cowman like the Kid was not perplexed to know why a fire was burning on a sultry afternoon. Presently, while he watched, a man came out of one of the huts, with a running-iron in his hand. He

glanced towards the group of poker players, and called, and his voice came clearly to the Kid from the distance.

"Say, you'uns, you get your ropes." Ho stooped, and thrust the iron into the red heart of the fire.

"Aw, can it, Missouri!" answered one of the poker-players. "There sure ain't no durned hurry!"

"I guess if them cows ain't ready when Cactus comes back to-morrow there will be trouble!" said Missouri. "Quit that game, you gecks, and get in the cows! We got a lot to brand yet, and there ain't a lot of daylight left."

Unwillingly, the ruffians left their cards. Several more men came out of the huts and joined them. There were more than a dozen of the rustlers in the Kid's sight now, and probably more out of his sight. He lay still and watched.

He had seen brand-blotting done before, and it was nothing new to him. A cow was lassoed, and dragged, struggling and bellowing, to the fire, where it was thrown down and held.

Missouri drew the hot iron from the fire, and proceeded to alter the brand on the thick hide, to an accompaniment of frantic bellowing from the cow.

It was a Bar-2 cow, and across the horizontal bar of the brand Missouri marked an upright, turning it into a cross. After the "2" he branded a round "O." The Kid watched with a grim interest. The brand-blotter was slick at his work, and evidently an old hand.

In a few minutes the Bar-2 cow was branded Cross-2O, and allowed to run loose on the grass again; and Mohave Dave himself, had he seen it, could not have said that it was a Bar-2 animal now.

Another cow took its place, roped in, and held for the running-iron. This was a White Star cow; and the running-iron drew a circle round the star, changing the brand to Circle Star. Cow after cow passed under the running-iron, keeping the rustlers busy, while the sun sank lower over the buttes and shadows lengthened in the locked canyon.

The Kid was thinking as he watched.

He knew the secret of the rustlers' den now. For a night and a long day he had remained in cover in the arroyo, and his patience had been rewarded. Now he had to get out and hit Plug Hat, and bring the posse back to round up the rustlers.

It was four hours, at least, on foot to the cow town; but the ride back would be swift. Night was falling, and he would be back with his men soon after midnight. But in the interval he reckoned that the guard would be changed. It was likely, at the moving rock—which meant giving the alarm to the rustlers. And the Kid, thinking it out, waited.

The brand-blotting ceased at last, as the shadows deepened. The fire died down, and lights gleamed from some of the huts. The stars came out overhead, and in their glimmer the Kid watched the rustlers gather to a meal outside the cookhouse.

And then came what he was waiting for—one of the gang left the rest, and came tramping up the sloping ground towards the cavern. And the Kid drew back into the darkness. It was the man whom the others had called Missouri who was coming; and the Kid figured that he was to relieve Sandy Tutt at the entrance.

(Continued on page 28.)

THE HIDDEN CANYON!

(Continued from page 6.)

Missouri came tramping into the cavern. The canyon was deep in shadow now, and the interior of the cavern, was blackness itself. But the burly rustler straddled on like one who knew the way well. His heavy boots clumped noisily on the rocky floor, and he did not hear the faintest sound as the Rio Kid followed him through the cavern.

The burly ruffian reached the end of the cavern, where the fissure led out into the arroyo. There he stopped, and stared about him in the deep gloom.

"Say, Sandy!" he called out. "You all-fired geek, you gone to sleep, and left the rock open, you bonthead. Say—Thunder!"

He broke off, gasping, as a hand was gripped on the back of his neck, and the muzzle of a revolver pressed to his side.

"Quiet!" whispered the Rio Kid. "Dog-gone my cats!" gasped Missouri. "If that's you fooling, Sandy—"

"I guess it ain't Sandy," murmured the Kid. "It's the sheriff of Plug Hat, you gink, and if you touch a gun or give a yaup, you get yours!"

"Carry me home to die!" gasped Missouri.

"Keep your mouth shut, you gink!" The muzzle of the Colt, grinding into the rustler's ribs, emphasised the order. Missouri made no movement. The Kid heard him gasping.

"Say, you win, sheriff!" he muttered. "Dog-gone my cats—"

"That's the lot!" said the Kid. And the rustler was silent. Quietly, deftly, the Kid relieved him of his gun and jerked off his greasy neck-scarf. "Put your paws together—here!" The Kid's voice came from the gloom. "You want to act just like a pet lamb, feller, or you go over the range so quick it will make your head swim."

In a few minutes Missouri was bound and gagged. From the darkness, the eyes of Sandy Tutt were gleaming up like a cat's.

The Kid chuckled softly. The rustlers, he figured, if they heeded that Sandy Tutt did not come to the locked canyon, would naturally reckon that he was remaining with Missouri. Anyhow, he had to take the chance. It was for the Kid now to light out, burn the wind for Plug Hat, and get back with the posse.

Likely enough he would find the rock door still open when he came; but if the rustlers, in the meantime, found it open, and shut it they would not know what had happened, for Sandy Tutt and Missouri would not be there to tell them. And a charge of giant powder would open the rock from the outside.

DOWN BY THE SEA!

LOOK OUT for our representative at the seaside resort you are visiting; he is 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.

The Kid dragged Sandy Tutt to his feet, freeing his legs from the bonds. He bound his right arm to Missouri's left.

"Now you want to move!" murmured the Kid; and the two rustlers stumbled before him, out of the rock doorway, into the fissure that led into the arroyo. "I ain't walking you to town, you guys; I guess I'll walk you to a safe place and leave you tied to a tree, and you'll sure have time to chew on it that it's a poor game to rustle cows while this baby is sheriff of Plug Hat!"

They emerged from the fissure into the open ravine.

To take the two prisoners to a safe distance, leave them safe and silent, and then hit for Plug Hat, was the Kid's intention: But that intention was never carried out.

The arroyo lay silent under the dim light of the stars. But as the Kid emerged from the fissure into the open air, there was a sudden sound and a movement. His hand flew to a gun, but at the same moment the muzzle of a rifle was clamped to his chest.

"Hands up!" came a cold, hard voice. "Hands up, you durned rustler!"

And a quiver ran through the Rio Kid. For he knew that voice; every hard, metallic tone in it was familiar to his ears. It was the voice of Mule-Kick Hall, the captain of the Texas Rangers!

The Rio Kid, alias Texas Brown, sheriff of Plug Hat, was in the hands of the enemies who had so long hunted him!

THE END.

(Life's getting exciting for the Boy Sheriff. He can't turn without running into fresh troubles. See next week's yarn of Texan adventure, entitled, "OUTLAWS K.O'D. BY OUTLAW!")

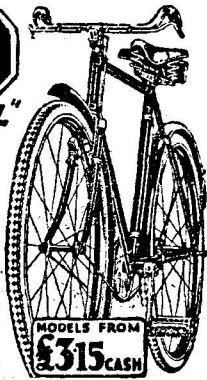
THE WORLD'S BEST CYCLE

26 DOWN The JUNO "ROYAL"

BROOKS SADDLE, DUNLOP COED TYRES, RENOLD CHAIN, 14 DAYS' FREE TRIAL.

8 & 15 MONTHLY PAYMENTS OF 5/10 All British. Superb Quality. Guaranteed for ever. Direct from Factory to you. Backed and Covered with Wonderful easy terms to suit you. Chromium Plated Models if desired. Write for Free Art List.

JUNO JUNO CYCLE CO. (Dept. U.2), 245, Bishopsgate, London, E.C.2.



GROSE'S, LUDGATE CIRCUS, LONDON

FOOTBALL JERSEYS All Colours and Designs, 15/6 per doz. Send for Illustrated List. Post Free.

GEO. GROSE & CO., 8, New Bridge St., London, E.C.4.

THE REAL OPPORTUNITY!

AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, and CANADA. Hundreds of BOYS (ages 14-19) WANTED. "THE STEPPING STONE TO MANHOOD" describes the Salvation Army's Scheme for training Boys on Army Farms and placing them with farmers overseas. Ask for Free Copy. OUTFITS provided. Parties of Boys PERSONALLY CONDUCTED overseas. COMMONSENSE AFTERCARE. Ordinary and reduced Bookings to the British Dominions; passages booked to U.S.A. and all parts of the world by all lines. Write or call: THE SALVATION ARMY, 3, Upper Thames Street, LONDON, E.C.4.

PARCEL OF 200 Interesting Stamps, such as Persia, Siam, Roumania (Boy King), Triangular, etc., price 3d. with Approvals only.—W. A. WHITE, Engine Lane, LYB, Stourbridge.

Your Height increased in 14 days, or money back. Amazing Course, 5/- Send Stamp NOW for Free Book.—STEBBING SYSTEM, 28, Dean Road, LONDON, N.W.2.

CHRISTMAS CARD AGENTS WANTED to sell Private Christmas Cards. Sample Book of lovely designs supplied free. Largest in Novelty Cards. "BEST COMBINATION BEAUTIFUL PRIZES" Apply to G. DENTON & CO., LTD., Dept. D.30, ACCRINGTON.

FREE FUN! Ventiloquists' Investments given FREE to all sending 1d. (P.O.) for latest Magic Trick and List (Large Parcels 2/6 5/-)—F. P. Thompson Co., Colwyn Bay, N. Wales.

HEIGHT INCREASED

IN THIRTY DAYS. No apparatus, no medicine, ordinary habits retained. Complete Course 5/-. Full particulars and testimonials, stamp.

MELVIN A. STRONG, REDNAL, BIRMINGHAM.

£2,000 WORTH OF GOOD CHEAP PHOTO MATERIAL AND FILMS. 12 x 10 Enlargements, any photo or film, 2d. Samples Catalogue Free.—HACKETT'S, July Road, LIVERPOOL.

DON'T BE BULLIED

Send Two Penny Stamps for some **SPLENDID LESSONS** in **JUJITSU** and Handsome Photo Plate of Jap Champions. The Wonderful Japanese Self-Defence without weapons. Take care of yourself under ALL circumstances; fear no man. You can have **MASTER** Illustrated, London for P.O. 3/9. **SEND NOW** to "YAWABA" (Dept. A.P.), 10, Queensway, Hanworth, Feltham, Middlesex. Practical Tuition London School Daily.

OUTFIT & "BOY KING" PKT. FREE!!

Album, 25 Bohemian, pocket case, etc., 2d. post for approvals. LISBURN & TOWNSEND (U.S.), LIVERPOOL.

HANDSOME MEN ARE SLIGHTLY SUNBURNT. "SUNBURNER" remarkably improves appearance. 1/6, 2/9. 6,000 Testimonials. (Booklet, stamp.)—Sunbreeze Laboratories, (Dept. A.7), Colwyn Bay, Wales. (Est. 1902.)

FREE PASSAGES TO ONTARIO, CANADA, for approved boy farm learners, age 15 to 19. Apply:—ONTARIO GOVERNMENT, 346, STRAND, LONDON.

STAMPS—Special Bargain Sets. 12 Nyassa (1921) 1/-, 9 Nyassa Triangles 1/-, 10 Spanish Catscombs 1/-, 100 French Colonies 1/6, also Approvs. from 1d.—WINNEY (Dept. A.), 11, Bramerton St., London, S.W.3