

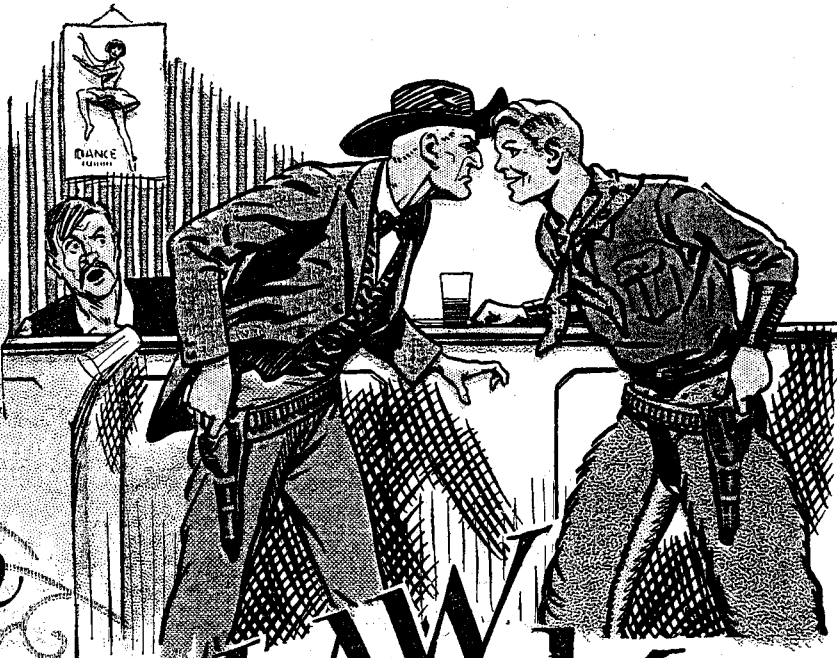
FREE—DANDY COLOURED AERO PLATE—INSIDE!

The

RANGER

2^d





The OUTLAW KID!

A BREATH-TAKING YARN OF THE WILD AND WOOLLY WEST.

The Kid Horns In!



*O*ur mustangs
grey,
We rode away,
With the
merry Ranger
band,
And our camp-
fires shone,
When the sun
had gone,
On the banks
of the Rio
Grande."

A clear voice carolled the old song of the Texas Rangers, ringing and echoing through the dusky green shades of the chaparral.

It was the Rio Kid who was singing, from sheer lightness of heart, as his mustang picked its way by a path, walled in by trees almost hidden by hanging vines and trailing masses of Spaniards-beard.

Through the arched boughs over his head glinted the hot sunlight of southern Texas. Ahead of him, through openings of the trees, came another glint—that of the shining waters of the Rio Grande.

The Kid was riding down to the great river, the border between Texas and Mexico. He was riding at his ease. In that remote corner of the Lone Star State the boy outlaw had shaken off the foes who hunted him. He was heading for the cow-town of Red Dog, which lay a few miles farther up the river. The Kid figured that in Red Dog, though they had heard of the Rio Kid, they would not know him when they saw him, and he was tired of lonely trails. Fate had made him an outlaw; but the Kid was a puncher born and bred, and he asked nothing better than to punch cows and be let alone.

"In the Indian pass,
In the prairie grass—"

Crack! crack! crack!
The Kid's cheery singing was interrupted.

From the direction of the river came a sudden outbreak of shooting, shattering the silence of the chaparral.

The Kid drew rein.
Crack! crack!
"Aw! By the great horned toad!" ejaculated the Kid, in exasperation. "If that ain't the elephant's hind leg!"

There was trouble ahead of the Kid—and he was riding into it. There never was a guy more anxious to avoid trouble than the Rio Kid; but trouble had a way of dogging his trail.

Crack! crack!
A bullet, tearing through branches and leaves, whizzed by a foot from the Kid, as he sat in the saddle listening. Another crashed into a tree trunk a yard from him.

Fate has made the Rio Kid an Outlaw for something he's never done. But the Kid smiles through trouble. One day he'll clear his name.

The galoots who were burning powder seemed to be loosing off lead almost at random.

"Dog-gone my cats!" growled the Kid. "Old hoss, I guess we're going to beat it and beat it quick. We ain't going to horn into this here trouble."

The Kid was about to wheel his horse and ride back the way he had come, when he paused.

Loud shouts, distant but plainly heard, came to his ears from the river—in Spanish. Mexicans were shouting and firing, and the Kid heard the splashing of horses in the water. And through an opening in the trees by which he had a glimpse of the wide river, he caught sight of a horseman riding desperately for the Texan side.

The rider was a Mexican, with an olive face under the shadow of a big sombrero. There was a streak of crimson on the olive face, where blood ran down from

under the sombrero. The man was wounded and evidently closely pursued. Bullets splashed up the water round him as he rode, fired from the Mexican shore.

Instead of riding away the Rio Kid remained where he was—hesitating. It was no business of his—and the wounded fugitive was a Mexican, and the Kid had all a Texan's dislike of "Greasers." But it was rather with his head than with his heart that the Kid wanted to dodge trouble; there was something within him that made him hate to turn his back on it.

He hesitated—and then he rode forward.

Crack! crack! crack!
A few strides of his mustang and the Kid had a clear view of the river. On the other side, a bunch of Mexican soldiers were firing—with an aim that made the Kid snort with contempt. Rifles cracked every moment, and lead tore up the water round the fugitive—but half the shots whistled past the river and tore away through the thickets round the Kid. But with so much lead being wasted, the Kid figured that the soldados would get their man before he could reach the northern shore.

The shooting was bad; nine-tenths of the lead was wasted. But some of it was going close. The Kid saw the sombrero spin on the rider's head; he saw him start as another bullet grazed his shoulder, tearing a rent in the velvet jacket. And a shrill squeal from the horse showed that the animal was struck.

It was failing—struggling in vain with the current of the river. The Kid shook his head. He knew that the rider would never make the grade now.

Crack! crack! crack! crack!
What the cause of the trouble was, the Kid did not know or care. But his heart was with the man who was struggling for his life. And as he saw that the horse was floundering and about to sink, the Kid made up his mind—as had often happened before—to horn into another guy's trouble. In a twinkling the Kid's lariat was in his hand.

Whiz!

The riata whizzed through the air, uncloaking as it flew.

The loop dropped over the shoulders of the desperate rider, and the Kid heard the gasping cry of amazement that came from him. In an instant the noose tightened, and at the same moment the horse sank under, and the rider was left struggling in the water.

The Kid wheeled Side-Kicker and rode back into the trees. The pull of the rope dragged the man through the water with the swiftness almost of a lightning flash. He was crashing against the high muddy bank before he knew what was happening.

There was a yell from the soldados across the river, and they fired fast. Bullets crashed into the mud of the high bank, scattering it in lumps. But the fugitive, amazed as he must have been by finding himself in the grip of a lasso, kept his head. The pull of the rope dragged him up the steep bank, and he clambered with hands and feet. Quickly he was over the top of the bank, and the rope dragged him headlong into the cover of the thick undergrowth.

Crack! crack! crack! crack!

The Mexican soldados were firing fast. Five or six of them pushed their horses into the water, with the evident intention of crossing to the Texan side in pursuit of the man who had escaped.

The Kid checked his mustang, wheeled,

Rio. You don't want to worry about that, hombre."

He turned from the Mexican and pushed through the thickets to the bank. Keeping in cover the Kid sighted his long-barrelled Colt.

Five horsemen were in the water, pushing across. The Kid grinned over his gun.

Crack! crack! crack!

The Kid was firing now, so swiftly that the three shots sounded almost as one.

Loud yells burst from the riders in the river. The Kid was not shooting to kill; he had no hunch to spill the juice of the Greasers in the Rio Grande. The whizzing bullets tore strips of skin from dusky faces. The Kid could plant his lead where he liked within a fraction of an inch.

It went close enough to satisfy the soldados. Three men clapped hands to scratched faces, wheeled their horses hurriedly, and dashed back to the Mexican side. The others followed them fast, without waiting for lead.

The Deserted Ranch!

"HALT!" The Rio Kid drew a quick breath.

The cow-town was in sight in the far distance; a straggle of shacks and frame houses on the bank of a stream flowing southward into the Rio Grande.

Between the Kid and the distant town a bunch of horsemen had ridden out of the prairie into the trail.

In the trail they had halted, facing the Kid as he came, evidently waiting for him to come up.

The Kid rode on towards them without slackening rein, his eyes searching them keenly as he drew nearer.



With the air thick with flying bullets, it was touch-and-go whether the Kid could pull the stranger to the bank in time. He bent again at his lasso and strained desperately.

and rode back to the man he had saved. The gasping man lay on the ground, breathless, exhausted, almost unable to move, tangled in masses of vines through which the rope had dragged him.

The Kid loosed him from the rope and coiled it. The gasping Mexican stared up at him, struggling for breath.

"I guess that was a close call, hombre," said the Kid.

"Verdad!" panted the Mexican. "Nombre de Dios! You—you dragged me out with your lasso—"

"Sure!"

"Gracias, señor! Muchas gracias!" gasped the Mexican. He staggered to his feet, holding on to a branch.

Crack! crack! crack! The firing came fast from the other bank and there was a splashing of horses in the water.

The Rio Kid's face grew grim.

"I guess them guys is hunting trouble!" he said. A walnut-butted gun leaped into his hand. "Say, you want to hunt cover."

"They—follow me—"

The Kid grinned.

"I guess they won't hit this side of the

The Kid burst into a laugh.

From the Mexican bank came a furious crackling of rifles; but none of the soldados ventured into the river again. The Kid watched them for a few minutes longer; then he holstered his gun and walked back to the spot where he had left the fugitive.

Side-Kicker was standing there, waiting for his master. But there was no sign of the young Mexican.

The Kid stared round.

"Say, hombre!" he called. "Say, where you got to?"

There was no reply to his call. Through the tangled undergrowth there was a trail, where the Mexican had gone. The Kid glanced at it and called again, and stared. But there came no answer.

"Well, dog-gone my cats!" ejaculated the Kid.

He shrugged his shoulders, swung himself into the saddle, and rode away—taking a circuitous route through the thickets to keep out of sight of the river. On the farther bank the Mexican soldados were still firing; and the sound echoed in the Kid's ears as he rode through the chaparral, dying away in the distance, at last, as he left the brush behind him, and came out on the open trail to the cow-town of Red Dog.

There were four men in the party. Two of them, the Kid saw at a glance, were cowpunchers, in chaps and Stetsons. One was a slim fellow in "store" clothes, who backed a handsome pinto horse; and on his looks the Kid set him down as a gunman. The fourth was a burly man with a bushy flaxen beard, and the star on his coat told the Kid that he was a man in authority. And the Kid's mood was a little grim as he rode up to the party.

In that remote cow-country, far from the places where he was known, he had figured that the Rio Kid might ride unrecognized. But as he saw the party halt and wait for him, and figured that one of them was the town marshal, he wondered whether he had taken too much for granted. Whether they guessed that he was the outlaw of the Rio Grande or not, it was clear that they were interested in him.

With a doubting mind, but a cool and composed face, the Kid rode on, till he came up with the bunch; and the burly-bearded man rapped out "halt!"

The Kid drew rein at once.

"Halt it is, hombres," he answered agreeably.

"Put up your hands!" rapped out

the slim man in store clothes, and he made a gesture towards the gun in his belt.

The Kid looked at him coolly. "Say, who are you, when you're at home?" he drawled.

"I guess you'll find out fast enough, if you don't paw the air pronto," snapped the gunman.

"Aw, cut it out, Euchre Dick!" interrupted the big, bearded man. "I guess there ain't nothing to pull guns for."

"Got it in once, marshal," said the Kid amiably. "If there's trouble lying around, I'm the guy to ride ten miles round it and leave it alone. But if you want me to put up my hands, marshal, it goes! I was carefully raised to respect the law, and you only got to say the word."

The marshal of Red Dog grinned. "I guess I told you to put up your hands, hombre!" said the gunman.

"I guess you can tell me again, and then again, and keep on till you get a crick in your craw, and still I shan't take a whole lot of notice," drawled the Kid. "If the marshal says jump, I'm the man to jump; but I ain't jumping for any other galoot in this county."

The two cowpunchers chuckled and the marshal laughed. The gunman scowled, and dropped his hand to the butt of a Colt.

Before he could draw it, the Kid's six-gun was looking at him.

"Don't!" said the Kid quietly. Euchre Dick sat his horse, his hand on his gun, staring at the Kid. He did not draw the gun.

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated one of the punchers. "I guess that guy has sure learned to pull a gun quick."

The marshal pushed his horse between the Kid and the gunman.

"Put up your gun, puncher," he said, "and you keep your shooter where it is, Euchre Dick! We came out to look for rustlers, not to shoot up a kid puncher."

Euchre Dick muttered under his breath and released the butt of his Colt. The Kid's gun disappeared at once.

"I sure ain't hunting for trouble, bombres," he said amiably. "But I ain't a guy to be bulldozed and crowded. Say, marshal, if you're looking for rustlers, you want to look further. I ain't never rustled anything in my life except a prize at a beauty show."

"I guess you're a stranger here," said the marshal of Red Dog, "and there's cows missing from the Bar-T. But I reckon you're a white man, on your looks."

"Marshal," said the Kid, "they knowed you was a man of good judgment when they elected you. I sure never struck a town with such a first-rate marshal."

"Aw, can it!" said the marshal of Red Dog. "I guess I'm asking you a few questions, you being a stranger here. What you called?"

"If you call me Santa Fe Smith you won't be more than a day's ride from the truth!" answered the Kid.

"You from Santa Fe in New Mexico?" "It ain't a whole life-time since I was in New Mexico," answered the Kid. "And Smith is a good name anywhere, I reckon."

"The hot place is full of such Smiths," growled Euchre Dick. "You allow you're a puncher?"

"Jest that!" agreed the Kid. "You're mighty sudden on the draw for a puncher. I guess if you said gunman you'd be nearer the mark."

"Feller, I wouldn't be found dead in the same graveyard with a gunman," answered the Kid. "But I guess you know more about gunman than I do. You didn't buy them store clothes out of punching cows."

Euchre Dick's hand made an involuntary movement towards his holster again. The Kid's eye was on him. But the marshal interposed again.

"I keep on telling you to can it, Euchre Dick," he said sharply. "You're a member of my posse now, you want to remember."

"Jest as you like, marshal," grunted Euchre Dick. "I guess I'll take some

of the gall out of that fresh galoot another time."

"Any old time will suit me, if you're honing for trouble, feller," answered the Kid politely. "You satisfied yet, marshal? I'm sure enjoying this meeting; but I've rode a long trail, and I allow I'm thinking of bacon and beans."

"What you want in Red Dog?"

"Punching cows," answered the Kid cheerfully. "I been told thers's room for a really good man who knows the business from A to izzard! And that's me, marshal."

"Looking for a job?"

"You've said it."

"Hitting for Red Dog?"

"Yep!"

"Then what you doing riding the trail to the haunted ranch?" interjected Euchre Dick.

The Kid raised his eyebrows.

"I guess I never heard of any haunted ranch," he replied. "And I sure figured that this was the trail to Red Dog."

The gunman eyed him keenly and suspiciously.

"You missed the straight trail a mile back if you're going to Red Dog," said the marshal. "This here trail will take you there, but you'll have to go round by the haunted ranch. Say, boys, this here puncher is O.K. You can get on, Mister Santa Fe Smith, from New Mexico."

The horsemen drew back out of the Kid's path. The Kid lifted his Stetson politely and rode on.

The marshal and his men rode in the opposite direction. It was with relief that the Kid saw the last of them.

He rode on at a rapid trot. Evidently, from what the galoots had said, he had missed the direct trail to Red Dog, and was taking a more roundabout course than he need have taken. The trail was marked only by hoof, and in places a keen eye was needed to pick it out from the surrounding prairie. But now that the cow-town was in sight across the rolling plains, the Kid could have struck for it across country. But the mention of the "haunted ranch" had rather interested the Kid. He kept on by the trail, to pass the ranch and take a look-see as he passed.

A quarter of an hour after leaving the marshal's posse behind, the Kid came in sight of a building, and slackened rein.

It was an old timber ranch-house, and looked as if it had been standing from the earliest days of settlement in Texas.

That it was deserted the Kid could see at a glance.

Fences were broken; the gate hung by a single rusty hinge. The bunk-house was a heap of fallen timber overgrown with vines and creepers.

But the rancho itself, strongly built of timber, still stood, though it had a neglected and forlorn look.

The Kid halted, and sat in the saddle staring curiously at the silent, forlorn-looking rancho. What had once been a garden was wildly overgrown with weeds and creeping plants. A belt of trees surrounded the house, hiding it from view from the prairie on all sides. Shutters were fastened on the windows, and the door was closed. There were a good many hoof-marks to be seen, as if the cattle from the surrounding ranges wandered at will in the unkempt grounds.

"So that's the haunted ranch, old hoss!" said the Kid. "I guess it looks as if it might be; but I sure don't go a whole lot on ghosts."

He swung his horse away and gave Side-Kicker a flick of the quirt. The haunted ranch vanished behind him as he rode on at a gallop to Red Dog.

Gun Play At Red Dog!

"RECKON you might have a chance at the Bar-T, feller!" said Hooky Jones, the landlord of the lumber hotel at Red Dog. "I guess they might have room for a good man. You want to ride over in the mornin', and see the foreman."

"I reckon I'll do jest that!" agreed the Kid.

The Kid was feeling good. He had finished a good supper and was chatting with the landlord. It was the Kid's game to let Red Dog know that he was just a puncher—merely that and nothing more. He was ready to sign on in any outfit that suited him, and he asked nothing better than to be left alone to punch cows. But he could afford to wait till he found an outfit that suited him; the Kid had a fat roll tucked away and he could afford to take his time.

"I guess I passed a rancho on the trail here, Mr. Jones," he remarked. "Your marshal, who I met up with on the trail, allowed that it was haunted. I reckon you know the shebang?"

Hooky Jones nodded.

"That's Fernandez's old place," he said, "and it's sure haunted, feller. Old Fernandez was shot up there, years ago; but he sure walks, and I'll say a lot of guys have seen him. There ain't a galoot in Red Dog would bed down in that rancho for love or money."

The Kid grinned.

"Yep, you can snicker," said Mr. Jones, "but I'm giving you the straight goods. There's been guys who went up to Fernandez's old ranch to look for the ghost, but they was powerful glad not to go a second time."

"You seen the spook?" asked the Kid.

"I ain't been looking for it," answered Hooky, "but Texas Dave here has seen it."

The Kid glanced round. He recognized one of the cowpunchers who had been with the marshal on the trail.

"Sure thing!" said Texas Dave with a nod. "That shebang is sure haunted, Mister Smith, and I seen the ghost. And I got a gun here if there's any galoot allows I ain't seen it."

"Feller," said the Kid, "I allow you've seen all the ghosts this side of Jordan. Leave that gun where it is."

"Sure!" said Texas Dave, with a grin. "But I guess you had been shifting a lot of tanglefoot before you saw the ghost, feller?" added the Kid.

"Maybe I'd had one or two," admitted the puncher. "But if you allow that I was too full to know a ghost when I saw one, I got a gun here—"

"Leave it there!" urged the Kid. "If there's one ghost around already, hombre, you don't want to make another."

Texas Dave chuckled.

"You said it," he agreed. "But Euchre Dick has seen that pesky ghost too. He had a bet he would sleep a night in the haunted ranch—and you bet a hull crowd saw him start, and watched him go into the shebang. Afore morning Euchre Dick was hitting the high spots as fast as his cayuse could shift its laigs. I'll tell a man! And Euchre Dick shot up a man what allowed he had been skereed by a shadow."

Euchre Dick, lounging by the bar at a little distance, had his eyes on the Rio Kid. The Kid's eyes were on the gunman though he appeared to be taking no heed of him.

The Kid had a hunch that he was scheduled for trouble with the gunman of Red Dog.

The Kid wanted trouble with no man in Red Dog, but he was ready for it if it came. And as the gunman heard his name mentioned, he detached himself from the bar, and came across to the group.

"I guess Dave is giving you the straight goods, puncher," said the gunman, his cold, keen eyes on the Kid. "I sure shot up a man who allowed I hadn't seen the ghost at Fernandez's joint."

"Me, I allow you've seen all the ghosts you want!" answered the Kid amiably. "I guess I ain't got no kick coming if you allow you've seen a whole herd of them, thicker'n fleas in a Mexican dog."

The gunman made a step towards him.

"I guess you're mighty fresh, Mister Sante Fe Smith, for a kid puncher from nobody knows where," he said, in a low, clear voice that had a ring of menace in it, "and I guess I ain't satisfied that

you don't know a whole lot about them cows that's been run off the Bar-T."

The gunman's eyes were glittering. There were a score or more of punchers looking on, and as if moved by the same spring, every man stepped back to leave a clear lane for bullets. The Rio Kid and the gunman were left facing one another with plenty of room.

The Kid was smiling pleasantly. But he was watching the gunman like a cat. He was ready to draw at the first sign of the Red Dog bully touching a gun.

"You allow I know suthin' about cows rustled off the Bar-T," went on the Kid.

"Sure!" snapped the gunman. "You're surely making a mistake!" said the Kid, in the same pleasant tone, "I've sure never rustled a cow in my life, though I guess I'd jest as soon be a rustler as a dog-goned, pesky, sneaking gunman."

What followed was like lightning. The gunman's hand flashed to the butt of a Colt.

A second more and the six-gun would have been up, streaming bullets at the kid puncher.

But swift as the Red Dog gunman was, the Rio Kid was swifter.

His hand dropped to a Colt, and he fired with the gun at his hip, without troubling to lift it.

Bang!

The Colt roared with a deafening report in the silence of the hushed room. There was a fearful cry from Euchre Dick, as he staggered back. His gun went crashing to the floor, a spatter of crimson drops going with it. The Colt had been shot from his hand as he drew it, and the gunman's hand was sliced by the bullet.

There was a breathless buzz. Red Dog had seen swift shooting before, but nothing so swift as this. Euchre Dick staggered, the blood flowing from his wounded hand, his face white as chalk, his eyes burning. With his left hand he made a clutch at his second gun.

The Kid made a stride forward. His smoking Colt looked the gunman in the face.

"Drop it!" he said tersely.

For a second Euchre hesitated. Then the gun clanged on the floor. He stood panting, all eyes on him.

The Kid made a gesture towards the door with his gun.

"Git!" he said. And slowly, driven by the levelled gun and the eyes that gleamed over it, the bully of Red Dog turned, tramped to the door, and disappeared into the street.

The Rio Kid came out of the timber hotel at Red Dog in the bright morning, with a cheery face.

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IN ADVANCE!

The hot sunshine of Texas streamed down on the cow-town. The Kid walked round to the stable for his mustang. The big cowman who was saddling a broncho in the yard gave him a nod and a grin.

"Mornin', Mister Smith!" said Texas Dave.

"Mornin', old-timer," answered the Kid. "Hitting the trail?"

"Sure! I got to get back to the Bar-T."

"I guess I'll ride along—if you'd like my company, feller," said the Kid.

"If I didn't I guess I wouldn't be shoutin' it out, seein' the way you handle a gun!" chuckled Texas Dave. "What you want at the Bar-T?"

"Looking for a place on the pay-roll," explained the Kid, "I guess I've come to this country to punch cows. Hooky Jones allows that your foreman may want a new man."

"Mebbe," assented Texas Dave. "Anyhow, it won't do no harm to ride in and see Black Alec, the foreman."

The Kid nodded, and in a moment had saddled his mount. He was ready when Texas was.

They rode round the timber hotel together, and clattered away down the dusty street, and out into the trail across the prairie.

"I guess I've ridden this trail before," the Kid remarked. "This here is the way I rode into town yesterday; it's the trail to the haunted ranch."

"You said it!" assented Texas Dave. "I guess we pass in sight of Fernandez's old rancho. You seen it?"

"I jest stopped for a look-see when I rode in yesterday," answered the Kid. "I didn't see any dog-goned ghost, feller."

He pulled in his mustang as they topped a ridge, and looked down on the deserted rancho. It lay in a hollow of the prairie, surrounded by trees and thickets. But Texas Dave did not stop. He was the length of a dozen riatas from the rancho, but evidently the Bar-T cowman did not like the vicinity. He rode on at a gallop, leaving the Kid behind.

The Kid looked down on the rancho for some minutes. It lay silent, deserted, desolate.

Suddenly he gave a start, and leaned forward in his saddle, his heart beating quicker. Was that a flickering light he saw in one of the rooms of the haunted ranch?

(The Rio Kid's on the trail of a mighty deep mystery. Read all about his adventures at the Haunted Ranch next week.)

CHARLEY THE CHUMP!

(Continued from page 3.)

more. He had heard enough. Pugnose Maginnis was selling the fight!

In the circumstances there was only one thing to be done, and in a few minutes Horace was laying all the facts before Sam Ponson. The latter nodded sadly.

"I heard rumours about it, Horace," he said. "This confirms it."

At that moment Pugnose Maginnis entered the dressing-room. The boxer sneered at Horace and was taking off his clothes when his manager addressed him.

"Listen, Pug," said Mr. Ponson. "I want to ask you a question. Are you or are you not selling this fight?"

Pugnose looked at his manager sharply. Then he grinned.

"Maybe I am!"

"But you can't do that, Pug!" protested Mr. Ponson. "Don't you want to be champ?"

"Aw, shut up!" snarled Pugnose Maginnis. "I can get a shot at Lefty Flanagan any time. And what are you squawking about? You get your percentage, don't you?"

"But my bets!"

"I ain't got nothing to do with your bets."

"By heck, Pug, I'll report you for this."

Pugnose grinned evilly.

"You go ahead and report, Sam. But maybe you better get some proof first!"

Mr. Ponson sank into a chair. Pugnose had him beaten there.

Just then a knock sounded on the door of the dressing-room and in response to the call a police sergeant entered.

"Mr. Binks here?"

"That's me," said Horace. "What's wrong?"

"Fellow by the name of Charley Jubb says you know him. We've got him down at the station charged with assault. Friend of yours?"

"That's right," gasped Horace. "But surely there's a mistake, sergeant. Charley wouldn't hurt a fly!"

"Maybe not. But this wasn't no fly he hit. The fellow's in hospital."

"Here, Horace," put in Sam Ponson, pulling out his pocket-book. "Here are twenty pounds. Better go down to the station and see if you can bail him out."

The great Binks hurried along with the sergeant but he had some difficulty getting Charley out. Several witnesses, however, had come forward to swear that Charley had acted in self-defence. After some persuasion Horace got his pal out of gaol on twenty pounds bail.

They took a taxi back to the boxing hall but so much time had been wasted at the police station that when they arrived the crowd was leaving the hall.

In the dressing-room they found Sam Ponson waiting for them. Pugnose Maginnis had already gone. The boxing manager seemed happy about something.

"How did the fight go?" gasped Horace.

"We won, boys!" cried Mr. Ponson. "Then Maginnis didn't sell the fight?"

"He didn't get the chance. There was no fight!"

"No fight!"

Mr. Ponson nodded.

"Lefty Flanagan didn't turn up. So according to the agreement the contest was awarded to Pugnose Maginnis, though Lefty retains the championship!"

At the news that Lefty Flanagan hadn't shown up at the fight an idea struck the great Binks. He turned to his pal.

"What like was this fellow you assaulted Charley?"

Charley was staring at a photograph on the wall of the room. It was a photograph of a man in a boxing attitude.

"Why, Mister Horace, sir, that's the fellow there!"

"I thought so," said the great Binks. "Charley, my lad, that was the finest bit of work you ever did in your life. That was Lefty Flanagan you knocked out!"

"I dunno me own strength," said Charley modestly.

"By heck!" broke in Mr. Ponson. "Then I certainly owe you chaps something. You can keep that bail money!"

The great Binks did a war dance.

"Twenty pounds!" he gasped.

"Charley, old scout, our fortunes are made!"

But Horace was mistaken. Charley had no difficulty in proving that he had fought in self-defence and the case against him was dismissed. Unfortunately, they engaged a lawyer just to be on the safe side. The lawyer's fees and expenses came to twenty pounds!

So once more the two partners found themselves back on the rocks. But the great Binks hadn't used up all his ideas yet.

THE END.

(The fortune-hunters try their luck again next week. How do they get on? Gee! You'll laugh when you read all about it.)

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A THRILL-A-SECOND IN OUR
WILD WEST SERIAL STORY!

The OUTLAW KID!

*It takes more than a bullet-proof
Ghost to scare the Rio Kid!*

won't be able to handle a gun agin for a month of Sundays, and I'm telling you, it was this kid shot him up. Is Black Alec around?"

"In the bunk-house."

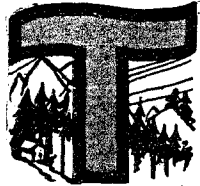
A man came out of the bunk-house as the horse-wrangler was speaking. The Kid had dismounted now and he glanced at the foreman of the Bar-T and lifted his Stetson politely.

"You Mr. Black?" he asked.

"Yep! What you want?" The foreman of the Bar-T eyed the Kid sharply. He was a powerfully-built man, with a dark, tanned face and black hair, and moustache, hard features and grim, hard eyes.

"I reckon you might be wanting a good man to punch cows on this here ranch,"

The Foreman of the Bar-T!



HERE was a scornful smile on the face of the Rio Kid as he leaned in the saddle and gazed at the ruins of the Mexican rancho.

"Haunted! Hum!"

The Kid, outlawed for a crime he had never committed had met trouble in the shape of over zealous sheriffs and evil gunmen, but he had yet to meet a real live ghost.

He had heard of the legend of the haunted ranch from Texas Dave, a sturdy puncher who had taken a liking to him and was now escorting the Kid to the Bar-T ranch where there was a likelihood of the Kid puncher securing a job.

Texas Dave had spurred on when the ruins of the haunted ranch hove in sight. The Kid had lingered for but a few brief moments to give it the once over and then he followed Dave.

"Say, who does this land belong to?" he asked, when he joined the puncher.

"It belongs to some Fernandez," answered Texas. "But he ain't never seen here—he or she. Some guys allows old Fernandez had a daughter, and if he had, I guess the ranch is hern. If it wasn't haunted, I'll say it would have been jumped long ago. But nobody in the Red Dog country ain't honing to cinch that rancho."

The Kid was thoughtful as he rode on. He had a hunch that he would like to horn into the haunted ranch, and see the ghost for himself. But that would keep. Just at present, the Kid was anxious to get on the pay-roll of a cattle outfit: partly because he was a puncher from the toes up, and liked his old work; partly because as a member of a bunch

he would be less likely to be suspected of being anything else.

Only a few miles from the haunted ranch the Bar-T came in sight. Several horsemen passed them on the prairie and nodded to Texas Dave, and glanced curiously at the Kid. They rode in at a wide-open gateway, and Texas threw himself off his horse outside the bunk-house.

"Say, Ginger!" he called out; and a red-headed horse-wrangler looked round from the corral gate.

"Hallo, you back?" said Ginger.

"Anything going on in Red Dog?"

"Euchre Dick's been shot up."

"Great gophers!" ejaculated Ginger.

"Who was it—a rustler? I heard that Euchre was riding in the marshal's posse after rustlers."

"Nope! Nary rustler," grinned Texas.

"We ain't seen nothing of the rustlers. It was this here kid puncher."

"Can it!" answered the horse-wrangler.

"It's the goods!" said Texas. "Euchre

said the Kid, pleasantly. "Hooky Jones allowed you might. I guess I'm a handy man with a rope, or a cayuse, and with a gun if it comes to that—and I've heard you've got rustlers around."

"I guess you wouldn't cut a lot of ice with the rustlers," grunted Black Alec. "Wait till you grow up."

"Say, this here kid shot up Euchre Dick last night in Red Dog!" said Texas Dave. "I'll say he can handle a gun."

The foreman started.

"What you giving me?" he snapped.

"There ain't a guy in Red Dog dare pull a gun on Euchre Dick!"

"It's the goods," persisted Texas Dave. "I tell you, I seen him, and Euchre's laid up for repairs now, with his fin in a sling, and cursin' the air blue. They can hear him for a mile round Red Dog. I'll tell a man!"

The foreman looked at the Kid with a new interest. But there was no liking in his look at the handsome, sunburnt face.

"I guess I'll be useful sir," said the Kid, cheerily. "Texas here allows that the boys don't like riding the haunted ranch range. I reckon ghosts don't worry me a whole lot, and I'll sure ride that range as soon as any other."

"You blow off your mouth a lot, for a kid!" grunted the foreman. "What's your name?"

"Santa Fe Smith."

"Waal, I guess you can take the home-trail to Santa Fe. And stay there," added Black Alec.

The Kid laughed cheerfully.

"If you don't want me in this bunch, Mr. Black, I guess I'll scare up another, long ways this side of Santa Fe," he answered. "But I'll say I'd be a useful man. I hear you've got rustlers around the Bar-T, and I'm telling you I'm death on rustlers. I'd jest hone to get after a cow-thief with a gat in my grip."

The foreman eyed him grimly.

"I guess if you spotted a rustler you'd hit the high spots so sudden a guy wouldn't see your cayuse for dust!" he grunted.

"Aw, can it!" snapped the Kid. "If you don't want me in your outfit, I'll ride. And jest to show you you're talking foolish, Mister Black, I'll take a look-see round for them rustlers. Say, if I tote a rustler in at the end of a gun, is it a cinch for a place in the outfit?"

Black knitted his brows.

"Say, that's a good offer," grinned Texas. "The boss would be powerful pleased if them rustlers was rounded up, sir."

"You figure you could trail out them rustlers, Mister Santa Fe Smith?" grunted the foreman.

"I guess I'll try," said the Kid.

"Aw, I reckon I'll give you a job to save your life then," said Black Alec. "I don't want you shot up on the Bar-T ranges. I'll sign you on for a week on trial."

"That goes," said the Kid. "I'll sure try to satisfy you, Mr. Black. You'll find me a good man with a cayuse and a rope and with cows."

"I guess I've found you a good man at chewing the rag already," said the foreman, "I'll give you a trial, like I said, and I guess I'll make you play up to your chin-wag. You'll take on the Fernandez range."

"Sure!"

"You'll camp out in the old Fernandez rancho," added the foreman with a grim look at the Kid.

"Suits me," said the Kid coolly.

Black Alec gave a grunt and walked on. The Kid glanced after him with a smile. He did not like the foreman of the Bar-T, and he had seen that the foreman did not like him.

But that didn't worry the Kid any. He was still smiling when he turned his mustang into the corral and joined the Bar-T men at dinner in the bunk-house.

In the Haunted Rancho!

THREE punchers rode with the Kid when he started from the Bar-T that afternoon, to take over the range assigned to him by the foreman.

After a short ride the quartette pulled rein on the slope above the Fernandez rancho.

"This is where I leave you," said the Kid cheerily. "So long!"

And with a wave of the hand to the Bar-T men, he rode down the slope to the deserted rancho.

Texas Dave and his two companions remained sitting their horses on the rise, watching him. They doubted even

now whether the Kid would venture to carry out the foreman's orders.

But the boy puncher rode direct to the rancho, and they saw him dismount outside the door, and throw his reins over a post.

They saw him standing at the door for a few moments, then the door was open and the Kid had passed into the building.



With a sudden and desperate wrench, the Rio Kid swung the table off the ground and crashed it at the oncoming ruffian.

and it burned with a red and cheery glow.

The Kid watched the glow with sleepy eyes—eyes that soon closed.

He slept.

What it was that awakened him, at last, the Kid did not know. But he woke suddenly, with all his senses on the alert.

He did not stir from his bed. He lay with his eyes

open watching the dusky shadows round him.

The fire had burned low in the rusty old stove; there was only a faint red glow from the dying embers.

What had awakened him?

Silently, he stretched out his hand to his gun-belt and grasped a walnut butt, and drew the Colt from the holster.

At the open doorway of the room, fifteen feet or so from the Kid, there was a glimmer that was not the glimmer of the fire. It was a glimmer of strange light, a phosphorescent glow, a pale, unearthly light. The Kid sat up in his blankets, his heart beating a little taster.

Dimly, but unmistakably, he could make out a figure in the doorway. It was the figure of a man—an old man with white hair and beard, glowing with faint strange light.

The Kid caught his breath.

Hooky Jones, the landlord of the timber hotel in Red Dog, had given him a description of the ghost of the haunted rancho. And this was the description. It was the ghost of old Fernandez that the Kid was staring at, or else a trickster in his guise.

"Carry me home to die!" murmured the Kid.

He lifted the revolver and aimed at the figure in the doorway.

"Say, you!" said the Kid, and his voice was clear and cool. "Say, you

The three punchers watched in silence. "I guess I hate leavin' him there," growled Texas Dave. "But there ain't no good talkin' to a locoed gink! Let's beat it."

And the punchers rode back to the Bar-T, glad to leave the haunted rancho in the thickening shadows behind them.

Meanwhile the Rio Kid in the living-room of the rancho, unpacked his belongings and settled down to prepare his supper. If danger lurked in the shadows of the haunted building the outlaw Kid did not show any sign of fear—rather he was looking forward to an encounter with the "ghost."

It did not take the Kid long to prepare and eat his meal, and as soon as he had finished he settled down to sleep, knowing he had much to do in the morning.

His slicker served him as a pillow; the butts of his guns were close to his reach in case he wanted them. His rifle he laid down beside him. He blew out the candles and turned into his blankets.

He had stacked the stove with wood,

"gink, you figure that you can scare me any? Not in your life-time! Put up your hands, you pesky scallywag, or I'll sure drive a bullet through you."

There was no answer from the phantom figure, no movement. It stood in the pale phosphorescent glow, motionless.

The Kid set his lips.

Bang!

The roar of the Colt filled the silent rancho with a noise like thunder.

Bang!

A second shot followed the first before it had died away.

Then the gun sagged in the hand of the Kid.

He had fired twice, point-blank, at the figure in the doorway with a hand that never missed. The worst shot could not have missed at such a range; and the Rio Kid was the best shot in Texas.

Struck Down!

THE Rio Kid sat very still.

Seldom had anything like fear touched the stout heart of the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande. But now something like a chill was creeping through him, and he felt the perspiration wet on his brow.

Slowly, silently, the phantom figure glided from his sight, evidently unharmed by the shot. It passed from the Kid's view, and the doorway remained black and empty.

A shudder ran through the boy outlaw.

The ghostly figure was gone; he was alone again—alone in darkness.

His teeth shut hard together.

With the revolver gripped in his hand he stepped to the doorway and looked out of the room.

The phantom figure had utterly vanished. "Carry me home to die!" muttered the Kid.

He was hopelessly beaten and puzzled. If it was a trickster who had played ghost to scare all comers away from the rancho for some reason unknown, the trickster must have been bullet-proof.

The Kid lighted the candles, and there was a glimmer in the room.

He listened, but there was no sound save the faint sigh of the wind, and a slight noise from Side-Kicker, his horse, stirring uneasily. He took a candle in his hand and looked out into the hallway.

"Thunder!" ejaculated the Kid suddenly. From somewhere in the darkness came the sound of a low groan.

He started and put down the candle, and stood with his eyes on the open doorway trying to think it out. Suddenly a glitter shot into his eyes.

"Dog-gone my cats!" he muttered. "You pesky gink, you sure are the world's prize boob!"

His bullets, to all seeming, had passed through the ghostly figure without harming it. But behind the ghostly figure in the doorway had been the wall of the room on the other side of the hallway; and the Kid realised that he had heard no sound of the bullets crashing through the wooden wall.

Then he knew!

His eyes glistened as he examined the cartridges remaining in his gun. The bullets had been removed from them.

He knew now what had happened. While he slept, his firearms had been tampered with, and the bullets removed from the cartridges, the guns being left in their place. They were blank cartridges that he had fired at the phantom figure in the doorway. The Kid's face set grimly. Someone, in the darkness, had been in the room while he slept; that was certain now. If it had been an enemy, he had been at that enemy's mercy. But the unknown had figured on scaring him away; and the Kid grinned rather sourly as he realised how near the unknown had come to getting away with it.

But if the Rio Kid had wanted any proof that the ghost of the rancho was human, he had it now. Phantom fingers had not played that cunning trick with his cartridges.

He picked up his cartridge-belt, re-

loaded the Colts, and buckled on his gun-belt. There was a loaded revolver in his right hand, the candle in his left, as he stepped out of the room into the hallway.

One room after another he entered, staring about him by the light of the flickering candle. But the old rancho was silent, untenanted.

He went through the kitchen at last, and looked from the open doorway at the back. A gust of wind blew out the candle in his hand.

Or was it a gust of wind? The Kid felt a sudden thrill of his nerves, and he spun round. There was a sound—

Bang! Bang!

The Kid fired twice into the darkness, at random. He could see nothing but he knew that someone was at hand. He heard the crash of the bullets on the wooden walls of the kitchen.

Then from the darkness came a sudden crashing blow, and the Rio Kid reeled.

As he reeled, a thousand lights dancing before his eyes, he heard a muttered exclamation—in Spanish.

Then the Kid went with a thump to the earthen floor, and darkness rushed on him and he knew no more.

Missing!

TEXAS DAVE came out of the bunkhouse at the Bar-T ranch, his brows corrugated under the brim of his Stetson hat.

The burly Bar-T puncher had a worried look. He was gazing in the direction of the haunted ranch—far away out of sight across the rolling plain. He had stood there for several minutes, when the sharp voice of Alexander Black, the Bar-T foreman, barked at him.

"You, Texas, what's got you? Gone to sleep standing up like a cayuse?"

Texas Dave looked round.

"Nops! I jest thinking of that kid puncher, Mister Black, what you put on the Fernandez range yesterday. I'll say I ain't easy in my mind about that guy."

The Bar-T foreman laughed gruffly.

"You got to ride over to Red Dog for the mail this morning," he said. "You can sure look in at the rancho for him, if you want. Get your cayuse and ride, you gink."

Texas Dave went to the corral and picked out his broncho, saddled up and rode away.

Texas had taken a liking to the boy puncher, Santa Fe Smith, who had joined the Bar-T outfit; little dreaming, like the rest of the bunch, that the young puncher was the Rio Kid, the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande. Texas, like every other puncher in the section, believed that the old rancho was haunted; indeed, he had seen the ghost of old Fernandez with his own eyes. He was concerned about the Kid, but he was very reluctant to take advantage of the foreman's permission to call in at the rancho and see for himself whether anything had happened in the night. He rode away from the Bar-T at a gallop. The trail to the cow town passed within sight of the old, deserted rancho; and when he came in view of it, lying in the hollow surrounded by trees, Texas slackened speed.

A deep silence brooded over the place. Only the clatter of the broncho's hoofs broke the silence as he rode down to the house. He halted at a little distance, and shouted:

"Say! You O.K., Santa Fe?"

There was no answer from the rancho, and again Texas hesitated for long minutes. But he made another effort, slipped from the saddle, hitched his horse and stepped towards the building. He had a six-gun in his grasp as he pushed open the crazy door.

"Say, Santa Fe, you hyer?" he called out, and there was a tremor in his voice.

Only the echo answered.

Texas Dave tramped in, and looked through the hallway and into the rooms on either side.

In the old living-room of the rancho he knew that the Kid had camped for the night, and there were many signs of someone having camped there. The embers in the old rusty stove were still

warm, a bucket half full of fresh water stood near it, and in a corner of the dusty floor he could see where blankets had lain. But none of the Kid's fixings were there now, and there was no sign of the Kid himself.

He tramped through into the lean-to kitchen at the back of the rancho. His heart was beating unpleasantly. The kitchen was silent and vacant, and he threw open the creaking door and stepped to the shed at the back that was used as a stable. There the Kid had stabled his mustang, and Texas found plenty of sign of the horse but the horse was not there. "I guess he got scared and levanted!" muttered Texas.

But there was a doubt in his mind. He had a hunch that "Santa Fe Smith" was the galoot to argue the point, even with a spook. He was wondering whether the kid puncher had burned powder, and he looked for sign of bullets.

He was not long in finding them. In the kitchen wall he found two places where lead had splattered, and the sign was fresh enough.

"By the great horned toad!" he murmured. "He sure pulled trigger on the ghost—there's been shooting here!"

He stood silent, staring round him, the silence of the place chilling his blood. What had happened to the kid puncher? Evidently he had been disturbed in the night and had fired at least twice. At what?

Texas shivered.

Not at a human foe, he was sure of that. What human foe could there have been in the deserted, desolate rancho?

The big cowman gave a sudden start. From somewhere in the silence of the deserted rancho came a low moaning sound. It died away almost immediately but it left the cowman with his flesh creeping. Texas Dave's teeth were clicking as he tramped out of the house and hurried back to his horse. Without losing a moment he remounted and dashed away from the haunted rancho at a gallop.

He did not breathe freely till he had dropped the ranch far behind, and was galloping on the trail to Red Dog, with the cow town visible in the distance.

He rode into the town and hitched his horse outside the timber hotel.

In ten minutes all Red Dog knew what had happened to the boy puncher who had defied the Fernandez ghost. It was one more wild tale added to the history of the haunted ranch.

Euclre Dick's Vengeance!

EUCLRE DICK clambered, with difficulty, into the saddle of his pinto, and rode out of Red Dog under the sinking sun. The gunman's right arm was in a sling, his right hand bandaged. It was likely to be many long weeks before Euclre Dick was able to use that hand again. He knew that the boy puncher who had shot his gun from his hand could as easily have planted the lead in his heart, had he chosen so to do; but that knowledge did not make the gunman's feelings any the softer towards "Santa Fe Smith." But he had heard news that made him hurry into the saddle and leave Red Dog. The Rio Kid had been at the haunted rancho and had met trouble. That news made him smile as he rode away at a gallop. He gave his pinto the spur all the way to the haunted ranch.

The old rancho had its usual deserted and desolate aspect when he arrived there. Euclre dismounted and turned his pinto into the shed at the back of the building.

Then he stood for several minutes, looking about him in the thickening darkness. He stirred at last, and went into the old bunkhouse. It was a heap of ruins, overgrown with thorny bush and trailing vines. But the gunman evidently knew the secret of the place for he squeezed through a mass of tangled lianas and stepped into the dark opening of a tunnel. The next moment he stopped as a rifle muzzle touched his breast in the darkness.

(Continued on page 241.)

weapon would have snapped like a rotten twig under the strain he put upon it. "Heavo, big boy!" Tommy encouraged, and the next moment the boulder rolled over. Once moved, there was no stopping it.

Straight for the house and the natives it went. The blacks looked up in startled terror. Then they scattered, running wildly in all directions.

But the boulder didn't crash on the house. It crashed over a sharp ridge, bounded up in the air, and right over the house to the other side, to go bounding into the trees at the opposite edge of the clearing.

"Kimon, let's go!" the big black said, gripping his novel club tightly and bounding away down the slope.

They were among the natives before the wretches had got over the shock the boulder had given them. Tommy struck right and left with his clubbed rifle, and did good work, too. But Tombo was wonderful!

He was a roaring tornado of destruction.

In less than five minutes, all those who could run had done so, and the rest were either crawling to safety or groaning and holding their heads on the ground.

Then Tommy led the way into Van Duren's house.

"Golly, the blighters were goin' to make roasted potatoes, too—out of these blacks!" he gasped, when he had entered and found four wild-eyed, thoroughly-scared black servants bound inside.

Tommy quickly cut them loose; then, after searching around for signs of Van Duren, he questioned them about the whereabouts of their master. After a good deal of trouble he learned that the natives who had raided the place had taken their master away with them!

"That means," Tommy declared, turning to Tombo, who was lovingly balancing his propeller club between his hands, "he'll be crocodile meat, if we don't do something pretty quick!"

The Talking Croc.

BY the time Tombo and Tommy reached Sakala's village it was quite dark, but there was no darkness by the Pool of Sacrifice. There the whole scene was lit up by

numerous torches, and it was an exact replica of the scene that Tommy had been the chief actor in earlier in the day. Now, Van Duren, fat and frightened, was taking the main part.

Tommy thought a moment, and the lad could think pretty rapidly when necessary!

"Tombo, old butty," he suddenly remarked, "did I hear you say something about that there scarecrow ju-ju man having all sorts o' funny things in his hut? Come on, an' lead me to it! I want a look round!"

Cautiously they circled round, until they could enter the village from behind, and dodging around the huts, Tombo led the way to that belonging to Sakala. The big black first peered inside, then entered. Tommy quickly followed.

Tommy could see the place was covered with human bones and tufts of feathers.

"Suffering seedcake! This is worse than the Chamber of Horrors!" he murmured. "What's this? Why, if it isn't old Father Christmas' bonnet!"

Tommy picked up the grim thing. It was the young crocodile's head that Sakala had worn when Tommy was a prisoner.

"I've a great wheeze!" he said. "Sakala won't dream of getting on with the show without this I bet my boots he'll be comin' back for it any minute—and when he does, you knock him on the boko with that propeller. Get me?"

"Yuh, betcha!"

In the darkness Tombo grinned. He owed the witch-doctor one! Then he gave a hiss of warning, as a soft footfall was heard outside. Even as the chums crouched back into the gloom the curtain that was draped over the doorway parted, and Sakala stepped inside.

Then Tombo struck. Sock! With a muffled groan Sakala crumpled up in a heap. In another minute he was bound up.

"Quick, Tombo," the youngster hissed. "Get this bonnet on, and get outside! You'd better shrivel up some way or other, then they won't recognise you, and the first chance you get out Van Duren's ropes. Here's the knife!"

Tombo cottoned on to the idea splendidly, and presently, dressed up to look

like Sakala, he left the hut. His appearance at the pool was greeted by delirious yells from the natives, and a squeal of terror from Van Duren.

Flourishing his knife, Tombo strode straight up to the bound Dutchman, and with a few slashing strokes cut his bonds—or nearly. Van Duren only needed his legs cutting free, when, with a blood-curdling yell, the natives, suddenly realising that they were being balked of their prey by Sakala, as they thought, rushed.

A moment later they got a shock, as Tombo ripped off his hideous mask, and, standing up to his full height, hit out right and left, using the dried croc's head as a weapon. In two seconds two natives were grovelling in the dirt.

Then Van Duren's eyes nearly popped out of their sockets, as a long, slimy shape crawled along the bank of the pool towards him. A crocodile! He gave a squeal, and rolled over.

"Hold on, Dutchy, you stay put a bit—you're as safe as houses!"

Van Duren stopped and stared, his eyes wide with amazement.

Suddenly the natives saw the crocodile. "The Green One!" they yelled.

Panic-stricken, they turned and fled.

It was now the big black's turn to open his eyes wide at the sight of the croc. Then a chuckle boomed in his throat as Tommy Bird crawled from inside the crocodile skin.

"Hot-doggity, cowpoke, I'll hand it ter yuh—that was one cute trick!" Tombo rumbled.

"Those savages didn't see the trick!" Tommy grinned. "They thought it was a stuffed crocodile I found in Sakala's hut come to life. They won't stop running until they drop. Now we're going to Father Christmas' hut for Tombo's propeller-club, for one thing, and for old Sakala himself for another. We're going to take the old wretch on a long journey."

Tombo chuckled. "Yuh've sed it, kid."

(What d'you think of Tombo—some "big boy" what? He has a scrap with a mad bull next week.)

THE OUTLAW KID!

(Continued from page 230.)

"Euchre!" he muttered, and the muzzle was withdrawn.

"Follow me, senior!" came a voice from the blackness, and the gunman tramped on, downward, apparently into the depths of the earth. There was a sharp turn in the tunnel, and a glimmer of light came to his eyes. He passed through a narrow doorway into a room walled with pine planks. An oil lamp was burning there. It was the old dug-out under the Fernandez rancho—constructed in the old days when savage Redskins swarmed on the prairies of Texas, and long disused and forgotten till it was turned to a "hide-out" by the rustlers of the Rio Grande.

There were several men in the room, all of them Mexicans. They saluted the gunman as he strode in.

"You got the guy who camped here last night?" he demanded.

"Si!"

Euchre Dick's eyes glittered.

"They reckon in Red Dog that he got a scare from the ghost and lit out," he said.

"He was not so easy to scare," grinned one of the Mexicans. "But he's quiet now—here!"

"And what you figure on doing with him?"

"He will live if he will ride with us, senior! But he has refused, and if he does not change his mind—" The Mexican shrugged his shoulders again.

Euchre Dick laughed harshly.

"Forget it!" he snarled. "He ain't that sort, I'll tell a man! And I guess I wouldn't give him the chance if he was. I tell you he's my game."

There was a long pause. Then, slowly, the Mexican cow-thief nodded.

"I guess it's time you was riding," continued the gunman. "There's three hundred cows on the Fernandez range, and two Bar-T punchers riding the range. You want to get them across the border before dawn."

The Mexican cow-thief threw away his cigar.

"Pronto!" he said briefly, and strode towards the tunnel, by which the gunman had entered. The ruffians in the dug-out followed him.

Euchre Dick stood listening, with a bitter smile on his face, till the sounds of their departure died away.

Then he moved, at last, towards the door at the end of the long dug-out in which lay the Rio Kid.

The Upper Hand!

"SHUCKS!" murmured the Rio Kid.

The Rio Kid had regained consciousness to find himself imprisoned in what looked like an underground room. For some time he had waited impatiently to know whom his jailers were. Suddenly the sound of footsteps came outside.

Standing in the darkness, the boy puncher listened to them stop outside the pinewood door, and to the grating of the bolt as it was withdrawn. He knew who was coming for he had just overheard the words of the gunman.

The Kid's eyes gleamed in the darkness as the door was flung open.

Framed in the doorway, the glimmering light behind him, appeared the figure of the gunman, his right arm in a sling, a Colt in his left hand, half raised.

Euchre Dick peered into the room. Behind the pinewood table the Kid was

crouched. The room was dark, save for the glimmer at the doorway.

Euchre Dick stepped in through the doorway. His gun was up now, ready to shoot.

Another moment and the Kid would have been under the fire of the Colt. But in that moment the heavy pinewood table was lifted at the end with an upward swing, as if it had been as light as thistle-down, and flung towards the gunman.

Euchre Dick leaped back with a curse as the table crashed at him, barely escaping the crash. The curse was still on his lips when the Kid was on him with the spring of a cougar, and his left arm was grasped and forced upward.

Half stunned by the blow he struggled spasmodically, and a scream of pain left his lips as the Kid mercilessly twisted his wrist and forced the gun from his grasp.

The Kid's fingers closed on the butt of the Colt. His knee was on the gunman's chest.

Crash!

The heavy barrel of the Colt came thudding down on the gunman's head, and he lay stunned and senseless under the Kid.

"Shucks!" murmured the Kid.

He rose to his feet. He did not give the gunman a glance; he knew that Euchre Dick was safe now, and would not stir for hours. With the Colt gripped in his hand, he stepped to the doorway and moved into the darkness of the tunnel beyond.

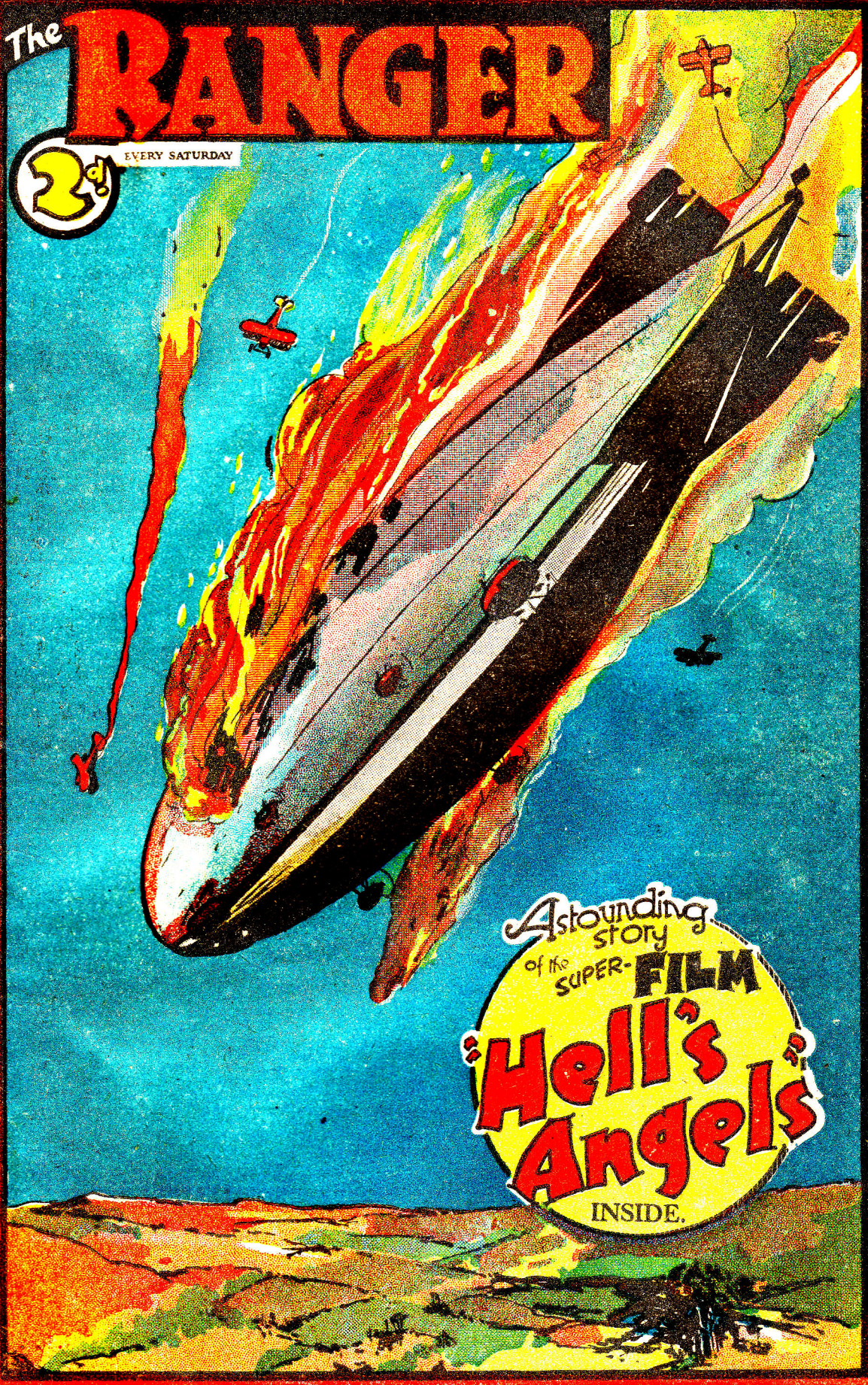
(There are rustlers on the warpath and the Rio Kid's got to get out of the haunted ranch and raise the alarm! Get next week's RANGER and read how the Outlaw Kid fares in his dangerous task!)

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SUPER-FILM
**"Hell's
Angels"**
INSIDE.

The OUTLAW KID!



**FURTHER
AMAZING ADVENTURES
IN OUR
ALL-THRILLING,
ROARING WILD
WEST STORY**

did not stop for it. The grey mustang rose to the leap, and the Rio Kid came over the high gate like a bird. The mustang's hoofs crashed to earth again, and the boy puncher drew in his mustang sharply, and Side-Kicker clattered to a halt, with steaming nostrils.

"Say, fellers!" panted the Kid, breathlessly.

Alex Black strode forward, with a grim brow.

"What's this game, you gink?" he demanded. "What you want at the Bar-T?"

The Kid stared at him. It was a couple of days since the Kid had signed on as a member of the Bar-T outfit, and much had happened to the Kid since then.

"I guess you know me, Mister Black," he said. "Santa Fe Smith, that signed on in this bunch. You ain't forgotten this baby, I reckon. You put me on the Fernandez range—"

"Sure! And the next morning you was gone," grunted the foreman. "Texas Dave searched for you and you was gone, and the herd left. I guessed you was scared by the ghosts of the haunted ranch and had lit out. And I'll say I reckoned that that was jest what would happen, too! And you've come back hyer now, you gol-darned gink! You can wheel your cayuse and ride. You ain't wanted on the Bar-T."

"I guess I'm going to put you wise, Mister Black," said the Kid, taking no heed of the foreman's unpleasant manner. "There's rustlers on the Fernandez range, and if you want to save the cows—"

"Aw, forget it!" snapped Black Alec. "The marshal of Red Dog is after the rustlers, and he's sure trailed them as far as the Mesquite sierra, and that's twenty miles from here. There's six men from the Bar-T riding with him. I guess there ain't any rustlers nearer than Mesquite."

Alexander Black, the foreman of the ranch, came out of his shack, close by the bunkhouse, and stood staring in the direction of the approaching hoof beats. The dark-browed, saturnine foreman of the Bar-T looked puzzled.

"Say, Mister Black, that guy sure is coming like he was sent for!" called out Ginger from the bunkhouse.

The foreman grunted.

"He's coming from the Red Dog trail," he said. "Mebbe it's Texas Dave or Panhandle from the Fernandez range. But they ain't no call to leave the herd on the range."

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Through the shadows the figure of a horseman loomed up, coming on for the ranch with his horse in a lather of foam.

The punchers, heedless of supper, poured out of the bunkhouse, to join Ginger and the foreman.

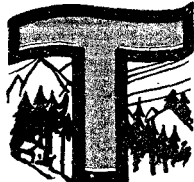
Ginger gave a sudden shout.

"Say, I savvy that guy! That's the kid puncher that joined the outfit two days ago, fellers—and camped in the haunted ranch—"

"By the great horned toad!" ejaculated Black Alec. "It sure is that kid puncher that calls himself Santa Fe Smith! I figured that he had hit the trail out of this section."

The Rio Kid was in full view now. The gate in the fence was closed, but the Kid

The Alarm!



THUD! Thud! Thud!

Darkness lay on the prairie round the Bar-T ranch. From the windows of the bunkhouse, yellow lights streamed out into the night. Half a dozen punchers, gathered to supper in the bunkhouse,

listened to the sound of thudding, galloping hoofs that were approaching the ranch.

Ginger, the horse-wrangler of the Bar-T, stepped towards the open doorway.

"I guess that guy's sure hitting the high spots!" he remarked.

Ginger stared out of the bunkhouse doorway into the soft, starlit Texas night. Whoever was riding towards the Bar-T in the dark shadows was riding hard.

"You want to guess again!" said the Kid. "There's a bunch of Mexicans driving the cows on the Fernandez range this minute."

"And what's Texas and Panhandle doing?"

"Getting on their way towards Jordan, I reckon," said the Kid. "I heard shooting on the prairie. Feller, I tell you the Mexican rustlers are driving the herd on that range, and they figure on getting them across the Rio Grande into Mexico before dawn."

There was a buzz from the Bar-T punchers. Several of them ran back into the bunkhouse for their gun-belts. But Black Alec stared grimly and unbelievably at the Kid.

"And how'd you know all about it?" he demanded.

The Rio Kid bit his lip impatiently. There was no time for talk; and he had burned the wind to reach the ranch and give the alarm. But the foreman of the Bar-T had to be satisfied.

"I'll tell you, sir!" he snapped. "I camped in the haunted rancho, according to orders, and I sure saw the ghost; and I guessed I'd have cinched that ghost, too, only a galoot gave me a crack on the cabeza with the butt of a Colt in the dark. I've been a prisoner in an old dug-out under the rancho—"

"I ain't never heard of any dug-out under the Fernandez rancho."

"Carry me home to die!" exclaimed the Kid. "If you'd heard of it, I guess it wouldn't have been any use to a gang of rustlers for a hide-out. They got that dug-out hidden deep. I tell you, there's a bunch of Mexicans—and I saw them in the dug-out and heard their talk, me a prisoner—"

"And they let you come away to give us the word?" sneered Black Alec.

The Kid breathed hard.

"You sure do get a guy's goat, Mister Black," he said. "I was shut up in a room in the dug-out, and Euchre Dick, the gunman of Red Dog, came along—he's in cahoots with the rustlers. They was keeping me a prisoner, but Euchre figured on rubbing me out; and when the greasers hit the trail, he came looking for me with a Colt. But I guess I got a cinch on him, and I've left him in the dug-out with a cracked cabeza—and since then I been burning the wind to put you wise."

"Say, Mister Black, I reckon this kid is square," said Ginger. "We sure want to get after them rustlers."

The Bar-T foreman shook his head.

"There's nothing to it," he said, "and I guess that young cuss is only talking out of the top of his Stetson. He allows that Euchre Dick is in cahoots with the rustlers. Waal, I know it was Euchre got sign of the rustlers in the Mesquite sierra, and sent the marshal there hunting for them."

"Likely he would!" snapped the Kid. "I guess it was his game to get the marshal out of the way, while his pards was running off cattle hyer on the Bar-T ranges. I'll tell all Texas they're running off three hundred cows for the Rio Grande this minute, as fast as they can drive them."

"You can tell all Texas, but it ain't any use telling me," said the Bar-T foreman, sourly. "And I'll tell you, Mister Santa Fe Smith, if that's your name, I don't want you in this outfit. I guess I was only stringing you when I posted you on the Fernandez range—I guessed you'd get scared and beat it. And I reckoned I'd see the last of you. Now you got the gall to horn in with this yarn!"

And the forman turned contemptuously away.

"By the great horned toad!" exclaimed the Kid. His eyes gleamed at the Bar-T foreman. Then he looked round over the staring crowd of punchers.

"Say, fellers, who's riding with me to cinch them rustlers?"

The foreman swung back. "Not a guy here's riding with you," he snapped, "and I guess if you don't beat it, and beat it sudden, you'll find trouble at this ranch."

"I guess I'm ready for all the trouble you can give me," snapped the Kid. "You can't scare me with black looks, sir, not worth a continental red cent. And if the boys ain't riding now I've given the word, I'm sure riding after them rustlers on my own. And I reckon—"

He broke off suddenly as there was a sound of hoofbeats from the darkness of the prairie.

Thud! Thud! Thud!
It was another horseman riding through the night, urging on his horse at frantic speed.

From the darkness a foaming horseman dashed up to the ranch. Ginger rushed to the gate and threw it open as the rider came thundering up.

"Texas Dave!" shouted the foreman, springing towards him. "What the thunder—"

The burly puncher dragged in his broncho. He was reeling in the saddle, and blood was streaming down one bronzed cheek.

"A bunch of Mexicans—they got the herd off the range," he gasped, "and they're heading south as fast as they can drive the cows. They got Panhandle!" He reeled, and Ginger caught him as he fell.

Black Alec stood motionless for a moment. His dark brows were knitted. Two of three of the punchers carried the wounded man into the bunkhouse. The others rushed to the corral for their horses. The foreman's voice rang out sharply.

"Saddle up! We got to ride and ride hard!"

Kicker could have gone faster but the Kid was not taking the lead. How far the Mexican raiders had travelled with the stolen herd it was impossible to tell, though it was certain that they were driving the cows as fast as the cows could go. From the direction taken by Black Alec, and followed by the rest, the Kid figured that he was heading straight for the border, where the Rio Grande flowed between Texas and Mexico. It was new country to the Kid—a part of Texas where he had never ridden before. He dropped back a little and rode side by side with Ginger, the horse-wrangler, and called to him.

"Say, Ginger, where we heading? Guess we ain't picking up the trail of the herd?"

"Not by a hatful," answered Ginger.



Almost dropping from exhaustion, the Rio Kid fairly hurled his horse over the last fence and landed amongst the startled cow-punchers. "Quick! The rustlers are driving off the cattle on the range!" he gasped out!

He gave the Rio Kid no heed, seemingly forgetful of his existence. But that out no ice with the Kid. As a bunch of horsemen swept out of the gateway and rode at a gallop, the Rio Kid rode with them.

A Wild Ride!

BLACK ALEC was riding with whip and spur. There was blood on the foaming flanks of his broncho and the cracking of his quirt rang like shots from a Colt. Even in those moments of wild haste the Rio Kid was conscious of a dislike and scorn for the man who could use a horse so savagely.

The Bar-T foreman swept on ahead, the punchers riding after him. Side-

"I guess there's only one place where they can get the cows across the river and that's the Comanche Ford. There ain't no other spot for half a day's ride either way. It's the Comanche Ford or nothin'; and you bet Mister Black knows it."

"I get you!" assented the Kid. He disliked the foreman of the Bar-T, and the way the man was using his horse got the Kid's goat. But he admitted that Black Alec sure knew his business. By heading direct for the ford of the Rio Grande, the only place where the raiders could cross, the Bar-T outfit had a chance of cutting off their retreat from Texan soil.

Joaquin Fernandez and his gang had a long start. But however rapidly the

cows might be driven, their pace had to be slow slower than that of the galloping horsemen. There was just a chance of getting first to the ford.

The prairie was dark; few stars glimmered in the sky and the moon was not yet up though there was a pale, silvery glimmer in the east that told that it was coming. And the rugged prairie was pitted with the holes of prairie rabbits. The Rio Kid dragged on his reins suddenly as he saw the shadowy figure of the foreman ahead of him take a sudden plunge.

There was a squeal of pain from the broncho, who had dipped a forefoot in a hole in the prairie. The horse went sprawling headlong, and Black Alec slumped into the grass.

"Aw, carry me home to die!" snapped Ginger. "Black Alec's down—this sure is the elephant's hind leg."

"I guess he was beggin' for it!" grunted the Kid.

The punchers reined in. Black Alec was on his feet in a moment, panting oaths. He bent over the struggling, squealing horse, and dragged furiously on the reins. But the broncho could not rise. Its leg was broken.

The Bar-T foreman swung round to the bunch.

"That cayuse is a goner!" he snarled. "Here, you, give me your cayuse—you Santa Fe."

He strode towards the Kid.

The Kid's face set grimly. The foreman was within his rights in demanding a horse from a Bar-T man. But he had told the Kid that he was not a member of the outfit. Bar-T man or not the Kid would never have handed over Side-Kicker to a man who handled a horse so savagely—not to save all the cows in Texas from being run across the border into the Mexican hills.

"Light down!" roared Black Alec, as the Kid did not stir from his saddle.

"I guess not, Mister Black," answered the Kid quietly. "You ain't lathering this cayuse with your quirt, nor ripping his flanks with your spurs. This cayuse is mine, and stays mine."

"Get off'n that hoss."

"I guess not!" said the Kid. His gun glimmered in the faint light of the stars. "You ain't touching this hoss, Mister Black, and if you pull a gun on me it'll be the last thing you'll do this side of Jordan."

Black Alec's hand dropped on his Colt. "Don't!" said the Kid quietly.

"You dog-goned geek!" Black Alec snarled with rage, but even in his fury he did not forget that this was the man who had shot up Euchre Dick, the gunman of Red Dog. "What you doin' here, anyhow? You ain't one of this bunch—you ain't wanted in this outfit, like I've told you."

"If I ain't one of the bunch, I guess you got no call to ask me for my cayuse, Mister Black. You ain't getting him, anyhow."

"I'll deal with you later!" hissed the Bar-T foreman. "Hyer, one of you boys give me a cayuse, and hoof it."

One of the punchers dismounted and the foreman took his broncho. He dashed on again, and the Bar-T outfit followed. Ginger, the horse-wrangler, stayed long enough to shoot the injured horse; and the Kid, who had stopped with the same intention, gave him a nod. Then they rode on again after the rest.

Higher over the dusky horizon came the glimmer of the rising moon. The thick waving grass caught the glimmer like a shimmering sea round the galloping riders.

Away ahead, through the gloom, another glimmer caught the Kid's eye: the shine of water. The Rio Grande was in sight.

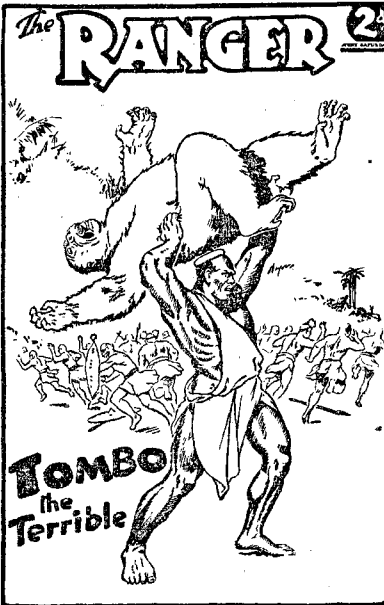
In a panting bunch, the Bar-T outfit dashed up to the river. Black Alec flung himself from his horse. He stooped to look for sign, but the Kid could see from the saddle that all was well. Three hundred cows would have left ample sign of their passage, and there was no fresh trampled trail going down to the ford.

"We're ahead of the scalywags!" panted Black Alec. "I guess we've cut off the gang from Mexico."

Black Alec strained his eyes through the shadows. From the distance came a low rumbling sound, faint and afar, but every puncher there knew what it was—the sound of a herd in motion.

"They're coming!" said Ginger. Black Alec rapped out sharp orders. The outfit drew their panting horses into the dark shadow of a clump of cotton.

Smashing Programme of Super Stories Next Week!



Get ready to cheer, boys, for Take-a-Chance Turpin is heading straight for the pages of The RANGER.

Take-a-Chance Turpin is only a youngster, but he's got an old head on his shoulders and a pair of useful fists that would give Carnera something to think about.

Take - a - Chance Turpin will be with you all in next week's fine issue. Other popular pals—Aces of the Andes, The Outlaw Kid, Charley the Chump, Barney Brook, and Tombo the Terrible will also be very much in evidence. Then, as another tit-bit in a fine feast of fiction, there is another all-thrilling story of—

"HELL'S ANGELS."

To give topicality to this full-value number some interesting facts and coloured pictures dealing with the

F.A. CUP FINAL

will be included.

The wise reader will be the one who trots round immediately to his newsagent with an order for—

NEXT WEEK'S "RANGER"

The Best and Brightest Boys' Paper - - - 2d.

THRILLS! LAUGHS! TOPICALITY! COLOUR!

woods close by the ford. There they waited for the arrival of the rustlers—every man with his gun in his hand now. Across the dark prairie the rumbling sound of many hoofs came clearer and clearer. The cracking of whips could be heard—now and then a distant shout. The herd was rolling on to the ford, rapidly driven by the rustlers, who evidently had no suspicion so far that the Bar-T outfit

had got ahead of them from another direction. Black Alec gritted his teeth.

"I guess we've got them guys dead to rights!" he muttered. "Head the cows away from the ford, and shoot every dog-goned greaser you can draw a bead on. By the great horned toad, this is a cinch."

The moon gleamed over the rim of the prairie. It glimmered on waving grass, and the heaving backs of plunging animals; here and there on the wide-brimmed sombrero of a Mexican horseman, cracking his quirt on the outskirts of the thundering herd. Three hundred cows, with half a dozen rustlers riding round them, came plunging on towards the ford—where the Bar-T outfit waited and watched finger on trigger.

The Fight at the Ford!

A FLASH stabbed the darkness. It was followed by another and another. The Bar-T bunch were firing as they swept out from the shadow of the cottonwoods.

Bang! Bang! Bang! There was a wild outbreak and squealing and roaring from the herd. Shouts in Spanish came from the Mexican rustlers—flash on flash of random firing.

The leading cows were within a hundred yards of the river when the Bar-T bunch dashed at them, taking them on front and flank. From the thundering horsemen and the roaring Colts the cows swung away. No effort of the rustlers could keep them on towards the ford. Startled and scared, the herd plunged away from the sudden uproar and turned up the bank of the river, stampeding.

The Kid heard the voice of Joaquin Fernandez yelling to his men. For several minutes, heedless of the Bar-T men, the rustlers strove to drive the herd onward towards the river. But it was futile; the scared herd was stampeding now, and they thundered away up the bank leaving the ford behind them.

Once the cows were turned away from the ford, the Bar-T men gave them no further heed. The stampede would scatter them far and wide over the prairie, for scores of miles along the river, and it would be a lengthy task to round them up again; but so long as they were on the Texan side the punchers cared little for that. The herd was saved, and they gave their attention to the rustlers.

One of the Mexican horsemen had gone down, overwhelmed by the rush of the cattle. Man and horse remained where they fell, crushed out of recognition by the countless thundering hoofs that passed over them. The rest were drawing together, firing at the horsemen that loomed up in the dim glimmer of the moon. There were six of the rustlers and more than twice that number of Bar-T men, and Joaquin Fernandez and his gang had little chance. Leaving the cattle to their own devices, the rustlers bunched together and dashed down to the ford, firing right and left in the gloom. Evidently they were thinking only of escape across the border now.

But there was no escape for them.

The Bar-T outfit were between them and the ford. Horseman met horseman, crashing in the dimness. The Rio Kid, guiding his mustang with his knees, had a walnut-butted gun in either hand now. In the gloom and the rapid motion most of the lead that sereamed through the air was wasted. But the Kid did not waste his lead. Twice he fired as the Mexicans came sweeping on, and twice a sombreroed head disappeared as the rider went crashing from his horse. Another and another of the rustlers went down under the fire of the punchers. The Kid heard a crash as a furious rider cannoned in to Black Alec, sending him to the earth and joining him there.

One sombrero still showed in the moon glimmer, but its wearer was no longer riding for the ford. He had wheeled his horse and was dashing back from the river. The Kid sent a bullet after him as he vanished across the prairie. He was about to spur Side-Kicker in pursuit when a panting cry from the dark grass

Continued on page 274.

axle-bolts, and then set the engine goin'. It'll wind in the rope like billy-ho!"

The captain gasped, but then he saw the possibility of the idea. Yelling to the coastguards to hold the rope, he dashed back and got to work as Barney had suggested. With a hammer grabbed from the tool-box, he smashed away the mud-guard supports and thus left enough room for the rope to coil round the axle without getting fouled. The mudguard itself was old and rusted, and it came away like tin as he wrenched. Then he got the rope-end and laced it round the axle-bolts whilst Barney jumped to the wheel.

The youngster pressed the engine starter, slipping the gear into first. Then at a shout from the captain he let in the clutch, and the slack of the rope wound in as if by magic.

The coastguards let go as they felt the strain, and ran with the captain to gather

big stones with which to wedge the wheels of the car. And so the life-line paid in from the stricken ship, and was brought ashore in something like half the time that it could have been done by full man-power.

To rig it to a stanchion of the coast-guard hut, and then start the business of pulling in the sailors who came up one by one on the buoy, was the work of minutes. Indeed, it was a surprisingly short time after the first soaked and shivering man landed, that the last dropped down exhaustedly and gasped out that there were no more on board.

They were helped into the hut, given hot drinks, and rubbed down immediately, but at length they were all comfortable, and cars with doctors and men from Grantown began to arrive and take charge.

Barney walked out of the hut, spent some time unravelling the rope from the axle, and then fitted the wheel again.

This finished, he went to the cliff-edge with the captain, and looked down to where the ship was now clean in halves and breaking more and more in the merciless battering of the sea.

Barney shivered.

"Luvaduck!" he said feelingly. "Luvaduck! I'm glad I don't 'ave to lead an adventurous life. Gimme a quiet, safe, an' peaceful time on dry land, thank you. Them's my sentiments."

He walked back to the car with the captain, and drove away. They accomplished the two hundred miles back to Coventry in two hours and forty-eight minutes!

(The speed-maniac who raced through a storm-lashed lake—he's Barney! See next week's gripping yarn of the speed world!)

THE OUTLAW KID!

(Continued from page 258.)

reached his ears. He reined in his mustang and leaped to the ground.

Black Alec was rolling over in the grass in the grasp of the rustler who had fallen with him. The Bar-T foreman had dropped his gun in the fall and was fighting desperately, hand to hand, with the swarthy ruffian. The Kid caught the gleam of a cuchillo.

Black Alec was yelling to his men, but in the darkness and confusion his men were not at hand. But the Kid was there. He leaped at the rustler as the knife flashed up over the Bar-T foreman.

Another second and it would have been driven to the hilt in Black Alec's breast. The Kid's Colt crashed on the Mexican's head, sending him sprawling in the grass, and the cuchillo dropped from his hand.

"O.K., Mister Black!" grinned the Kid.

The Bar-T foreman staggered up, panting.

He gave the Kid one look, and it was not a friendly look though the boy puncher had saved his life. Then he glared round for his revolver, and grabbed it up. The Mexican, half-stunned, sprawled in the grass; and the Bar-T foreman screamed bullets at him from the Colt, riddling him with lead.

"I guess that cow-thief has got his!" snarled Black Alec.

The Kid's eyes glistened. But he said nothing. The Bar-T foreman turned to him again.

"I guess you stopped him in time!" he said.

"I guess so!" said the Kid. "And I reckon you might have cinched the guy without giving him his ticket for soup, Mister Black!"

"Aw, can it!" snarled the Bar-T foreman. "The dog-goned geek has got what was coming to him." He stared round in the gathering light of the moon.

"I guess this is a wipe-out. You savvy if any of the scallywags have got clear? I guess none got across the ford."

"Not a guy," said the Kid. "But there was one of the bunch hit the back-trail mighty quick, and I'm sure going after him. I reckon I know where to look for the guy—in the hide-out under the haunted ranch."

"I guess I want to see that hide-out," said Black Alec. "I'll ride with you."

He clambered on his horse. Ginger rode up through the shadows.

"I reckon this is our game, Mister Black!" chuckled the horse-wrangler. "We've sure put paid to that pesky bunch."

"Sure! Get the boys together and look after the cattle," said Black Alec. "Santa Fe allows that one of the bunch got away, and has beat it for the hide-out at the haunted ranch. I'm sure going to see! There ain't going to be one of the bunch ride clear."

The Rio Kid was already riding, and the Bar-T foreman dashed after him. Back along the trampled trail left by the herd they rode towards the old Fernandez

ranch. Far away up the bank of the Rio Grande, the herd was scattered now, most of the scared animals still on the run, and likely to run till they dropped from weariness.

The stampede was likely to give the Bar-T men plenty of trouble in the next few days. But the herd had been saved and the gang of rustlers wiped out, with the exception of the one man who had fled back into Texas. And the Kid figured that he knew where to look for that guy. And he rode on rapidly to the haunted ranch, the Bar-T foreman galloping at his side.

The Last of the Rustlers!

JOAQUIN FERNANDEZ, the leader of the Mexican rustlers, threw himself from his foaming horse and led the panting animal through the clinging vines and creepers that hid the secret entrance to the old dug-out under the haunted ranch.

The Mexican's dusky face was working with rage. There was a streak of crimson across it where a bullet had grazed, and several bullet-holes through the high crown of his sombrero. Utter defeat and destruction had fallen on the gang of Mexican rustlers, and Joaquin, who alone survived, was cut off from his retreat into his own country. On the morrow the whole country would be up hunting for him, and the cow-thief counted on lying doggo in the dug-out, which had concealed him so often before. Not for a moment did he suspect that the Rio Kid had escaped, and had taken a leading part in the fight at the ford. So far as the Mexican knew his hide-out under the haunted ranch was still a place of security.

The mass of creepers fell into place behind him. Breathing in great gasps, the Mexican led his horse along the dark tunnel to the cave where he was accustomed to leaving him, and where Euchre Dick's horse had been left. In the darkness he did not observe that the Kid's mustang was gone. He cast the broncho loose there and tramped on down the tunnel into the dug-out, where a swinging lamp was burning. Whether Euchre Dick was still there the rustler did not know, but he was soon to learn. As a lamp was burning he guessed that the gunman was not yet gone—but he stared round the dug-out for him in vain.

"Caramba!"

His startled glance fell on the door of the room at the end of the dug-out, where the Rio Kid had been left a prisoner. The door was swinging open. Through the open doorway he had a glimpse of a figure that lay on the earth—and it was not the figure of the Rio Kid. With rapid strides he crossed the dug-out, and bent over Euchre Dick.

The gunman, stunned by the Kid's blow, had lain senseless for hours. His consciousness was returning now, and he was stirring feebly when the Mexican reached him. Joaquin stared at him, gritting his teeth, and stared round in savage astonishment. Then he dragged the gunman into the outer dug-out, into the light of the lamp.

Euchre Dick's eyes opened, and he stared at the enraged face of the Mexican. Joaquin dashed water into his dizzy face. "Nombre de Dios!" he said between his teeth. "Wake, hombre, wake! What has happened here? The puncher—where, is he?"

The gunman staggered to his feet. His glance went wildly round him, as if in search of the Rio Kid. But he knew that the Kid must be long gone.

Joaquin caught him savagely by the arm.

"Speak! You stayed behind to shoot the puncher—what has become of him? Speak, fool of a gringo."

"I guess he got the cinch on me," gasped Euchre Dick. "He sure knocked me out with my own gun. I guess he's beat it."

The Mexican's face was distorted with rage.

"He is gone? Por todos los Santos! Then the secret of the dug-out is a secret no longer! And I have fled here for safety! Caramba! They will be here—they will follow—I am a lost man! Fool! If you had left him a prisoner, barred in the room—fool, all is lost, and it is you who have lost all." He spat out Spanish oaths. "Caramba! There is not a moment to lose."

He strode back towards the tunnel. At the entrance he stopped and turned, a revolver in his hand. Twice he fired, and Euchre Dick, with a groan, fell to the floor of the dug-out. He did not stir again as the desperado turned and disappeared into the tunnel.

A minute more and the Mexican was dragging his horse back to the outlet. There was no safety for him in the den he had counted on as a sure refuge; even now his enemies might be riding overhead—Swift flight and skulking in the depths of the chaparral might save him yet—if there was time.

He dragged aside the screen of creepers and vines and led the horse out into the moonlight.

A moment more and he was in the saddle, gripping the reins for a desperate ride.

"Halt! Hands up!"

It was the voice of the Rio Kid. A levelled Colt looked in the dusky face of the rustler, the Kid's eyes gleaming over it. Joaquin Fernandez drove his spurs into the broncho's flanks, bending low in the saddle as he dashed away. And the Kid held his fire. With a wild clattering of hoofs Joaquin dashed past the haunted rancho and out upon the plain.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The Kid had left Black Alec behind in that rapid ride to the haunted rancho.

But the Bar-T foreman was not far. The Rio Kid heard the roar of his Colt, a yell and a fall; and then the thudding hoofs of a riderless horse that dashed away over the prairie. He had spared the rustler, but the Bar-T foreman had not spared him; and Black Alec's Colt had barked death to the last of the rustlers of the Rio Grande.

(The Rio Kid isn't done with rustlers yet. Not by long chalks. They cross his trail again next week in another roaring yarn of the West.)

RANGER DAN'S BULL'S-EYES!



Father: "And there, son, I have told you the story of your father and the Great War!"

Son: "Yes, dad, but what did they need all the other soldiers for?"

(A pair of roller skates have been awarded to C. E. Randall, 7, Saxon Street, Hightown, Wrexham, Denbighshire.)

Pat went to his friend's house to tea. When it was time to go home they found it was raining, so Pat's friend asked him to stop the night. Pat said he would. Later on in the evening Pat rushed in wet through.

"Where have ye been?" asked his friend.

"Sure, O've just been home to get me pyjamas!" answered Pat.

(A table tennis set has been awarded to E. Bune, Lesliee, Coronation Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex.)

First Yokel: "He's been sitting a-doing nothing but waste time for six hours!"

Second Yokel: "How do you know he's been there all that time?"

First Yokel: "'Cause I've been standing here watching him!"

(A grand book has been awarded to A. Wickens, Thatch Cottage, The Common, Stansted, Essex.)

Sergeant (inspecting company): "Jones, you are the dirtiest soldier in the regiment. Just turn round and look at the back of your neck!"

(A Warneford Tractor Plane has been awarded to E. Todd, 27, Bray Street, Belfast, N. Ireland.)

Murphy and Mike were in the centre of a quarrel. Said the short one: "Sure, Mike, if Oi was as big as yeself Oi'd woipe the flure wid ye, little as Oi am!"

(A pair of roller skates has been awarded to J. Colquitt, 75, Dicconson Lane, Aspull, Wigan, Lancs.)

Oculist: "Has your little boy got used to wearing his glasses?"

Mother: "Well, I can't make him wear them all day, but I can and do slip them on him when he's asleep!"

(A Warneford Tractor Plane has been awarded to E. Clayton, 115, Ealing Road, Brentford, Middlesex.)

Constable (to professor who has been run down): "Did you chance to notice the number of the car, sir?"

Professor: "Well, not exactly. But I remember noticing that if it was doubled and then multiplied by itself, the square root of the product was the original number with the integers reversed!"

(A tool chest has been awarded to J. Whitaker, Brook House, Newtownards, N. Ireland.)

Householder: "You're sure you've made no mistake?"

Plumber: "Quite certain, sir; why do you ask?"

Householder: "I thought perhaps you had when I saw the bath-room taps aight and the maid drawing water from the gas bracket!"

(A stationary engine has been awarded to E. Pickworth, 5, Royal Parade, Daves Road, S.W.3.)

"Well, sir," he replied, "the man next to me stuttered!"

(A conjuring outfit has been awarded to A. E. Roissetor, 80, Rendel Road, Custom House, E.16.)

"Fancy you being a Scotsman and not playing golf!"

"Ah, I used to play, but I gave it up years ago!"

"Why?"

"I lost my ball!"

(A dandy speedboat has been awarded to Hugh McTeer, 2/59, Sun Street, Edgbaston, Birmingham.)

Sandy prided himself that no one had ever got the better of him in a financial deal. "Sandy" said Isaac, "I'll sell you something which cost me threepence for twopence."

Sandy bought it. It was a threepenny tram ticket.

(A table tennis set has been awarded to A. Atkinson, 230, Eastbourne Avenue, Gateshead, Co. Durham.)

Amateur Sportsman: "What is the name of that species I've just shot!"

Guide: "Says his name is Smith, sir!"

(A Fretwork Outfit has been awarded to G. Dagger, 159, Broadfield Road, Moss Side, Manchester.)

The sergeant had just given a lesson on bomb-throwing.

"First of all," he bellowed, "you release the pin from the bomb, count three, and then throw the bomb as hard and as far as you can, making sure to take cover."

With this he marched the new recruits out on the plain.

Every recruit was given a bomb.

"Get ready!" bawled the sergeant.

"Now. Away with the bombs!"

The pins were drawn, counting started; but before the third count was reached, one recruit was seen to drop his bomb and run.

Next day he was taken up to headquarters and asked why he had shirked his duty.

PRIZES FOR JOKES.

Ranger Dan's asking for rib-snorting, rib-bursting jokes. He's simply pining for 'em. So if you have got a good one up your sleeve, send it along to him, together with the coupon below, filled in IN INK. Address your efforts to: "Ranger Dan's Bull's-eyes," The RANGER, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

For jokes published in his corner, Ranger Dan—whose decision must be accepted as final—will present wonderful gifts which include cameras, tool-chests, train sets, books, etc. Attaboy!

Teacher: "What is the meaning of 'unaware'?"

Boy: "The last thing you take off when you go to bed!"

(A dandy speed boat has been awarded to N. Robinson, Church Terrace, Holmfirth, near Huddersfield, Yorks.)

Dentist: "I didn't know you had had this tooth filled before. I see there is some gold on my drill."

Patient (faintly): "I haven't! I think you must have struck my back collar-stud!"

(A combination knife has been awarded to F. Smith, 29, Lord St., Palfrey, Walsall, Staffs.)

A paid-off seaman carrying a partly covered bird-cage approached a house and rang the bell.

When the lady of the house answered the summons, he began: "I've a fine bird here, mum. If you would care to look—"

"Can't you read that notice?" interrupted the lady sharply, pointing to the familiar placard—"No Hawksers!"

"Yes, mum—but this ain't a hawk—it's a parrot!"

(A wallet has been awarded to C. Mills, 51, Carnel St., Belfast, Ireland.)

Mother: "Well, Tommy, how did you get on with your examinations?"

Tommy: "I got five marks for everything."

Mother: "Did you really?"

Tommy: "Yes, and I can't sit down now!"

(A giant torch has been awarded to T. Silsby, 21, Garton End, Peterborough, Northants.)

Tramp: "Yes, I'm afraid I've been in prison."

Old Lady: "You should be ashamed to own it!"

Tramp: "I didn't own it, mum, I was only a lodger!"

(A combination knife has been awarded to S. Holmstrom, 47, Gray St., Bootle, Liverpool.)

----- "Ranger Dan's Bull's-Eyes." -----

NAME

ADDRESS

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Ranger, No. 11.

The CHIEF RANGER CHATS!

Your Editor's dead keen to get to know all his new pals. Drop him a line to "The Chief Ranger," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.



Well, you fellows, any complaints? No FEAR! I can feel the mighty chorus splitting the drums of my ears. But let me see, on second thoughts I call to mind one complaint—if we can call it that—from a host of RANGER readers. They "complain" that the RANGER comes out only once a week; they would like a different issue of this wonderful paper for EVERY DAY of the week. Well, that's a tall order! I'm not so green, however, as to think they are really complaining. Their little grouse, clearly enough, is a compliment that many editors would give their ears to receive. In short, my correspondents' unanimous opinion is that The RANGER is the finest boys' paper obtainable. Well, that's just fine! In reply to these enthusiasts—to all of you, in fact—let me say this: EVERY SATURDAY'S ISSUE of The RANGER will be found as excellent as the copy you are holding now. We are working like folk inspired in the Editorial and printing offices. The BEST and ONLY THE BEST is what RANGER readers require, and, jingo, they're getting it.

ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW

is another line to the strong policy that has placed The RANGER at the top of the tree, and in next week's stunning programme you will shake by the hand, for the first time,

"TAKE-A-CHANCE TURPIN!"

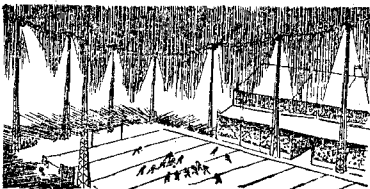
Gee, boys, Turpin's an amazing fellow—a mighty good friend, a dangerous foe, and extraordinarily canny with a catapult! He's troubled with an insatiable appetite for big adventure. When you meet him you'll find him real hungry, but you'll be hungry, too—hungry to hear more about him. The sparkling series I have in hand, featuring "Take-a-Chance Turpin," will give you the finest feast of "full course" fiction that you have ever sat down to.

ORDER NEXT WEEK'S "RANGER" NOW!

The Chief Ranger

MIDNIGHT FOOTBALL.

In the land of non-stop stunts, they are going in for midnight football. Why they want to engage in footer matches when sensible folk are blissfully dreaming in snug beds only the Americans themselves know! But the fact remains that they have recently rigged up enormous towers of steel, a hundred feet high, around one of the playing-fields of Detroit University, with numerous 20,000-candle-power electric lamps a-top of them.



You switch on the "juice," and the field is promptly flooded with strong light. If the inclination takes you that way, you can look on whilst the teams are battling instead of being a-bed. And when you get tired of watching the ball being slogged about, you may stand and admire the searchlight mirrors and chromium-plated reflectors that make the electric light rival that of the brightest day.

RIDE HIM, COWBOY!

"Gosh, I'll show the world!" muttered Ralph Sanders, Texas cowboy. "Ride a hoss? A bucking, man-eating, fire-breathing mustang what wants to use his feet as wings—when he ain't a-jumping on you? I'll ride a he-bull, sir—a he-bull! An' I'll ride him to li' ole Noo York. Yes, sir, every blessed inch of the way!"

The speaker was saying his piece at Brownsville, Texas. And Brownsville, Texas, and New York are separated, as near as we can measure it, by

roughly 2,700 honest-to-goodness leg-weary miles. And so the cowboy's threat might be considered as a man-size proposition. Did he do it? He did.

Ralph and his bull made a triumphant entry into New York, after a jog-trot lasting 248 exciting days. And—would you believe it?—both rider and steed weighed-out afterwards, at a goodish bit 'n excess of their weight, as registered at the starting post.

CHARLEY THE CHUMP!

(Continued from page 255.)

high fence. She landed on the other side safely and sped for the next obstacle.

Soon Charley got so used to the bumping and jumping that he was able to sit up and take notice. So far he had been lucky enough to keep in the saddle. But presently he came to a water jump.

Usually the high hedge is first and the water behind it; but running the wrong way as Charlie was the water came first and the hedge next. This made the jump too difficult. Silver Star stuck in the middle of the hedge and both flopped back into the water.

"Huh!" grunted Charley. Just then something flew over their heads. It was Beeswing!

"That's funny," said Charley, staring after the horse. "Gonner's riding the wrong way. I must go after him and let him know!"

He caught Silver Star and pulled himself into the saddle.

"After him, old hoss!" But that was the last Charley saw of Beeswing and Gonner. It seemed to him that he must have ridden round that course at least fifty times. At last he pulled up and looked back. He gasped.

About thirty yards behind, riding hard, came a dozen horses!

"Golly!" gasped Charley. "They've let other hosses into the race. Come on, Silver Star, ma'am, we've got to show 'em!"

They showed 'em. He could hear the other horses thundering in his rear. But Silver Star kept her lead, and as they shot down the straight towards the winning-post, Charley heard a shout from the mob of spectators.

He sped past the winning post at least fifteen yards in front of the other horses. Some distance beyond it Silver Star suddenly stopped. Charley flew over her head and struck the ground. He lay partially stunned.

When he recovered he found Horace bending over him.

"Did we win, Mister Horace, sir?"

"Win!" roared the great Binks. "You came in first in the next race, you chump!"

Charley sat up.

"Then Silver Star lost?"

Horace shook his head.

"You weren't riding Silver Star, Charley. You were riding Beeswing. You must have got the horses mixed. Gonner rode Silver Star and won by miles. There was a regular row about it, but the stewards gave Silver Star the race!"

Charley sighed.

"Ain't that nice, Mister Horace, sir?"

At that moment a loud noise attracted their attention and, looking round, they saw dozens of men running towards them.

"What's that, Mister Horace, sir?"

"Come on, Charley, you ass!" cried Horace. "We've got to scoot again! They're the fellows who backed Beeswing! And they are after your blood!"

So it wasn't so nice for the partnership pals, after all!

(Charley the Chump and Manager Horace in more screamingly funny adventures next week. Don't miss 'em!)

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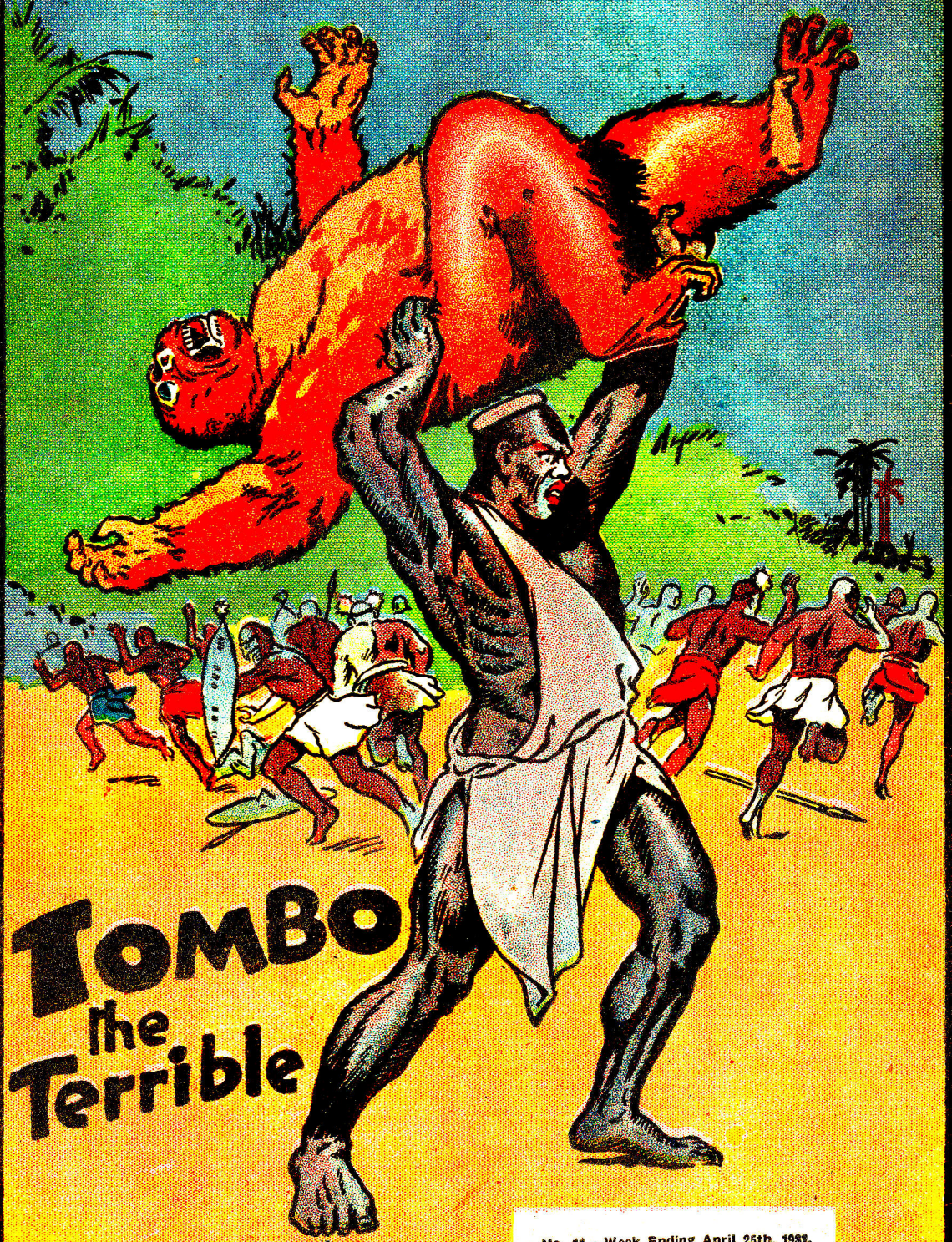
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No. 11.—Week Ending April 25th, 1951.

SMASHING YARN
OF THE WILD
WEST.

The OUTLAW KID!



The Kid Hits the Trail!

THE Rio Kid frowned. He was standing in the doorway of the bunk-house of the Bar-T Ranch.

The bright sunshine of Texas shone down on the ranch buildings and the rolling prairie that surrounded the Bar-T. The sights and sounds of a busy ranch were pleasant to the eyes of the Kid, a puncher born and bred, though he had long followed an outlaw's lonely trail.

Glad enough the Kid would have been to bed down at the Bar-T. He liked the ranch, he liked the outfit, and in that remote corner of Texas he was unknown; no man had a suspicion that he was the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande, or anything but the cheery young cowpuncher he looked. It would have suited the Kid fine to join the Bar-T bunch, and there was a vacant place in the outfit for him to fill.

But the Kid reckoned that it was not to be, hence his frown.

At a little distance he saw Alex Black, the foreman of the ranch, in talk with two of his bunch. Once the foreman had glanced towards the bunk-house, and his brow darkened at sight of the Kid. He did not like the Kid, and the boy puncher's recent services in helping to defeat the Mexican cattle-lifters made no difference to that. The Kid rather wondered what was at the bottom of the foreman's grouch. Anyhow, there it was; it was for Black Alec to sign him on if he chose, and Black Alec did not choose. So there was nothing left for the Kid to do but mount the grey mustang and hit the trail.

"Say, Sante Fe!"

It was a voice from within the bunk-house, and the Kid, for the moment, did not heed. Then he remembered that his name was Sante Fe Smith, in the Red Dog country, and he looked round.

Texas Dave, the puncher, was sitting in his bunk, his head bandaged. Texas had stopped a Mexican bullet the night before, on the Fernandez range. He gave the Kid a nod and a grin as the boy puncher turned back into the bunkhouse.

"Say, you stopping?" he asked.

The Kid shook his head.

"I guess not, old-timer," he answered.

"Your doggoned foreman, Mister Black, has got a grouch agin this infant. He don't like this baby."

"I guess we'll all be glad for you to stop, Sante Fe," said Texas. "Mebbe Mister Black would guess again now, since you helped to rub out the Greasers last night, and to save three hundred cows that they was driving to the border. And there's a man wanted, since Panhandle was wiped out by the rustlers."

The Kid shook his head again.

"Suit me fine!" he said. "But Mister Black ain't taking any. I guess he couldn't refuse me a bunk here to bed down for the night, but he figures on me hitting the trail to-day."

"I guess if the boss knowed, he'd horn

Bad men get an outsize in headaches when the Rio Kid strikes their Trail.

in and tell Mister Black to keep you!" growled Texas.

"I ain't seen the boss," said the Kid.

"I guess Judge Findex ain't to home now," said Texas. "He's been away some days along to Sharpville. Say, you hang on till the judge comes home. He's expected back to-day. I guess the judge would sign you on, and glad, when he hears what you have done to save the herd."

The Kid looked thoughtful.

"Mebbe Mister Black will set you goin' afore the judge comes in," went on Texas. "If he does, you take the Mesquite trail and mebbe you'll meet up with the judge on his way home. You'll be sure to meet up with him someways between this and Sharpville. And I'm telling you, the judge would be glad to sign you on."

"I'd sure like to sign on," said the Kid.

"But I dunno about joining a bunch with the foreman nursing a grouch agin me."

"Aw, can it!" said Texas. "Mister

Black's always got a grouch—you don't want to take no notice of that. I guess he's got a temper like a Mexican mule. There ain't a guy in the outfit he ain't rubbed the wrong way—cepting Injun Pete and Slick Sampson—them two guys he's chewing the rag with now." Texas gave a nod towards the open doorway, through which the foreman could be seen with the two punchers.

"Them two guys, I'm telling you, ain't at all liked in this bunch. They ain't good punchers, and they ain't white—and why Mister Black makes favourites of 'em, has got me beat."

The Kid smiled.

He would have liked to bed down on the Bar-T, for he liked the cheery friendliness of Texas Dave and Ginger, the horse-wrangler, and the rest of the bunch. But he did not reckon that it would work.

"Say, hyer comes Mister Black," added Texas. "You talk turkey to him, feller, and mebbe he'll guess again."

"I'll sure talk to that guy like a Dutch uncle, hombre," said the Kid, with a smile, and he turned back to the doorway.

Black Alec came up to the bunk-house. The two men whom Texas had described as his favourites followed him, and the Kid eyed them rather curiously.

Injun Pete was a half-breed, with a coppery face and gleaming black eyes. Slick Sampson looked more like a gunman than a puncher. The Kid had already noticed these two members of the outfit and noted that they had little to say to the rest of the bunch.

"You Sante Fe!" grunted the foreman.

"Hyer," said the Kid pleasantly.

"I guess it's time you was hitting the trail."

"You sure don't seem to hone for my company on this ranch, Mister Black," said the Kid.

"I guess you're a piece too fresh," growled the foreman. "I allow you played up like a little man agin the Mexican rustlers. You helped to save the herd, and you showed up their hide-out at the haunted rancho, and I guess rustlers won't be able to use it again. But we ain't got room for you on this ranch, and you're too fresh, anyway. You want to beat it, and beat it without giving trouble."

"I never was a galoot to hunt for trouble," answered the Kid amiably. "But I'll say I never struck such a pesky, all-fired skunk as you are, Mister Black!"

The foreman's eyes glittered.

"That's enough from you!" he snapped. "Git your crittur out of the corral and hit the trail."

"And don't chew the rag any more, feller!" added Slick Sampson. "You're told that you ain't wanted on this ranch, and you're jest asking to be booted off."

"If there's a guy here that can boot me off, hombre, I want to see that guy before I absquatulate," said the Kid. "I'm sure homing to see that guy. And if he can boot me off, I'll give him my cayuse and fixings."

Slick's hand dropped on the butt of a Colt and out came a gun.

But, like magic it seemed, the Kid swung round his arm and a long stock whip flashed through the air. The next moment the gunman's six-shooter was snatched out of his hands by the end of the whip.

"You for the long jump if you try that

again, feller!" he said. "You want to keeps your mitts off your hardware!"

"Say, that guy is sure lightning with a whip," grinned Ginger, the horse-wrangler. "You want to ride round that guy, Slick."

Black Alec had also made a motion towards his belt, but he refrained. He broke in, in sharp tones.

"Let up, you galoots! Look here, you Sante Fe, you hitting the trail?"

"Sure!" said the Kid.

"Well, beat it pronto, afore there's trouble!" growled the foreman.

"If any guy is honing for trouble, I'll sure give him all he wants before I quit!" retorted the Kid.

"Git it!" said Black Alec laconically. And he swung away.

Slick Sampson and Injun Pete followed him. They went together into the foreman's shack, giving the Kid no further heed.

The Kid crossed over to the corral and called to Side-Kicker. He mounted the grey mustang and rode away from the Bar-T, several of the punchers waving their Stetsons in farewell as he went, and the rolling prairie swallowed him from sight.

The Ambush!

THE sound of distant hoof-strokes came to the Rio Kid's ears in the silence of the Mesquite sierra. The Kid was camped in the sierra.

He had left the Bar-T Ranch twenty miles behind him when he camped for noon beside the lonely trail that ran through the hills towards the far-off town of Sharpville.

The afternoon sun glowed down on the sierra now, but the Kid was in no hurry to break camp.

He was at a loose end.

He had camped in a clump of timber, high up the hillside, round the base of which ran the trail. Side-Kicker lay resting under the trees, every now and then turning his intelligent eyes towards his master, as if in sympathy with the Kid's sombre mood.

The Kid, leaning against a tree, looked idly down towards the trail at the foot of the hillside, winding among rocks and thickets and clumps of trees.

His brow was clouded.

He was tired of the outlaw trail, and the Bar-T would have been a welcome refuge. It was useless to think of it, but the Kid was thinking of it, all the same, with knitted brows.

Two horsemen came in sight on the trail riding into the sierra from the plains, the way the Kid had come some hours since.

"Shucks!" murmured the Kid as he sighted them.

They were distant, but he recognised the two at a glance. They were Injun Pete and Slick Sampson, the "foreman's favourites" of the Bar-T.

The Kid watched them idly, unseen by the two riders, hidden as he was by the trees among which he stood.

The clattering hoofs rang and echoed through the silence. The Kid's eyes followed the two horsemen, expecting to watch them out of sight.

But the hoof-beats ceased as Injun Pete and Slick Sampson halted on the trail.

They stopped where the trail ran by a thicket of high bush, a hundred yards down the rugged slope on which the Kid stood.

He saw them standing in the trail beside their horses, looking up and down the trail, and muttering together.

Then they led their horses into the thick bush, and disappeared from the Kid's sight.

The Kid whistled softly.

"Bush-whacking, by the great horned toad!" he murmured.

It was an ambush, and the two ruffians were laying it fairly under the Rio Kid's eyes.

The Kid watched the trail, but the two men did not emerge from the bush. Minute followed minute; no sound or

motion from the two who had concealed themselves beside the trail.

"Sho!" murmured the Kid.

He wondered.

On their looks he had judged the two favourites of the Bar-T foreman to be as tough as any galoots in the section. But tough as they looked, he would not have figured that any members of the ranch outfit would be tough enough to stage a hold-up. But if this was not an intended hold-up, the Kid reckoned that he had never seen one.

They were in ambush, watching the trail from the cover of the thick bush. They could only be watching it with hostile intent for some guy whom they expected to pass. Some enemy whom they aimed to shoot up from cover—or else some galoot who was to be held up and robbed. And back into the Kid's mind came what Texas Dave had told him that morning. This was the trail that Judge Pindex would be riding, back from Sharpville to the ranch. He was expected home that day, and he would be riding this trail.

The Kid whistled again. The two bushwhackers were watching for some guy, and he wondered whether it was the rancher.

"Old hoss," murmured the Kid, addressing Side-Kicker, "I guess this infant is horning into this game. I guess them two bushwhackers is going to get a surprise, old hoss."

Leaving the mustang in the trees, the Kid descended the hillside, towards the thicket by the trail.

He crept in cover and made no sound as he went. The Kid was an old hand at this game; he made his way down the rugged hillside as silent and invisible as an Apache or a Comanche stealing upon an enemy.

On his hands and knees he wormed his way into the thicket where the two bushwhackers lay in cover. And a murmur of voices that reached his ears warned him that he was close on them. Silent, unseen, the Kid wormed nearer, till he could see the two figures among the pecans and thorny bush. And he grinned as he saw that each of them was masked now, with a cloth drawn over his face, in which eye-holes were cut. If the Kid doubted that it was a hold-up, he would have been sure now.

The Rio Kid lay in cover, and made no sign. He was not honing for trouble, but he reckoned that he was going to chip in if he was wanted. Long minutes passed, silent save for the buzz of insects in the bush.

Then from the distance came a sound—the distant sound of horse's hoofs! Instantly the two bushwhackers were alert.

"That'll be the judge, Pete!" The Kid heard the muttering voice of Slick Sampson.

"I reckon!"

There was a rustle in the bush as the half-breed put his head out, his black eyes gleaming up the winding trail, watching for the approaching horseman.

Injun Pete drew back again.

"It's sure the judge!" he said.

"Keep doggo till he's close," muttered Slick. "The judge's a good man with a gun if you give him a chance, and we don't want to spill his juice if we can help it. Let him get close, then jump on him sudden, and get him covered—"

"You bet!"

The thudding of hoofs on the rugged trail drew nearer. The two bushwhackers hugged cover, watching and waiting, their guns in their hands now. And the Kid waited, too—a grin on his face and a gun in his hand, also.

The Kid Takes a Hand!

"HALT!"

"Put 'em up!"

Judge Pindex, boss of the Bar-T Ranch dragged in his horse suddenly.

The rancher was riding at an easy trot, along the rugged trail that wound round the base of the hill. From the pecan thicket two figures had suddenly leaped, and two Colts were levelled at the rider.

With a clatter of hoofs the horse came to a halt. The rancher's right hand flew towards his belt. But he did not touch a gun. He was covered by two levelled Colts, over which gleamed two pairs of fierce eyes from the eye-holes in the cloth masks. And the rancher slowly dropped his reins and lifted his hands above his head.

His brow was knitted and his eyes glittered at the hold-up men. But the rancher knew when he had to obey, and he obeyed the order to "put 'em up."

"Keep 'em up, hombre!" said Slick Sampson gruffly. "I guess it ain't no use scowling, feller; we've got you covered."

"I guess I'll see you strung up for this, whoever you are, you doggoned scallawag!" said the rancher curtly.

"Mebbe," drawled Slick. "But, jest now you're at the little end of the horn, feller, and you want to jump when you're told to jump. Keep 'em over your hat, feller, or you get yours mighty sudden."

He made a sign to his companion, and the half-breed stepped towards Pindex, drew the gun from his belt, and dropped it on the trail.

"Now I guess you can light down!" said Slick.

The rancher dropped his hands, and slid from the saddle. Injun Pete took his horse, and threw the reins over a bough of a pecan.

Slick's revolver covered the rancher all the time. Pindex was unarmed now, but the bushwhacker was taking no chances with him.

"You can go through his rags!" he muttered.

Injun Pete approached the rancher, grinning under his mask at the rage in the boss's face. His nimble fingers ran through the victim's pockets.

A wad of bills was turned out. There were several hundred dollars in the roll, but the bushwhackers were evidently not satisfied.

"Where's the rest, feller!" rapped Slick.

"I guess you got my roll!" growled the rancher.

"Aw! Forget it! You got the money from Sharpville to pay the bunch at the Bar-T. Where you got it?"

The rancher did not answer. He cast a hurried glance up and down the trail, as if in the hope of seeing help. But the Mesquite trail was a lonely one. The bushwhackers had picked the spot carefully for the ambush.

"Mebbe it's on the cayuse," muttered Slick. "Look-see, pard! I guess we don't want to be all day here. The marshal of Red Dog is somewhere in this sierra, lookin' for rustlers. Pronto!"

Injun Pete went to the rancher's horse. From one of the saddle-bags he disinterred a thick roll of bills.

"I guess this is the goods!" he grinned.

"You said it!" chuckled Slick. "Judge, you can sure beat it! You're leaving that cayuse along with us for a keepsake! You ain't got more'n twenty miles to walk to the Bar-T, and mebbe you'll meet up with some puncher who'll give you a lift, once you get out of the hills. You want to beat it now."

Judge Pindex drew a deep, savage breath.

"I guess I'll get you for this!" he muttered. "I guess I'll have the bunch hunting for you as soon as I strike the ranch—"

"You won't strike it this side of sundown, hoofin' it!" grinned Slick. "And I guess the bunch can hunt for us all they want—they won't cinch us in a month of Sundays. You git going, judge, I'm sure getting tired of holdin' this gun. And if—"

Bang!

The bushwhacker broke off with a startled yell.

The sudden shot rang out from the pecans, and the gun spun from Slick's hand, shot away by the bullet.

It crashed on the trail, and Slick, yelling with agony, clasped his numbed wrist with his left hand.

Injun Pete swung round towards the bush in utter amazement. From the

pecans a lithe figure stepped, a puncher in Stetson and goatskin chaps. His smoking gun looked at the masked half-breed. "Hands up, feller!" drawled the Rio Kid.

Injun Pete, gritting his teeth, threw up his gun to fire.

Bang!

The Rio Kid fired first.

The half-breed's bullet whizzed by a foot from the Kid's head, as the ruffian crumpled up and rolled over in the trail.

"I guess that guy would have it!" said

The rancher started.

"You ain't saying that it's a Bar-T man that's held me up on the trail!" he exclaimed.

"I sure ain't saying anything else," answered the Kid. "You uncover his face and I guess you'll know Slick Sampson."

"By the great horned toad!"

The rancher, with a grim brow, stepped to the bushwhacker, and jerked the mask from him. The face of Slick Sampson, distorted with rage, was revealed.

The Kid shook his head.

"I'm looking for a ranch to bed down on," he answered.

"Then you don't want to look any further than the Bar-T! You ride in with me, and I'll tell Alex Black to sign you on."

The Kid grinned.

"Suits me fine," he answered. "But I better tell you, boss, that I been to the Bar-T, and your foreman don't like me a little piece. I was at the Bar-T last night, and Mister Black was sure honing for me to hit the trail and get out of his sight."



Behind the trees the Rio Kid watched the hold-up, awaiting his chance to jump in and put the wind up the masked raiders!

the Kid coolly. "You askin' for the same medicine, feller?"

Slick Sampson was still clutching his wrist. He glared at the Kid with mad rage through the eye-holes of his mask.

"You!" he panted. "You hyer, darn you! You—"

"Jest me!" grinned the Kid. "I sure been watching you for a dog's age, feller, and I guessed I'd kinder chip in! You puttin' up your paws, hombre, or askin' for your ticket for soup?"

Slick, with a savage oath, elevated his hands over his Stetson. The fate of Injun Pete was a sufficient warning to him.

The rancher was staring blankly at the Rio Kid. He was as surprised as the bushwhackers by the boy puncher's sudden and unexpected appearance on the scene.

"Say, boy, who're you, and where did you jump from?" asked Judge Pindex.

The Kid grinned.

"You can call me Sante Fe Smith, judge," he answered. "I was camping on the hill when these two bulldozers moseyed along and laid for you, and I've kinder kept tabs on them since. I kinder guessed you'd be honing for some guy to chip in, judge!"

"You've said it!" agreed the rancher. He picked up the rolls of bills that the half-breed had dropped in the trail. "I guess it would have been a clean-out, if you hadn't horned in, puncher. Keep that doggoned trail-thief covered, and I'll sure tote him along to the ranch."

"They'll know him there!" grinned the Kid. "That guy ain't no stranger on the Bar-T, judge."

together." He jerked the mask from the face of the dead half-breed. "Injun Pete! I reckoned as much!"

"Say, boss," muttered Slick Sampson. "I guess we've slipped up on this; we sure have slipped up bad. I guess I'm honing to hit the trail, boss! The boys'll sure string me up if you tote me back to the ranch."

"I guess you're going to be handed over to the marshal of Red Dog, you durned lobo-wolf," answered the rancher, "and if the boys string you up afore he gets you, I ain't the guy that will take a lot of trouble to stop them. You keep him covered, puncher."

"You bet!" said the Kid. "They got their hosses in the pecans, rancher. I'll sure fix him up for hitting the trail."

Slick Sampson gave the Kid a deadly look. The boy puncher gave him a cheery grin in return. He drew nearer to the bushwhacker, and jammed the muzzle of his gun in Slick's neck.

"Get out your cayuse!" he said.

With a sullen curse the bushwhacker tramped into the thicket, and led the horses into the trail. Under the Kid's gun, he mounted, and the rancher bound him to the saddle with his own trail rope. Then the Rio Kid holstered his gun.

"I guess he's fixed now, rancher," he said. "You can sure tote him along to the Bar-T, and maybe Mister Black will be glad to see him again, as he's so fond of the guy."

The rancher looked at him.

"You riding any range in this section, puncher?" he asked.

browed face of the Bar-T foreman, and he grinned. He figured in his own mind that Black Alec was interested in what had happened on the Mesquite trail. Judge Pindex looked round.

"That's Alex Black," he said. "I guess he was riding this way to look for me on the trail. I guess it'll surprise him some when he sees that doggoned Slick."

"It'll sure surprise him a whole lot, sir, I reckon," assented the Kid.

He had noted the eager gleam that came into Slick Sampson's eyes at the sight of the ranch foreman. They rode towards the distant figure. Black Alec was still sitting motionless in the saddle, staring towards them. The Kid had no doubt that he was surprised at what he saw. The Bar-T foreman suddenly gave his horse the quirt and came towards them at a gallop.

And the Rio Kid shifted his reins and the rope of the led horses, to his left hand and with his right hitched his gun-belt a little, to bring the wammie butt of a gun closer to his hand. The Kid figured that he might want a gun when the Bar-T foreman came up.

THE END.

(The Outlaw Kid is dead nuts on rustlers and road-agents — and he's sure laid a few of 'em by the heels. But he's not finished with these particular insects by a long way. You'll find him still wagging ear with the bad men of the prairie in next week's story.)

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A Surprise for Black Alec!

ALEX BLACK, foreman of the Bar-T ranch, gave his broncho quirt and spur. He dashed at a gallop towards the group of riders that had emerged into the prairie from the trail in the Mesquite sierra. The foreman's hard, black-bearded face was flushed and there was a deep glitter in his eyes. His hand, as if unconsciously, went to his gun; but he withdrew it and lashed at his broncho with the quirt, as if he would wreak on the panting animal the bitter rage that was running riot in his breast. Yet it would have puzzled any rider on the Bar-T ranges to guess what it was that had got the foreman's goat so sorely.

Three riders had come out of the hill-trail into the plains. One of them was Judge Pindex, boss of the Bar-T. Another was a handsome boy puncher known as Santa Fe Smith to the Bar-T men, and whom no man in Red Dog country suspected to be the Rio Kid. The third man was Slick Sampson, of the Bar-T outfit, and he rode bound to his horse, the Kid holding the reins. The sight of Slick as a prisoner might have surprised the foreman of the ranch, but it hardly accounted for the rage that burned in his eyes and displayed itself in the savage lashing of his horse.

Judge Pindex slowed his horse to a halt as the foreman came thundering up. His bronzed face wore a puzzled look.

"Say, Alex Black sure looks like he has his mad up," said the rancher. "I guess something is biting him. and biting him bad!"

The Kid smiled.

"It sure does look that-a-way, sir!" he remarked.

With a crash of hoofs the foreman drew in the foaming horse. He gave the Kid one black and bitter look and touched his Stetson to the ranch boss. He was controlling his rage, but it gleamed out of his deep-set eyes in spite of him.

"Say, Black, what's got you?" asked the rancher. "You sure do look all het up!"

The foreman gestured with his quirt towards the Rio Kid.

"I guess I ain't none too pleased to see that ornery cuss on this ranch, sir," he answered. "I've turned him off the Bar-T once, and he sure wants a lot of telling to quit. What's he doing with a Bar-T man roped up that-a-way, I want to know?" Black Alec gritted his teeth. "I'm all beat to see him riding with you, boss, and a Bar-T man roped up in his hands! I guess I got a gun here that will tell him to go, if he don't light out pronto."

"Forget it," said the rancher curtly.

"I'm telling you, Black, that I was held up on the trail back from Sharpsville by two ornery guys that got hold of the roll I was bringing from the bank to pay the bunch. That puncher horned in and stopped them."

The Kid fancied that the foreman had already guessed that!

"And them two guys," went on Judge Pindex. "was Slick Sampson and Injun Pete, of my own outfit—them two pesky scallywags that you've always thought such a lot of, Black. I've told you more'n once they was the only two bad apples in the barrel, but you allowed you could make use of them on the ranch, and I left it to you."

The foreman breathed hard.

"Where's Injun Pete?" he asked. "He was shot up in the rookus. And Slick's going to be handed over to the marshal of Red Dog," answered the rancher. "You was sure fooled by them two pesky guys, Black."

Black Alec sat his panting horse, his eyes on the Kid. The Kid gave him a cheery smile. He could figure what the Bar-T foreman was thinking; but the foreman's thoughts were not such as he could utter in the presence of the Bar-T boss—if the Kid was right. The Kid would have laid a hundred Texas dollars to a Mexican centavo that Alex Black knew how his two favourites in the bunch had been occupied in the Mesquite sierra that afternoon. But such a suspicion did not cross the rancher's mind, and the Kid kept his own counsel, only



you figure on him joining the bunch, I'll sure be glad to see him there."

"You'll find me a good man, sir," said the Kid meekly. "I'll sure be proud to ride

in your bunch, Mister Black."

"As for that pesky scallywag," said the foreman, with a look at Slick, "he's fooled me a whole heap, and I'll see that he gets what's coming to him. I guess I got to get into Red Dog to see the marshal, and I'll tote that all-fired bushwhacker along with me. Hand him over to me, you, Santa Fe."

"That goes," said the rancher.

The Kid paused a moment or two.

If what the Kid figured was well-founded he could guess what would happen to Slick Sampson when he was handed over to the Bar-T foreman to be ridden into the cow town. The Kid guessed that the bushwhacker would never reach the marshal's office.

"Say, I guess I'll ride this guy into town, if you ain't any objection, Mister Black," said the Kid.

Alex Black turned on him savagely.

"You disputing orders already now the boss says you're in the bunch?" he demanded. "You figure that you can talk back to your foreman because you've helped the boss a piece? I tell you, Santa Fe, if you're going to ride with the Bar-T boys, you're going to jump to orders. Get that?"

"Sure!" said the Kid.

There was no help for it. He rode closer and handed over Slick's reins to the ranch foreman. He did not fail to note the sly grin that dawned for a moment on the stubby face of Slick.

"You ride on to the ranch with the boss," grunted Alex Black. "Take that

faintly amused by what he guessed Alex Black had to suppress.

"I sure had to shoot up Injun Pete, Mister Black," said the Kid. "He got a gun on me, and it was him for Jordan or else this baby. But you'll sure be glad to hear that the judge never lost his roll to them two bulldozers. They had him fixed when I horned in—"

"They sure did!" said the rancher.

"I—I guess I'm surprised," said Black Alec. "I never figured that they was that kind of cusses, sir. It's got me beat!" His eyes for a second met Slick's.

Slick Sampson, gunman, wasn't slick enough when he hit upon the Rio Kid for a target.

"Santa Fe Smith is looking for a ranch to bed down in," said Judge Pindex. "I've offered him a place in the outfit, Black! You sure will get a good man in that puncher. He allows that you've seen him already and don't like him a whole lot; but, after he's saved me from them bushwhackers, I guess you'll be glad to see him in the outfit."

Alex Black did not reply for a moment. But the rancher's words were a command in polite form, and he knew it. He had to sign on Santa Fe Smith in the Bar-T bunch.

"I reckoned that puncher was too fresh for this outfit, boss," he said at last. "But what you say goes, of course. If

other cayuse to the corral. I guess I'll see you agin, sir, after I've landed this bushwhacker in the calaboose at Red Dog."

The rancher nodded and rode on, the Rio Kid following him with the led horse that had belonged to Injun Pete. The Kid glanced back once and saw the Bar-T foreman riding in the direction of the distant cow town at a gallop, leading Slick's horse by the reins. A fold of the prairie hid them from sight, and the Kid figured that once they were out of sight they would head for anywhere but Red Dog. He was not sure yet, but he was going to be sure—if Alex Black horned in later at the Bar-T with a story that Slick had got away. And the Kid figured that he would.

One of the Bunch!

GINGER, the horse-wrangler, came in at the doorway of the Bar-T bunkhouse and nodded to the punchers there. Night had fallen on the plains. Baldy, the cook, had handed supper out of the chuckhouse, and most of the outfit had gathered to it. Seated at the trestle table was the Kid, and the face of the Kid was bright and cheery. He had ridden in with the boss, and though Alex Black had not yet returned from Red Dog to sign him on formally, he was now a member of the bunch. And there was not a man in the Bar-T crowd that was not glad to see him there.

There had been only two members of the bunch who had not liked the Kid, and they were the foreman's favourites, Injun Pete and Slick Sampson. And they were out of the bunch now; the half-breed shot up in the Mesquite hills, and Slick gone to the marshal of Red Dog on a charge of bush-whacking. And that news, which the Kid had told in the bunkhouse, was more than welcome to the outfit. Slick and his side-partner had been, as the rancher himself said, the two bad apples in the barrel, and the whole outfit were glad to have seen the last of them.

Ginger gave the Kid a cheery grin as he tramped in with a clatter of spurs and dropped on the bench at the table.

"Say, I hear you belong to the bunch now, Santa Fe?" he said.

"You've said it," agreed the Kid.

"I guess I'm sure pleased," said the horse-wrangler. "I'll say the boss knows a good man when he sees one."

The Kid grinned.

"Feller, you're talking hoss-sense," he remarked. "For sheer solid hoss-sense, hombre, I pass it up to you."

There was a chuckle from the punchers.

"But Alex Black won't be none too pleased," remarked Ginger. "He sure has got a grouch agin you, and I'll say I don't see why, arter you helped to wipe out the Mexican rustlers and save a herd for the boss. You want to keep one eye peeled for Black Alec."

"I guess I'll keep both peeled," said the Kid. "But I figure on making Mister Black see he's got a good man."

"Mebbe!" said Ginger doubtfully. "Mebbe! I guess he won't be pleased at his pesky favourites turning out to be a pair of scallywags and holdin' up the boss on the trail. They sure did pull the wool over Alex Black's eyes a whole lot."

The Kid was not so sure of that, but he did not utter his thoughts. He had already learned that the foreman was not popular with the bunch, but that he was not a straight guy did not cross the simple minds of the men of the range and the bunkhouse.

"And I sure been thinking since I heard about that hold-up," went on the horse-wrangler, "and I kinder guess that Slick could tell us suthin' about the cows that's missin' from the ranges, if he liked."

"Cows missin'?" said the Kid.

"There ain't nary a day without cows missin'," said Ginger. "I'm telling you there's rustlers in this section, and they don't let the Bar-T ranges alone. Nope!"

"I figured that the rustlers was wiped out when we cleaned up Joaquin Fernandez and his gang," said the Kid.

"Not by a jugful!" said Ginger. "There's a heap o' rustlers, as well as that bunch of greasers. I'll say Alex Black put paid to that bunch; they was wiped out to the last dago in the gang. I guess there won't be any more Mexican cattle-lifters come across the Rio Grande for a spell. But there's rustlers in the Mesquite sierra, and I guess they run off beef to sell at the railroad camps along to Sharpville. And now Slick's turned out to be a bushwhacker I figure he knowed where some of that beef went."

"You said it, Ginger," chimed in Texas Dave. "I'll say the rustlers was special busy in Slick's range, anyhow. He lost more cows than any other hombre in the outfit."

"I'd sure have 'spicioned him afore if I'd known the all-fired scallywag he was," said the horse-wrangler. "But I guess Slick won't do any more double-crossing; he will sure get his now he's handed over to the marshal at Red Dog."

"Mister Black ain't back yet?" asked the Kid.

"Nope; he's sure late."

Supper over, the Kid strolled out of the bunkhouse. Stars were gleaming in a dark, velvety sky, and a soft breeze rustled the tall grass of the prairie. The Kid, leaning on the bunkhouse wall, looked across the plains in the direction of the cow town of Red Dog. Black Alec had not yet returned to the ranch, and the Kid was curious to see him when he came in. He had a hunch that Black Alec would come in with a tale that Slick Sampson had escaped, and the Kid wanted to know.

There was a clatter of hoofs on the prairie trail at last. A horseman loomed up in the starlight, riding for the ranch.

At a distance the Kid recognised the foreman. He watched Mister Black curiously as he rode in.

Black Alec rode direct to the ranch-house, jumped down and latched his horse, and went into the building. There was a light in the window of the living-room of the ranch-house, and the Kid saw the tall shadow of the foreman cross the light within. Judge Pindex was there, and the Kid wondered what the foreman had to tell him.

Ten minutes later Black Alec came out and led his horse away from the ranch. Ginger went to take the broncho from him and turn it into the corral.

"They got that bulldozed safe in the calaboose, sir?" asked the horse-wrangler. "I guess we'd have strung him up if he'd been brought back here. The boys are sure wild at him holding up the boss."

"I guess he gave me the slip on the prairie," answered Black Alec shortly.

Ginger uttered an exclamation. The Kid smiled faintly. He had expected it, and what he had expected had come to pass.

"You let that bushwhacker get away, sir?" exclaimed Ginger.

The foreman rapped out an oath.

"Let nothing! I reckoned he was safely tied on that hoss when that dog-goned gink Santa Fe handed him over to me. How'd I know the feller was a geek that couldn't tie a knot like a cowboy? Slick worked the rope loose, and he jumped for it when I was takin' him through the scrubs and cleared before I could get a bead on him. I'll say I emptied a Colt after him, but he got away."

He swung round towards the Kid with a scowling brow.

"You, Santa Fe! You figure that you're the man to ride in a ranch outfit, and you don't know how to tie a rope!" he snarled.

The Kid met his eyes coolly. Well the Kid knew that he had bound Slick Samp-



The Rio Kid raced past the bunch of scrubs, and a volley of shots rang out. But the Kid was wide awake. In a second he had flung himself over the side of his horse!

son to his horse in a way that the bushwhacker could not have got out of without help. But the foreman had to give an explanation, and it was his game to put it on the Kid.

"I figured that I tied him safe, Mister Black," said the Kid mildly. "He sure never got away while I was with him riding him out of the hills."

"He got away half-way to Red Dog," snarled Black. "He got loose from that rope you put on him."

"Say, you want to learn to tie a rope, Santa Fe," said Ginger.

"I guess I ain't got a whole heap to learn about tying a rope," said the Kid. "If Mister Black will let me tie him on a horse, I'll undertake to eat the rope if he gets loose in a month of Sundays."

"Aw, can it!" snapped Alex Black. "That bushwhacker got loose. He beat it in the mesquite and got clear. I hunted for him two hours and more, but he got to cover and kept doggo. Just because you couldn't tie a rope, you gol-darned gink! Don't give me any back-chat, but I'm telling you, gol-darned ginks ain't any use in this hyer outfit!"

And the foreman swung angrily away and went into his shack.

Ginger grinned at the Kid.

"Say, you got Mister Black's mad up!" he remarked. "I guess I like you, Santa Fe, but I'll say you was a gink to tie a rope so's a man got loose."

"Feller," said the Kid quietly, "you've allowed that that hoss of mine is a good cayuse?"

"Best chunk of hossflesh I've seen in Texas!" said Ginger. "What about it, Santa Fe?"

"This," said the Kid. "You let me rope you on that cayuse o' mine like I roped Slick on his cayuse, and if you get loose without help I'll give you the hoss."

Ginger looked at the Kid long and hard. "I get you!" he said slowly. "I sure get you, Santa Fe!"

The horse-wrangler whistled. "I guess Alex Black didn't want to hand that bulldozer over, having been a friend of his'n. I sure get you! But"—Ginger lowered his voice—"you don't want to stand on your hind legs and shout it over the ranch, Santa Fe! Alex Black is boss of the outfit so long as he's foreman. Keep it back of your teeth, feller."

The Kid nodded. He knew that Alex Black had set the bushwhacker free, but he was not going to shout it out over the ranch. Ginger led the foreman's horse away, leaving the Kid with a thoughtful cloud on his brow. He was going to have trouble with Alex Black. He could not doubt that. But the Kid thrived on trouble, and he did not figure that he was going to come out at the little end of the horn.

Shot for Shot!

"BURNING daylight!" shouted Texas Dave in the doorway of the bunkhouse.

The Kid rolled out of his bunk. The rising sun gleamed on the wide grasslands of the Bar-T ranch. The Rio Kid turned out bright and early.

The Kid breakfasted with the outfit and went to the corral to see to his horse. He expected to be riding the range that day, and he looked forward to a puncher's day's work cheerfully. Ginger gave him an approving grin as he cared for his mustang at the corral gate. A guy who took so much trouble over his cayuse as the Kid did was sure of the horse-wrangler's esteem. The Kid was adjusting a cinch when the foreman came up.

"You for the Cactus Creek range, Santa Fe," he said.

The Kid straightened up. Alex Black seemed to have forgotten his grouch against the new man in the bunch. He spoke to the Kid as he might have spoken to any other cowman. The Kid was rather relieved. Black Alec did not want him riding the Bar-T ranges, but he seemed to have made up his mind to it now that it could not be helped, and if he meant to treat the Kid like the rest of the bunch it was so much to the good.

"Yes, sir!" said the Kid cheerfully.

"You'll ride to Cactus Creek and relieve the two men on duty there," said the foreman. "It's time Pecos and Yuma Bill hit the ranch. You want to take grub for a week. I guess Pecos will put you wise about the range when you get there. You don't want to lose time."

"You won't see my cayuse's heels for dust, sir," said the Kid. "But I guess I'm new here, and I don't savvy Cactus Creek."

"Ask Ginger; he'll put you wise."

"Sure!"

The foreman stalked away. The new cowman had his instructions and Alex Black was done with him. The Kid turned to the horse-wrangler. Ginger was staring after the foreman with a rather peculiar expression on his bronze face. He grinned as he looked at the Kid.

"Mister Black sure has a grouch agin you, Santa Fe," he remarked.

"How come?" asked the Kid.

"Waal, I guess nobody in the outfit hones to ride to Cactus Creek," said Ginger. "And there's always two men posted there. It's jest on the edge of the hills, and twenty miles from everywhere else in Texas. There's always been two men on that range. Say, you'll be powerful lonely for a week!"

The Kid smiled. If Alex Black was making things hard for him, that cut no ice with the Kid. The Rio Kid was used to lonely trails.

"I guess it's all in the day's work, Ginger," he said. "You put me wise how to hit Cactus Creek and I'll sure vamoose the ranch pronto."

He listened to the horse-wrangler's directions, nodded, and mounted Side-Kicker. In a cheery mood, though he was heading for the most solitary and least attractive post on all the ranges of the extensive Bar-T, the Kid gave Side-Kicker a light flick of the quirt and galloped away.

The ranch dropped out of sight behind him.

A few miles out, he passed a couple of Bar-T punchers and waved to them. After that the Kid had the prairie to himself.

Mile after mile glided under the galloping hoofs of the grey mustang. The Kid enjoyed that gallop in the fresh, morning air.

Ten miles from the ranch he slacked his pace.

Ahead of him a wide belt of pecan, post-oak and straggling juniper stretched down from the foot of the Mesquite hills across the plain. There were many openings in it to the open plain beyond. No marked trail ran from the ranch to Cactus Creek, but the Kid knew where to aim for, and he had to ride through that belt of scrub.

Caution was second nature to the Kid. He had too many enemies to be ever off his guard. So when a blue jay fluttered out of the thicket ahead of him the Rio Kid figured that it did not do so without a reason. He had not forgotten that Slick Sampson was loose, neither did he figure that Slick had forgotten how the Kid had beaten him to it at the hold-up.

The blue jay had settled down again at a distance. The belt of thicket lay dusky in the sunshine, lifeless, silent. The Kid's way lay through it by a wide opening beyond which he could see the farther plain. The Kid, suddenly wheeling his horse, dashed back the way he had come, with Side-Kicker's streaming tail tossing towards the thicket.

He felt the wind of something that whizzed by a foot from him, and the report of a rifle followed the shot.

The Kid grinned.

There was an ambush in the pecans, and he had drawn the fire of the hidden enemy. As well as if he had seen the man, the Kid knew that the bushwhacker had watched him from the thicket, waited to see what opening he would strike for, and crept along through the scrubs to lie in wait for him there. And when the Kid wheeled and rode back the bushwhacker figured that he had taken the alarm and tried a pot-shot. Which was exactly what the Kid wanted, for the shot told him that there was an ambush in the pecans, and from the fact that only one shot was fired

he figured that he had only one man to deal with.

Bang, bang!

It was a Winchester rifle, and it pumped lead after the Kid. But the Kid was galloping and leaning from one side of his horse to the other. The marksman in the pecans had little chance of hitting him. And in a minute the Kid rode down into a sunken coulee of the prairie and was safe below the level of the surrounding plain.

He threw himself out of the saddle. There was a grin on his face, but a steely glitter in his eyes. The Kid was not the guy to be pot-shotted like this with impunity.

"I sure wonder if that Slick after my pesky scalp?" murmured the Kid. "If it's Slick, I want to know how he savvyed that I'd be riding the trail to Cactus Creek this mornin'?"

The Kid's face grew grim. If it was Slick Sampson lying in ambush in the pecans there was only one way Slick could have known that the Kid would ride that way. Only one man could have put him wise to it, and that man was Alex Black, foreman of the Bar-T.

"By the great horned toad!" muttered the Kid. "I guess it sure looks as if that doggoned scallywag sent me on this trail to be shot up. It surely does look like it."

The Kid intended to know. He had ridden away from the ambush because a horseman on the open plain had not a dog's chance against a rifleman in cover in the thicket. But he was not done with the bushwhacker yet.

Leaving the grey mustang in the coulee, the Kid crept to the upper plain.

He did not rise to his feet there. The grass was high and thick, but was not high enough to cover a standing man. The Kid remained on his knees. In deep cover, creeping like a Red Indian, the Kid hit for the pecans.

He figured that the rifleman would be hugging cover, watching the coulee, ready to take another pot-shot if the horseman emerged from it. Silently and swiftly the Kid crept through the high grass, aiming to strike the belt of pecans at a distance from the spot whence the shots had come.

Minute followed minute.

No sound reached the Kid save the buzz of insects in the thick grass. There was no more shooting from the ambush.

The Kid struck the pecans at last.

He crept into the thicket from the grass, his eyes on the alert, and drew himself to his feet among the small, closely-packed trees.

Silent as a creeping Apache he threaded his way among post-oak and pecan and clinging juniper and Spanish moss. Without hesitation and without a fault he headed for the opening through the scrubs, where he figured that the rifleman was still watching.

The Kid looked out from the thicket. Through the belt of scrubs, behind a fallen log, a burly figure was kneeling, looking along a rifle that rested on the log. And it was the figure of Slick Sampson!

The Kid grinned.

Softly and silently he edged nearer the gunman. He was only a few feet from the ruffian when he halted behind a tree.

The Rio Kid could get no nearer to Slick Sampson without revealing himself to the gunman. Of course, he could have shot the ruffian where he lay, but that was not the Kid's way—to shoot a man unawares.

As the Kid was pondering the question an idea came to him. From the tree behind which he was hiding a bough jutted out almost over the place where Slick Sampson was lying. No sooner did the brainwave occur to the Kid than he acted.

Silent as any Apache or Comanche the Kid climbed the tree and crawled along the bough, gun in hand, until he was almost over the gunman. Hidden by foliage, he hesitated a moment, on the alert, eyeing Slick Sampson beneath him. But the gunman was still ignorant of the Rio Kid's nearness, and the Kid rose slowly and then launched himself down on top of the ruffian.

(Continued on page 335)

wondering whether the strain of the race had confused him. Barney sat up in his seat and yelled out that something was amiss, and the captain took his foot uncertainly off the accelerator.

Then he moved as though a set of springs had been let loose inside him, for round a further curve, a level-crossing appeared in sight. The car was travelling at over eighty miles an hour and there was not a hope of pulling it up in time. Both the captain and Barney realised it and ducked instinctively. With a crash the speeding car went through the light gates like a knife through butter.

Barney's heart missed a beat in that brief instant, for whilst he was bumped and nearly flung out of his seat as the car bucketed over the lines, he caught sight of a shining black monster that seemed to be right on top of them. Then they were through the farther gates, there was a mighty crash and a rumbling from behind them, and Barney looked back as the captain skidded the car to a standstill.

A train was thundering past the crossing, its wheels clattering over the battered remains of the gate, and its Westinghouse brakes screaming as the driver clapped them on. Speed had brought them within a hair's-breadth of death, but speed had saved them at the last instant—the train had missed them by inches only!

The captain, however, was not wasting time. His handsome face was set grimly, and he was already reversing the car.

"This is a little of our fat foreign friend's work, I think," he said. "But I'm not letting him get away with it. Will you sit tight, Barney, and chance what damage has been done to the car, so that we can get back and finish the race?"

"I ain't getting out o' this car until we've won, capt'n, sir!" answered Barney quietly. "We had a full lap lead before we was sent off down this turnin', so we got plenty of chance yet if only all four wheels'll stick on."

"Good boy!" said the captain, and raced the car back over the crossing which the train had passed. Back at the fork roads, they had to stop and drop down one of the barrier poles which the foreigner and his friend had replaced directly after they had passed, so that the rest of the field would not follow. Directly they got through and put the pebe back, however, the captain "put his foot down," and the car screamed forward, to pass the grandstands three minutes later, a whole lap behind the Slovak car, which was now leading.

The rest of that race has gone into motor-racing history—still more, into the special history of the rise of the Lockheed Motor Company to its present position of most prosperous concern in the trade.

At the end of the fifth lap, Captain Malcom was one lap behind the Slovak—and only five to go. A handicap of ten miles in fifty; a position that

any expert would have described as hopeless. At the end of the eighth, the Lockheed was a little over half a lap in arrears, and at the end of the ninth—well, as the cars thundered past the grandstands, the crowds rose in their places and appeared to go crazy.

For the Lockheed and the Slovak were running level.

Down in the pits a fat man walked nonchalantly towards the exit-barriers, but he found himself surrounded by a quite affectionate group of his brethren who stood close and intimated that they simply couldn't think of letting him walk about unprotected—what with the danger of pickpockets in this strange country, and all that.

Three minutes later, when Captain Malcom screamed over the finishing line fifty yards ahead of the Slovak, someone playfully knocked off the fat man's hat. Someone else, carried away by the spirit of fun, ripped up the back of his coat, whilst yet another wrenched his necktie off.

It took six policemen and a red-faced inspector nearly half an hour to get the fat man away from his compatriots—who had the volatile temperament of their race—and when they did so, they had to surround him until someone had fetched a sack with which he might cover his trembling form.

Then they led him away, but as he passed the repair-pits where the cars were lined up, he caught sight of Barney grinning at him.

"'Allo, my young friend," shouted Barney. "Goin' in for the sack-race? Ain't it surprisin' 'ow much better a car runs for sand in the cylinders? Never 'ave thought it, would you?"

"You double-crossed me!" howled the fat man, struggling in a firm police grip. "You changed that engine somehow."

"Oh, no we didn't," grinned the youngster gleefully. "We didn't 'ave no need to, my young friend. Y'see, that car what you filled up with grit was our practice-car, an' it didn't matter a little bit. We shouldn't do re'arsals on the actual car we was goin' to race, for fear of losin' its tune. So laugh that off!"

The fat man gasped as he was hauled away, and spent the rest of the day in a small and draughty cell, meditating on the unfairness of life. Next morning, when Captain Malcom and Barney appeared in court, armed with certain photographs, the fat foreigner almost swooned.

He decided that life was not only unfair, but hard.

And for the eighteen months that followed, "hard" was the word!

THE END.

(Barney in the strangest 400 miles road-race of his speed-mad career. See next week's Smashing Complete Tale of the Speedway.)

THE OUTLAW KID!

(Continued from page 318.)

"Great gophers—"

The cry that rose to Sampson's lips died in the instant that the Kid landed on top of him, flattening him out and winding him.

The Kid leaped to his feet, his Colt menacing the gunman sprawling at his feet.

"Kind o' sudden meeting!" said the Kid. "Get on your pins and put 'em up, feller! I guess I've got you now, Slick—and leave that rifle where it is!"

"Dog-gone you!" panted Sampson, and slowly, savagely, the gunman rose to his feet, his hands in the air.

"You sure got away from Alex Black last night, Slick," said the Kid, "but you ain't getting away this time! I'm sure going to ride you into Red Dog afore I strike Cactus Creek, you dog-goned lobo-wolf! Say, who put you wise to it that I was hitting this trail this mornin'?"

Slick Sampson did not answer. He stood panting for a while, eyeing the Kid with a desperate gleam in his eyes.

"Dog-gone you!" he muttered at last. "You figure that you're riding me into Red Dog, puncher?"

"You've said it!" agreed the Kid. "And this time you won't be with Alex Black, and I guess you'll get to the calaboose safe, you bushwhacking coyote! I guess I know how to tie a rope that won't come loose, when you ain't with Black Alec, feller!"

He advanced nearer the gunman, his Colt at a level. His foot caught a trailing liana and for a fraction of a second the Kid stumbled. Instantly the gunman's hand swept down to the revolver in his belt.

"Let up, you gink!" roared the Kid in warning.

But Slick Sampson was already jerking up the Colt to fire.

Bang!

The Kid's Colt roared and Slick Sampson staggered back. His own gun roared the next second, but his arm was sagging and the bullet crashed past the Kid's riding-boots into a tree. With a gasping cry, the gunman slumped down into the grass.

"I guess you would have it, feller!" said the Rio Kid soberly. "And I guess I burned powder only jest in time. It was you or me, feller, and you sure was the guy that asked for it!"

When the Rio Kid called Side-Kicker, mounted the grey mustang and rode out of the pecans, heading for Cactus Creek, he rode alone.

(The Outlaw Kid comes up against more perilous adventures in next week's Gripping Western Tale.)

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The RANGER

No. 13—Week Ending
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2



The OUTLAW "KID!"



FULL-OF-PEP COMPLETE
WESTERN THRILLER.

Pecos in a Paddy!

SMOKE was rising from the tin chimney of the lonely stockman's hut at Cactus Creek. It was the blur of grey smoke against a blue sky that first located the hut to the Rio Kid's eyes as he came trotting up the bank of the creek. It was a welcome sight to the Kid. He had ridden twenty miles that morning, from the Bar-T ranch to that out-lying range at the foot of the Mesquite sierra, and he figured that he was ready for his beans.

Two men of the Bar-T outfit, Yuma Bill and Pecos, were in charge of the Cactus Creek range, with three hundred cows to look after. The Kid was on his first duty since he had joined the Bar-T outfit; and he knew that it was because Alex Black, the foreman, had a grouch against him that he was sent on that solitary duty alone. All the outfit knew that two men were wanted on that range, and two men had always been posted there. The Kid was ordered to ride that range on his lonesome; but he was not grouching. Lonely trails were not new to the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande. And he figured that he could handle a herd of three hundred cows.

Side-Kicker, after twenty miles of rugged prairie, was as fresh as paint. The Kid rode up the bank of the creek at a trot, his eyes sweeping the range he was to ride for the next week. The creek flowed down from an opening in the sierra, and there was rich green pasture on either side of it. Plenty of feed, and good watering for the herd, the Kid reckoned; it was a good range, so far as that went. But they had told him in the Bar-T bunkhouse that there were rustlers in the Mesquite hills, and the Kid reckoned that a rustler who knew his business would find it as easy as pie to drive stray cows off that range into the hills, with only one man in charge. A galoot had to shut his eyes sometimes! That was a rather troublesome thought to the Kid. The boss of the Bar-T had made the foreman sign him on in the bunch, and the

Kid did not want to begin by losing cows for his boss. He wondered rather grimly whether Alex Black wanted him to lose cows as an excuse for firing him.

He rode up to the hut with a clatter of hoofs. A puncher appeared in the doorway, with a can of beans in his hand. He stared at the Kid.

The Kid jumped off Side-Kicker, and turned the grey mustang into the corral adjoining the hut. The puncher watched him inquiringly. The Kid walked up to the doorway with jingling spurs.

"Say, feller, what you happen to want?" drawled the man in the doorway.

"I guess I've come to take over the range," explained the Kid. "I'm a new guy in the bunch: you can call me Santa Fe Smith. You Pecos or Yuma?"

"Yuma Bill," answered the puncher. "Pecos is on the range. Wade in and feed. I guess Pecos'll be along."

"I'm sure ready for feed," said the Kid cheerfully, and he entered the hut.

Rustlers change their minds about the Bar-T cows when the Outlaw Kid is sent to guard them.

There was a cheery smell of cooking. There were beans and bacon and flapjacks on the rusty iron stove.

"Say, Mister Black ain't sent one man, and him a kid, to take over this range?" asked Yuma Bill as the Kid sat down on a pinewood bench to feed.

"He sure has!" answered the Kid. "I guess Mister Black thinks such a heap of me that he figures that I can do two men's work. I sure take that very kind of Mister Black."

Yuma grinned. "You'll want to watch out," he said. "Alex Black will raise Cain, if you lose cows, and I guess there's cow-thieves in the hills. We done lost six cows last week."

The Kid nodded. If two men on the range had lost half a dozen cows, the Kid figured that more ought to be lost with only one man riding range. He guessed that Alex Black was wise to that, too. It looked to the Kid as if Mister Black was willing to lose cows for his

boss, in order to get back on the new puncher that he disliked in the outfit. The Kid was going to have a hard row to hoe on the Cactus Creek range.

There was a clatter of hoofs outside, a jingle of spurs, and the other ranger-riders tramped in. He stared at the Kid.

"That's Pecos," said Yuma Bill. "Say, Pecos, Alex Black has sent this guy to take over the range on his lonesome."

Pecos grunted. "I guess Alex Black is loco," he said.

"They'll have half the herd before the week's out, turned into beef to sell at the railroad camps along to Sharpville."

"I guess they'll hear my guns talking, feller, afore they get half the herd off this range," said the Kid. "I reckon, if they cinch stray cows, it will be Mister Black's fault, and not mine; but they won't get half the herd, nor yet a quarter. And if I get a bead on any of them durned rustlers, they'll be powerful sorry for homing in on this range."

"You sure got a big voice for a little man!" said Pecos with a snort, eyeing the Kid. "How long is it since you said good-bye to your schoolmarm?"

The Kid grinned.

The cowman had come in, in a bad temper; that was clear. The Kid figured that he had had trouble on the range. But the Kid was not going to quarrel with a Bar-T man if he could help it.

"Say, what's biting you, Pecos?" asked Yuma Bill.

Another snort from Pecos.

"There's more cows gone!" he snapped.

"I just been picking up the trail of a small bunch, leading up into the hills. I'll say it's time the marshal of Red Dog got a holt on them rustlers."

"Ain't you followed up the trail?" asked the Kid.

Pecos gave him a glare.

"Did Alex Black send you up here to teach me to punch cows?" he demanded belligerently.

"Sure not!" said the Kid pacifically.

"And I ain't honing to teach you nothing, feller. I guess I got plenty to learn myself."

Which was not quite correct, for the Kid knew as much about cows as any man in Texas could have told him.

"I'll say you have," said Pecos, "and I'll say that you better learn not to shoot off your mouth permissus! I guess Alex Black must be plumb loco

to send you up hyer. Jest plumb loco! You'll lose the whole herd for the boss; and I guess, if a rustler shows up, you'll bolt the door and hide your cabeza under the blankets in your bunk."

"Say, you sure are spilling a whole jugful, feller," drawled the Kid. "You want to use that big mouth of yours for packing away beans!"

Yuma Bill grinned. Pecos made a step towards the Kid, taking a grip on the quirt he had brought into the shack with him.

"You asking for this hyer quirt?" he snapped. "I guess you won't have to ask more'n once."

"Aw, can it," said the Kid. "I ain't come up hyer to hunt trouble. I come to take over the range; and Mister Black's orders is for you two guys to ride back to the ranch and leave me to it. Put your quirt away, feller, and sit down to your fodder."

.. Say, was Alex Black full of tanglefoot

when he sent you up hyer?" demanded Pecos. "I guess he must have been. I'll sure you'd be too plumb scared to stick here on your lonesome."

"I ain't easy scared," smiled the Kid. "I ain't a whole lot scared of an ornery cowman blowing off his mouth permissus, and cavorting around with a quirt in his paw. Not a whole lot."

"I sure said you wouldn't have to ask more'n once!" roared the angry cowman, and he made a stride at the Kid, with the quirt in the air.

Bang!

The Kid's hand went to a gun more swiftly than the eye could follow. There was a puff of smoke from his hip and Pecos started back with a yell. He stared blankly at the handle of the whip that was grasped in his hand. The rest of the quirt lay on the earthen floor. The Kid's bullet had cut it in two.

"Carry me home to die!" gasped the Bar-T puncher. He stared at the quirt like a man in a dream.

"Say, that guy can use a gun!" exclaimed Yuma Bill. "Say, Pecos, you don't want to get to gun-play with that little cuss, you surely do not."

Pecos dropped the quirt, and his hand strayed to a gun. The Kid smiled at him over a lifted Colt.

"Don't!" he said softly.

And Pecos did not! He stared at the Kid hard, withdrew his hand from his holster, and sat on a bench at the table. The Kid holstered his gun and smiled amiably.

A grin dawned slowly on the rugged face of the Bar-T puncher.

"You can sure handle a gun," he said. "I pass it up to you! I guess I take back what I said about you being scared. You sure are a little man!"

And the three punchers ate together. Before the meal ended, the Kid was on as friendly terms with the two range-riders as with the rest of the bunch at the Bar-T.

Running Down the Rustler!

THE Rio Kid stood in the doorway of the shack, and looked out over the sunny prairie. The creek winding down from the hills, gleamed and shone in the sunlight; the high grass waved and glistened. Southward, as far as the eye could reach, stretched the sea of rolling grass; northward, the Mesquite sierra barred the

horizon. It was towards the sierra that the Kid's glance turned. If there was one thing that got the Kid's goat more than another, it was cow-stealing. All over Texas, even in places where he had never been seen, the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande had a wild reputation. There were plenty of guys who would not have put it past the Rio Kid to drive cows. But they did not know the Kid. Outlaw he had been made, by no fault of his own; but he was still at heart, what he had always been—a cowpuncher with all a cowman's principles and prejudices. Cow-stealing got the Kid's goat, and got it bad.

Now he had quitted the outlaw trail, and hoped that he had quit for keeps. It was sheer joy to the Kid to be riding with a ranch outfit again; and the Bar-T was as good a bunch as he ever wanted to ride with. The boss was a good boss, and it made the Kid sore to think of thieving rustlers running off Bar-T cows. He was thinking as he stood looking out over the sunlit prairie. Pecos and Yuma Bill were packing their traps, to hit the trail for the ranch. They figured that Alex Black was a mosshoad to put one man in charge of the range; but orders were orders. The Kid, after communing with himself for some time, turned back into the shack.

"Say, you'uns," he said, "you in a hurry to hit the Bar-T?"

"Not any," answered Yuma Bill. "I guess our time ain't up here yet, only if Alex Black says hit the trail, it's us for the trail, I guess."

"Sure," assented the Kid. "But I've been thinking about them cows. Pecos allows he picked up the trail into the hills. I'm sure honing to go gunning after that bunch of cows, only the range can't be left. You'uns stop along the range another day, and I'll sure get after them cows."

"Forget it," said Pecos. "I allow you can handle a gun, Santa Fe! But you'll sure get shot up if you trail them rustlers into the hills."

"I guess I'll take a chance of that," said the Kid quietly. "The boss is a good boss to me, and I want to save him his cows."

Pecos gave a grunt. "You won't pick up nary a trail, after you get into the hills," he said. "I done lost that trail and I guess you won't read sign where I don't read none."

"I was sure reckoned to be a good

man at reading sign, once," said the Kid with a faint smile. "I've sure got a hunch I might trail home them cows. You mosey along, and point out where they was lost. Alex Black sure won't care a continental red cent whether you hit the ranch to-night or to-morrow!"

"That's a cinch," agreed Yuma Bill.

Pecos grunted again, but he nodded. "I'll mosey along, if Yuma will look after the herd," he said. "I guess you won't follow that trail no farther than I did. But if you can pick up sign, I'll be powerful glad to follow them cows, and get to shooting with the scallywags what lifted them."

"It's a cinch," said the Kid cheerily. He called the grey mustang from the corral and mounted. Pecos mounted his pinto, and they rode away from the stockman's hut together. They splashed through the creek, and the horses stretched at a gallop across the plain. It was three miles from the stockman's hut that Pecos pulled in his pinto, at the edge of rocky, stony soil.

"I guess I rode as far as this afore I came in to feed," he said. "This is where I was let out, Santa Fe."

"Mebbe I'll be let out, too," said the Kid. "But I kinder guess I'll take a look-see."

He dismounted from the grey mustang, and searched for sign. Pecos sat his horse, watching him with a sarcastic grin. The Bar-T puncher figured that this kid cowman had nothing to teach him about picking up sign. He grinned as the Kid moved, half-stooping, searching the ground, keen as a hawk, patient as an Apache.

At last he straightened up and waved his hand to Pecos.

"What you got?" shouted the puncher. The Kid was a hundred yards from the spot where he waited.

"I guess I got sign!" yelled back the Kid.

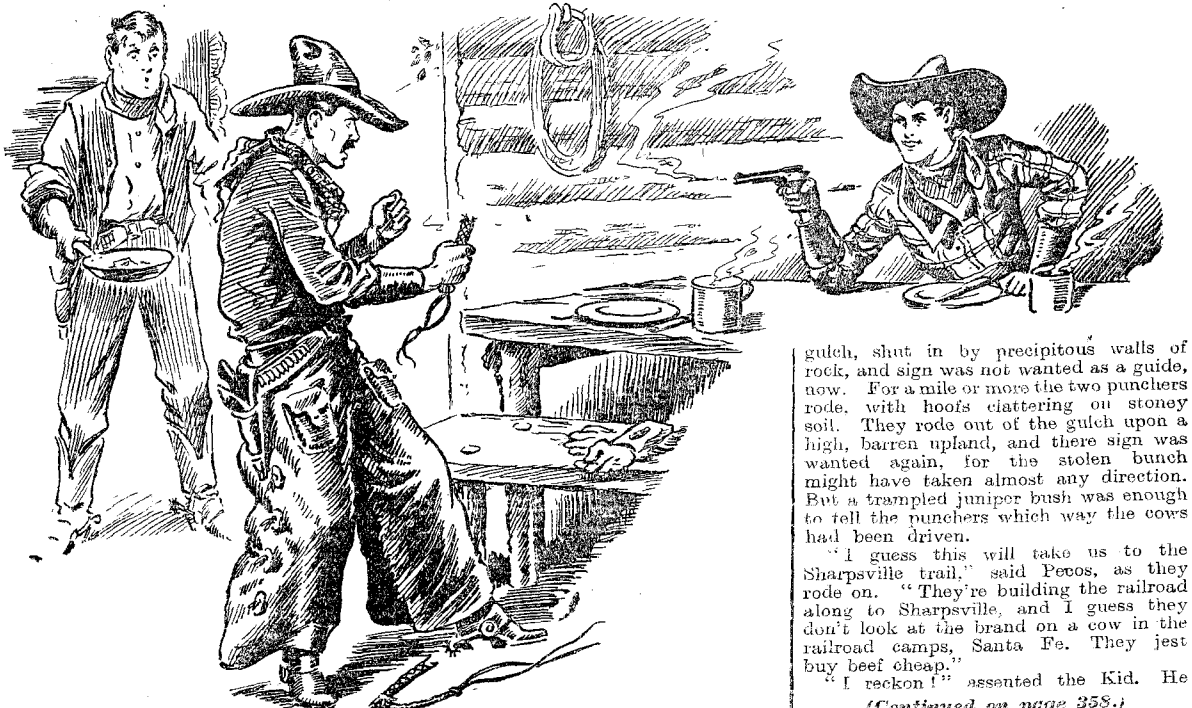
"Aw, can it!"

But the Bar-T puncher rode on to join the Kid, Side-Kicker trotting on of his own accord. In a hollow of the rocks was a patch of alkali dust, and in the dust was the print of a single hoof. It was a single track of a single animal; but it was enough to show that the cows had passed that way.

"Say, I guess you've said it, Santa Fe!" admitted Pecos.

"Sure!" assented the Kid.

He remounted Side-Kicker, and they rode on. The way ran by a narrow, rocky



The Kid's gun crashed out, and the bullying puncher jumped back with a yell as his stock-whip was shot clean in two!

gulch, shut in by precipitous walls of rock, and sign was not wanted as a guide, now. For a mile or more the two punchers rode, with hoofs clattering on stoney soil. They rode out of the gulch upon a high, barren upland, and there sign was wanted again, for the stolen bunch might have taken almost any direction. But a trampled juniper bush was enough to tell the punchers which way the cows had been driven.

"I guess this will take us to the Sharpville trail," said Pecos, as they rode on. "They're building the railroad, along to Sharpville, and I guess they don't look at the brand on a cow in the railroad camps, Santa Fe. They jest buy beef cheap."

"I reckon!" assented the Kid. He

(Continued on page 358.)

THE OUTLAW KID!

(Continued from page 339.)

had had experience before of what happened when a railroad was driven into cow country. Every construction camp was a centre of cow-stealing. Plenty of contractors looked only at the price of a steer, not at the brand on its hide.

The Kid glanced up at the sky. The sun was sloping down in the west, but there were hours left of daylight.

"I guess," said the Kid, "that we're going to cinch that cow-thief, Pecos. He's heading them cows for the Sharpsville trail; but he won't drive them on the open trail before dark. I guess he will keep in the hills till the sun goes, hombre."

"You said it," agreed Pecos. "I guess there's plenty cowmen ride that trail, and if a guy saw a bunch of cows with the Bar-T brand heading away from the ranch, he would want to know. That cow-thief will sure keep doggo till dark."

"And I guess we'll sure be at his heels before sundown," said the Kid.

Pecos nodded, and they rode on.

There was little doubt that the rustler was hitting for the Sharpsville trail, but he might have struck it at any point, and sign was wanted all the way to hit that point. How the Kid picked up the sign, Pecos, experienced plainsman as he was, did not know. But "Santa Fe Smith" never failed, and slowly but surely they rode on their way, while the sun sank lower towards the mountains of New Mexico. The Kid at last drew in his mustang, and pointed with his quirt towards a belt of tall chaparral that bordered the Sharpsville trail.

"I guess we ain't much farther to look for that bunch," he remarked.

"They're sure hidden in that chaparral, waiting for dark. I'll tell a man!"

"You said it!" agreed Pecos.

The Kid's keen eyes watched the dusky chaparral. Pecos jingled his spurs impatiently.

"Get on!" he snapped.

"Go slow, old-timer," said the Kid. "I guess that rustler ain't got his eyes shut! I allow there's somthin' movin' in them pecans—"

"Jest a cow, I reckon—aw, what you at?" roared the cowman, as the Kid suddenly grasped him by the neck-scarf, and dragged him from the saddle, falling to the earth with him.

As they crashed on the hard soil, a puff of smoke floated from the dusk of the chaparral, followed by a whip-like crack. The next instant the whizzing lead whined over the punchers, as they sprawled.

Gun Talk!

"COVER!" hissed the Kid. He rolled behind a rock. Pecos, dizzy from the sudden fall, was slower. A second bullet from the chaparral splattered on the stones within a foot of him, splashing him with chips of rock. Then the cowman hunted cover quick enough.

"Aw! Carry me home to die!" gasped Pecos.

"I guess that guy was watching us, a few!" grinned the Kid. He called softly to Side-Kicker, and the grey mustang dropped by his side. The Kid snatched his rifle from the leather scabbard buckled to his saddle. He lay with the rifle extended before him, watching the distant bush, his eyes gleaming over the barrel.

From the dusk of the thick scrubs, white smoke streamed out as another shot came from the unseen marksman. The crack of the rifle was followed by the crash of a bullet on the rock behind which the Rio Kid lay. Chips flew in the air, and Pecos cursed as one of them struck him in the neck.

Crack!

The Kid fired instantly. That jet of white smoke from the chaparral was enough for the Kid.

A loud yell rang from the distance.

From the tangled thickets, a figure in Stetson and chaps staggered out, drunkenly, trailing a rifle. For a second it stood, swaying, and then crashed to the earth.

"I guess that guy has got his!" said the Rio Kid. He leaped to his feet, and in a flash was in the saddle and galloping on. Pecos leaped on his pinto, and followed.

The rustler did not stir as they passed him. He lay where he had fallen, his rifle by his side. The Kid gave him a glance, and rode on into the chaparral. In the thickets was the trampled trail of the stolen bunch, and a few minutes later the punchers came on them—ten cows with the Bar-T brand on their hides, hidden in the scrubs.

"I'll tell a man!" exclaimed Pecos, in great glee. "We done got them cows, Santa Fe!"

"Sure!" said the Kid.

Cracking quirts roused out the cows from the scrub, and under the falling shadows, the two punchers drove them back, by the long and weary way they had come.

By rugged, rocky canyon and arroyo, the punchers drove on the bunch. The stars of midnight were gleaming down on the waters of the creek when they got out of the hills, at last.

The cows were driven back to the herd, on the pasture by the shallow waters of the creek. Yuma Bill, a shadowy figure on his broncho, came riding up, cracking his quirt. He ran his eye over the lumbering cows in the bright starlight.

"By the great horned toad!" he ejaculated. "You done run down that rustler and got them cows back, Pecos."

"Forget it!" answered Pecos, with a chuckle. "I pass it up to this kid, Santa Fe. I'll tell all Texas he can sure follow the blindest trail a rustler ever left, and I guess them cows would have been railroad beef to-morrow, if he hadn't humped in on this range. Yessir! I'll say Mister Black knew what he was about when he sent that kid puncher to this range."

The Kid smiled.

"Say, you'uns, I guess you can leave the herd to me, now, if you want," he said. "Mister Black's orders was that you was to hit the ranch pronto!"

"You've said it!" agreed Yuma.

The two cowmen rode away to the stockman's hut to change horses in the corral for their ride to the ranch. They waved their Stetsons to the Kid as they went, and he waved back cheerily.

The Kid rode on slowly round the slumbering herd. Huge, dim forms loomed in the grass; heavy breathing came through the silence. The Rio Kid had been in the saddle all day, but he did not seem fatigued. Not while darkness lasted did the Kid intend to close his eyes on that lonely and far-flung range.

It was not till the stars were paling, and there was a fresh breath of dawn on the prairie, that the Kid turned his mustang at last towards the stockman's hut. He figured that he would get a couple of hours in his blankets, and then hot flapjacks and coffee would set him up for another day in the saddle. That range surely, was not a one-man job; but the Kid had taken it on, and he was going to do his durndest. It was a matter of pride with the Kid that not a single cow should be lost from the herd that was under his care.

He was thirty yards from the stockman's hut, when a red flash gleamed in the darkness, followed by another and another.

At the first flash, the Kid was down in the grass, Side-Kicker sprawling by his side.

The Kid's teeth came together hard. It was from the doorway of the stockman's hut that the three bullets had whizzed.

For a long minute, he lay in the thick grass, watching and listening. He honed for his enemies to make a rush; the walnut-butted guns were ready. But they made no move.

He whispered a word to the grey mus-

tang, and Side-Kicker remained motionless. On his hands and knees, the Kid crawled away through the high grass.

Double-crossed!

CRACK! Crack! Two more shots rang from the dark doorway of the stockman's hut. The bullets tore through the high grass. A muttering of husky voices came on the wind.

The whizzing lead went nowhere near the Kid, who was a score of yards from the spot where he had fallen with his horse. Crawling, unseen in the high grass, he had reached the timber wall of the corral, which cast the blackest of black shadows.

In the shadow of the wall, unseen, the Kid rose to his feet, a six-gun in either hand. Standing with his back to the corral, hidden in blackness, he stared towards the doorway of the hut, not ten yards away. Three dim faces peered out of the hut, watching the starlit grass. But the savage eyes under stubby brows, were not looking towards the Kid under the corral wall. They were looking away towards the spot where he had fallen with his horse. The husky muttering came to his ears.

"I guess he's got his, Rube! He went down like a sack of alfalfa, and his cayuse after him!"

"You've said it, Hank!" muttered another voice. "But we got to be plumb careful with that guy, like Alex Black allowed."

"Aw! I guess he's got Black Alec scared! I'll tell a man, he's plugged for keeps, this time."

The speaker stepped out of the hut, a burly figure in the dimness, and the other two bush-whackers, reassured, followed him.

The Kid smiled grimly.

He swung the walnut-butted guns to a level, and stepped from the shadow of the corral wall.

"Put 'em up!"

His voice rang suddenly, sharply.

There was a startled yell from the three, and they spun round towards the Rio Kid in amazement and alarm. The puncher whom they had believed to be lying riddled with lead in the grass, thirty yards away, was standing within six or seven feet of them, his guns covering them, his eyes gleaming over the leveled guns. They glared at him, their jaws drooping as they glared.

"Dog-gone you!" roared Hank, and his six-gun swung up, his finger on the trigger.

Bang!

The Kid's gun roared on the instant. Smoke and fire streamed in the dimness, and the bushwhacker pitched over, headlong into the grass. A fearful yell awoke the echoes of the prairie, and died away into silence.

In the same instant, there was a rush of running feet, as the fallen man's companions tore away into the high grass.

Bang, bang!

The Rio Kid fired after them as they ran, grinning as he pulled trigger. Wild yells from the fleeing bushwhackers answered the ringing shots. The yelling and the wild trampling of feet died away in the distance.

The Rio Kid laughed. But there was a grim ring to his laugh. Well he knew that the cards were stacked against him, and that while he rode the Cactus Creek range, he would ride with his life in his hand. But the Bar-T foreman had not got away with it yet, and the Rio Kid was a bad man to crowd.

He whistled to Side-Kicker, and the grey mustang came trotting up to the hut.

"Old hoss," said the Kid, "I guess you and me are sure scheduled for a plumb hot time on this hyer range. But I figure that we're pulling through."

(Surrounded by rustlers on the lonely range! What chance has the Rio Kid of fighting through? See next week's gripping tale of this amazing Boy Outlaw! It's Great!)

RANGER DAN'S BULL'S-EYES!



Millionaire: "I started in life without a pair of boots to my feet, and now I've millions."

Boy: "Love a duck, gov'nor, who cleans them all?"

(A Grand Book has been awarded to A. Hendry, 29, New Street, Thornaby - on - Tees, Yorks.)

Urchin (after watching golfers vainly looking for lost ball): "S'cuse me, sir, but would it spoil your game if I told you where the ball is?"

(A Train Set has been awarded to C. Baylis, 42, Lickhill Road, Sturport, Wores.)

Farmer (to Tommy): "Hi! What are you doing in my pond?"

Tommy: "I've been playing cricket with your bull, and he won the toss and put me in first."

(A Pair of Skates have been awarded to E. Walker, 30, Keston Road, Tottenham, N. 17.)

Club Bore (relating one of his experiences abroad): "Out there, of course, every man carries a shooter. I was out one night and came face to face with a tiger. Up came my shooter—and what do you think?"

Listener (wearily): "I know, you'd forgotten your peas!"

(A Combination Knife has been awarded to L. E. Osborne, 20, Canning Road, High Park, Southampton.)

Mistress (to page boy): "James, you've broken as much china this month as your wages amount to. Now, how can we prevent this occurring again?"

Page Boy: "I don't know, unless you raise me wages."

(A Wallet has been awarded to F. Levell, 6, Granville Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk.)

Cabin Boy: "Is a thing lost when you know where it is?"

Skipper: "No, you chump!"

Cabin Boy: "Well, your

silver tea-pot is at the bottom of the sea!"

(A Warneford Tractor Plume has been awarded to E. Snook, 64, Gladstone Street, Swindon, Wilts.)

Two steeplejacks were having an argument as to who had climbed the highest.

Mr. Tall: "I've been so high that I had to bend down to let the moon pass over me."

Mr. Taller: "Did you see the man in the moon?"

"Of course I did!"

"Well, that was me!"

(A Tool Chest has been awarded to A. Stewart, 6, Thornbury Street, Millfield, Sunderland.)

The sailor was proudly showing the old lady over the Navy's latest destroyer.

"Yes, this ship makes over thirty knots an hour," he boasted.

"Good gracious," gasped the old lady. "And who's job is it to untie them all?"

(A Grand Book has been awarded to E. Helay, 2, Great Gap, Ivinghoe, Leighton Buzzard.)

Great Gap, Ivinghoe, Leighton Buzzard.

Farm Hand: "Crighton's cow has broken into our yard again. What shall I do?"

Sandy: "Well, don't stand there doing nothing. Milk her and put her out!"

(A Table Tennis Set has been awarded to A. Jordan, Chartridge Lodge Cottage, Chesham, Bucks.)

Teacher: "What effect has winter on trade?"

Willie: "Please, sir, the ice-cream man sells roast chestnuts!"

(A Giant Torch has been awarded to F. Fisher, 13, Hood Street, Wallasey, Cheshire.)

"I've a brother in Australia who is a good player," said a golfer as he lifted a large chunk of turf.

"Well, dig away," said his partner in disgust, "and you will soon be beside him."

(A Wallet has been awarded to J. Williams, 34, Yore Hill, Ely, Cambs.)

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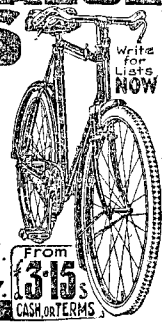
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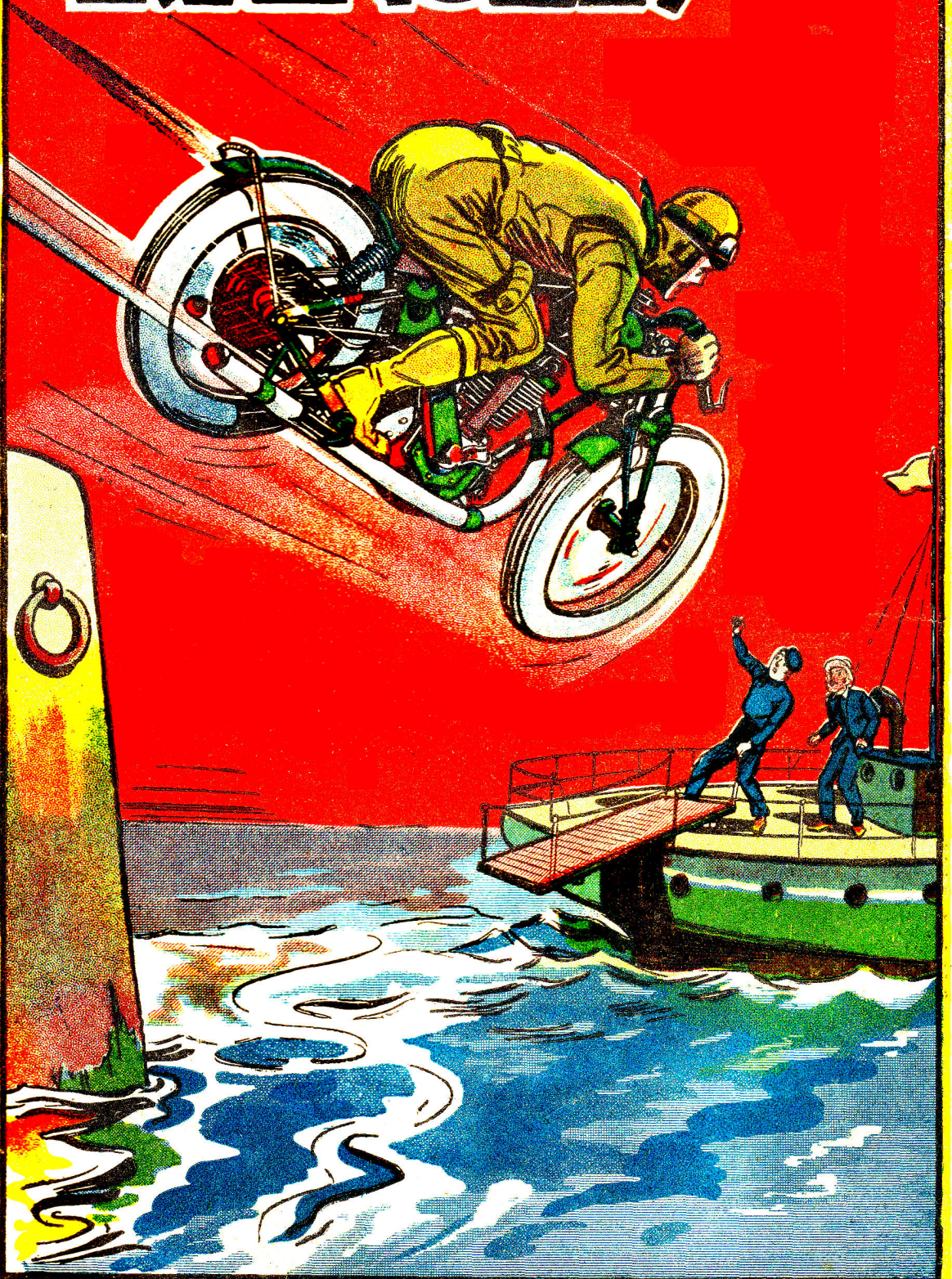
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HALLO, STRANGER, HERE'S YOUR "RANGER"!

The
RANGER

2^D

EVERY SATURDAY.



QUICK-ACTION
ALL - THRILLS
TALE OF THE
WILD WEST.

The OUTLAW KID!



Cornered!

"DOG-GONE 'em!" muttered the Rio Kid savagely. He raised himself in his stirrups, staring across the sunlit Texas prairie.

In the rich pasture on the bank of Cactus Creek, twenty long miles from the Bar-T ranch, three hundred cows fed, under the care of the new puncher in the Bar-T outfit.

Five hobbling Stetson hats appeared in view over the high grass. The Kid watched them grimly as they came.

On that lonely range, the Bar-T puncher was not expecting visitors, unless they came as enemies.

Standing in his stirrups, the Kid watched for a long minute. Five horsemen were coming on at a gallop, and the Kid figured that they aimed to ride between him and the stockman's hut, a mile away from the pasture where the herd fed.

"Dog-gone 'em!" repeated the Kid.

Five to one was long odds, even for the puncher who had once been the outlaw of the Rio Grande. The Kid reckoned that he wanted to hit cover, and that he wanted to hit it quick.

He shook out his reins and turned Side-Kicker towards the stockman's hut. A crack of the quirt and the grey mustang stretched to a gallop.

The Kid looked over his shoulder as he galloped. The bobbing Stetson hats were nearer, and the cracking of quirts came to his ears. Under the Stetsons he had a glimpse of stubby, hard-bitten faces. They were riding harder now, lashing the bronchos to furious speed, to ride him down before he could reach the shelter of the hut. Bang, roared a six-gun, but the bullet flew yards from the galloping Kid.

His jaw set hard.

A light touch of the spur and Side-Kicker leaped to lightning speed. There was no cayuse in Texas to which the grey

mustang could not show his heels. The Kid dashed up to the hut in a cloud of dust, the mustang in a lather of foam. Bang, roared a gun again from the prairie, and the lead spattered on the timber wall of the hut.

The Kid sprang from the saddle. There was a remuda in the corral, but the Kid did not turn Side-Kicker into the corral with the others. He led the grey mustang into the hut.

The pinewood door slammed, and the Kid jammed the bars into place. The shutter at the little unglazed window was already closed and barred. Inside, the stockman's hut was dusky, but gleams of sunlight came through many a chink in the timber walls.

Thud, thud, came galloping hoofs on

The Bar-T. swop their double-crossing foreman, Black Alec, for a real white man who is only a Kid.

the prairie. With a clatter and a jingle of bridles and stirrups the horsemen crashed to a halt, and leaped from the saddle. There was a trampling of heavy cowmen's boots, and the butt of a quirt crashed on the barred door.

Behind the barred door stood the Kid, a six-gun in his hand, his eyes like cold steel. A hoarse voice shouted outside.

"Say, you there, Santa Fe Smith!"

"Sure!" answered the Kid.

"You dog-goned fire-bug, I guess you're cinched this time!" roared Red Rube. "We got you dead to rights now."

Crack, crack, crack!

Bullets spattered on the thick wood. One of them came through the door and dropped, spent, at the Kid's feet.

Crash!

A heavy log, swung in brawny hands, beat on the door. It creaked and groaned under the impact.

The Kid's eyes gleamed through a chink in the door; a chink that widened

as the wood split under the crash of the assault. The muzzle of his six-gun was thrust into the chink.

Bang!

A fearful yell answered the shot. The log crashed to the earth, as one of its bearers reeled and fell headlong.

There was a roar of rage from the bushwhackers, and a sound of running feet. Like prairie rabbits startled by a wolf, the gunmen hunted cover.

The Rio Kid's laugh rang out mockingly.

"Say, you ain't cinched me yet, you'uns! I'm sure waiting for you, but you don't seem in an all-fired hurry! Say, you dog-goned skunks, ain't you got sand enough to stand up to a gun!"

Spattering bullets answered the taunt.

From chink after chink the Kid's eyes gleamed, watching for a chance for a return shot. Once his gun roared, tearing a strip of skin from Red Rube's stubby cheek as the gunman dodged back into cover. Before the hut one of the bunch lay still beside the fallen log; four of them were pumping bullets at the timber walls.

Hotter and hotter grew the fire. The Kid shrugged his shoulders. The bushwhackers were wasting cartridges. If they figured that the shooting would "rattle" the puncher in the hut, they did not know the Rio Kid. But the Kid reckoned that the fusillade was aimed to cover some move on the part of the enemy, and he watched warily. The Kid's keen ears were not to be deceived, and fast and furious as was the fire, he knew that only three guns were talking. He figured that the fourth man was otherwise engaged; and he waited and watched.

From a chink at the back of the hut he watched a burly figure loom into view, almost staggering under a stack of brushwood.

The Kid's teeth shut hard.

He knew what that meant. That stack of dry brush, placed to the wall and fired, would send the stockman's hut up in flames. While three of the bushwhackers blazed away to keep the Kid's attention, the other man had gathered brush; and a minute more would have seen the pile flaming under the timber wall.

Bang!

The Kid's six-gun streamed smoke and fire from the chink. The stack of brush toppled over, and in the midst of it sprawled the ruffian who carried it, screaming.

"I guess that guy's got his!" murmured the Kid.

The yelling of the fallen man died away. A shout of rage came from Red Rube and his companions, and bullets rained on the hut.

But the firing died at last.

The Kid waited.

Two of the enemy had gone down; but the other three had him cinched in the hut. The Kid figured that he was in a tight corner, if the bushwhackers played the game out. To step from the hut was to fall riddled with bullets. When darkness came to give him cover, the Kid figured that he would leave his fortress and put paid to the bunch. But it was

still high noon, and many a long hour to sundown. The Kid wondered whether the bunch would tire out before the long hot day was over. As if in answer to that question there came a beating of hoofs on the prairie—galloping hoots receding in the distance.

The Kid's lip curled. He did not figure that the enemy was gone. He reckoned that it was a trick to draw him out of cover. He waited.

The galloping died away in the distance. He watched from a chink, and saw three Stetson hats vanish beyond the wall of the corral.

But he did not unbar the door. The Kid was as wary as a prairie wolf. Red Rube and his bunch had ridden away; but the Kid reckoned that they had not gone far, and that they had crept back under the screen of the corral walls. He still waited.

Silence hung round the lonely hut on the Cactus Creek range. Suddenly through the silence came the jingle of bridle and stirrup. The Kid heard a rider dismount at the door. There was a crash of a quirt on the wood and a voice shouted.

"Say, open this door you, Santa Fe Smith!"

The Kid started, and his teeth came together with a click. It was the voice of Alex Black—Black Alec, foreman of the Bar-T ranch.

Face to Face!

"BLACK ALEC!" breathed the Kid. It was the Bar-T foreman who stood outside the stockman's hut, crashing the butt of his quirt on the door.

The Kid's eyes glinted.

He knew that the Bar-T foreman had sent him to that lonely range to be shot up by the bushwhackers. Black Alec did not suspect that he knew, or that he even suspected. But the Kid knew.

And he knew what the game was now. The Bar-T foreman was there to open the way to the gunmen, crouching out of sight in the cover of the corral wall.

Crash came the quirt on the door again. The Bar-T foreman shouted impatiently.

"Say! You there, Santa Fe Smith?"

"I'm surely here, sir!" answered the Kid coolly.

"I guess there's been a rookus here! Here's a guy laid out, and another behind

the hut! You been waking up trouble

here, Santa Fe?"

"You've said it!" answered the Kid.

"Wal, let me in, dog-gone you!"

"I guess them scallywags are still around, sir!" answered the Bar-T puncher.

"Aw! Forget it!" snapped Alex Black. "Was there more than these two that you've given their ticket for soup?"

"I guess there was three more to the bunch."

"Wal, they've hit the horizon, then," said the Bar-T foreman. "There ain't hide nor hair of them around. Say, you dog-goned coyote, you going to hide in that pesky hut all day, and leave the cows to look after themselves? That ain't the way you're going to earn your boss' pay, Santa Fe Smith."

The Kid's face crimsoned. But his voice was cool and drawing as he answered.

"You figure that they've sure lit out, Mister Black?"

"Sure!" snapped the foreman. "Open this door, darn you."

The Kid stepped to the door. With his six-gun in his right hand he lifted down the bars with his left. Another crash from the foreman's quirt sent the door spinning open, and a flood of sunlight fell into the dusky interior of the hut.

The Rio Kid stepped back quickly. His eyes were grimly on the black-bearded figure in the doorway, and he kept back out of the line of fire from the open.

He was ready for gun-play if the Bar-T foreman started anything. He was ready for a sudden rush from the bushwhackers, and he figured that if he got them bunched in the doorway, with the light behind them, they would not live long enough to get to closer quarters.

But Black Alec did not touch a gun. He had not forgotten how sudden Santa Fe Smith was on the shoot.

He tramped into the hut.

His eyes, under his heavy black brows, glinted at the Kid. It was hard for him to disguise his enmity, though it was his game to deceive the puncher. The Kid watched him warily, with one eye on the door, ready for a rush. He had a six-gun in either hand now.

"Say, you can pack your guns, puncher!" growled the Bar-T foreman. "I'll say there ain't a guy anywhere around! You sure are rattled."

"Not a whole lot!" drawled the Kid.

"But I kinder figure that them three bulldozers ain't fur off, Mister Black."

"Aw, quit chowing the rag," said the Bar-T foreman. "Get out on the range. I guess now I seen there's trouble here, I'll send two men to join you when I hit the ranch agin."

"I kinder reckon they mightn't find me alive, sir, if I rode out on the range jest now," grinned the Kid. "I sorter figure that there's three dog-goned bulldozers jest waiting to make it last sickness for me as soon as I put my cabeza outter that door, Mister Black."

"I'm telling you—"

"Aw, can it!" broke in the Kid. "You dog-goned, double-crossing skunk, ain't I wise to it that you posted me on this range to be shot up? You all-fired greaser, I'm wise to your game."

The Bar-T foreman started violently. It had not even crossed his mind before that the puncher knew of his treachery.

For a second his hand slid towards the butt of a gun. But he withdrew it swiftly.

"Say, you're dreaming, you Santa Fe!" he said. "What you figure I'd want to get you shot up for, you dog-goned bonehead?"

"I reckon you don't want this infant in the outfit," said the Kid. "The boss made you sign me on because I topped your side-pardners robbing him on the trail. I guessed at the time you knowed something about that hold-up. And I've sure figured since that you know a whole lot about the cows that's rustled off the ranch and sold for beef at the railway camps along to Sharpville, you pesky cow-thief. You durned, double-crossing skunk, you're selling out your boss, in cahoots with the rustlers that's thinning his herds. And I guess you don't want a guy around that's wise to the kind of double-crossing polecat you are, Mister Black!"

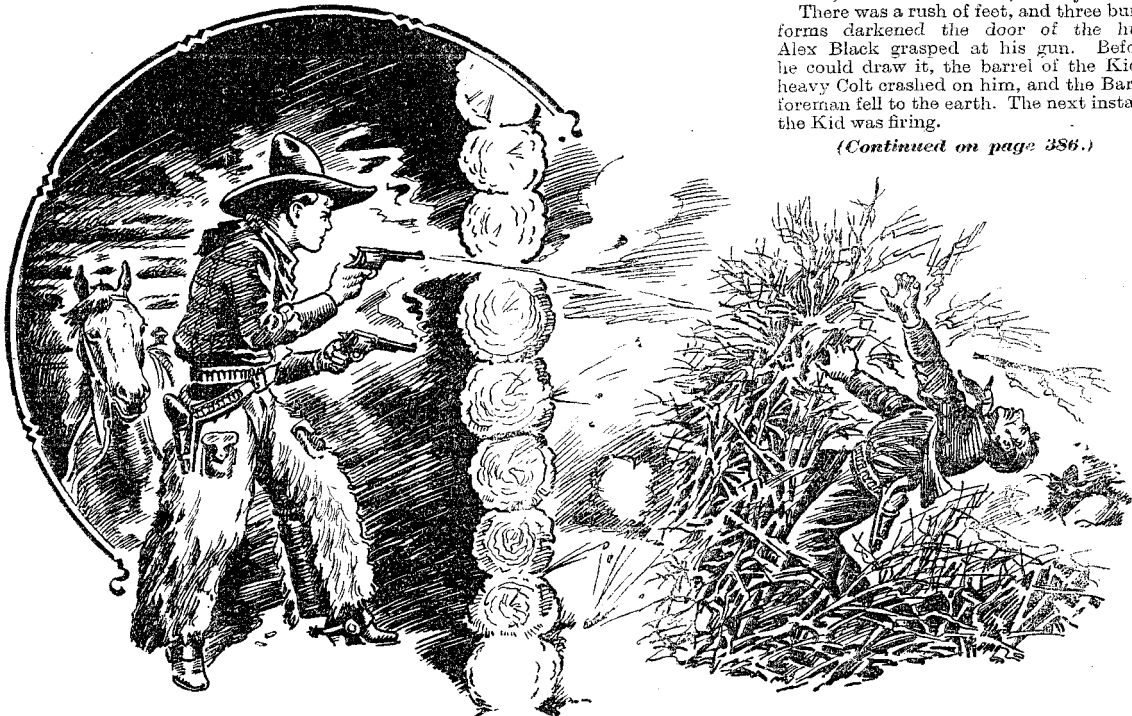
The Bar-T foreman panted.

"You was sure sry in wiping out the Mexican rustlers that came over the Rio Grande," snapped the Kid. "But I'm wise to it that you're in cahoots with the rustlers on this side, Mister Black! You're a dirty cow-thief, selling out the boss that gives you your beans; and if you don't like that, you dog-goned skunk, you're packing a gun, and you're free to pull it."

"By the great horned toad!" panted Alex Black. "You sure know a whole lot that you'll never spill at the Bar-T." He raised his voice to a furious yell. "You, Rube! Wade in, darn you!"

There was a rush of feet, and three burly forms darkened the door of the hut. Alex Black grasped at his gun. Before he could draw it, the barrel of the Kid's heavy Colt crashed on him, and the Bar-T foreman fell to the earth. The next instant the Kid was firing.

(Continued on page 356.)



Desperately the Rio Kid shot through the chinks in the log walls as the rustlers piled the bundles of dried brushwood against the door.

THE OUTLAW KID!

(Continued from page 367.)

The Kid Wins Out!

BANG, bang, bang! roared the Rio Kid's six-guns, streaming hot lead at the burly figures cramming in at the doorway.

Red Rube and his men came with a rush, shooting as they came.

But they came from the blazing sunlight of the prairie to the dusk in the interior of the hut, and the Rio Kid had them where he wanted them.

Right and left reeled two of the bushwhackers, yelling. Red Rube plunged forward into the hut, falling on his face.

The din of the shooting died away. Smoke and the smell of gunpowder reeked in the hut.

The Kid holstered one of his guns and dashed blood from his cheek with the back of his hand. He stepped towards the doorway.

Red Rube groaned and stirred. The Kid stooped and jerked away his weapons. "I guess you ain't buzzards' meat yet, feller," he said. "You'll sure live to stretch a rope."

He glanced at the two bushwhackers who had fallen outside the doorway. Neither of them stirred.

Quietly the Kid bound up his shattered shoulder. The Kid could be merciful, indeed tender, to an enemy, when the guns had ceased to talk. Then for some minutes he stood looking out over the sunlight range, over the lumbering herd that fed by the shining creek.

He turned back into the hut. Black Alec had now regained his senses.

"I guess we're hitting the Bar-T, pronto," said the Kid. "I'll sure tote you guys to your cayuses, and we'll hit the trail for the ranch. You got to answer up to the boss, Mister Black." He smiled grimly. "You've been selling out the boss for years on end, you skunk, and lying to him like a Digger Injun. I guess you'll have to lie pesky hard to crawl out of this."

The Bar-T foreman looked at him with glinting eyes under his black brows.

"Give me a horse and let me ride!" he muttered. "You dog-goned galoot, I guess you're wise to it that there's a heap of papers in my office at the ranch that will put a cinch on me, once the boss goes through them. You durned well know that I've been selling Bar-T beef to the railroad camps ever since the railroad came along to Sharpsville. You got me cinched, durn you—give me a horse and let me ride."

"I reckon that's for the boss to say!" answered the Kid curtly. "It's Judge Pindex's say-so, Mister Black. If he lets you ride, you can sure ride all you want and I won't stop you. I reckon the outfit will want to string you up when they savvy the kind of all-fired cow-thief you are: but the boss ain't the man to stand for that. We're hitting the trail for the ranch."

The Kid stepped from the hut and led the Bar-T foreman to his horse. Black Alec made no resistance. His black-bearded face was haggard. As he sat in the saddle, the Kid bound him there with a riata. He had to lift Red Rube to his saddle, and a riata secured the bushwhacker on his broncho.

The Kid mounted Side-Kicker, and taking the reins of the two horses he rode away for the Bar-T ranch.

The New Foreman.

GINGER, the horse-wrangler, gave a yell.

He stared across the gate at the riders coming up the trail to the ranch. Then he jumped on the gate and stood there, staring, to get a better view.

"Carry me home to die!" gasped Ginger.

He leaped down from the gate and rushed across to the bunkhouse, yelling.

"Say, you guys! Say, you want to know! I'll tell a man! Here comes

Santa Fe Smith back from the Cactus Creek range, and he's got Alex Black roped up on a bronc, and that dog-goned rustler Red Rube along with him. Say, you want to know!"

There was a rush of Bar-T punchers from the bunkhouse. It was sunset, and many riders were in from the ranges. Ginger's excited yell brought every man in the bunkhouse swarming out.

The bunch of punchers stared in blank amazement. To see Santa Fe Smith riding Alex Black a prisoner to the ranch was amazing. The Bar-T outfit did not begin to understand.

"I guess that guy Santa Fe Smith is asking to be fired!" ejaculated Texas. "Say, I guess he must have gone plumb loco."

Yuma Bill ran along to the gate and threw it open. The Rio Kid rode through, leading his two prisoners.

The Kid grinned a little, as he saw the astonishment in the faces of the Bar-T outfit. He guessed it was some surprise to the outfit to see their foreman led back to the ranch a prisoner, bound to his horse.

Judge Pindex came out on the veranda of the ranch-house, drawn by the roar of excited voices. The boss of the Bar-T rubbed his eyes at the unexpected sight that met them. The next moment he was striding on the scene, with a frowning brow. The punchers made way for their boss as he strode up.

"Say, what's this circus!" hooted the rancher. "What you doing with my foreman roped up like a horse-thief, you Santa Fe?"

The Kid lifted his Stetson to the rancher.

"I guess he's roped up because he's a cow-thief, boss," he answered, "and I've sure toted him home for you."

"You dog-goned young bonehead! You want to allow that my foreman is a cow-thief!" yelled Judge Pindex.

The Kid grinned. "He sure is, boss, and in cahoots with Red Rube's bunch, and I guess if I hadn't been mighty spry with my guns, they'd have rubbed me out on the Cactus Creek range."

"Carry me home to die!" gasped the rancher.

There was a buzz of astonishment from the punchers. Every man on the ranch was gathering on the spot now. Baldy the cook had come out of the chuck-house; even the Mexican chore-man had his head out of a window of the ranch.

Red Rube glared defiance at the crowd. He knew what was coming to him; the sheriff had wanted him for ten years for rustling cows and hold-ups on the trails. Black Alec sat his pinto with his black-bearded chin sunk on his breast. It was hard to recognise the bullying foreman of the Bar-T now. After long years of domineering and double-dealing, ruin had fallen on him, and he had crumpled under the blow.

Silence followed the Rio Kid's words for some moments. The rancher broke it at last.

"What you got to say, Alex Black? You've been my foreman, and I've trusted you! I guess I want proof before I believe you been double-crossing your boss! What you got to say?"

Black Alec did not speak. It was useless to deny when he knew that the ruffian at his side was ready to betray him, and the proofs of his guilt only needed looking for in his office on the ranch. The rancher waited for his reply, but it did not come.

Judge Pindex's face hardened. "You Santa Fe, you put me wise," he snapped. "What's happened on the Cactus Creek range?"

The Kid told him briefly. There was a surge forward of the punchers with grim faces. Texas ran for a lasso and came back swinging it in his hand. Hands were raised to drag Black Alec from his horse.

"I guess we want a rope and a branch!" exclaimed Ginger. "You durned scallywag, bossing the bunch and in cahoots with rustlers all the time! Lynch him!"

The Rio Kid pushed his mustang forward.

"Hold in, your hosses, fellers," he drawled.

"Dog-gone you, Santa Fe, you quit chewing the rag," roared Ginger. "I'll say we're going to string up that pesky scallywag."

"I sure ain't no objection to stringing up a cow-thief," said the Kid cheerily. "But it's the boss' say-so! I guess if the boss says string him up, you can string him up all you want."

"Lynch him!"

Judge Pindex broke in. His eyes fixed for a moment on the Bar-T foreman's pallid face with a look that brought a flush into the colourless cheeks. Then he glanced round at the punchers.

"Forget it!" he said tersely. "There ain't no time to be lynching on this ranch! That fire-bug Red Rube is going to the sheriff, who's wanted him long enough. Alex Black can ride!"

"Say, boss—" urged Texas.

"Aw, can it!" said the rancher. "Cast him loose, you Santa Fe, and let him ride. And if he don't ride hell-for-leather, I guess you'uns'll fan him with lead and give him a start."

Black looks were cast at the Bar-T foreman as the Kid cut him loose. But the boss' word was law on the Bar-T, and the hands that had been raised to grasp the traitor foreman dropped again. With his eyes burning Alex Black grasped his reins. He cast a bitter glance round at the circle of grim faces—faces of the men who, a few hours ago, had jumped to his orders, but who would have strung him up on the nearest branch now had not their boss stood between.

"Dog-gone you!" said Black Alec between his teeth. "Dog-gone the whole pesky bunch of you!" His savage gaze circled the crowd, and then fixed on the Rio Kid. His eyes blazed with hate. "You, Santa Fe, you ain't seen the last of me. I'll get you yet—"

"Not in your lifetime, old-timer," said the Kid. "Say, I guess you want to ride for your health, Mister Black."

The Bar-T foreman swung round his pinto. One last look he gave at the Rio Kid, and then he rode. Guns were in the hands of the punchers now, and they barked behind the horseman, bullets "fanning" him on his way. With the lead screaming round him as he rode, Black Alec spurred his horse fiercely, and vanished in a cloud of dust across the prairie. The high grass, red in the sunset, swallowed him from sight at last.

"I guess we've lost our foreman!" said Ginger.

"And I'll say that I've found a new one," said Judge Pindex, "and I guess his name is Santa Fe Smith!"

The Rio Kid jumped.

"Aw, boss! What you giving me?" he exclaimed.

"I guess I'm giving you a foreman's job on this ranch," answered Judge Pindex, "and you ain't saying no, feller."

There was a shout from the Bar-T outfit. The Rio Kid looked round at them. Texas waved his hat. Ginger banged his Colt in the air.

"Fellers," said the Kid, and there was a tremble in his voice. "Fellers, the boss says I'm to be foreman of this ranch, and if the bunch wants me, I guess it's a cinch! I'll sure be proud to be foreman of this bunch, and I'll say it's the best bunch I've ever struck in Texas, 'cept the old crowd at the Double-Bar where I was raised. But I'll say there's better men here—and Ginger's one, and Texas is another—"

"Aw, can it!" grinned the horse-wrangler.

"Quit chewing the rag," said Texas. "You're our foreman—and the best man in the bunch, and I'm telling the world."

And a waving of Stetsons and a roar of six-guns greeted the appointment of the new foreman of the Bar-T ranch.

(Deadly perils overtake the Rio Kid next week. You'll be thrilled with every line of this great story!)

The CHIEF RANGER CHATS!

Your Editor's mighty keen to get to know all his new pals. Drop him a line to "The Chief Ranger," The Fleetway House, Farrington Street, London, E.C.4.



ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW!

How-do, everybody? Chief Ranger calling! What do you think of this week's issue? Great, isn't it? But wait until you get next week's number—it's greater still! I've got a real peach of a series of

THE FROZEN NORTH,

written by a master of his job, who knows the Yukon and the mixed peoples of that vast tract of country. The central figure in this novel series is

LITTLE CROW, THE CREE,

a mahogany-coloured Redskin youth with a stout heart and away with him that fascinates all with whom he comes in contact. You can picture him crooning to his huskies as he mushes his way across the frozen northlands, heading straight bang into adventure! Little Crow is a Red man, but he's white beneath the surface. Once you've made his acquaintance, you'll be mighty impatient to meet him again. That's a straight tip from yours truly. And, talking of tips, let me rub in that the only way to make absolutely certain of getting your RANGER—of meeting Little Crow, the Cree, is to

ORDER YOUR COPY IN ADVANCE!

You're enjoying this copy of The RANGER no end. Now just think how you'd feel if you had missed getting a copy. 'Nuff said!

The Chief Ranger

LIZZIE VERSUS LIZZIE.

When Lizzie the tortoise and Lizzie the motor-car met the other day there was a fine—and funny—to-do. Lizzie the tortoise has passed her 200th birthday, and so isn't as nippy on her feet as she used to be. All she asks is to be well-fed and allowed to bask, without hindrance, in the public thoroughfares of Mombasa, where she is rightly regarded as something quite unique and to be petted and respected by all and sundry.

Well, roaming down the main street of Mombasa on a recent sunny morning, looking for a spot of shade where she might enjoy forty winks, she spotted a car—the other Lizzie—drawn up by the kerbside outside an hotel.

The owner of the car was then inside the hotel trying to sell his Lizzie. He hooked a possible purchaser and brought him outside to witness what the car could do. He stowed the P.P. away as passenger and took the wheel, pressed the self-starter, honk-honked a couple of times—and then grumbled in his beard. The jolly old car wouldn't budge!

The back wheels were going around nicely, but something was holding the car stationary. Investigation revealed

Lizzie the tortoise, still sound asleep, where she had crept for shade under the car, carrying on her shell the full weight of the Lizzie that couldn't budge!

CHASING FLIES FOR A LIVING.

"Whop that fly!" is a slogan with money behind it in the film-making studios of California just now. Those concerned in the making of pictures there declare that all the flies in the world have left their native heaths and gone there to live—and ruin pictures in the making.

They flutter about and buzz like young steam-engines, and the microphone records their maddening music as part of the "talkie" picture. Worse still, the little beasts have a habit of coming suddenly to a rest on the tense features of the actors and actresses. And you can't stop to scratch whilst you are being "shot" in the very fore-front of an important and expensive picture!

One of the most famous of film-making directors, Melville Brown, says that these pestiferous buzzers are responsible for so many re-takes of movie pictures that the cost to the industry is about £2,000 a day! And now the chiefs are going to put up with it no longer. They are employing

specially agile men as fly-chasers, at excellent pay—fellows who will surmount all obstacles to chase a fly to its lair and give it the knock-out!

1st STOP—23rd FLOOR!

Whoosh! goes the lift, and your breath vanishes for a bit whilst your heart and lungs seem to be roaming about just anywhere. It's an exciting life, living at the top of the New York News Building, for unless you want to wear your feet down to wafers by walking up and down the hundreds of stairs you have to travel at the rate of 700 feet per minute—by lift.

In that cloud-piercing building in America, there are sixteen lifts continually rushing up to the thirty-sixth floor—the top—and down again. Some of the lifts are reserved for passengers in a real hurry, and these go non-stop to the twenty-third floor.

Fancy forgetting the number of your flat or room in that monstrous pile and having to roam all over its thirty-six floors looking for where you live!

THE HUMAN TUCKSHOP.

"Look pleasant, please!" is no longer part of the patter of the latest-style photographer. They don't care a button what your face looks like or how your arms and legs are sticking out. All they are concerned with is taking snaps of your interior! They are specialists in the portrayal of the human tuckshop—the place where your dinner goes.

Got a tummy-ache? Then come right in, sir! Let the surgeon push a nice-looking tube into your mouth—it won't hurt a bit. That's right, sir. Now swallow—splendid!

At the end of that tube is a camera so tiny that it goes down with no more trouble than an acid-drop accidentally swallowed. Two electric wires are concealed in that flexible tube, one working the shutter of the tiny camera in your interior, the other operating a flashlight alongside.

If the surgeon wants to make a real picture-gallery of things down there, he takes a full set of sixteen pictures. Then he relieves you of your burden, and when the snaps have been enlarged he can examine at leisure the why and wherefore of the tummy-ache that drove you to him!

ON CAPTAIN KIDD'S TRAIL.

All the world has heard of Captain Kidd, king of pirates, and of Sir Malcolm Campbell, the man who lives to pull the nose of Father Time by persistently breaking speed records. Now Campbell is after another record—a clean-up of £10,000,000 lying around somewhere in Cocos Island, where old Captain Kidd had his private bank!

As soon as he sees that there are no more speed records in urgent need of breaking, Sir Malcolm wants to turn his back on motor-cars for a bit and hunt for the pirate king's buried treasure. He has already been to Cocos Island once, in 1925, and what he and his party saw so whetted Campbell's appetite that he now wants more.

If he discovers that pirate hoard he will have broken another record. Cocos Island isn't a picnic spot. It's all jungle and rock and stinging insects and very little water and 115 degrees in the shade and one or two other things that make the ordinary fellow glad to stop at home and just read about it!

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Printed and published every Saturday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farrington Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, Farrington Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland and abroad, 11s. per annum; 5s. 6d. for six months. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., and for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd.—Saturday, May 16th, 1931.

SEVEN WONDER-STORIES OF THE WORLD—WITHIN!

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EVERY SATURDAY.

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The OUTLAW KID!

Hoss-sense saves the Rio Kid from a high dive into eternity—and the hoss-sense comes from his mustang.



BREATHLESS?—SURE! THRILLING?—YOU BET! YOU'LL CATCH YOUR BREATH AS YOU READ THIS QUICK-FIRE WESTERN YARN!

In the Night!

THE Rio Kid woke suddenly. He had been dreaming of wild old days on the outlaw trail as he lay in his bunk in the foreman's cabin on the Bar-T ranch. Outlaw days were over for the Kid now, though they haunted his dreams. In the busy days on the ranch the new foreman of the Bar-T had almost forgotten that he had ever been the outlaw of the Rio Grande.

But "Santa Fe Smith," foreman of the Bar-T, had not forgotten the wary caution and vigilance that had been second nature with the Rio Kid. His eyes opened in the darkness, and his ears were intent the instant he had awakened. The next moment, as a faint creak came from the window shutter, he knew what had awakened him.

The Kid sat up and reached for one of the walnut-butted guns that lay by his bedside. His eyes glistened in the gloom. They were fixed on the wooden shutter that covered the unglazed window, through a chink or two of which came a glimmer of the soft starlight of Texas. The shutter creaked again and again, under a pressure from without; slight sounds that would have disturbed few sleepers. A grim smile flitted over the Kid's face in the gloom, and he slipped quietly from his bunk.

The shutter creaked again and slid open. A shaft of starlight glimmered into the cabin. The Kid, standing back against the wall in deep shadow, gripped the butt of his Colt and waited. It was easy for a man to step in at the window, now that it

was open, and the Kid waited for him to step.

The shutter slid wide open. In the square of starlight a dark figure blocked the stars. But the midnight prowler did not enter. An arm was thrust into the opening and a revolver glimmered. It was aimed directly at the bunk across the room.

The Kid waited, tensely.

For a long minute the revolver remained at a level, but the trigger was not pulled. The man was watching, listening. But the dead silence reassured him. Suddenly, with an effect of thunder in the silence, came the roar of the six-gun.

Bang!

The bullet smashed into the bunk where a few minutes before the Kid had been sleeping. Bang, bang, came fast and furious; bang again, and again. The man at the window was emptying his six-gun into the bunk—riddling the man who lay there with bullets, as he figured. And the Kid, grimly silent, waited till the six shots had crashed out, splintering the bunk and tearing through the blankets. The cabin reeked with smoke and the smell of gunpowder. A husky, savage voice followed the rapid shooting.

"I guess you've got yours, Santa Fe Smith, doggone you!"

From the distance came a shout. The roar of the Colt had awakened the punchers in the bunkhouse. The black figure at the cabin window backed and the starlight streamed in. And the Rio Kid, with a light leap, sprang through the window.

The man who had fired was running for the gate. But he spun round with a gasping curse as he heard the Kid behind him. The black-bearded face of Alex Black, late foreman of the Bar-T, who had been sacked for rustling, glimmered in the starlight. His eyes almost started from his head as he saw the Kid—the Kid whom he believed to be lying in the foreman's bunk riddled with bullets.

The Kid's eyes gleamed at him over a lifted gun.

"Put 'em up!" rapped the Kid. The empty Colt was gripped in Black Alec's hand. His arm came up and the empty Colt whizzed at the Kid. The Kid caught it on the barrel of his own weapon, and struck it aside. As he did so, Black Alec ran for the gate again, with the desperate speed of a hunted wolf.

Bang!

The Kid fired and the bullet grazed the running man. The Kid could not bring himself to drive lead through the back of a fleeing enemy. With a fierce leap Black Alec was over the gate, and dragging loose a pinto horse that was hitched there. The Kid ran on. From the shadows of the trail a horseman loomed up. It was Yuma Bill, a puncher of the Bar-T.

"Cinch him!" yelled the Kid. Men were pouring out of the bunkhouse now, half-dressed, guns in hands. The shooting had roused the whole ranch. It had brought Yuma Bill riding in from the prairie. At the Kid's yell, Yuma Bill jumped at the black-bearded man who was clambering on the pinto.

There was a flash of steel in the starlight. A hoarse cry rang from the trail-rider, and he pitched to the ground. Black Alec dropped the bowie knife that was crimson to the hilt, flung himself across the pinto and galloped away. The Rio Kid reached the gate. Yuma Bill lay groaning in the trail; Black Alec, urging on the pinto with quirt and spur, was riding for his life.

Bang, bang!

The Kid, with blazing eyes, was shooting to kill now. But the fleeing rider, bending low in the saddle, vanished in the shadows of the prairie. Again and again the Kid fired as the rider vanished. But Black Alec was gone.

Ambushed on the Trail!

"DOG-GONE him!" snarled the Kid. He holstered his smoking gun, dragged open the gate, and bent over the fallen trail-rider. A crowd of punchers surged round him.

"What's the rookus?" exclaimed Ginger, the horse-wrangler of the Bar-T.

"Yuma's got his!" said Texas.

"It was that doggoned skunk Black Alec!" hissed the Kid. "Bear a hand to get Yuma to his bunk, you'uns."

Yuma Bill was lifted from the trampled grass and carried into the bunkhouse. He was laid in his bunk, senseless; and

the Kid, with a set, grim face, washed and bandaged the wound in his brawny chest. The Bar-T punchers stood round in silence.

"I guess Yuma ain't going over the range," said the Kid at last. "But it was sure a close call for the guy; and he won't be riding the trail agin for a month o' Sundays."

"Hyer's the boss!" said Pecos. Judge Pindex, boss of the Bar-T, appeared in the doorway of the bunkhouse, half-dressed, a revolver in his hand.

"Say, what's all this jamboree?" he inquired.

The Kid pointed to the wounded man in the bunk.

"It was sure Black Alec aiming to make you want a new foreman, sir," he answered. "He didn't get this baby, but he got Yuma with his bowie at the gate. And I guess I'm going to get Black Alec, if I have to trail him all over Texas, doggone him."

"I reckoned that doggoned cow-thief had lit out of the section," said the rancher.

"Lit out nothing!" grunted the Kid. "He sure moseyed along this-a-way for my scalp, and I had him under my gun and let him live! And here's as good a man as any in the bunch knocked over with a hole in his chest you could put a six-gun in. Carry me home to die! If I don't get that all-fired rustler you can call me a Digger Injun!"

"I guess I'll send word to the marshal at Red Dog, and they'll sure rope in Alex Black!" said the rancher.

The Kid snapped his teeth. "It's your say-so, boss! But I reckon I'm going to ask you for a day off to pick up the trail of Alex Black."

"As many days as you want, Santa Fe," answered the rancher, and the Kid nodded and left the bunkhouse.

"Doggone it!" growled the Kid. His mind was made up now. In the dim night even the Rio Kid, keen as an Apache or a Comanche, could not raise the trail of a galloping horse on the boundless prairie. But with the first gleam of dawn he aimed to take the trail; and he figured on following it till he had put paid to Black Alec.

Long before dawn the foreman of the Bar-T was ready. Side-Kicker was led

from the corral, saddled and bridled. The Kid strapped on his rifle, packed his slicker-pack, and examined the walnut-butted guns meticulously. Dawn gleamed from the east, silencing the waving grass of the prairie. The Kid called to Texas. He did not forget his duties as foreman of the Bar-T, and he gave the puncher directions to carry on in his place.

"But you ain't going after that bulldozer on your lonesome, Santa Fe!" objected Texas. "You sure want to take some of the boys along."

The Kid shook his head. "I guess the boys are wanted on the ranch, Texas," he answered, "and I sure allow that I'm as good a man as Alex Black."

"You said it!" agreed Texas. "But I guess that doggoned lobo-wolf will aim to get you from behind a rock. He ain't the guy to give a galoot an even break."

"He sure ain't!" said the Kid. "But he won't get me from behind a rock in a gal-darned hurry, Texas. I'm going to rope him in and hand him over to the marshal at Red Dog, or else leave him for the turkey-buzzards—but if he gets me, Texas, I guess you'll make a good foreman for this ranch."

"Aw, forget it!" grunted Texas. In the glimmering dawn the Kid walked with Side-Kicker's reins over his arm to the spot where Black Alec had disappeared. The trail of the pinto was light, but it was more than enough for the Kid. He followed it on foot for a little distance, and then mounted the grey mustang and rode.

The trail ran direct north, towards the Mesquite hills. The Kid had figured that that was the direction it would take, for it was only in the hills that the fugitive could find safety—if he could find it there. Hunting for a man who had vanished into the trackless sierra was a task that would have daunted the keenest sheriff in Texas. But the Rio Kid, who had beaten many a sheriff on the trail, figured that he was going to make the grade.

More than once the trail of the pinto was crossed by others, and the Kid had to dismount and pick up sign with searching eyes. Twice the trail was blotted out by the hoof-marks of a lumbering herd of cows, but each time the Kid picked it up again farther on towards the hills.

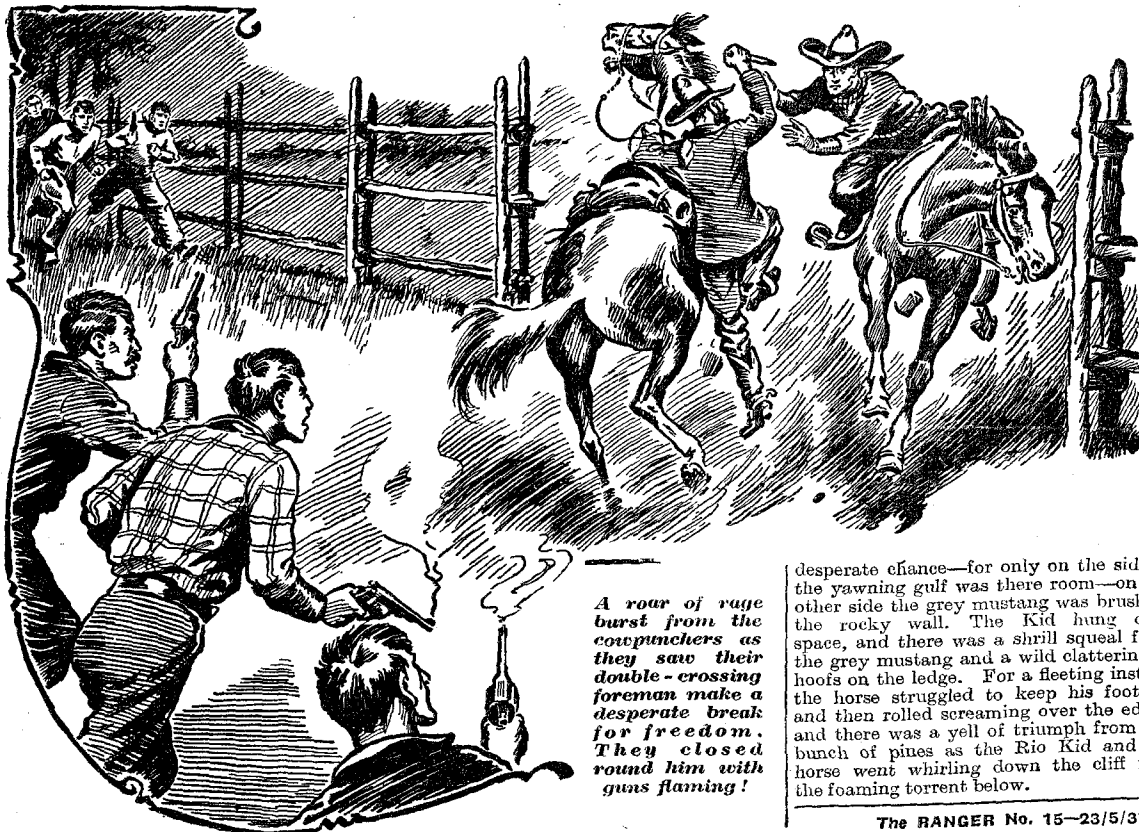
Ahead of him now was an opening in the rocky line of the sierra; and the Kid, sure now of his direction, put the grey mustang to a gallop. It was yet morning when he struck the hills and rode into a rocky canyon. The canyon yawned wide between precipitous walls of rock, narrowing farther on to a gorge, where it was filled from side to side by a torrent that came foaming down from the uplands.

The Kid halted and scanned the canyon. On either bank of the torrent there was riding room till the gorge was reached, after which no horseman could ride up. On the left, a narrow ledge ran up the canyon wall, scarce three feet wide, and overhanging the torrent. An iron nerve was required to ride by such a path, but the Kid reckoned that that was the path Alex Black had taken—unless he had ridden into the canyon to camp there. He dismounted and scanned the ledge, and a trampled branch of juniper was sign enough for him. He remounted and rode up the ledge.

Higher and higher it rose, climbing the rugged wall of the canyon, widening here and there, then narrowing to barely a couple of feet. Black Alec had looked for pursuit, and he had left pursuers a hard trail to follow.

Side-Kicker, with the sure tread of a mountain cat, followed the dizzy ledge winding up the canyon wall. On the Kid's right, now, was a sheer fall of thirty feet, with the torrent raging and foaming at the bottom. Even the iron-nerved Kid did not care to look down as his right leg swung over dizzy space. And his eyes were watching the ledge slanting and winding up before him. It led to the high uplands—a trackless wilderness of rock and scrub. The Kid reckoned that he would be pleased, more than a few, when that stage of the trail was done, for if the fugitive had stopped to face pursuit there, nothing could save a pursuer. And suddenly from a bunch of pines that clung to the canyon wall over the ledge came a movement, and the Kid knew that Black Alec was there!

The roar of a rifle came the same second. The Kid, wary as a panther, flung himself down beside his horse's flank, with one leg over the saddle, and the bullet flew over him. But it was



A roar of rage burst from the cowpunchers as they saw their double-crossing foreman make a desperate break for freedom. They closed round him with guns flaming!

desperate chance—for only on the side of the yawning gulf was there room—on the other side the grey mustang was brushing the rocky wall. The Kid hung over space, and there was a shrill squeal from the grey mustang and a wild clattering of hoofs on the ledge. For a fleeting instant the horse struggled to keep his footing, and then rolled screaming over the edge; and there was a yell of triumph from the bunch of pines as the Rio Kid and his horse went whirling down the cliff into the foaming torrent below.

Through the Shadows of Death!

A WILD rush through the air—a crashing and splashing. Many a tight corner had the Rio Kid been in; many a time had grim death looked in the face of the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande. But in the flashing second as he shot downward, the Kid figured that the game was over and that he had struck the end of his wild life-trail.

Only a second, packed with long minutes of horror, before he struck the torrent, and the whirling waters closed over him and his horse. From the ledge above a black-bearded face with fierce eyes glared down. Black Alec was in time to see the Kid strike the torrent that tore him away as he struck it, rolling man and horse helplessly over as if in a giant's grip. With a six-gun in his hand, the cow-thief blazed away at the wild waters that had closed over the Kid, splashing lead right and left into the torrent. But there was little chance of the lead reaching the Kid; the rush of the descending waters tore him away at lightning speed. Whether he had been hit, Black Alec could not know; but he knew that his pursuer was swept away to merciless death, and his savage laugh rang out and echoed back from the rocky wall of the canyon.

The Kid hardly knew what was happening to him. The roar of the waters was in his ears; again and again he struck on a rock as he was swept down the gorge. Blinded, breathless, choked, dashed and beaten, the Kid's senses left him, and he knew that it was the end—and then he knew no more. It was a senseless body that the torrent tore and whirled on its raging way down the steep gorge.

It was the end—or was it the end? The Rio Kid had passed through the black bitterness of death, yet his eyes opened to the sunlight; he was conscious of dull aching in every bone, of water that swished and bubbled round him. Something was holding him—was dragging him—his face was free of the water—he was breathing. His dizzy brain could not take it in; only he knew that he was no longer whirling down the foaming gorge. He lay in bubbling, creaming water, the roar of the torrent still in his ears; and that grip on him was dragging—dragging—holding him back from death. Whether seconds passed, or minutes, the Kid never knew, but his dazed brain cleared at last and he could see and understand.

He was out of the gorge, in the lower canyon beyond the torrent. Over him loomed the grey mustang, drenched and dripping, knee-deep in water by the bank. It was Side-Kicker's teeth that fastened in his shirt, dragging him from the stream. In dazed wonder the Rio Kid realized what had saved him.

In the shallowing water by the bank below the falling torrent, the mustang struggled to keep his footing, while his teeth held his master. And the Kid, himself again at last, staggered up and clung to the horse, and the mustang struggled ashore with his master clinging to him with the last remaining ounce of his strength.

Out of the water, with solid rock under his feet, the Kid sank down.

Long he lay there, exhausted, with the burning sunlight streaming down on him, drying him. Beside him stood the mustang, his intelligent eyes on his master. The Kid was in no hurry to move. He lay waiting for his strength to revive. He had been through the valley of the shadow of death, and it had told even on the iron-limbed Kid.

But he rose to his feet at last.

Side-Kicker's soft muzzle nuzzled under his arm, and the Kid threw his arm round the glossy neck.

"I guess this ain't the first time you've pulled me' through, old hoss," he murmured softly. "It ain't the first time, not by a whole jugful, I'll tell a man! But I guess we never had a closer call than that, you and me, old hoss! We surely never did!"

Carefully the Kid cleaned and re-loaded his guns. He looped the reins over his arm and led Side-Kicker to the ledge.

"It's us for the trail, old hoss," said the Kid, "and this time I reckon it's Alex Black that's going to get it where he lives. I guess that guy will sure be some surprised when he sees us, old hoss: he surely will."

Up the rocky ledge the Kid rode the grey mustang. Hours had passed since he had pitched into the torrent; it was long past noon. Burning heat blazed down into the canyon. The Kid chewed a stale flapjack as he rode; that was all the food he needed on a trail. Black Alec, he figured, had long gone, confident that he had stopped pursuit, that he had left his pursuer dead in the torrent. The Kid reached the bunch of pines high up the ledge, where the black-bearded cow-thief had lain in wait for him.

He found sign there of Alex Black and his pinto; but the sign was cold. As the Kid had judged, the cow-thief was long gone. The Kid followed on up the ledge, winding higher and higher into the uplands of the bleak sierra, till the perilous path ended at last on a high barren hillside. The afternoon sun was sloping down towards the sierras of New Mexico; the west was a blaze of crimson and gold. The shadows of the pines lengthened on the rocks.

Patient as an Apache or a hunting cougar, the Kid searched for sign of the man who had vanished into a wilderness of rock and scrub. There was little to be picked up, but that little was enough for the Rio Kid. Under the falling shadows the Kid pressed on, slowly but steadily, while the sun sank lower and lower and dipped at last behind the hills.

Darkness fell like a velvety cloak, but as the last light disappeared, the Kid knew that he was close to the end of the long and weary trail. Through the darkness that wrapped rocks and pines a red flicker of firelight gleamed blood-red against the blackness.

The Death Ride!

BLACK ALEC, sitting on a log by the camp-fire in the high sierra, threw an armful of pine cones on the fire.

The day had been hot, but the night was cold, bitterly cold on the high uplands, hundreds of feet above the plains of Texas. The fire burned crimson under the heap of cones and branches, sending up thick smoke. Had a pursuer still been on his trail Alex Black would not have ventured to start a fire, bitterly cold as it was. But his pursuer was drowned and dead in the mountain torrent—if seeing was believing. And every time he thought of the Kid's fearful plunge over the cliff the late foreman of the Bar-T grinned savagely.

At dawn he aimed to ride again across the sierra into New Mexico; into new country where he was not known. But in the dark he did not care to ride on by that wild and rugged way, where the uplands were split into steep arroyos and yawning, black barrancas—where a false step was death. But with his only pursuer dead in the mountain torrent, he had time on his hands; he could afford to wait till morning. And if the Bar-T bunch found what was left of their new foreman, and hunted him for vengeance, he would be long and far out of their reach.

His pinto, weary with the hard trail, lay near him. The horse lifted its head, its eyes gleaming in the firelight for a moment. Something had startled the horse.

The cow-thief stared into the night that surrounded him like a black wall. He listened, with a vague uneasiness in his breast. But there was no sound.

He rose from the log at last and unrolled his blankets. He kicked the fire, and a ruddy flame shot up from the pine-cones. Overhead, hardly a star gleamed in the sky; the night was cloudy and dark. With his blankets in his hands the cow-thief gave a sudden start and stood stock still, the blood racing to his heart. From the darkness, where he could see nothing, came a voice—a quiet voice that he knew, but that he had never dreamed to hear again.

"Hands up!"

He stood rooted.

"Hands up, you doggoned cow-thief! I've got you covered, and by the great horned toad, you're dead meat if you touch a gun! I've trailed you down, Mister Black, and you're my mutton, with the wool on."

A husky gasp came from Black Alec.

He swung slowly round, staring in the direction of the voice—the voice of the Rio Kid, the man he knew as Santa Fe Smith, the man he had sent to eath in the rushing torrent. There was terror in his eyes; icy terror gripping his heart. His starting eyes stared into the darkness.

"I guess I ain't waiting!" came the Kid's voice. "Put up your hands, you doggoned cow-thief."

The face of the cow-thief flamed with fury.

He could not see the Kid, but he knew that the Colt was levelled as he stood against the light of the fire. The desperate thought was in his mind of springing to his horse; but the hand that never missed was raised, and in the light of the fire he was clear to the sight of the man he could not see. The fire had betrayed him to his enemy; the fire was showing him up to his enemy's aim. He stood by the fire, the unrolled blankets in his arms, staring—and the figure of the Rio Kid emerged into the radius of light, the grey mustang at his heels. His gun was levelled, his eyes glinting over it.

Black Alec's eyes burned at him across the flickering fire. The Kid's eyes narrowed.

"Hands up, Alex Black! Or——" There was death in the grim Colt; death in the eyes that glinted over it.

The blankets dropped from Black Alec's hands—and they dropped over the fire, smothering it. Thick smoke rolled and eddied, but for the moment every gleam of light was blotted out. It was a desperate chance, and the cow-thief was taking it. As blackness rushed down, he threw himself on the ground, just as the Kid's gun roared.

A bullet grazed his head as he fell—and another splattered on the rocky soil an inch from him. The Kid expected to hear the answering roar of a six-gun, but Alex Black was not pulling a gun. He was rolling over to his horse; he was clutching at the pinto; he was throwing himself across the bare back.

Bang, bang, roared the Rio Kid's Colt, and the lead whined close by the panting cow-thief.

But in the darkness even the Kid was beaten to it; and in those wild moments Black Alec made the most of his chance. He was on the pinto, and a sudden clatter of hoofs echoed in the night as he dashed madly away. Bang, bang, roared the Colt behind, and a bullet drew blood from the cow-thief's cheek. But with merciless spurs he drove on the pinto, and mad galloping answered the Kid's shooting.

The Kid's teeth shut hard. With a spring he was on the grey mustang's back and dashing in pursuit of the cow-thief.

Gallop, gallop, came thundering back from the hill. It was madness to ride a race on the wild and rugged mountain, but there was death behind the cow-thief and he was taking chances. The Kid was not the man to be beaten to it. With cracking quirt he urged on the grey mustang, and Side-Kicker raced in pursuit.

Bang, bang! Spurts of fire came from the blackness ahead. The cow-thief was firing back. He fired wildly, almost at random, and the lead whined far from the Kid. But at the flashing of the Colt the Kid pulled trigger, and a yell floated back. The cow-thief was hit. But the galloping hoofs still rang on the rocks; if he was hit he was still keeping the horse's back, riding madly on through rugged rocks and enveloping darkness.

Clatter, clatter, rang the hoofs of Side-Kicker in pursuit. The echoes rolled back like thunder from the hill. The Kid, his teeth set, rode savagely, listening keenly as he rode. Even the Kid's keen ear could scarcely tell whether the hoof-beats that crashed back came from the fugitive, or were the echoes of his own

(Continued on page 419.)

RANGER DAN'S BULL'S-EYES!

Magistrate: "Where do you live?"

Tramp: "No where!"

Magistrate (to second tramp): "And where do you live?"

Second Tramp: "I've got the room above him."

(A Combination Knife has been awarded to D. Wilson, 67, South-east Road, Portabella, Dublin.)

Murphy: "Why is it you aren't on a diet as the doctor ordered, Pat?"

Pat: "Faith, I'm not going to starve to death just for the sake of living a little longer!"

(A Combination Knife has been awarded to E. McKeefry, 5, North Bull, Dollymount Dublin, Ireland.)

Teacher (to small boy who has a brother): "Where is your brother this morning?"

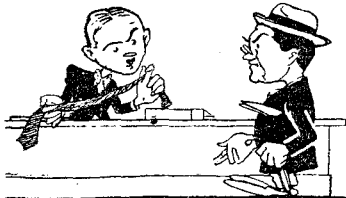
Boy: "Please, teacher, we were seeing who could lean out of the window farthest—and he won!"

(A Grand Book has been awarded to H. Butterworth, 206, Shaw Road, Royton, Oldham, Lancs.)

The pompous little major was boring the club smoking-room with his yarns. At last, however, he raised smiles.

"Yes," he said, "the Grassoppa Pass can only be crossed by asses and mules. I know—I speak from experience."

(A Fretwork Outfit has been awarded to Keith Jessop, 7, Lindhurst Avenue, Bredbury, near Stockport.)



Tompkins: "I want to buy a necktie." Shopman: "Yes, sir. Here is one that is very much worn."

Tompkins: "What do you take me for? I want a new one. I've got plenty of worn ones at home!"

(A Warneford Tractor Plane has been awarded to V. Goodman, 40, Napier Road, Luton, Beds.)

The heavy-weight boxer was describing his latest fight.

"Yes," he said, "my opponent had to be taken to hospital with a broken nose, two black eyes, a twisted shoulder-blade and a fractured jaw."

"Oh," exclaimed a friend, "did he have a row with the referee?"

(A Wallet has been awarded to W. Freckleton, 2, Wark Avenue, Bertram Place, Shiremoor, Northumberland.)



American in Scotland: "Say, tell me where I am. I'm lost!"

Scot: "Is there a reward for ye?"

American: "No."

Scot: "Then ye're still lost." (A Giant Torch has been awarded to G. Bishop, 36, Windsor Street, York Road, Leeds.)

The auctioneer was holding up a pair of silver candlesticks.

"Give me a start!" he cried.

"Fourpence!"

"What!"

"Ah!" said the bidder, "I thought that would give you a start!"

(A fine Speed Boat has been awarded to W. Irving, "The Summit," Dumfries, Scotland.)

Magistrate: "The evidence shows that you threw a brick at the constable."

Bill Bruiser: "It shows more'n that—it shows I 'it 'im!"

(A Table Tennis Set has been awarded to T. Griffiths, 73, Rutland Street, Millfield, Sunderland, Co. Durham.)

A famous footballer was relating an experience to his clubmates.

"I was rushing through the Rangers' defence with the ball at my feet," he said, "when suddenly I saw the goal in front. Raising my foot, I shot with all my force."

Listener: "And did you score?"

Footballer: "Score! Why, man, it took me half-an-hour to get my foot out of the bedposts. I was dream'ng."

(A Grand Book has been awarded to E. Rowbottom, 10, Lewis Street, Shaw, near Oldham.)

Young Ashby joined the Army and had to take up a riding course.

"Sergeant," he said to the old veteran in charge

of the riding school, "pick me out a nice, gentle horse, will you?"

"Right," said that worthy. "Have you ever ridden before?"

"Never," confessed the recruit.

"Good. Then I've got the very horse for you. Here's one that's never been ridden before. You can both start out together."

(An Ensign Camera has been awarded to W. Fisher, Barkston, near Grantham, Lincs.)

"What a debt we owe to medical science," remarked father as he laid down the paper.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed mother. "Haven't you paid that doctor's bill yet?"

(A Warneford Tractor Plane has been awarded to E. Cooper, Church Street, Long Backby, near Rugby.)

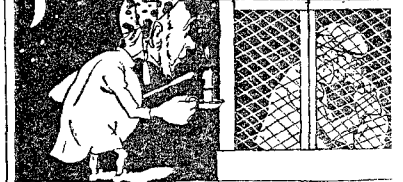
Pat and Mike were on the river bank looking for a job. A diver came to the surface of the water and Pat said:

"Hi! Your boss want any men down there?"

"I don't know," replied the diver. "Come and see for yourself."

Pat turned to Mike: "If I'm not up in ten minutes, you'll know I've started!" And he dived in!

(A Fretwork Outfit has been awarded to G. Woods, 5a7c, Park Road, near Alfred Place, Dingle, Liverpool.)



Farmer (outside his disturbed hen-roost at night): "Who's there?"

Muffled Voice from Within: "Only us chickens, gw'nor!"

(A Fretwork Outfit has been awarded to P. Lang, "Pendemis," Bishops Way, Andover, Hants.)

Bobbie: "Why is father singing, mother?"

Mother: "He's singing baby to sleep."

Bobbie: "Well, if I were baby I'd pretend to sleep!"

(A Combination Knife has been awarded to J. Finn, 35, Spenser Street, Bootle, Liverpool.)

Willie: "That mouth-organ you gave me for my birthday is easily the best present I've had, uncle."

Uncle: "I'm glad to hear that."

Willie: "Yes, mother gives me sixpence a week not to play it!"

(A Table Tennis Set has been awarded to S. Fay, 25, Leyland Avenue, Gatley, Cheshire.)

PRIZES FOR JOKES.

Do you know a funny joke? Good! Then send it to Ranger Dan. He's presenting marvellous prizes to readers whose efforts cause him mirth. Address your jokes to "Ranger Dan's Bull's-Eyes," No. 15, THE RANGER, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.), and enclose the coupon, filled in, shown below. Ranger Dan's decision is final.

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NAME

ADDRESS

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Ranger, No. 15.

.....

whirling upwards. A dense fog wrapping everything.

Bruce got his seat, fell prone along the tank, his gauntleted hands pressed to the bars. He bored in through a dust cloud, and shot out through the billowed smoke.

The race was on!

To his right a sky-blue speedster hugged him. To left, Rodman carved through a flung-out bunch of riders. Straggled along the straight, the field spun out. Then the turn—a dark-brown wave of spurting dirt—a dizzy swing astern—and round to face ahead again.

Another mad dash down the straight. A throng of riders falling out of view behind. One after another they slipped away. A few remained. The blue machine, another, and Rodman, hanging on the sky-blue's tail.

R-r-r-p! Then the corner.

Scotty's back wheel slewed out and raked the loose brown ground. The sky-blue speedster shivered in towards him, all but kissed his knee, and shook away, an inch to spare.

Inside he saw the red and aluminium bike bore. Rodman slashed through; his back tyre wobbled in a trailing arc. It touched the sky-blue rider's foot—shook him—then shot away to a puff of oil-smoke. As Scotty took the straight beyond, he glimpsed the American's tail.

Head down the pair streaked for the next turn, Scotty's front wheel hugging Buster's back. Together they dived baldheaded into the bend, broadsiding neck to neck.

Nearer and nearer Rodman swung, till it seemed a cannon was a cert.

Bruce forced the bars around, his muscles swelling to the frightful strain. The American's wheel shot in, and missed. Bruce wobbled, took the wire net fence, bounced off and went into a violent jazz.

Another swerve—a fierce lock of his tortured wrists. The good bike flattened out upon a level keel. The straight—a whirring maze of phantom posts and fencing—a sickly blur of pale, white faces, nightmare.

What was that at the far corner—the south-east? That stir among the crowd—men thrusting through the forefront of the press about the rails?

Castro—uniformed police! They were mounting—dropping over the fence on to the track!

The Scot's pulses jazzed. At last he guessed the truth! That south-east corner cut into Castro's territory. On the last lap, the police chief aimed to make a swoop!

Bruce slid a finger down the bars and touched the throttle lever. The bike leaped forward like a thing possessed—flamed down the straight, caught Rodman's bike, and passed it. A hurricane of up-flung dust, of smoke and spurting fire, the yellow speedster smashed into the turn.

A knot of braided figures jumped out in a waving line as the Scotsman's back wheel hinged around.

A hand grabbed out and Scotty's dropped bars wobbled. He sloshed his armoured gauntlet in the snarling face and barged on through a phalanx of police.

The sky-blue motor streaked up round the turn, scattered the shouting cops and spun into a frightful jazz. The epicentre of a whirling cloud, its rider ankle desperately to save himself. Then Rodman dashed in with a breakneck plunge, and the pair crashed wildly in a drunken mix-up.

Vaguely Bruce saw the American rear up from the threshing heap—start his machine and thrust off for the straight. Bruce gave his bike a shove, jumped for the saddle and roared off down the straight. In his deafened ears, a blaring roar of cheers came after him.

The finishing line ahead—the chequered flag upraised. A jerk—a sickening crunch affront him. He glimpsed his front wheel buckle.

His front wheel had gone! Done!

No! With a frenzied heave he flung backwards, strained outwards in the saddle. The front forks lifted till the bike heaved up on its back tyres like a bucking broncho.

He swayed, held it, and rattled down the last few yards, the wreckage of a wheel dangling before him.

The finish line—the flag—a swift down swoop—then a red and silver streak that smashed past him. Rodman!

He glimpsed a far-off movement by the rails—a pouring in, like drifting sand into a hole. It was the infuriated crowd, handling Castro's policemen.

A thunderous roar went up that shook the blazing skies. Dirty Dick's cap went sudding in the air.

Scotty fell a-sprawl upon his bucking mount as it flopped down in the dirt.

But through the murk of dust and Castro smoke, he saw the sparkle of the precious silver belt.

His—by a foot!

“Broadside Bruce” and “Dirty Dick” involved in breathless adventures in the heart of the South American continent. You'll enjoy every word of next week's all-thrilling story of dirt-track racing abroad.

THE OUTLAW KID!

(Continued from page 414.)

horse's feet. He cracked his quirt as he felt his horse staccating in its stride.

“Get on, old hoss, doggone you! hissed the Kid. “Get on, doggone you pesky hide! You want to let that rustler best us to it!”

And for once the Kid gave the grey mustang a touch of the spur. But neither quit nor spur availed, and the mustang halted; for the first time disobedient to his master.

“Doggone you!” roared the Kid. “What's got you, hoss?”

But the mustang, his feet planted firmly, did not stir. And in the silence of the echoes that followed his halt the Kid realised that he could no longer hear the galloping ahead.

Where was Black Alec? Had he halted—was he turning at bay, desperate, gun in hand? Leaning over the mustang's neck the Kid strained his eyes ahead in the blackness. And an icy thrill ran through his veins as he searched out a rough edge of rock not a yard ahead of his halted mustang—the rugged edge of a yawning barranca. The Rio Kid, who had never known fear, felt for a moment a chill at his heart.

He slipped from the saddle. He trod forward—softly, cautiously. He knew now why the grey mustang had stopped, why neither whip nor spur would drive him another step onward. One more stride of his horse would have plunged the Kid over the verge of the rocky chasma that stretched before him—black, yawning, wide, of unplumbed depth. With a beating heart the Rio Kid stared over the brink of the fearful gulf.

“Carry me home to die!” breathed the Kid.

He knew now why no galloping echo came back from the night. The gulf that yawned before the Kid had yawned before Alex Black; but the pinto had not stopped in time.

He listened.

No sound came up from the black depths. A hundred feet below, at least, lay the rugged rocks on which horse and rider had crashed in the darkness. The Kid turned back.

It was the end of the trail!

(More trouble visits the Rio Kid at the Bar-T Ranch in next week's Smashing Tale of the Wild West. But the Kid faces it with both guns out—like the fighter he is!)

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The RANGER

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The OUTLAW KID!

A ROARING
YARN OF
THE WILD
WEST.

the thousand dollars they're offering for you in Frio."

The Kid's eyes glittered.

"I reckon I'd be glad to see you trying to earn that reward, Cactus," he snapped.

"Mebbe!" grinned Cactus. "But that ain't my game, Kid, and you ain't the guy to shoot up a galoot permissus. You never was."

The Kid gave an angry grunt.

"What you doing here?" he snapped.

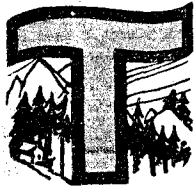
"I ain't seen you since I quirted you at White Pine. I guess I'm honing to quirt you again, you doggoned hoss-thief!"

"Aw, can it, Kid!" said Cactus.

"You don't want to get mad because we had trouble back at White Pine. What you doing here? Say, you ain't got on a



"Light Out!"



THE KID!"

Cactus Pete gasped out the name in astonishment.

The Rio Kid drew in the grey mustang.

That it was too good to last was a thought

that was often in the mind of the Rio Kid as he rode the ranges of the Bar-T as foreman of the ranch. For whole days he would forget that he had ever been the outlaw of the Rio Grande, hunted by sheriffs and Rangers. But often he had to remember; and when he remembered, he wondered whether it would last, and how long it would last.

But that sunny morning as he cantered along the trail to Red Dog, he was thinking no such thoughts. His sunburnt face was bright, and he hummed a Ranger song as he rode. When he sighted the horseman coming towards him down the trail he had no misgivings. The rider was in chaps and Stetson, and looked

like a puncher; and the big brim of his hat hid his face from the Kid as he approached. The Kid did not figure that that Stetson brim hid a familiar face; not till he was quite near and the horseman looked up, and their eyes met. And the Kid's heart almost missed a beat at the sight of Cactus Pete's hard, evil visage. The man he had known as a horse-thief on the banks of the Rio Frio stared at him in astonishment.

"The Kid!" repeated Cactus Pete.

He knew him. The Rio Kid had made one or two little changes in his appearance since he had signed on with Judge Pindex as foreman of the Bar-T. He did not want to resemble too closely the pictures of the outlaw that were posted up in many a cow-town along the Rio Grande. But Cactus Pete knew him at a glance.

The Kid sat his halted mustang, his hand very near the butt of a gun. Cactus Pete stared, and then pushed his broncho nearer the Kid, grinning.

"You don't want to pull a gun, Kid!" he said. "I guess I ain't arter

ranch like you had when I met up with you down in the San Pedro country?"

The Kid breathed hard.

He was foreman of the Bar-T, trusted by his boss, loyally backed up by the bunch. And a word from this outcast horse-thief would knock his new life to pieces like a house of cards.

"Say, I guess I ain't got time for chewing the rag!" said the Kid abruptly. "I guess I want to see the last of you, hombre, and to see it quick. You want to burn the trail."

Cactus Pete's eyes searched his face.

"You got on to something in this section?" he said. "If it's a hold-up, I guess I'm the galoot to go into cahoots with you, Kid! I guess—"

He broke off as the Kid whipped a gun from a holster. The long barrel of the Colt glistened in the sun.

"Light out!" said the Kid briefly. "If I'm on to a hold-up, Cactus, I don't want a guy of your heft in the game. Hit the prairie, and hit it pronto. I'm sure going to fan you with bullets till you git!"

Cactus Pete's eyes burned at him and for a second his hand made a motion towards a gun. The Kid's jaw set grimly.

But Cactus did not touch

Ruin stares the Rio Kid in the face if he does his duty by his boss . . . but duty comes first.

the gun. It was not good enough, and he was wise to it.

"I guess I ain't come here a-shooting!" muttered Cactus Pete sullenly. "But I reckon—"

"Quit chewing the rag and hit the horizon!"

Bang!

The Kid's Colt roared, and the bullet cut through the brim of Cactus Pete's Stetson. The horse-thief of Frio swung round his broncho, quitted the trail, and dashed off across the prairie. His teeth were gritted, his eyes burning; but he hit the prairie, and hit it quick. The Kid's six-gun roared behind him.

Up the trail, from the direction of the Bar-T ranch, two punchers came riding—Texas and Pecos. They spurred on their bronchos as they saw their foreman sitting his mustang in the trail, blazing away lead after a horseman who rode furiously away in thick grass.

"Say, Santa Fe, what's this game?" called out Texas, as the two punchers came thundering up.

The Kid lowered his smoking gun. Cactus Pete was riding away fast, and the Kid figured that he would keep on hitting the trail.

"You sure was making that guy burn the wind, Santa Fe!" chuckled Pecos.

Santa Fe Smith, foreman of the Bar-T—known to Cactus Pete and to many a sheriff in Texas as the Rio Kid, laughed.

"I guess that guy's a doggoned horse-thief, and I was sure warning him off Bar-T trails," he answered. "I reckon there'd be cayuses missing if that galoot wasn't missing first."

The Kid rode on to Red Dog with the two punchers. Cactus Pete had vanished, hitting the horizon as fast as his broncho could carry him. And the foreman of the Bar-T hoped that he was gone for good.

The Hold-Up!

"HALT!"

Jerry Mack, who drove the two-horse hack from Saddlebag to Red Dog, slowed down his team as the horseman pushed out of the straggling mesquite beside the trail.

One glance at the rider was enough for Jerry, who had been through many a hold-up in his time.

The man had a flour-sack drawn down over his head, with eye-holes cut in it. There was a six-gun in his right hand. His order to the stage-driver was hardly needed. At the sight of a masked man with a six-gun, Jerry knew that it was time to halt. Jerry, like most galoots in the Red Dog section, packed a gun; but he did not think of touching it. Jerry was paid to drive the hack, not to start gunplay with road-agents. He gave the masked man a cool nod.

"Your funeral, bo!" he said, and he chewed tobacco while he waited for the man in the flour-sack to get through. The horseman rode closer.

"Step out—and step lively!" he rapped.

Four passengers stepped out of the hack. Under the half-raised six-gun, and the grim eyes that watched them through the eye-holes of the mask, they were not thinking of resistance. They put up their hands without waiting to be told. A fifth man stepped out more slowly. It was Judge Pindex, boss of the Bar-T ranch, coming back from Saddlebag with a bag of dollars from the bank. The rancher's eyes gleamed at the hold-up man.

"You guys stand back." The masked man gestured with his revolver, and the four passengers backed to the side of the stage-trail. "Say, rancher, I guess you're my game."

"I guess I got a ten-dollar bill you can touch, if you want!" grunted the rancher. There was a laugh from under the flour-sack.

"Can it, rancher! I was standing only six feet from you at Saddlebag when you took six hundred dollars out of the bank. I guess you want to hand out them dollars, and to hand them out pronto."

"You doggoned trail-thief—"

"Hands up!"

The man in the flour-sack snapped out

the words. Judge Pindex had almost touched a gun. But he did not quite touch it. His eyes glittered at the road-agent, and he breathed hard and deep.

But his hands went up. The six-gun was looking at him, and there was death in the Colt, and in the cold, hard eyes that gleamed from the eye-holes in the flour-sack.

The masked man slid from his broncho. He stepped towards the rancher, keeping the six-gun up.

"You handing out them dollars, dog-gone you?" came in a hiss from under the flour-sack. "I guess I ain't waiting, rancher. If you want me to leave you for buzzard's meat—"

The trigger was moving.

Judge Pindex gritted his teeth, and drew out the bag of dollars. The road-agent grasped it with his left hand.

"I guess you wa'n't any too soon," he snapped. He jerked the judge's gun from his belt, and tossed it into the mesquite. "Now hop back into that hearse, doggone you!"

"I guess I'll see you strung up for this," said the rancher between his teeth, as he stepped back into the hack.

The masked man remounted his broncho. Faintly, from the distance, the sound of hoot-beats was borne on the wind. There were riders on the trail, though as yet they were hidden from sight by the straggling pecans and mesquite that bordered it.

The man in the flour-sack seemed to hesitate for a second. But the ringing of hoofs on the hard trail decided him, and he left the other four passengers unnoticed. He cracked his quirt, drove his long Mexican spurs into the flanks of his horse, and dashed away across the prairie.

Clatter, clatter, came the beating of hoofs from the direction of Red Dog. Judge Pindex leaped from the hack again.

The man in the flour-sack was disappearing in the distance. Down the trail from Red Dog came a bunch of riders, with clattering hoofs, jingling spurs and bridles. The rancher gave a yell.

"Hyer, you guys!"

Santa Fe Smith, foreman of the Bar-T, jingled to a halt. Texas and Pecos, and Ginger, the horse-wrangler, were riding with him. The Kid stared at the halted stage, and lifted his Stetson to his boss.

"Say, boss, what's this circus?" he asked.

The rancher pointed to the horseman vanishing in the distance across the sun-red prairie.

"It's a hold-up!" he yelled. "That guy's got off with six hundred dollars! You Santa Fe—"

The Kid did not wait for the rest. He swung the grey mustang from the trail, cracked his quirt, and galloped on the track of the fleeing road-agent. The three punchers galloped after him.

Jerry Mack spat out tobacco-juice; gathered up his reins and his whip.

"All aboard!" he sang out.



The Rio Kid and his punchers surrounded the cornered road-agent who had robbed them of their wages. "Stick 'em up!" snapped the Kid.

And the hack, with its passengers, rolled on along the rugged trail to Red Dog—the rancher leaning from the window and staring after the galloping riders till they vanished in the grass of the prairie.

Hunted Down!

SIDE-KICKER leaped to a touch of the spur. The Rio Kid, his eyes gleaming under bent brows, was riding hard.

Far ahead of him, almost out of sight in waving grass, appearing and disappearing from moment to moment among the scattered post-oaks and bunches of pecans, the man in the flour-sack galloped, riding for his life.

Behind the Kid came Texas and Pecos and Ginger, letting out their bronchos at full stretch, riding with whip and spur. They shouted and loosed off revolver-shots as they galloped.

But the Kid did not shout, and he did not waste powder. He rode hard, and he rode grimly, his eyes fastened on the fleeing figure ahead. It was his boss that had been robbed, and the Kid figured that he was going to get back the rancher's dollars, and round up the hold-up man, if horseflesh and hard riding could do it.

"Get to it, old hoss!" murmured the Kid.

Seldom did the Kid use the spur; but he gave the grey mustang a touch now. Side-Kicker stretched to full gallop, and the Kid shot ahead of the three punchers riding behind.

Closer and closer the Kid drew to the straining fugitive. He gave a glance behind—the punchers were now farther in the rear. They had quit shouting and loosing off lead, and were riding their hardest. But the grey mustang left them standing. Already the Kid, as he looked back, could see little more than their Stetsons bobbing over the high grass.

Little cared the Kid! If it came to a cinch, it would be man to man; and the Kid figured that he was able to handle any hold-up man in Texas.

Closer he drew, and he could see the flour-sack, with its eye-holes and the eyes gleaming through, as the man looked back. A spurt of fire came from the rider, and the Kid laughed; the bullet flew yards wide.

The man in the flour-sack rode desperately on again.

Thud, thud, thud, rang the hoofs on sun-baked earth.

Far ahead, a dark line across the prairie, ran the bluffs that marked the course of the Saddlebag River. In the spring rains the water foamed up to the bluffs; but in the summer heats, the river ran shallow, and the grassy bluffs rose high above the yellow stream. The Kid smiled grimly. He reckoned that the road-agent was a stranger in the Red Dog country, or he would have known that the way ahead was barred by the river that ran low between the bluffs. He had his man now, unless the hold-up man got away with a leap that few riders in Texas could have made with success.

Thud, thud, thud!

The Kid saw the man in the flour-sack rise in his stirrups, staring ahead. He had seen what the Kid reckoned he would soon see. The masked face stared back at the Kid.

Bang!

The Kid's six-gun roared, and the bullet whizzed an inch from the flour-bagged head.

The road-agent bent low in the saddle, and rode desperately on.

He was heading straight for the bluffs. To turn from his course was to lose ground, and he could not afford to lose a yard, with his pursuer within shooting distance.

"By the great horned toad!" The Kid snapped off the words. "I guess he's aiming to make the jump! Get to it, old hoss!"

He rode hard.

With quiet and spur, the masked man was flogging on his horse to desperate speed.

The river was near at hand now. The

wide space between the high bluffs that marked either bank was clearly seen. It was a desperate leap—only to be taken by a man riding for his life.

But the man in the flour-sack had evidently made up his mind to it. He rode on.

The sun was almost touching the sierra in the west now; the shadows of the post-oaks lengthened on the plain. Once darkness had fallen the trail-thief's escape was easy. The Kid's jaw squared.

His gun was levelled again as he galloped on: the hand that never missed was raised.

Bang!

A bullet tore through the crown of the Stetson that was jammed down on the flour-sack. It was the Kid's last warning.

But as if the bullet, whizzing so close, had spurred him on, the wild rider rose to the leap.

The straining broncho had reached the edge of the bluff. Far across the yawning gulf the opposite grassy bluff rose, the shallow river murmuring thirty feet below.

The spurs, dripping red, tore the flanks of the broncho. The horse rose in a desperate leap.

The Kid's eyes were like cold steel over his gun.

Bang!

A shrill squeal floated back from the leaping horse. The impetus of the desperate leap carried him on, and he almost touched the opposite bluff with lashing hoofs. The next instant, man and horse were whirling down to the river far below, the trail thief tearing frantically at the flour sack, for it was blinding him. It came away in his hand just as the Kid reached the edge of the bluff.

The Kid drew in his mustang almost on the verge of the grassy precipice, and stared down.

The river canyon was dark with thickening shadows. The sun was almost gone. The Kid's eyes picked up the body of the horse, lying in the shallow water, the slow current washing over it. The desperate road-agent had crawled out of the water, under the hollow high banks, washed out by the river in spring floods. He was hidden from the eyes of the Kid; but he was there, and the Rio Kid reckoned that it was a cinch.

Far away the thudding of hoofs came echoing across the darkening plain. With a clink of spurs and bridles, the three Bar-T punchers came panting up and joined the Kid.

The Kid Catches a Tartar!

LIKE glittering jewels the stars came out in the dark velvety blue. From deep down between the banks of rugged bluffs came the low murmur of the river. Shallow water murmured over sandbanks and muddy flats, rolling sluggishly on its way to the Rio Grande. The Kid's riding-boots splashed water and mud. It was dark at the bottom of the river canyon, but the water glimmered in the light of the stars, and there was light enough for the lynx-eyed Kid. With his gun in his hand, his eyes glinting through the gloom under the bluffs, the Kid hunted the man who had cinched Judge Pindex's bag of dollars, and almost got away with it.

In a hollow under the high bank a desperate man crouched, revolver in hand. Eyes gleamed through the holes in the flour-sack which he had now resumed wearing. The road-agent was very near the end of his tether.

Crouching in thick shadow, under the overhanging bluff, he listened to the splashing of riding-boots in the margin of the stream, as the Bar-T punchers hunted him. Mud covered the road-agent from head to foot, but the bed of soft mud into which he had fallen in the water had saved his bones; he had fallen clear of his horse, and he was unharmed. If they missed him in the darkness—

But the Rio Kid was not likely to miss him.

The Kid's keen eye was on that dark hollow under the bank, at a little distance from the spot where the dead broncho lay in the wash of the stream. The Kid

lifted his gun, to search the hollow with lead.

The eyes gleaming through the holes in the flour-sack caught the gleam of the stars on the levelled barrel. The road-agent fired a hurried shot, in desperation. The Kid felt the wind of the bullet as he pulled trigger.

His bullet gashed along the road-agent's shoulder, his aim guided by the flash of the gun. The next bullet would have crashed through flesh and bone, but the man in the flour-sack shouted hoarsely:

"Let up! I pass, partner! Let up! I pass it up to you!"

He lurched out of the hollow, his hands in the air.

The Kid's eyes glinted at him over his gun.

"Keep 'em up!" he rapped tersely.

"Doggone you, you've got me!" muttered the road-agent.

"You said it!" agreed the Kid. "Texas, you cinch that gun of his'n while I keep the guy covered."

"You bet!" grinned Texas.

The Bar-T puncher jerked the gun from the road-agent's belt. Ginger dropped the loop of a riata over the uplifted arms, and drew it taut. The hold-up man was a prisoner now. Pecos gave him a shove with the muzzle of a Colt.

"Hump it!" he said.

The road-agent tramped through shallow water with the Bar-T punchers to the gully in the bank by which the Kid and his followers had descended to the river. They tramped up the gully to the upper plain. The horses were tethered there. The Kid called to Side-Kicker.

"I guess the boss will sure be glad to see that bag of dollars again, you'uns," he remarked. "I guess I'm hitting for the ranch, hell-for-leather, and you'uns will bring that gol-darned guy in." The Kid drew the rancher's sack from the pouch at the road-agent's belt, and slipped it into the pocket of his chaps. "Keep a cinch of that rope on him, Ginger."

"Search me!" answered Ginger.

A muttered exclamation came from under the flour-sack. The eyes through the eyeholes burned at the foreman of the Bar-T. Now that he saw the Rio Kid close at hand, in the clear light of the stars, recognition leaped into those burning eyes. The Kid, unheeding, leaped into the saddle, and rode away in the direction of the Bar-T ranch at full gallop.

"I guess you got to hoof it, hombre," said Ginger, knotting the rope on the road-agent.

The man in the flour-sack was staring after the Rio Kid, vanishing in the starlight across the prairie.

"The Kid!" he muttered inaudibly.

"The Kid! Carry me home to die!" In the chase across the prairie he had only seen that it was a puncher in Stetson and chaps who was riding him down; but he knew the Kid now. Under the flour-sack there was a savage grin on his face.

"Say, puncher," he snarled, "who's that guy? What you call him?"

"I guess that's Santa Fe Smith, foreman of the Bar-T," answered the horse-wrangler.

A husky laugh came from under the flour-sack.

"Santa Fe Smith! That gatoot calls himself Santa Fe Smith in the Red Dog country? Foreman of the Bar-T! By the great horned toad!"

"Say, you know our foreman, you darned trail-bief?" asked Texas.

The man in the flour-sack laughed again.

"You got it in once," he answered.

"I guess I know that guy—I guess I know him a whole lot! I allow he'll sure be surprised when he sees me at the ranch; he don't know yet the guy he's cinched."

"If you know our foreman, you know the whitest man in Texas, you doggoned polecat!" growled Ginger.

"Mebbe!" jeered the man in the flour-sack. "But I guess when you hand me over to the sheriff I'll go in company."

"Aw, can it!" snapped the horse-wrangler. "That's the whole lot from you! Get a move on!"

(Continued on page 430.)

Zarro nodded sullenly.

"You will further say that you have decided to release Captain Carruthers and all the officers of the barque Orontes," continued Dick. "Being in a kindly mood, you will add that every other slave is to be released—"

"Are you mad?" snarled Zarro. "Will it not satisfy you if your own countrymen are released?"

"All these unfortunates must be released—or you'll be dropped so quickly that you won't have time to feel sorry for yourself," retorted Dick. "Now then, senior—march!"

They marched into the valley. There were no trees to be seen now—no shade of any kind. The early morning sun shone direct upon the barren rocks, and the boys could well understand that by mid-day the heat would be stifling. A veritable valley of death.

They had not marched far into the valley before a number of untidy-clad soldiers approached, with an officer. Zarro made a valiant attempt to look pleasant and gave the orders. At once the officer was dumbfounded, and clearly showed it.

"But, Excellency, do you mean this?" he asked aghast. "You say that every man is to be freed—"

"Are you daring to question my orders, Captain Ibanez?" snapped Zarro. "Do as I say! I have excellent reasons for this change of plan."

He spoke, of course, in Spanish, and his orders were voluble. He spoke so quickly that even Dick, who had a smattering of Spanish, could not follow. But it was clear from the officer's attitude that the correct orders had been given.

He hurried away and the little party advanced farther into the valley towards the huts and other buildings. Already the slaves were being released, and they were bewildered by their new liberty. The boys, with weapons ready, waited tensely. They knew that they were only gaining this success because Don Santos Zarro was in fear of his life.

"Where are Captain Carruthers and our other officers?" asked Dick after some minutes had elapsed. "Why this delay, Zarro?"

Don Santos shrugged.

"My young friend, you are impatient," he replied. "The men of whom you speak are in the mine, and they must be informed, and it will be yet some time before they can reach us."

"If anything has happened to them, Zarro, you will have to answer," put in Cracker Smith fiercely. "We've got you where we want you now, and—"

He paused as a sudden crowd of pitiful, ragged-looking tin workers ran out from behind some of the buildings. They paused, as though irresolute, and then they saw Don Santos and the boys. They ran up with eager cries of joy.

They swarmed round the boys, shouting their gratitude in Spanish, and Dick became rather anxious. He had no wish to be separated from Zarro. The enthusiasm of these released slaves might be embarrassing—even dangerous.

And then the shock came.

For Zarro suddenly uttered a shout, and at the same second the released slaves fell upon the boys with fierce, vicious energy. Dick and his companions, unprepared for any such assault, went down in the first rush.

They were literally swept off their feet, the slaves swarmed over them and they were pinned down.

Zarro's Trump Card!

DON SANTOS ZARRO laughed with contemptuous relish.

"So I have what you call turned the tables, eh?" he said. "You young fools! When you thought to get the better of Zarro the Terrible, you made the great blunder!"

"You treacherous hound!" said Dick scornfully.

His feelings were bitter. He realised exactly what had happened. Zarro, in giving his orders to Captain Ibanez—in

Spanish—had added further orders of his own. These supposed slaves, in their rags and tatters, were really Zarro's soldiers in disguise! Not until they were actually on the boys had they revealed their true colours—and then it was too late for Dick and his friends to escape.

It was certainly an astute dodge—a cunning plan. And now Zarro was in full command of the situation. Every boy was bound hand and foot. And, to make matters worse, Captain Carruthers and Mr. Masters and the other officers were dragged to the same spot, also bound.

Dick and the boys were horrified to see the change in Captain Carruthers and his officers. They were haggard, unshaven, grimy, emaciated. They had been through great hardships during these last few weeks.

Roughly handled, the boys and the men they had come to rescue were taken to the foot of a great frowning cliff at the end of the valley. The rocks towered above, even overhanging. And men were at work here, busy with drills, and there were wires to be seen, too.

"I will tell you what my plan is," said Zarro evilly. "You boys have defied me long enough! You shall die—and your men with you. Quite a simple little plan," he added, grinning. "There are great charges of dynamite in this cliff. Soon I shall make the electrical contact, and the dynamite will explode. Carramba! What a fall of rock there will be—and you British dogs will be buried for ever!" The boys were horrified.

But while Don Santos Zarro was indulging his devilish cruelty, disaster had befallen his famous guard in Moreno City.

A cruiser, flying the Venezaguan flag, had suddenly appeared in the bay, with the Scorpion in attendance. This cruiser had been sent by President Luma, in response to the urgent message which he had received.

There was practically no resistance from Moreno. The troops landed, and if there was any fighting, it was hardly noticeable. General Alvarado was one of the first to be released, and the new governor took prompt measures. The boys from the Scorpion, of course, had told of the expedition to the tin mines, and a strong force was immediately prepared, and it set out, General Alvarado himself in the lead.

Zarro stood with a curious-looking object in front of him. It rested on the ground, a sort of plunger device, with a big handle. Wires ran from it, passing right across the valley to that ominous cliff under which the prisoners were lying, helpless.

"All is ready, Excellency!" said Captain Ibanez nervously as he hurried up.

Zarro gave a great laugh and made a movement forward. That laugh was the last sound he ever uttered.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Three revolver shots rang out and Don Santos Zarro toppled over and lay in a crumpled heap. General Alvarado, running up with a dozen soldiers, took Captain Ibanez by surprise, and Zarro's men, who were near, ran madly in all directions.

Some hours later Captain Carruthers, his officers, and the boy crew of the Orontes were being feasted and honoured in the Government House of Moreno City. General Alvarado was their host, and again and again he thanked them for the excellent services they had rendered to President Luma and Venezagua.

As far as Dick Carstairs and his chums of the Caribbean were concerned, the adventure was over. For peace had now come to the Moreno Islands.

And so, a week or so later, the good old Orontes sailed out of Moreno harbour on her travels once again—re-fitted, and with her officers and crew intact.

THE END.

"Come on, Steve!" is the title of a *Smashing New Series of Horse-racing stories that starts in next week's issue. You'll all like Steve. He's a great little chap.*

THE OUTLAW KID!

(Continued from page 426.)

The three Bar-T men mounted, and started for the ranch. Behind them trailed the man in the flour-sack, at the end of the rope. The Rio Kid, riding at a gallop, had long disappeared. The punchers had to walk their horses to accommodate their pace to that of the man on foot behind.

But the road-agent, as he tramped and stumped over the rough prairie at the end of the trailing rope, was grinning savagely under his mask. The Kid did not know him in the flour-sack, but he knew the Kid. He figured that there was a surprise in store for the foreman of the Bar-T.

They reached the ranch at last.

The Kid had reached it long before. He had found Judge Pindex waiting for him anxiously. The rancher's face cleared as the Kid tossed the bag of dollars on the table.

"You got him?" asked the rancher.

"Sure!" grinned the Kid. "The boys are bringing him in, but I guessed I'd ride in with the dollars, boss. They'll be along with that trail-thief, and I guess I'll cinch him in the store hut till morning, and then let a guy ride him into Red Dog for the marshal."

The Kid walked down to the gate, to wait for the punchers to come in with the prisoner. The three riders came in at last, with the man in the flour-sack stumbling behind the horse-wrangler's broncho.

The Kid glanced at the road-agent carelessly.

"Put him in the store hut, you'uns," he said. "I guess he'll keep there till sun-up."

And under the Kid's eye the man in the flour-sack was marched into the hut. A dozen punchers gathered round to look at him, and Ginger unbelted the flour-sack and drew it off over the road-agent's head. A hard, evil, stubby face was revealed, in the light of the lantern held by one of the punchers.

"Say, Santa Fe, this guy allows that he knows you," remarked Ginger. "You seen the doggoned lobo-wolf afore?"

The Kid's eyes were fixed on the face revealed by the removal of the flour-sack. For the moment the Kid's heart stood still, as he saw the evil face of Cactus Pete grinning at him.

There was the bitterness almost of death in the Kid's heart. He waited for the trail-thief to speak, to tell what he knew, to tell that the foreman of the Bar-T was the Rio Kid, the hunted outlaw of the Rio Grande. But Cactus Pete did not speak. His eyes were fixed on the Kid's.

"You know the cuss, Santa Fe?" asked Ginger again.

"I sure know him a whole heap!" said the Kid bitterly. "Beat it, you'uns—leave him to me."

The wondering punchers withdrew, and tramped back to the bunk-house. The Kid was left alone with the prisoner. Cactus Pete grinned evilly.

"The Kid!" he said softly. "The Rio Kid—foreman of the Bar-T! I guess I ain't going to the sheriff this time, Kid—or if I do, I reckon the Rio Kid goes with me. You get me, Kid? Dog don't eat dog, Kid! You get me out of this, or you go with me to the sheriff."

The Kid spoke at last.

"You doggoned trail-thief! I warned you to light out! Now I reckon you can take what's coming to you, if you open your mouth as wide as the Rio Grande!"

With that, the Rio Kid strode from the hut. The door slammed on the scowling trail-thief, the bars rattled into place. Cactus Pete was left alone, muttering oaths, to wait for what was coming to him. But what was coming to the Rio Kid?

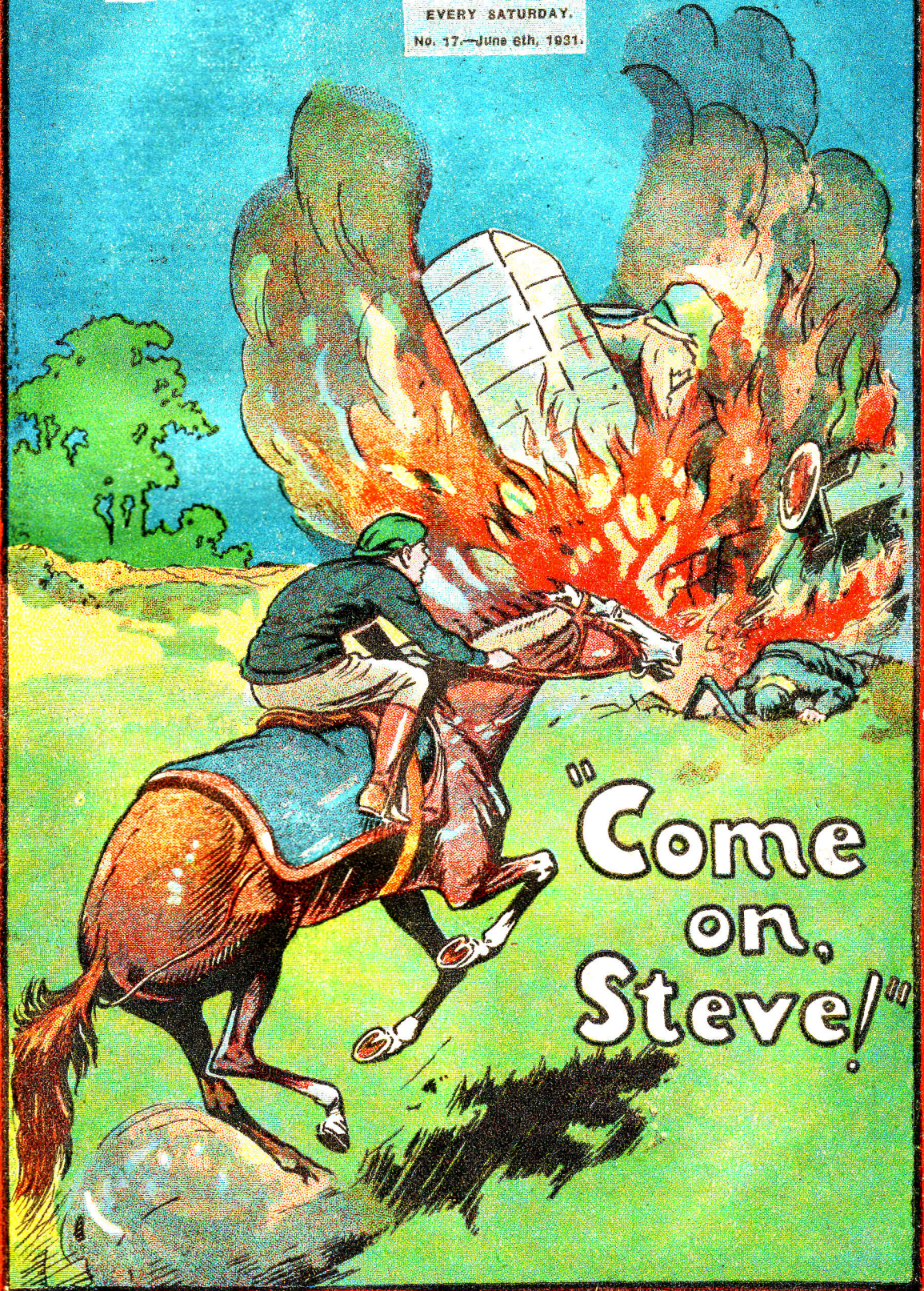
(The Rio Kid's in a tight corner. If the outlaw the Kid's captured opens his mouth, it's good-bye to the Bar-T for the young foreman. See next week's full-of-surprise tale of the Wild West.)

● STOP! ● STEADY! ● GO AND BUY THE RANGER!

The RANGER

2^d

EVERY SATURDAY.
No. 17.—June 6th, 1931.



“Come on, Steve!”

The OUTLAW KID!

SMASHING
TALE OF THE
WILD WEST.



The Kid's Secret!

THE Rio Kid's hand slid to the walnut butt of a gun, and he gripped it hard, his fingers clenching on it almost convulsively. The long-barreled Colt was half-drawn.

But the grip on the butt unclenched, and the gun slid back into the holster. The Kid muttered impatiently.

Standing in the doorway of the foreman's cabin on the Bar-T ranch, the Kid stared out in the glimmer of the stars.

It was not yet dawn.

In the bunkhouse, the Bar-T outfit slept, never dreaming that their foreman was awake and watching with sleepless eyes. Faintly from the dusky prairie came a sound of hoofs, from some puncher who was riding the range.

The Kid's eyes were fixed on the store-hut at a little distance, a black shadow in the gloom. In the store-hut lay Cactus Pete, a prisoner, with his hands bound.

Long had the Bar-T foreman stood in his doorway, looking across to the hut where the road-agent lay a prisoner.

The Kid's eyes turned on a puncher who emerged and went to the corral. Texas, the puncher, came from the corral with his broncho's reins looped over his arm, and he started a little at the sight of the Bar-T foreman in his doorway.

"Say, you're up airly, Santa Fe!" called out Texas.

The Kid nodded.

Santa Fe Smith he was called on the Bar-T, and not a man on the ranch guessed or dreamed that he had ever been called the Rio Kid. But they would know soon, when the prisoner in the store hut had opened his mouth. Cactus

Pete knew the Kid, and the Kid figured that Cactus aimed to shout out what he knew, for all the Red Dog country to hear. And he wondered what the bunch would say when they knew that their foreman, not long ago, had been the outlaw of the Rio Grande.

Texas came over towards the Kid, peering at him in the deep dusk.

"I guess I'm hitting the Red Dog trail, Santa Fe," he said. "I allow I'll tote that bulldozer along, and hand him over to the marshal. The marshal sure will be pleased some to get a holt on the road-agent who stopped the Saddlebag stage yesterday."

"I reckon!" assented the Kid. "But I guess I ain't sending that galoot along with you, Texas. You can sure tell the marshal he's here, and he can come for him if he wants."

The Rio Kid saves his enemy from certain death although it spells his own ruin.

"It's your say-so!" agreed the puncher, and he walked his horse down to the gate, mounted and rode away.

The Kid's brow knitted more blackly, and he thought long and hard. What was he going to do?

He stirred at last from his cabin.

He went into the corral and led out Side-Kicker and another horse. He saddled and bridled them both, and tethered them at the gate. Then he strode to the store-hut and unbarred the door.

"Say, you lobo-wolf!"

He rapped out the words as he threw the door open.

From the dark interior of the hut a face with burning eyes looked at the foreman of the Bar-T. Cactus Pete was not sleeping.

With his arms bound behind him, the horse-thief of Frio lurched towards the door.

"You've come up to time?" He grinned savagely at the Kid. "You

got a horse for me, durn you? I reckoned you'd chew on it, Kid, and make up your mind to let me ride! Doggone you! You're sure wise to it that if I go to the sheriff, you go along with me! Cut me loose."

The Kid eyed him grimly.

"I guess I'm taking you on a little pasear," said the Kid. "Step out of this shebang and step quick and quiet."

The horse-thief's face paled suddenly.

Only his worthless life stood between the Rio Kid and safety. Well the ruffian knew what he would have aimed to do in the Kid's place. He backed into the hut. The fear was in his heart that it was in the Kid's mind to shoot him out of hand, and so seal his lips for ever.

The Kid's eyes gleamed at him.

"I'm telling you to step out, Cactus, quick and quiet!" he said. His hand dropped on a gun and half-drew it. "You let out one yap for the boys to hear, and it will be the last thing you'll do this side of Jordan! You doggoned trail-thief, I'll let lead through you, and jump at the chance, if you worry me any. Step out."

Cactus Pete's lips opened—and shut again. The Kid was not the man to shoot him up, unarmed, out on the lonely prairie. But he was the man to keep his word; and the horse-thief knew that if he gave a call for the Bar-T outfit to hear, he was a dead man.

He stepped from the store-hut.

The Kid led him to the saddled broncho at the gate. He helped the bound man to mount. Then he mounted Side-Kicker and, taking the reins of Cactus Pete's broncho in his hand, he rode away from the ranch, leading the prisoner. The hoof-beats echoed on the lonely plain. The Kid was heading northwards, towards the low line of the Mesquite hills that barred the prairie in the far distance.

When the dawn flushed up over the grassy plains, the Bar-T ranch was many a long mile behind.

Man to Man!

CLATTER, clatter, rang the hoof-beats on hard rock.

The grassy prairie was left behind; the Kid was riding into the hills through a rocky canyon.

Not a word had he spoken since the Bar-T ranch had been left. Again and again Cactus Pete muttered and cursed, but the Kid paid him no heed.

He kept a grip on the broncho's reins, and the bound man rode by his side; but the Kid seemed as if he had forgotten that the horse-thief was there.

Not a word, not a look, at the man who rode by his side. And terror was growing in Cactus' breast. The sweat thickened on his brow.

The Bar-T punchers had rounded him up, after a hold-up on the trail. He had counted on safety when he recognised the Kid in the foreman of the Bar-T ranch. He had figured that the Kid would cut him loose in the night, and give him a horse and let him ride, glad to see the last of him. But that was clearly not the Kid's intention. What was his intention?

The Kid halted at last, threw the reins of the horses over a pecan, and jerked Cactus Pete from the saddle.

His bowie-knife glimmered in the rising sunlight, and Cactus Pete felt a spasm of fear.

"Kid!" he panted.

"Aw, can it!" snapped the Kid. The keen edge of the knife glided over Cactus Pete's bonds. The horse-thief of Frio stood a free man.

He breathed hard and deep, the sweat

trickling down his stubby face. The Kid thrust the knife back into his belt.

Something of assurance came back to the trail-thief. The Kid was not the man to shoot him up unarmed. He had known it.

"Say, Kid, what's this game? You brought me here to let me ride?"

"You got another guess coming!" snapped the Kid.

"What's the game, then?" muttered Cactus. "You ain't toting me into Red Dog to hand me over. You ain't letting me shout out to all the burg that the foreman of the Bar-T ranch is the fire-bug of the Rio Grande, with a reward of a thousand dollars on his head."

"Sure thing!" said the Kid. "Then I guess you got to let me ride, Kid."

"Guess again!" said the Kid. "I guess you wouldn't keep your bully-beef trap shut if I was to let you ride. Nope! Now you know where to get the Rio Kid, I reckon you'd be honing to get your fingers on the reward that's out for me in Frio. Mebbe you ain't fixed to horn in for the reward, seeing that you're wanted in Frio for horse stealing, and in half the towns in Texas for hold-ups and rustling cows. But you sure would tell all Texas where the Rio Kid was to be found."

Cactus' eyes glittered at him. The Kid read him easily enough. Once he was safe from the walnut-butted guns, revenge was in the hands of the horse-thief of Frio. He had only to shout out the Kid's secret, and Texas sheriffs would soon be riding for the Bar-T ranch to cinch Judge Pindex's foreman.

"I guess I wouldn't spill anything, Kid," muttered Cactus. But the glitter in his eyes belied his words.

The Kid made an impatient gesture. "You figure that I'm trusting an all-fired lobo-wolf like you, Cactus?" he said.

He drew from his holsters the two walnut-butted guns and laid one on a rock.

"I guess I'm walking twenty paces, Cactus," he said quietly. "When I stop, you pick up that gun."

Cactus caught his breath. "It's man to man," said the Kid, in the same quiet tone. "If you get me, you can sure ride, and ride lively. If I get you, I reckon there'll be a durned

and then he came to a halt. His clear voice rang across to the horse-thief.

"Pick up that gun!"

Cactus drew a throbbing breath. The Kid was giving him every chance. But his heart failed him now. He could not face the Kid, gun in hand.

He made a movement, as if to step towards the gun that lay on the rock. The next instant he turned and with a desperate bound, leaped for the chaparral. Wary as the Kid was, that sudden action surprised him.

Crash went the burly horse-thief into the thickets, and he threw himself on his face as the Kid's gun roared.

A bullet smashed through the thickets over him.

Panting, Cactus plunged on through the scrubs. He was in cover now; if the Kid fired again, he had to fire at random. He heard the sound of running feet; the Kid was coming. Swiftly, desperately the escaping horse-thief plunged on. The voice of the Rio Kid rang in his ears.

"You doggoned pesky scallywag!" Bang! roared the six-gun again, the bullet tearing leaves and twigs round the escaping ruffian.

The Kid's eyes glittered with rage as he rushed in pursuit.

Cactus tore desperately on through the thickets. Bang! A bullet whizzed only a foot from him. There was a stirring in the scrub, a low, hoarse growl that sent a spasm of terror to the heart of the horse-thief of Frio, and a huge, shaggy, grey form reared itself over him.

With a scream of terror the horse-thief stopped. He would have turned back—he would have faced even the Kid, rather than the grizzly bear that had been roused from his lair in the chaparral, wounded and enraged by a bullet that had struck him as he lay in his covert. But it was too late. The huge claws were upon him, and Cactus Pete, screaming with terror, went to the ground in the fearful grip of the grizzly.

For Life or Death!

"SEARCH me!" gasped the Kid.

He panted to a halt in the tangled thickets. The deep, savage growl of the grizzly came to his ears.

Sharper rang the terrified shriek of Cactus Pete.

Through tangled tendrils and twigs the Kid could see them; the man with

white, desperate face, eyes starting with terror, struggling madly in the claws of the bear.

The great jaws were opened; the little savage eyes of the grizzly gleaming with rage. There was a crimson splash on the fur where the Kid's bullet had struck.

For a split second, the Kid stood quite still.

Then he leapt forward.

Bang! bang! roared the six-gun; but Cactus Pete was not the target of the Kid's shooting now. The lead crashed in at the red, open jaws, that in another moment would have snapped on the writhing, screaming man from Frio.

The huge, shaggy head, the gleaming eyes, turned on the Kid, and Cactus writhed away from the grizzly's clutches, reeled over in the tangled roots and vines, and fell. He lay within the grizzly's reach, blood streaming down where the claws had torn him. The shrieks choked in his husky throat. The terrible claws were reaching at him, when the Kid leaped in, his bowie-knife in his right hand.

To the very hilt the long knife was driven in the grizzly's shaggy throat. With a hoarse, gurgling growl, the giant brute staggered over and fell.

The knife was still in the shaggy throat. Eluding the clutching, tearing claws, the Kid leaped in, grasped the handle of the bowie and dragged it out. The next moment it was driven into the heart of the grizzly.

A shuddering growl, and the huge form lay still.

The Rio Kid stood, panting, his face white, his heart beating in great throbs. He had saved the horse-thief; the grizzly lay dead at his feet; the hideous growling had died away and the kid was the victor. He threw the crimsoned bowie aside and shivered.

"Carry me home to die!" murmured the Kid.

He stepped towards the man from Frio. Cactus Pete raised himself on his elbow, staring at him with dizzy eyes. His left arm was torn, and streaming with blood.

The Kid gave him a grim look.

"I guess you sure woke up bad trouble, Cactus!" he said. "Say, you doggoned scallywag, I reckon you wouldn't have troubled me a whole lot if I'd left you to that grizzly. But I'll tell all Texas that I always was a doggoned gink!"

Cactus did not answer. The terror of

(Continued on page 466.)



As the gunman made a sudden dash for the shrubs, the Rio Kid swung round, his gun belching flame and lead.

The CHIEF RANGER CHATS!

Your Editor's mighty keen to get to know all his new pals. Drop him a line to "The Chief Ranger," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.



RETURN OF WALLY!

CHEER, boys; he's coming back, and what a come-back it is, too! Wally, that fascinating imp of mischief, has designs on a place among the Big Five up at Scotland Yard, so some of the 'tecs will have to look to their laurels.

WALLY, THE BOY 'TEC.

is some sleuth-hound! He adopts a police-station as a "home from home," and certainly brightens up the existence of the men in blue with his abundant Cockney wit and ready tongue. His first experience as a detective, which you will read about next week, is one long thrill. No RANGER reader who took a liking to Wally, the boy gangster, should miss the irrepressible Wally in his new role. Don't forget, lads, he'll be with you all again next week! There's another surprise-packet in store for you, too, in next week's number.

VENTRILOQUIST VAL,

the boy with the marvellous gift of "voice throwing," entertains you with a hundred per cent laughs story that will bring tears of merriment to your eyes. Sticking to our great programme of unlimited thrills, laughs, and real entertainment, next week's RANGER—which you should order NOW—is well up to bargain standard. See you next week, boys,

The Chief Ranger.

THE TANGO COWBOYS.

Living practically in the saddle, rivaling the expert native Indians in superb and daring horsemanship, the Gauchos of the Argentine lead a wild life as cowboys on the great open prairies. On the few occasions that they tear themselves apart from their horses they indulge in the favourite native dance which we have borrowed and call the Tango! With Spanish and Indian blood in their veins they have a natural love of finery, and a Gaucho out of the saddle and dressed in his best is something to look at. With knee boots and silver ornaments and gay silken scarves, plus the stiletto without which the Gaucho is seldom seen, he is the living counterpart of those wild cow-

boy figures which flit so frequently across the cinema screens.

THE STAMFORD BRIDGE HERO.

There are plenty of popular heroes now gouging up the cinders on our busy dirt-tracks, but none more popular than wonderful Frank Arthur. He has been called one of the three greatest riders in the world. Certainly he has shown 'em startlingly in Australia what can be done with two wheels and a stretch of loose cinders! Thrills? He has had so many he has forgotten most of them. But probably one narrow escape will never slip his memory. That was when, to avoid another rider who had come a

THE OUTLAW KID!

(Continued from page 451.)

the grizzly's clutch was still on him, and he could scarcely believe that he was still living.

The Kid bent over him.

"I guess this lets me out!" grunted the Kid. "You sure ain't fixed for gun-play now, Cactus! I'll tell a man!"

The horse-thief groaned.

"You've saved me, Kid! Carry me home to die! I guessed I was a gone coon! You've sure saved me, Kid."

"I reckon there ain't no two ways about that, doggone you!" answered the Kid.

The man was his enemy; a treacherous enemy. But the Kid, who had saved his life, bound up the bleeding arm where the grizzly's claws had torn. Cactus staggered to his feet.

The Kid eyed him.

"I guess you can sit a bronc, Cactus!"

The RANGER No. 17—6/8/31.

cropper on the Warrington track and lay sprawled over the course, Arthur set his bike at the safety fence, tore a whole length of it up, and shot ten feet into the air, with the result that both elbows were dislocated, and several cuts adorned his face, which was smiling cheerfully.

THE PRIDE OF THE CLYDE.

Proudly flaunting the colours of the Canadian Pacific Railway fleet of liners are some of the finest vessels in all the world. The latest C.P.R. liner to be launched, the 42,000-ton Empress of Britain—"the pride of the Clyde" as her builders dubbed her—is another challenge flung down by Britain to the shipbuilders of other countries. With snow-white sides, emerald green water-line, and three colossal yellow funnels, she will be an object of admiration and curiosity wherever she goes—first on the Transatlantic service, then on a cruise round the world next November. Swimming pools, tennis courts, gymnasiums, Turkish baths—everything is aboard to make passengers imagine themselves in a tip-top hotel ashore. And in one of the great funnels is a 21-valve radio set!

THE GOLDEN ARROW.

Think what a speed of nearly four miles a minute means, then imagine yourself steering the motor-car which came very, very close to reaching that amazing speed—the wonderful Golden Arrow. The late Sir Henry Segrave drove (though that word scarcely fits it!) this speed monster at Daytona Beach, Florida, on March 11th, 1929, at something over 231 miles an hour, thus capturing for Britain the world's land-speed record. This 1,000 horse-power racer, built like a gilded projectile, has an enormous tail shaped like that of an aeroplane, and the stream-lined cowling to the mighty engine is another aeroplane idea which the designer so successfully adopted.

AN ELECTRIC BATTLESHIP.

A first-line battleship of the U.S. Fleet, the West Virginia, is so well equipped with electric power that not only are the colossal guns electrically operated, but the potato-peelers in the cooks' galley, and the ice-cream freezers, are worked the same way. And every loaf of bread consumed aboard has been baked by electricity! This 33,590 ton (full load displacement) battleship can carry a crew of 1,486 men and officers when acting as the fleet flagship. Her full length is 624 feet, width over 97 feet, horse power 28,900, and her armour in some places is 16 inches thick. She carries eight 16-inch guns, twenty 5-inch guns, and numerous lesser ones, and two 21-inch submerged torpedo tubes. Everything aboard such an up-to-date craft must work strictly to time-table—hence the great clock which you see at the masthead in the picture.

he said. "I brought you here for gun-play, but you sure did not want an even break, you all-fired scallywag."

"You aim to tote me into Red Dog, Kid?" asked Cactus in a low faint voice.

The Bar-T foreman shook his head.

"Nope! Get on that bronc, and hit the trail! Tell all Texas where to find the Rio Kid, but watch out for my gun when I see you again, for I'll sure shoot on sight, Cactus! Git!"

The horse-thief clambered into the saddle.

"Kid," breathed Cactus Pete, "I reckon I'm a bad man from Badtown, but you got me where you want me, Kid! I'm sure forgetting that I ever saw the Rio Kid in this section—I'm sure forgetting that I ever saw the Rio Kid at all! You get me, Kid? You're seeing the last of me, Kid, and I ain't chewing the rag none! No sheriff in Texas will ever hear from me where to look for the Rio Kid."

The Kid stared. The stubby face of the horse-thief was earnest. The horror of the death from which the Kid had saved him was still strong on Cactus.

The Kid had faced the claws of the grizzly to save him, and Cactus, bad as he was, was not all bad. There was deep earnestness in his look and tone.

"You get me, Kid? You're Santa Fe Smith, foreman of the Bar-T, and I don't know any different!"

With a clatter of hoofs the horse-thief rode up the canyon. The Kid's eyes followed him as he rode.

He stood quite still, a strange look on his face. He knew that Cactus meant what he said. He was done with Cactus Pete, and his secret was still his own.

Far up the canyon, Cactus Pete looked back. He lifted his sound arm, and waved a hand to the Rio Kid in farewell. The Kid swept off his Stetson, and waved back.

Cactus Pete rode on, and disappeared. "Sho!" murmured the Kid.

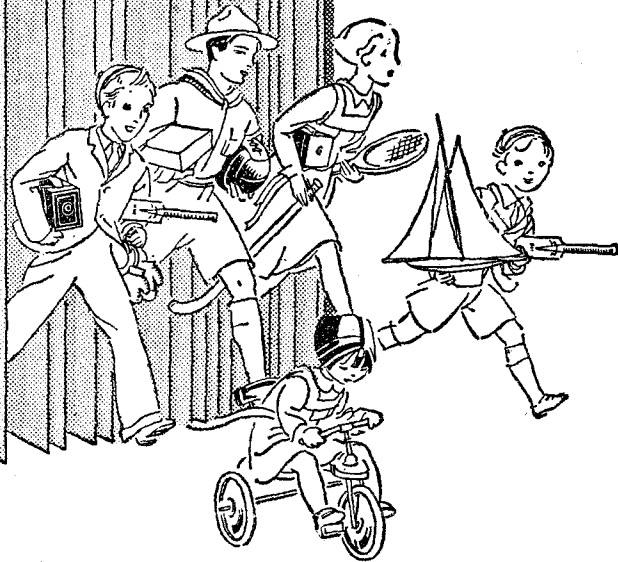
And his brow was clear as he mounted Side-Kicker to ride back to the Bar-T ranch.

THE END.

(Meet "Ventriiloquist Val," the merry mirth-maker, next week in a Great New Series of Tales.)

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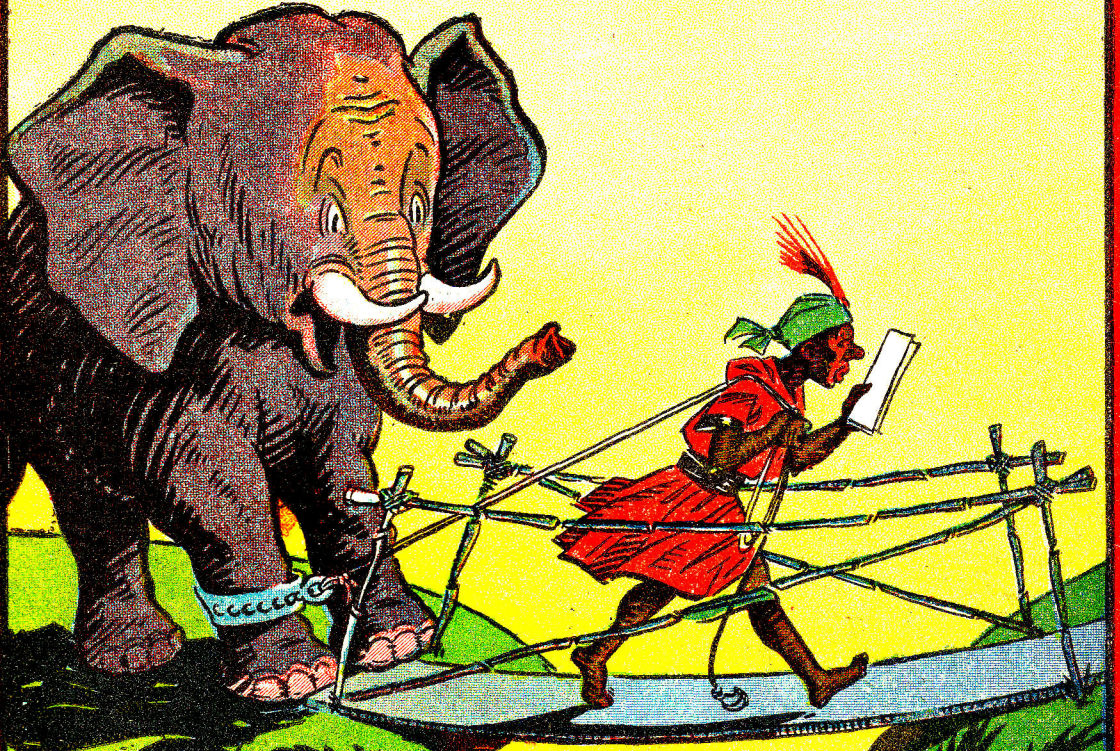
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The RANGER

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THE OUTLAW KID!

By
RALPH REDWAY.

THERE'S A PRICE ON THE HEAD OF THE RIO KID, OUTLAW. GET HIM DEAD OR ALIVE—THAT'S THE CRY OVER THE RANGES! MULE-KICK HALL, OF THE TEXAS RANGERS, GETS HIM ALIVE—BUT HE GETS NO "KICK" OUT OF THE CAPTURE. FOR THERE'S NO HOLDING THE TWO-GUN KID!

Fallen Amongst Foes.

THE Rio Kid had not a care on his mind when he rode into Bullwhacker under the setting sun.

That remote cow town on the Mexican border was far from the country where he was known, and where sheriffs and Rangers hunted for him. For days and nights, the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande had ridden and camped on the rolling llano and in the tangled chaparral, his only company that of Side-Kicker, the mustang.

Outlaw as he was, the Kid was still at heart the cowpuncher he had been in the old days on the Double-Bar, before luck had turned on him and driven him outside the pale of the law for no fault of his own. He honed for cowmen's company and cowmen's talk, the rough-and-ready camaraderie of the bunkhouse and the round-up camp.

Bullwhacker was a little cow town, a straggle of shacks and frame-houses, on the bank of the border river, and the population was not more than forty, except when the punchers came in from the ranches.

There was no sheriff, or even a town marshal within a day's ride, which suited the Kid—sheriffs and town marshals were not good for his health. It was, in fact, just the burg that the Rio Kid wanted to hit, when he was figuring on throwing an outlaw life behind him and aiming to make a fresh start.

Bullwhacker was crowded, and the grey mustang had to slow down to a walk when the Kid rode in. Horses were tied to every rail and post; punchers swarmed in the street, and there was a crowd in the wooden piazza of the shack hotel, the building for which the Kid was aiming.

He guessed that something unusual had happened, and he wondered what it was. He halted his horse in front of the shack hotel, and called to a puncher who was waving hi. Stetson close at hand.

"Say, bo, what's tne rookus?"

The cowman looked round at him.

"They got him," he answered.

"Who?" asked the Kid.

"El Cuchillo!" The puncher waved

his hand towards a stout wooden shack, standing at a little distance back of the

lumber hotel. There was no gaol in Bullwhacker, and the Kid guessed that the shack was being used as one, for the nonce. "They got him there—got him where they want him!"

The Kid whistled.

He had heard of El Cuchillo, the Mexican bandolero. Many a time had he heard of him, and of his raids across the border, of the stolen herds he had driven across the shallow waters of the Rio Grande into Mexico.

For more years than the Kid could remember, the bandolero had preyed on the cow country along the Rio Grande, and many a puncher on a lonely range had fallen under the keen cuchillo from which he derived his nickname.

"Say, I reckon this hyer burg is sure proud of itself, getting that Mexican firebug!" said the Kid heartily.

The puncher grinned.

"Aw, forget it, feller!" he answered.

"It was the Rangers got him. I guess the Texas Rangers have been after him for a month of Sundays, and they got him at last! 'Tain't more'n an hour since they rode into town with him."

"Oh, sho!" said the Kid.

"They got him in that shack for the night—they're riding with him at sun-up to hand him over to the sheriff at La Plaza," grinned the puncher. "I guess it's a short shrift and a long rope for that greaser, feller."

"Sho!" repeated the Rio Kid.

He sat very still in the saddle.

The Texas Rangers!

Not once in a dog's age did a Texas Ranger ride into Bullwhacker. It was cruel luck for the Kid. Any day earlier, any day later, he would have missed them; but a malicious fate had to drive him into the cow town on the very day the Rangers were there.

Not a galoot who belonged to the section knew anything of the Rio Kid but his name; but the Rangers knew—only too well. Plenty of them had seen him in the flesh; all of them had seen his picture, posted on the dead-walls in half the towns of Texas, with the offer of a reward of a thousand dollars for the original, dead or alive.

Bullwhacker was no place for him; the Kid got that at once. He wheeled the grey mustang, shifting his holsters a little to bring the walnut-butted guns a little nearer to his grasp. And as he

did so he sighted a face in the crowd—a face that was like tanned leather, with eyes that were like cold steel. And those penetrating, steely eyes were fixed on him, the grim, hard face was twisted in a fierce grin, and a brown hand was lifted with a Colt in it.

"The Rio Kid, by thunder! Hands up, Kid!"

It was Mule-Kick Hall, captain of the Rangers. His eyes of steel gleamed over the levelled revolver; his finger was on the trigger. The Rio Kid was quick on the draw—no man was quicker in Texas—but he did not touch a gun. The Kid knew no fear; but he knew enough to go in when it was raining. The slip of his hand an inch towards a gun spelled instant death, and the Kid knew it.

Jim Hall's voice rang out:

"Rangers, this way! It's the Rio Kid! Dead or alive! Hands up, Kid, or you get yours!"

Slowly the Kid's hands went up. The crowd on all sides, of him surged, and buzzed, and roared. The name of the Rio Kid passed from lip to lip.

Guns were drawn on all sides. Three or four Rangers pushed through, with revolvers up. Mule-Kick Hall came closer, still watching the Kid like a cat over his Colt. The Kid had no chance—not the ghost of one. He had ridden into a death-trap, and they had got him.

His hands went up, and he nodded coolly to the captain of the Rangers.

"Say, feller, this is sure a surprise—packet you got for me!" the Kid drawled. "You got me, if you want me!"

"Keep them up!" said Hall briefly.

He stepped closer. The Kid's hands were up, and stayed up; but Mule-Kick Hall knew how swiftly they would have dropped to the walnut-butted guns if the Kid had had the ghost of a chance. The muzzle of his Colt was jammed in the Kid's ribs, as he jerked the guns away with his left hand.

"Light down!" said Hall.

The Kid was disarmed, and his hands came down now. He dropped lightly from the saddle. Two of the Rangers grasped him, with Hall's revolver still looking him in the face, and searched him for hidden weapons. The Kid made a grimace as they hooked away the little derringer he packed in the pocket

of his goatskin chaps. Perhaps he had had a hope that it might be overlooked. But Mule-Kick Hall was not the man to overlook a thing.

He was taking no chances with the elusive Kid, who had baffled all the sheriffs of Texas, and beaten Jim Hall himself more than once.

"Bring him along!"

Between the two Rangers, with Hall's revolver at his back, the Rio Kid was marched along, past the lumber hotel, to the shack at the back. There lay the Mexican bandit whom Hall had roped in, after months of trailing; but El Cuchillo, prize as he was, was not so great a prize as the Rio Kid.

One of the Rangers took down the thick pinewood bars from the door, and turned the key in the lock. The door was thrown open, and from the dusk within there was a glimpse of a swarthy face and glittering black eyes.

"Say," drawled the Kid, "you got me, Hall, you surely got me! But you ain't gaoling me with that Mexican polecat, sure? I'll say it ain't good company for me, feller! It sure gets my goat!"

"Mosey in!" snapped Hall.

His gun was half-lifted.

"Feller," said the Kid politely, "I never was a guy to argue with a gun! I reckon that greaser's company is better'n yours, you pesky, pie-faced geck!"

The Kid stepped in, and the thick, heavy door slammed shut. The key was turned and the bars slammed into place.

The Kid Cinched!

THE Mexican, folded in a tattered, gaudy serape, a crumpled sombrero on his greasy, dark head, sat hunched on a bench, leaning back against the wall in a corner.

Juan Jerez, known as El Cuchillo, had killed more men than he had fingers and toes. All along the border his desperate reputation was known. Fierce as a jaguar, and more treacherous, rustler and cow-thief in Texas, bandolero in his own country of Mexico, he was a guy on whom the Kid would gladly have pulled a gun had he met him on the llano or the sierra.

Fate had made the Kid an outlaw, but between the cheery Kid and the black-browed, glint-eyed bandit there was a great gulf fixed. It sure got the Kid's goat to be forced into his company.

But there was no help for it, and the Kid was philosophical. After a glance at the Mexican, which met a stare of black hostility, the Kid gave him no further heed but proceeded to examine his new quarters.

At sunrise the Rangers were to ride out of Bullwhacker with their two prisoners, and it was a day's ride to La Plaza, where prison doors would close upon them. Under Jim Hall's steely eyes on the ride there would be no chance of making a getaway—the Kid knew that. And once in the sheriff's hands at La Plaza the game was up. He had the night, but if sun-up found him still in Bullwhacker the Kid's goose was cooked.

There was only one room in the shack. It was built of strong pine planks on sawn poles. There was one window, but that had been boarded up outside for additional security, since El Cuchillo had been lodged there. The door was thick and strong, the lock was stout, and bars outside had been added, like the planks over the window, to keep the bandit safe.

Through a crack or a crevice here and there came a glimmer of the sunset, but it was very dusky in the hut, and deepening to thick darkness. A couple of benches were the only furniture—there was not even a mat on the sandy, earthen floor. The Kid whistled softly.

Outside the shack he could hear a tramp of feet. Safe as it was, the prison-hut was not left unwatched. One of the Rangers paced by it, with his rifle under his arm; and the Kid

reckoned that the watch would last through the night.

The Kid threw himself at last on the uncoupled bench, facing the Mexican hunched in the other corner. The greaser had not spoken a word, but his black, snapping eyes had watched the Kid as he examined his quarters, never leaving him.

He was little more than a shadow to the Kid's eyes—a burly man, looking burlier in the heavy serape that wrapped his muscular form. But in the deepening dusk the Kid caught the glint of his watching eyes. Deep as was his repugnance for the savage bandit from over the border, the Kid was conscious of a touch of fellow-feeling for a companion in misfortune.

"Say, bo, I guess that this is a cinch!" he drawled.

"Si, senior! came across in the gloom. 'El capitano Hall is in great luck with two such birds in his snare. You are the Rio Kid?'"

"You've said it, hombre!"

"I am El Cuchillo." There was a note of pride in the voice of the bandit, which made the Kid grunt. "Birds of a feather, seniorito!" said the Mexican. "And caught in the same snare!"

The Kid rose to his feet, a glint in his blue eyes.

"Hombre," he said, "I reckon the sheriff at La Plaza will hand out the same stuff to both of us when he gets a cinch on us, and there's no two ways about that. But we ain't birds of a feather, hombre, not by long chalks, and you want to remember that, and keep on remembering it. I ain't got a gat to pull on you, greaser, but I got a set of knuckles that will alter your features some, and then a few, and some more! Chew on that, Mister Jerez, if you ain't horing for trouble."

The Mexican made no reply to that, but his black eyes gleamed and snapped.

He hunched himself in the corner in his serape, and was silent, only the glitter of his snake-like eyes in the dark telling that he was wakeful.

The Kid sat down again, silent, too. The shouting and clattering in Bullwhacker had died down. Only to the Kid's ears came the steady tramp of the Ranger pacing before the shack.

Once came a sound that made him start and draw a quick breath. It was the whinny of a horse—a whinny he knew! Side-kicker was not far away—in the stable behind the lumber hotel, the Kid reckoned. The grey mustang missed his master, and that sound from his faithful cayuse went straight to the Kid's heart.

It gave him a pang, and for a minute the cool carelessness faded from his face. He rose from the bench, his teeth set.

"By the great horned toad!" muttered the Kid restlessly. "If a guy could get out of this rat-trap and get hold of a gun and a cayuse—" But he laughed the next moment. "Kid Carfax, you gink, the jig's up! Mule-kick Hall allowed that he'd get you, dead or alive, and you've sure helped him all you know how, you ornery bonehead, you! It's you for the long jump, and I'm telling you so!"

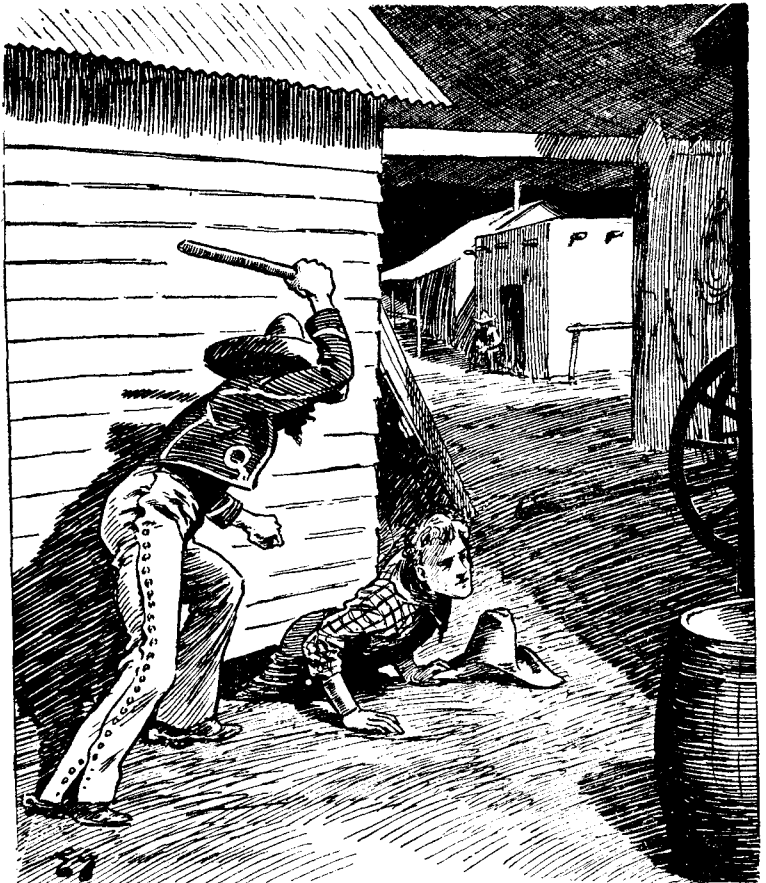
"Seniorito!" came the voice of the Mexican, now invisible in the darkness.

The Kid spun towards him impatiently.

"Aw, can it!" he snapped. "I guess I don't want any more from you, Juan Jerez!"

"Will you wait for dawn, and the ride to La Plaza?" breathed the Mexican. "Fool! Only a few hours divide us from death! Stand in with me, and we will beat the Rangers yet! Come this way—to this corner! Look, or, rather, feel, for you can see nothing!"

(Continued on page 319.)



Unsuspecting of the crouching bandit, the Rio Kid crawled through the hole under the shack, and his head and shoulders came into view. "You like not the company of the lobo-wolf, El Cuchillo! You are finished with him now!" hissed the bandit, and his hand, grasping a bludgeon, rose ready to strike.

beyond the lamp, was watching him steadfastly.

For a long minute the two eyed each other in silence, as they had done just before their battle. Then, raising his hand in a grave salute, the strange lad spoke.

"Well fought, great warrior!" Tomahawk's smouldering glare changed to blank astonishment. But the old pugnacity rasped in his voice when he replied after a brief pause.

"Talk English, pup, and cut out the soft soap!" he snapped. "Proper Injuh stuff this, eh? Make a man comfy and well, so's he can last longer under th' torture later on! Waal, I gotta hand it to yuh. Yo're th' fust guy who ever put Tomahawk Ted to sleep w' yore fancy tricks. Yo're a witch-doctor all right, and yo've got me cold. O.K.—I kin feel pain ag'in now all right! So call in yore skunks and git on with th' torture!"

White Indian's hand moved impatiently, as though to wave the aggressive speech aside. Soberly he replied in the Western tongue.

"Thar ain't goin' to be no torture, Tomahawk. It never was on th' programme!" he said quietly, to the scout's increased amazement. "The Suns have never tortured a captive since I've been their medicine-man. That stunt outside was just to test you. I only slung my knife at you to see if you really were the wonderful fighter without nerves that we've all heard about. In another minute after that, I'd ha' been inside that ring shaking hands with you—only you suddenly cut loose like a loosed buffalo, and laid waste half my men!" he added, with that quaint, boyish grin of his.

Quickly, however, he turned serious again, while Tomahawk simply gaped.

"And you won! You stood the test!" he said earnestly. "Tomahawk, I never knew men could fight like you. Everything I've heard about you, scout, adds up! I was bluffing when I said my men watched you all the way from the Rio—matter of fact, you fooled them several times, and they are *Sun* Indians. Savvy? Also, if it comforts you any, they don't bear no malice! They don't like you none, any more than any other paleface. But they know a great warrior when they see one, and they shore admire you plenty. Yo're a clever scout, Tomahawk, and a heap big scrapper. But—"

He nodded sombrely. "Yo're a heap big fool as well!" "Ho!" The bewildered Tomahawk, who had been lapping up the sincere compliments with his usual childlike vanity, snorted. "Fool, eh? How come?"

"Because," answered the lad softly, "yo've let Snake Lurden talk you into trying to kidnap me. Only you would have tried it, or stood a chance of pulling it off. Which is why he employed you. You swallowed his black lies! You made yoreself his dupe! And by helping Snake Lurden, yo're helping to betray your fellow-Texans and your own country—to Mexico!"

"Wha-at?" Tomahawk let loose a full-throated roar of stupefaction. Mexico—once the tyrant rulers of Texas, and now the hated enemy of every man, red and white, in the south-west! As always, the mere mention of that name was as a red rag to a bull. His huge fists opened and shut in a savage, ugly gesture. And when he spoke again, his voice was no longer loud, but hoarse and shaky.

"Go on! Cards on the table! If yo're tellin' me lies, I'll limb yuh! If

yuh ain't, by glory, I'll kill Snake Lurden!"

Gracefully the slender youngster rose and came nearer.

"Tomahawk," he cried, in the same earnest voice, "I want to be friends with you—now that I know you! Believe me, I've got a man's size job on my shoulders, keeping the Suns in order, and fighting the worst band of curs and traitors who ever infested the south-west! I'm no boaster, but I hold the lives and safety of every white man west of the Mississippi in these two hands! One word from me, and the Suns, Kiowas, Putes, Comanches, even the Sioux, will paint the West red! But I'm not giving that word unless I have to. I need your great help! And to prove that there's peace between you and me— Here!"

Two heavy Navy revolvers and a hunting-knife were suddenly tossed at Tomahawk's feet. Eagerly he grabbed up his guns, spun the loaded cylinders, and stroked the long barrels lovingly.

Then he gave White Indian a keen level stare.

"Yo're square, boy! Shoot!" he said bluntly. "But remember this. If what yuh say about Lurden and Mexico's the truth, yuh and me bury the hatchet. And by the same token, if Lurden's bin *poisoning my mind ag'in yuh* with lies—"

The giant's voice thickened to a deep, menacing growl.

"I'm goin' right back to th' Rio and tear him apart with my bare hands!"

(Next week's RANGER will contain more thrilling chapters of John Brearley's magnificent adventure story. Make sure of your favourite weekly paper, buddies, by ordering it in advance.)

THE OUTLAW KID!

(Continued from page 315.)

The Kid, in sheer wonder, approached the corner where the Mexican sat on the bench, from which he had not stirred. He shifted now, and in a few moments more the Kid knew why he had remained immovable in that corner, with his serape draped round him. It was to hide a secret.

He pulled the bench aside now. In the corner that it had concealed was a deep gap in the sandy floor at the back of the shack. The Mexican whispered, and the Kid stooped, groped, then whistled a low, soft whistle.

The poles that supported the walls were planted deep in the earth, but the planks nailed to them were flush with the ground. Before the Kid had joined him in his imprisonment the bandit had been burrowing, like the rat he was—and the Kid guessed that he had been almost caught at the game when the Rangers came with the new prisoner.

That was why he had sat hunched in the serape in the corner, never stirring, hiding his hope of escape, doubtful whether he could trust the Kid, unwilling, doubtless, to help the Gringo to escape with him if he could have helped it. But it was both or neither.

"By the great horned toad!" breathed the Kid; and in the darkness the Kid's eyes were dancing.

Treachery!

THE Rio Kid chuckled softly. "Feller!" he whispered. "I'll say you're some hombre!" "Silencio!" breathed the Mexican.

The hour was late. Bullwhacker lay silent and sleeping under the stars of Texas. But in the silence the steady pacing of the sentry Ranger was heard, pacing to and fro in front of the shack.

The Kid on his knees, groped an arm's length in the cavity under the

back wall. The sandy soil was easy to dig if a guy had a tool. The Kid had not thought of such a stunt, for he could not dig with bare hands. He reckoned he would have thought of it if he had had a chance of getting by with it. He caught a glimmer of steel in the Mexican's hand. It was a tiny stiletto.

"They was sure boneheads to leave you that, hombre!" muttered the Kid. The Mexican grinned.

"It was hidden in my boot, senior! It has served me before, amigo; once it found the throat of the carcelero, in a carcel in my own country."

The Kid made a movement of repugnance. Even to save his liberty, to save his life, it irked him to pull in cahoots with this cutthroat. His movement did not escape El Cuchillo, and the black eyes snapped with hate.

"Will you save your life?" hissed the Mexican. "Will you help me to escape and help yourself, or remain here to ride with the Rangers at dawn?"

The Kid drew a deep breath.

"I guess we're in cahoots till we pull out of this, greaser!" he said. "But when we step outside we hit different trails instanter. I reckon it gets my goat to let loose a lobo-wolf of your heft, it sure does! But they ain't stringing up this Kid at La Plaza—no, sir! Get to it!"

The Mexican did not speak again. He knelt to the work of excavation. With the short, keen knife he dug and loosened the sandy soil, scooping it out with a tin pannikin which had been left in the shack.

The Kid took the pannikin from him and scooped the loose earth while the bandit dug. They worked in silence, save for their laboured breathing and the occasional clink of the knife on some large stone embedded in the soil.

In the shack the heap of displaced soil and stones grew. Deeper and deeper grew the cavity, outward under the plank wall.

It was weary work with such tools;

but life and liberty depended on it, and neither of the prisoners slacked.

An hour—another hour—and then the Kid, reaching his arm under the pine wall, could feel open space without, behind the wooden building; a breath of the night wind came to him through the opening.

All the time, in front of the shack, sounded the steady tread of the Ranger sentry.

There was a muttered curse from the Mexican as the blade of the stiletto snapped short on a stone.

"Great gophers!" muttered the Kid. "That's hard luck; but I guess we'll make the grade, feller!"

"Silencio!"

With the stump of the knife, with the tin pannikin, and with bare hands, they dug and dug, dragging away earth and stones, making the cavity under the wall larger and larger, wider and wider.

At last there was room for them both to crawl through and emerge into the outer air.

"Good!" muttered the Mexican.

He leaned back on the bench, dewed with perspiration, breathing hard. Faintly but clearly in the silence of the night came the tramp of the sentry Ranger.

The Kid waited.

The Mexican's eyes gleamed strangely at him in the gloom. El Cuchillo stirred. He grasped the bench, and, with a single wrench of his sinewy arm, broke off one of the legs. There was a sharp crack of the breaking wood, and the Kid started.

"You durned bonehead!" he breathed. "If that Ranger guy hears—"

The tramp of the sentry had receded. It was heard again, passing in front of the shack. The Kid listened with painful intensity; but the man had heard nothing.

"Follow me, senior!" muttered El Cuchillo; and the strange gleam of his eyes in the gloom struck the Kid again.

With the bludgeon in his dusky hand the Mexican plunged into the cavity.

There was room for him to crawl through, but he grunted and panted as he forced his way, brushing on crumbling earth. The Kid waited impatiently till the way was clear.

Once outside it was easy to wind away in the darkness from the sight of the sentry, and approach the stables from another direction; then Side-Kicker for the Rio Kid, a Ranger's cayuse for the bandit, and they would ride—to part for ever the minute they pulled out of Bullwhacker.

Impatiently the Kid waited till the bulky Mexican was clear of the cavity under the wall.

"Venga, usted!" breathed the Mexican from without. "Come, señor!"

The Kid would not have been a whole lot surprised if the greaser had burned the trail without waiting for him to follow. But the bandit was waiting, crouching by the side of the shack without.

The Kid plunged through. The passage was easier for the slim Kid than for the Mexican. He ducked under the wall, and his head and shoulders came into view.

"Senorito!" It was the bandit's whispering voice as the Kid was rising. "You like not the company of the lobo-wolf, El Cuchillo! You are finished with him now!"

The dusky hand rose and fell like lightning, and the bludgeon crashed on the head of the Rio Kid. The bandit had turned on him like the treacherous wolf that he was.

The Kid sank back into the cavity like a log, stunned and senseless. And El Cuchillo, grinning, darted away into the darkness and disappeared.

The Luck of the Kid!

THE Rio Kid stirred.

A low groan left his lips.

His eyes opened in a wild stare. For a long moment he did not understand. But recollection flashed into his mind. His head was aching; he was hunched in the excavation under the plank wall; his Stetson lay beside him. There was no sign of El Cuchillo. How long he had lain there, crumpled up and senseless, the Kid did not know.

He suppressed a groan as he lifted his head and stared about him. Stars glimmered down from a dim sky; shadowy buildings loomed in the gloom. All was silent, save that, from the other side of the shack came a steady, tramping tread. It was the tread of the Ranger sentry passing to and fro in front of the shack, and evidently never dreaming of what had happened behind it.

The Kid drew a deep, deep breath. There was no sound of alarm. Bullwhacker lay in slumber; only the pacing sentry was wakeful.

The escape of the Mexican bandit had not been discovered yet, and the Kid, as he realised that, set his teeth, and his eyes glittered.

El Cuchillo had struck him down by treachery, and left him senseless, to fall again into the hands of Mule-Kick Hall, aiming to cinch a cayuse from the stables behind the lumber hotel and ride for the plains. The Kid could picture the black-bearded, dusky ruffian creeping and lurking in the darkness, stealthily as a jaguar. But the bandit had not got away with it yet!

The first sound of a hoof-beat in the silence of the night would have been a sound of alarm, and there was, as yet, no alarm. El Cuchillo had not succeeded yet in cinching a cayuse.

Without a horse he could not hope to escape. On foot on the plains he had no chance of getting clear. And it had not been so easy as he figured to cinch a cayuse.

The Rio Kid dragged himself silently from the excavation, and stood in the dim starlight behind the shack. He

passed his hand over his aching head. His brain was clear again now—clear and alert.

Something had delayed the flight of the Mexican. That delay had given the Kid time, and he was the galoot to make the most of the chance. Fate had had a kick coming for him when he rode into Bullwhacker; but the fickle goddess was turning his friend now.

The Kid had figured that he was going to find Side-Kicker, and ride, and if his eyes fell again on the treacherous lobo-wolf who had double-crossed him, there would be no riding that night for El Cuchillo.

Silent as an Apache the Kid glided away from the shack, keeping the building between him and the pacing Ranger.

A few minutes more and he was in the shadow of the stable wall behind the lumber hotel.

The night was growing old; it was verging towards dawn. But as yet the darkness was unbroken, save by the pale glimmer of the stars. From within the wooden building in the shadow of which he crept, the Kid could hear faint sounds of horses. Side-Kicker, he reckoned, was there, and once the grey mustang was between his knees the Kid counted on freedom.

Silently, in shadow, he crept round to the front of the stable. His keen eyes watched for the bandit. There was a sound again of stirring horses; the animals seemed restless, as if something had disturbed them. The Kid wondered whether El Cuchillo was in the stable, picking out a cayuse. Yet if he was there, why had he not already led out a horse, and burned the trail?

How long the Kid had lain insensible behind the shack, he did not know, but he reckoned that it was at least a half-hour. El Cuchillo had had plenty of time—yet something had delayed his flight.

Puzzled, watchful, alert as a lynx, the Kid crept on, and stood by the stable door, which was ajar. From within came a dim glimmer—a lantern was burning there, swung to a rafter. And now the Kid's ears picked another sound beside that of the restless stirring of horses—a sound that was faint, but unmistakable close at hand.

"By the great horned toad!" breathed the Kid.

It was the sound of a struggle—almost in silence; but the Kid could hear the faint scuffling, the panting breath.

And then the Kid knew what had delayed the bandit's flight. The horses were watched—one of the Rangers was sleeping in the stable to guard them; that was why the dim lantern burned. The Kid reckoned that he might have guessed as much—Hall was a man to guard every point. The faint sound of struggle told its own tale—El Cuchillo was grappling there with the watchman in the stable.

The Kid pushed the door silently open.

The lantern-light within was dim; but it was enough for the Kid. Within three yards of him was Side-Kicker, the mustang; and as if he knew his master had come, the mustang's head turned, and the intelligent eyes fastened on the boy outlaw. And the Kid's eyes danced as he saw, hanging on a hook on the wall a gun-belt and holsters—his own guns!

But then his eyes turned on the strange scene that was being enacted close at hand. And he caught his breath as he saw a tanned face, and glittering pin-points of steely eyes—

"Mule-Kick Hall, by the great horned toad!" breathed the Kid.

It was the Ranger captain who was in the stable. His slicker and blankets showed that he had slept there. He was not sleeping now! He was on his back on the crumpled blankets, fighting for his life—and fighting a losing fight!

For a brawny knee was planted on his chest, and two dusky hands were gripping his throat.

The Ranger's fingers, tore desperately at those gripping bands; and tore in vain. Over him bent the Mexican, his black eyes glittering, his teeth set.

The Mexican's back was to the Kid—he did not see him, did not hear him. But Hall's despairing eyes glimpsed the boy outlaw as he stood gazing.

For a second only the Kid looked. Then he turned to the mustang. It was no funeral of his, he reckoned. Swiftly, silently, the Rio Kid picked up his saddle, saddled Side-Kicker, and loosed him from the halter. Swiftly, silently, he caught down the gun-belt, and buckled it on.

His heart was singing in his breast, with the certainty of freedom. Once on the back of the grey mustang, with his guns in his hands, the Rangers would not stop him—all Bullwhacker would not stop him. Life and liberty lay before the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande—and he led the grey mustang to the door.

But he stopped. It was no funeral of his, he told himself savagely; but he stopped. The mustang stood and waited, as the Rio Kid turned back. No funeral of his—the Ranger was his foe, his bitter foe, who had sworn to trail him down to death. And yet the Kid turned back.

Mule-kick Hall was at his last gasp, and the Kid could not leave him so. And the desperado who was choking out his life in deadly silence—he was the lobo-wolf who had turned on the Kid and treacherously struck him down and left him for recapture!

The Kid called himself a gink and a bonehead for horning into another man's funeral—and his enemy's! But he swung swiftly across to the struggle—and his grasp fastened on the back of the assassin's dusky neck.

"Carambo!"

El Cuchillo gasped out the word in startled amazement as that grasp fell on him, dragging him back.

"You pesky, double-crossing lobo-wolf," said the Kid. "I guess you're getting yours!"

With all the strength of his sinewy arms, he dragged the bandit from the Ranger, and flung him across the stable. El Cuchillo crashed down, and sprawled half-stunned. The Kid grinned down at the panting Ranger, as Mule-kick dragged himself on an elbow.

"Say, feller, I guess you want to hustle, if you aim to ride this baby to La Plaza at sun-up!" he drawled.

The Ranger panted, struggling for his voice. Only a gasping gurgle came from his strangled throat.

The Kid laughed and ran back to his horse. He led the grey mustang from the stable at the run, into the glimmer of the stars. He swung himself into the saddle.

The Ranger sentry, pacing before the shack, swung round at the sight of the Rio Kid, mounted on the grey mustang, breaking into a gallop. His rifle leaped to his shoulder, but the Kid was gone before the rifle cracked, and a bullet hummed yards from the boy outlaw as he galloped, his two guns roaring a song of freedom and defiance.

Mule-kick Hall and his men rode out of Bullwhacker in the sunrise; and bound to a horse in the midst of the Rangers, was one prisoner—not two! With them went El Cuchillo, to the justice that had long waited for him.

Far away on the prairie, the Rio Kid was riding under the golden sunrise, free as the wind that whistled past him as he galloped, and humming a merry tune as he rode.

(Popular Frank Richards returns to the RANGER next week with another rollicking story of the cheery Chums of Grinstead.)