

YOURS FOR TWOPENCE—THO' IT'S WORTH A BOB!

The RANGER

EVERY
SATURDAY

2^d



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 permiscus. 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 it!"

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 hoss-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 eyeholes 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, doggone 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 hoof-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 quirt and spur, the masked man was logging 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.

"Doggones 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 up-lifted 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 pocket 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 galoot 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 durned trail-thief?" 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!"

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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, senor—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 Venezuelan 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 Venezuela.

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 slyly. "The Rio Kid—foreman of the Bar-T! I guess I ain't going to the sheriff this time, Kid—or if I go, 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.)