

WONDERFUL FREE AERO PLATE OF THE GREAT WAR—INSIDE!

The

RANGER

EVERY SATURDAY

2^d!



Astounding
story
of the
SUPER-FILM
**Hell's
Angels**
INSIDE.

The OUTLAW KID!



FURTHER
AMAZING ADVEN-
TURES IN OUR
ALL-THRILLING,
ROARING WILD
WEST STORY

did not stop for it. The gray 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.

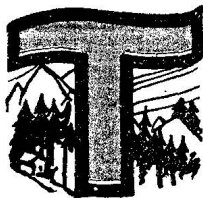
The punchers, heedless of supper, poured out of the bunkhouse, to join Ginger and the foreman.

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, nor 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 or 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 cut 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 much 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 choked 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.

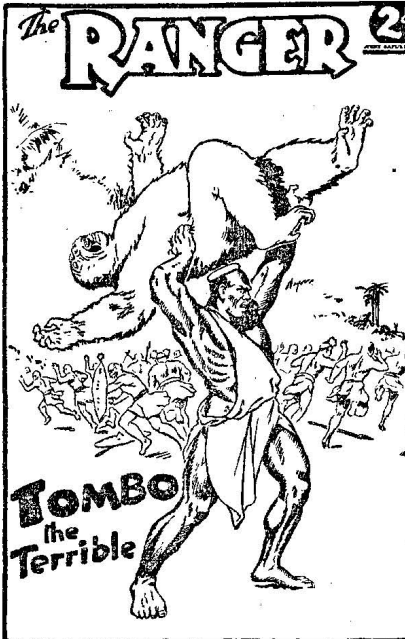
In a panting bunch, the Bar-T outfit dashed up to the river. Black Alec flung himself from his horse. He stooped to look for sign, but the Kid could see from the saddle that all was well. Three hundred cows would have left ample sign of their passage, and there was no fresh trampled trail going down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

"We're ahead of the scallywags," 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.

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

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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—

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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 screamed 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 feebly. "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 streamed 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 glinted. 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 geck 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 out 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 ranch.

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.)