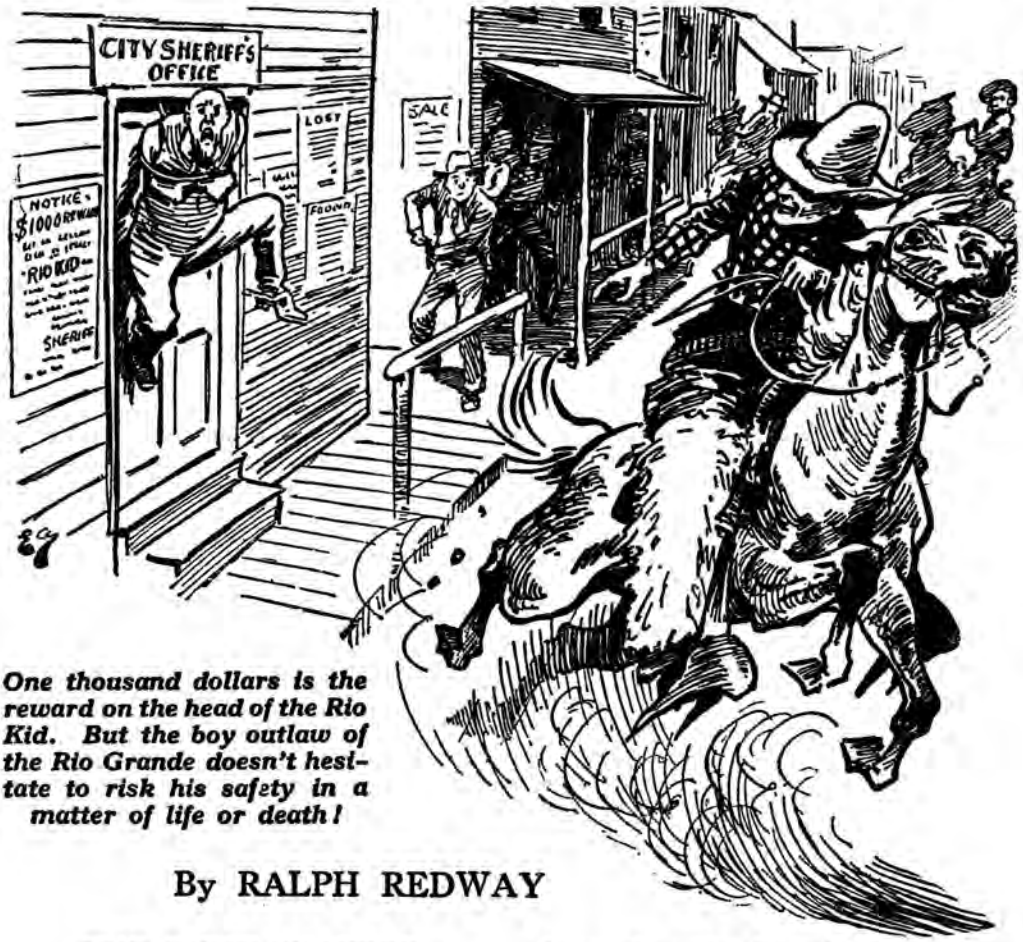
The Laughing Outlaw!



One thousand dollars is the reward on the head of the Rio Kid. But the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande doesn't hesitate to risk his safety in a matter of life or death!

By RALPH REDWAY

THE FIRST CHAPTER
STRINGING UP THE SHERIFF!

"PUT 'em up, sheriff!"

Sheriff Watson, of Frio, gave a sudden start, and his hand shot towards the butt of the Colt in the holster at his belt.

A minute ago the sheriff, sitting at his pinewood desk in his office fronting the plaza of Frio, had been staring out moodily into the dusty plaza, through the wide-open doorway. The sun was setting on the cow-town on the banks of the Rio Frio. Here and there horsemen were riding in from the Texas prairie; and among them, the sheriff's eyes rested on a cow-puncher whose goatskin chaps were thick with alkali dust from the plains. And when the puncher pulled in his cayuse, and threw the reins over the hitching-post

by the office door, Jake Watson wondered, hopefully, for a moment, whether the rider was bringing him news of the Rio Kid—the boy outlaw on whose head the reward of a thousand dollars was placed. News of the Rio Kid, and a chance of getting on his trail, would have been like meat and drink to the sheriff of Frio; disgruntled, exasperated, and embittered by failure after failure to get a cinch on the elusive boy outlaw of the Rio Grande.

The puncher tramped in. His Stetson hat, pulled low, hid his face all but a smooth boyish chin as he entered. But as he stepped into the office he pushed it back with one hand, and at the same moment a six-gun appeared in the other. And Sheriff Watson, with a convulsive start, stared at a face he had never dreamed of seeing in his own office, and reached for his gun.

"Don't!" said the Kid, smiling.

He was smiling—but the handsome blue eyes had a glint of cold steel in them over the levelled barrel of the six-gun. And the sheriff's hand stopped before it reached the butt of his Colt. It was not healthy to handle his hardware with the Rio Kid's gun looking him in the face and the Kid's eyes glinting over it.

"You!" breathed the sheriff. "You here, you dog-goned firebug! By the great horned toad——"

"Sure!" said the Kid, smiling.

With his left hand he threw the office door shut; then he stood leaning on it, regarding the sheriff of Frio, still smiling. But the gun in his hand never wavered. Jake Watson clenched his hands till the nails dug into his horny palms. But he sat tight. Within call were a hundred men whose guns would have leaped from their holsters at the name of the Rio Kid. But the sheriff did not figure on uttering a call that would have been the last sound to leave his lips on this earth. He glared at the Kid with deadly rage in his eyes; but he controlled his temper.

"What you want, you gol-darned outlaw?" he muttered hoarsely. "You reckon you can bulldoze a sheriff in his own office?"

"Jest a few!" agreed the Kid, with a cheery nod. "You been hunting me a whole lot, sheriff—I guess you got a bunch of guys out on the trails now, looking for this baby; and I figured that you wanted news of the Rio Kid! I sure humped in to give you the news. You sure can see now, with your own two lookin' eyes, that the Rio Kid is around—and not fur away—not so fur, mebbe, as you'd like him!" And the Kid chuckled softly.

Jake Watson's hand made a convulsive move downward. But it stopped again. It was sudden death to touch a gun.

"I guess I said put 'em up, sheriff!" drawled the Kid. "You reachin' for the roof, like I'm asking you so polite?"

Slowly, the sheriff's hands went up above his head. With his hands up, he sat and glared at the Kid, with burning eyes.

The Kid stepped to him, jerked the Colt from his belt, and tossed it into a corner. Then he stepped back to his former position at the door.

"I'll say you're safer without your gun, sheriff!" he remarked. "You might try to pull it, and I guess I'd be sorry to have to spill your juice all over your office. I'd sure hate to shoot up a guy, so long as he was a good little man, and did as he was told."

There was a clatter of heavy boots

outside, and a hand on the door-handle. The sheriff's eyes gleamed. Instantly the high heel of the Kid's cowman's boot was jammed against the door, preventing it from opening.

The door-handle rattled, and a voice called :

" Say, sheriff ! You to home ? " It was the voice of Abe Harrigan, the sheriff's man ; a glad sound to Jake Watson's ears. But the sheriff did not stir or speak under the Kid's gun.

" You want to tell that guy you're busy, and stall him off, sheriff ! " murmured the Kid. " And you want to tell him quick ! "

Sheriff Watson drew a quick, hard breath. His desire was intense to shout out the Kid's name—to bring Harrigan in, gun in hand, with a band of Frio guys after him. But he did not want the Frio guys to find a dead sheriff in the office. He choked, but he jumped to the Kid's order.

" I guess I'm busy, Abe," he called out. " I got a guy here chewing the rag. You give me a look-in later."

" Sure, sheriff ! " The heavy boots tramped away.

The Kid smiled cheerily.

" What you want here, dog-gone you ? " breathed the sheriff, his voice husky with rage. " What game you playing, you pesky firebug ? "

" I'll give you a guess, sheriff ! " said the Kid banteringly. " You been hunting me with a rope—you got your guys combing the Huecas

" Put 'em up, sheriff ! " Sheriff Watson, of Frio, gave a sudden start and stared at the face he had never dreamed of seeing in his own office—the Rio Kid's ! " You here, you dog-goned firebug ! " he breathed.

for me now, rubbering after my hide-out in the hills. I guess you aim to string this baby up on the nearest tree, if you get a cinch on him. Ain't that the programme, sheriff?"

"Yep!" snarled the sheriff. "I ain't telling you no lies, Kid! If I get you, you go up on a rope—and now shoot if you durn well like."

"I ain't come here a-shooting, old-timer," said the Kid. "I got a rope for you, same as you have for me." He made a gesture with a lasso coiled on his left arm. "You get me, sheriff? I guess you ain't stringing me up on a cottonwood in the Huecas—not so's you'd notice it, sheriff! Your galoots are going to find you strung up in your office."

"What?" gasped the sheriff.

"But I guess I ain't going to make it last sickness for you, Jake!" grinned the Kid. "I always was a tender-hearted cuss! Why, if I pushed you over the range, mebbe they'd get a new sheriff in Frio that knowed how to set about roping in an outlaw—and I shouldn't be safe then, Jake—like I am with you playing sheriff!"

"Dog-gone you——" hissed Jake Watson. "You——"

"Pack it up!" smiled the Kid. "I ain't got a lot of time to waste here—Frio ain't too healthy for this baby. Put your paws down to your belt."

The Kid stepped to the sheriff and dropped the loop of the lasso over his shoulders. He drew the noose taut, pinning the sheriff's arms to his sides. Then with the rope he jerked him to his feet.

He holstered his gun, stepped to the door and opened it. Here and there, in the dusty plaza, were horsemen—at a little distance Abe Harrigan was talking to a cow-man at the door of the Red Dog. But no one was near the door of the sheriff's office. The Kid set the door wide open, and pushed the sheriff to the front of it, his burly back to the door. Helpless, breathing fury, Jake Watson watched him with smouldering eyes.

The Kid threw the rope over the top of the pinewood door. Then, dragging on it, he pulled the sheriff off his feet. The rope was knotted to the door-handle on the inside. Sheriff Watson hung on the door, his boots a foot off the ground, and the Kid stepped back and surveyed him with a smiling face.

"I guess you don't look pleased, Jake!" he exclaimed. "But I guess if you were stringing me up, you'd sure put the rope a piece higher, old-timer! You ain't got no kick coming, Jake."

The sheriff did not speak. Rage choked him. The grip of the rope, pinning his arms to his sides, was like an iron band with his weight on it. It bit into his sinewy arms. His heels drummed on the door as he hung.

"I'll say that all Frio will sit up on its hind legs and snicker when they see you that-a-way, Jake!" smiled the Kid. "What you figure?"

The Kid, grinning, stepped out of the office.

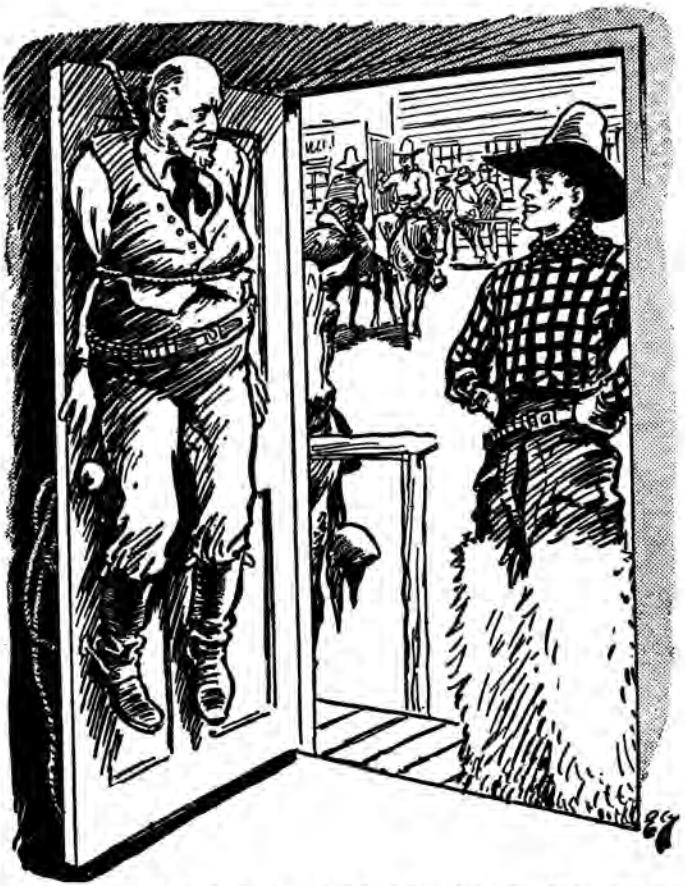
"Duck your cabeza, Jake!" he grinned. "I'm sure going to shut this here door!"

The sheriff ducked his head as the Kid drew the door shut after him, with Jake Watson hanging on the outside of it, fronting the plaza. In a moment more the Kid was in the saddle. Sheriff Watson, strung up on the outside of his office door, was in full view of all Frio, and it was not healthy for the Rio Kid to linger now.

" So-long, Jake ! " he called. " I guess this here dog-goned cow-town is going to see how much you and your bunch worry this baby ! You want to see me again, Jake, you follow me up into the Huecas, and mebbe I'll string you up again, in a way you will dislike."

The Kid dashed away at a gallop. The dust flew in clouds from the galloping hoofs of his mustang as he went.

From across the plaza came a roar of voices. In a few moments, dozens of pairs of eyes were on the sheriff, strung up on the outside of his office door. Abe Harrigan came across from the Red Dog at a run, at his heels a crowd of Frio guys. They stared at the sheriff—they fairly goggled at him—and there was a roar of laughter.



" I guess you don't look pleased, Jake ! " said the Rio Kid. " But I guess if you were stringing me up, you'd sure put the rope a piece higher, old-timer ! "

" Say, sheriff—what the great horned toad ——" gasped Abe.

" The Kid ! " panted Jake. " The Rio Kid ! Get after him, you goob—the Rio Kid—he's riding ! Shoot, dog-gone you, shoot ! "

" The Kid ! " gasped Abe.

" The Rio Kid ! " roared a score of voices.

" Shoot ! " spluttered the sheriff. " Dog-gone you, shoot ! Get the Kid ! "

But the Rio Kid was already at a distance, riding hard. A dozen men rushed after him, blazing away with their Colts. But the Rio Kid, laughing, dashed out of the cow-town on the prairie trail and was gone. Round the sheriff's office the crowd thickened. From all corners of Frio guys rushed up at the news of the Rio Kid's latest exploit, and roars of laughter rang in the infuriated ears of the sheriff. Even Abe Harrigan was grinning as he pushed open the door and released the hapless sheriff at last. And Jake Watson, with a crimson face of fury, slammed the door in the faces of the laughing crowd—but

the shut door did not keep out the sound of laughter, which echoed long and loud in the plaza of Frio.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

" STICK 'EM UP, KID ! "

" WE'VE got him ! " breathed Jake. Moonlight, clear and bright, streamed down on the rocky slopes of the Huecas ; on rugged cliffs and precipices, steep arroyos and shaggy pinewoods. In a deep gulch, where the pines cast dark shadows under the moon, the red flicker of a camp-fire glimmered through the night. And Jake Watson, as he saw it, breathed deep and hard, and signed to his men to be silent. If the Rio Kid was sleeping, it was well known that he slept like a cougar, with one ear open ; and a footstep on the rocky soil would have been enough to awaken him.

That they were close on the track of the boy outlaw, the Frio bunch knew. A score of times they had seen him and exchanged shots during the past week. They were hunting him, and hunting him hard, in the almost trackless rocky waste of the Huecas —hunting him till they were bone weary ; wearier than the elusive outlaw they sought, and in a mood growing blacker and more bitter with every passing day. Gladly, the Frio bunch would have quitted the trail and left the Kid to run, during those hard and weary days of combing pinewoods and tangled chaparral, rugged rocks and jutting precipices, amid yawning chasms and abysses. But the sheriff of Frio drove them to the task. Tireless himself, Jake Watson was ruthless to his posse—and weary, day after day, night after night, they combed the Huecas for the Kid. Since that day when the mocking Kid had strung him up on the office door, for all Frio to look at and laugh, the sheriff had been on the trail ; and he swore savagely that he would never quit till he had the Kid.

And now it looked as if, at long last, he had him. Many a sign had led them to that lonely, shadowy gulch, and they had left their horses at the lower end, and crept forward on foot, in the hope of surprising the Rio Kid in his camp. And his camp lay before them—the flicker of burning pine chips glimmering in the night. And by the camp-fire lay a figure rolled in blanket and slicker—motionless ! And Jake's eyes burned, as he grasped his Colt with a convulsive grip.

The Kid was cornered at last—caught, for once, napping ! High up in the Huecas, in that rocky wilderness, no doubt he had figured himself safe to camp, and take the rest he sorely needed ; but he had not counted on the grim, fierce determination of the sheriff of Frio. The sheriff was not resting, he was not sleeping, that moonlit night—neither were his weary men. And closer and closer to the glimmer of the camp-fire in the mountain they crept—six of them, grim-faced, savage, gun in hand. And still the figure in the rolled blanket and slicker did not stir !

" By the great horned toad ! " The sheriff's eyes danced. " We got him—we sure got him dead to rights ! I'll say the Kid never was caught napping before ; but we got him, we sure got him ! Get your guns on him and riddle him with lead if he stirs a finger ! "

" We got him covered, sheriff ! " whispered Abe Harrigan.

They halted, standing within six or seven paces of the recumbent figure, every hand grasping a six-gun, every gun aimed at the sleeper. The sheriff called :

" Wake up, Kid ! Wake up, dog-gone you ! Stick 'em up, Kid—we got you covered ! "

The sleeper did not stir.

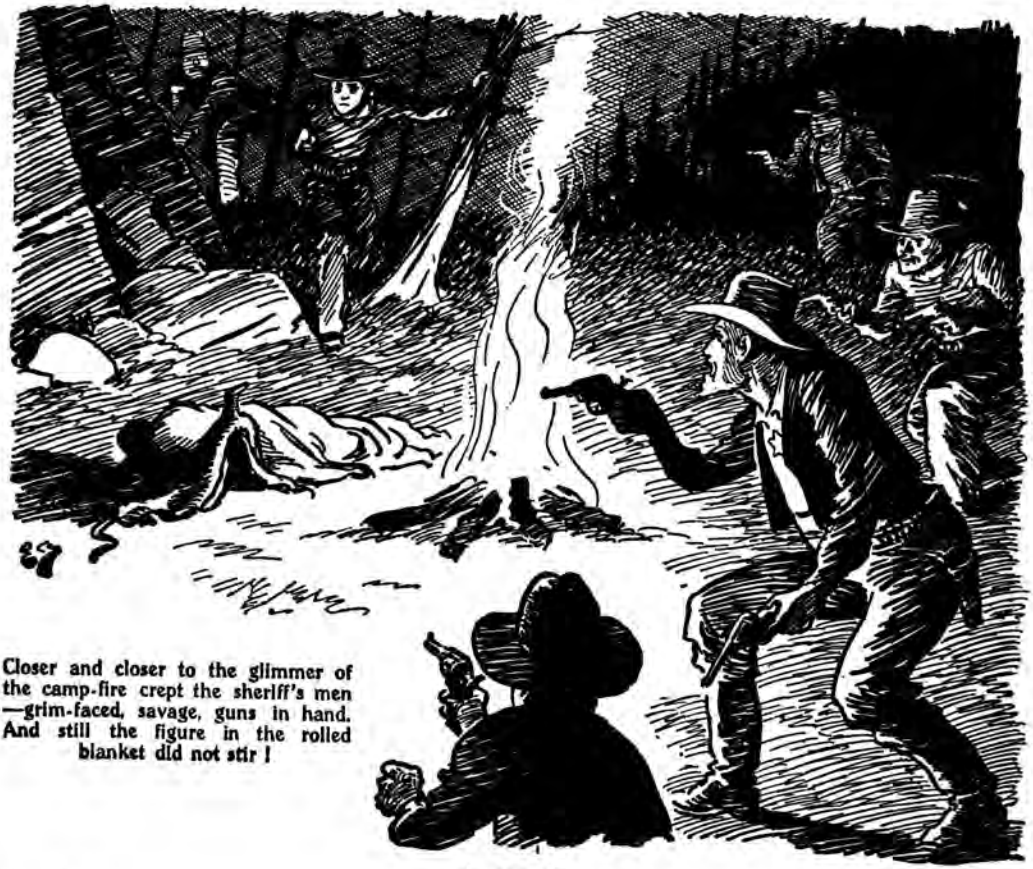
" You hear me, Kid ? " roared the sheriff. " You figure on playing possum, you dog-goned geck ! Stick 'em up, or—one second, Kid ! "

The sleeper still did not stir, but the sheriff reckoned that, under the blanket, a hand was seeking a six-gun, and he did not figure on giving the Kid a chance to burn powder. He fired, and the roar of the six-gun awoke a thousand echoes among the rocks and pines. The bullet crashed through slicker and blanket.

" I guess the Kid's got his ! " roared the sheriff, and he ran forward with the revolver smoking in his hand, his men at his heels. His gun was ready for another shot, if the Kid stirred. But the sleeper did not stir. And the sheriff, gloating, kicked the blanket aside—and then a yell of rage pealed from his lips as he beheld a log that lay beneath—scarred by the bullet that he had figured had gone through the Kid.

" Tricked ! " breathed Harrigan. " Dog-gone my boots, the Kid is sure around—watch out, you-uns ! "

The sheriff swore fiercely. But his men stared round with startled, uneasy eyes at the dark sweep of the pinewoods. It was a pine log that lay



Closer and closer to the glimmer of the camp-fire crept the sheriff's men —grim-faced, savage, guns in hand. And still the figure in the rolled blanket did not stir !

under the Kid's blanket—and they had been tricked into the firelight. They stood full in the light, full in the Kid's fire, if he was at hand—and only too surely they knew that he was! Hardly a few seconds later, from the dark pinewoods, black as a pit, came the flashes of a six-gun.

Crack! crack! crack! crack!

The firing was so rapid that the shots were almost blended into one. The sheriff yelled as a bullet tore along his cheek, whipping off a patch of beard and bronzed skin. Abe Harrigan yelled as another cut a tip from his ear. With a roar of rage and alarm, the sheriff's posse of Frio ran for cover, racing down at top speed the gulch that they had ascended so slowly and cautiously. Crack! crack! crack! rang from the darkness of the pines behind them, and bullets hummed like bees round the ears of the Frio bunch as they fled—and yell after yell rang wildly in the night as man after man was hit.

Yet no man went down. Scratches, some of them deep, every man had, spurring him on into frantic flight. But the hidden Kid was not shooting to kill. Every life in the bunch was at his mercy, and he could have thrown lead into every guy there as he ran; but the Kid was not the man to do it. Not by his own wish, or by his own fault, was the Kid an outlaw—and an outlaw's ways were not his ways. With raining bullets, he drove the Frio bunch to wild and desperate flight, but he was grinning in the darkness of the pines as he threw lead.

Wildly trampling boots echoed down the gulch, and the Frio bunch, running for their lives, vanished out of the moonlight at last, and the Kid ceased to burn powder. From the distance, echoing over the mountain, came the beat of hoofs. The bunch had got back to their horses, and were mounting in hot haste, and riding—but they were not riding into the gulch. They were riding down the mountain at a gallop, in dread every moment of whistling lead from the dark shadows.

The Rio Kid emerged from his cover, the moonlight glimmering on a laughing face. The grey, black-muzzled mustang, his companion on many a wild trail, followed him. From the dark distance came an echo of galloping hoofs that died away in the night, and the Kid laughed as he stroked the glossy neck of his mustang.

"I guess we're through with that bunch, Side-Kicker, old hoss!" grinned the Kid. "I'll say they sure have lit out like they was sent for, old-timer! Mebbe Jake'll quit the trail, and I sure figure that his bunch will, if Jake don't! I'm telling you we're through, old hoss."

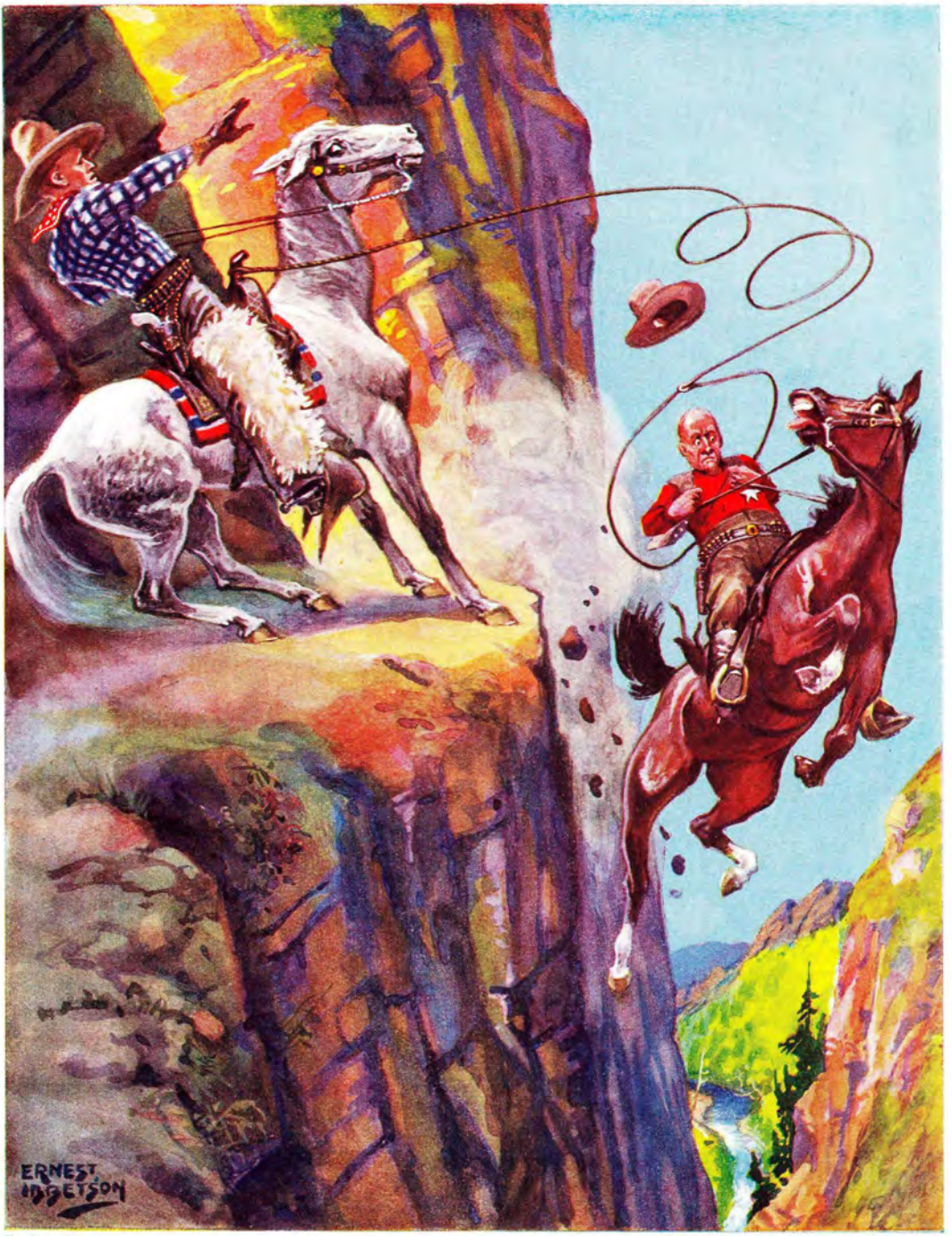
And the Kid, laughing, picked up his blanket and slicker, and in the darkness of the pines he slept as peacefully as ever he had slept in the bunkhouse at the old Double-Bar before hard fate made him an outlaw.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

RIDE TO DEATH!

"GEE-WHIZ!" exclaimed the Kid. Clatter, clatter, clatter, came the ring of hoof-beats on the hard rock, and the Kid checked his mustang and glanced back over his shoulder. But in the steep winding ravine he could not yet see the horseman who rode, fast as the unseen man was galloping on his track.

In the bright morning, the Rio Kid was riding, humming the tune of a Mexican fandango as he rode, light-hearted and carefree. The Frio bunch, he figured, had hit the cow-town in the home-trail, and he was through with them. For a week or more he



Facing page 112

SAVING HIS ENEMY!

Specially painted for the "Holiday Annual" by E. Ibbetson.

had played hide-and-seek with his hunters in the rocky recesses of the mountain; and, now that he was through, he rode at his ease, on the trail for the Rio Grande. That day, he figured, he was going to leave the Huecas behind him; before sundown he would be riding knee-deep in grass, on the prairie trails he loved. But that clatter of hoofs on the rocks behind hinted that he had another guess coming.

High up in the Huecas there were few riders; no cows ever strayed in those desolate canyons and gulches to draw a puncher from the plains. It was a foe who was riding on his traces, and the Kid had a guess that it was Jake Watson; he had a lingering doubt whether the sheriff would give up when his bunch gave up. He shrugged his shoulders and rode on. If Jake followed him on this wild trail, the Kid reckoned that Frio would soon be in want of a new sheriff. It was no spot for reckless riding.

The narrow ravine which the Kid was following ended, opening like a gateway on the edge of a yawning barranca. Sheer from the rocky trail dropped the side of the chasm, sheer as the wall of a house. The barranca was deep and wide—deep, the Kid would have reckoned, to a thousand feet or more, way down to the level of the surrounding prairies, and wide by not less than a hundred feet, barring the way to all creatures that had no wings. But to the right, between the dizzy verge and the soaring rocks, ran a narrow path, which the Kid knew, and he backed his horse on it.

Between the high rock and the yawning gulf there was a width of less than half a riata's length—more than enough for the Kid, accustomed to ride in perilous places. He backed Side-Kicker on to that perilous path and halted there, facing back, and now his hand rested on the walnut butt of a six-gun.

The corner of rock beyond which he had backed his steed was sharp almost as the corner of a building. It shut off the Kid's view of the ravine through which he had come.

The ringing hoof-beats sounded through that ravine as the pursuing rider galloped on. When that rider reached the end, as the Kid had done, he had to halt on the edge of the abyss, or else turn where the Kid waited. And in either case he came under the Kid's gun, and his life was at the mercy of the outlaw of the Rio Grande. And if it was Jake Watson, as the Kid reckoned that it was, it would be gun to gun, shot for shot, and the quickest man on the trigger would ride away alive, and the other would be left for the black vultures that soared high over the rocky Huecas. And the Kid did not reckon that it would be a galoot about his size who would be left for the vultures.

Clatter! clatter! From the hidden ravine the rider came galloping, galloping, and the Kid laughed. At that rate of speed he would not find it easy to pull in his horse at the end, where the ravine opened on the deep wide barranca; he risked going over the verge, to plunge a thousand feet on rocks far below. And it suddenly flashed into the Kid's mind that the pursuer did not know that the barranca was there!

No doubt he had picked up sign of the Kid—perhaps glimpsed his Stetson from afar as he rode—and knew that he was close behind the escaping outlaw. He knew the Kid was ahead of him, but he did not know the trail; surely he did not know that wild trail, or he would not be coming on at a

gallop, direct for the precipice in front of him!

The Kid whistled softly. His hand touched his gun, but he did not pull it—he did not figure that it was needed. When that mad rider came sweeping round the last bend of the winding ravine, at that mad speed, it would be too late for him to pull in his steed—horse and rider must go headlong over the precipice, and the Kid knew it. It was not going to be gun-play; all that the Kid had to do was to sit in the saddle, beyond the rocky corner, and watch his enemy hurl himself to destruction.

Clatter! clatter! The hoof-beats rang loud and clear and near—the rider was close; in a few moments more—— And then the Kid, the hunted outlaw, whose wild deeds were the talk of every cow-camp and rodeo in Texas, knew, like the white man he was, that he could not stand for it. It was a foe, a deadly foe, who came, gun in hand at a mad gallop, but the Kid could not sit idly and see him rush to so fearful a fate. And he shouted:

"Pull in! You pesky bonehead, pull in your cayuse—you are sure riding into a barranca! Pull in, and save your neck!"

His shout rang sharp and clear, but the clatter of the ringing hoofs may have drowned his words, or the warning might have been heard too late—or unbelieved by the sheriff of Frio. For the rushing hoof-beats came on unchecked, and a few seconds later the horseman leaped into the Kid's view, coming out of the ravine at a gallop—and the Kid knew that all was lost for him. Not till he was right on the verge could the rider see the barranca that yawned ahead—and then, madly, he dragged on his reins, too late.

And the Kid's sunburnt face whitened a little as he watched Jake Watson. For a fraction of a second the horseman hung there, struggling on the edge of the chasm, and then he was over—horse and rider plunging into the almost bottomless gulf that yawned below.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
ROPED!

WHIZ!

The lasso flew.

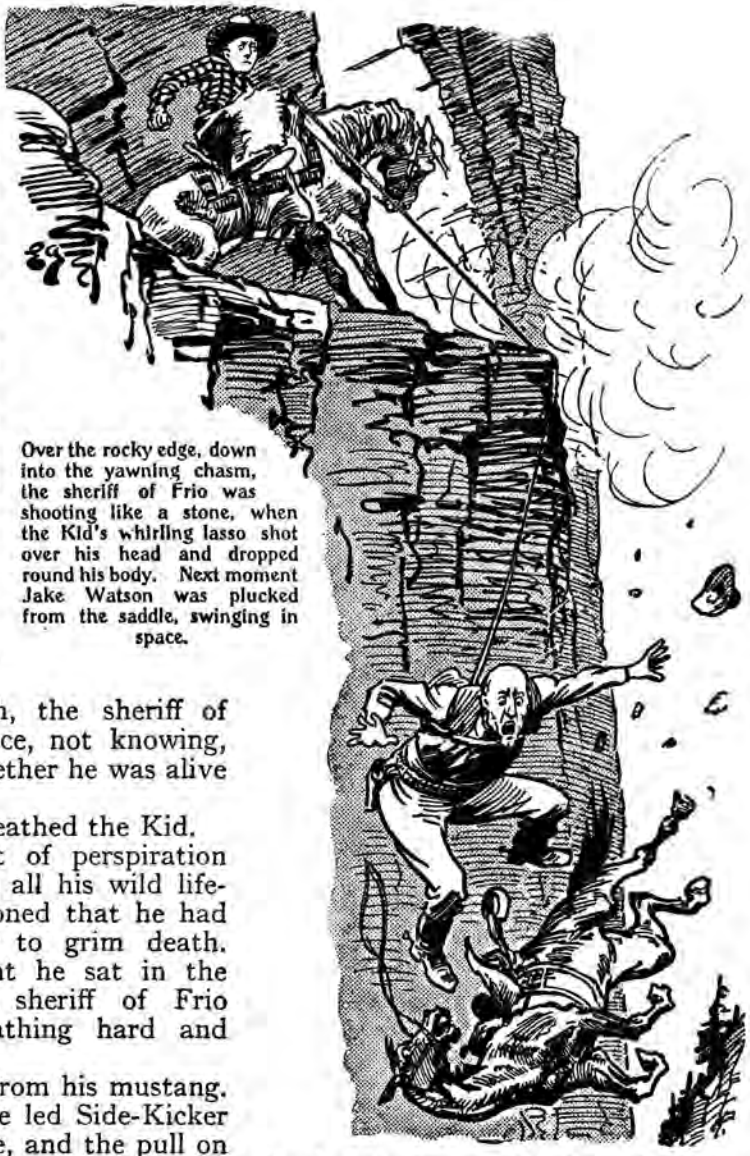
The Rio Kid did not stop to think. Had he lost a split second, it would have been too late. The swiftness of the leaping cougar would have been too slow. Swifter than the cougar, swift as the lightning-flash, the Rio Kid grasped his riata and made the cast.

Swift and sure was the Rio Kid's hand with the forty-foot rope—no plunging steer, no untamed buck-jumper, had ever escaped the rope when it whirled from the hand of the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande. Swift and sure, uncoiling as it flew, the riata shot after the doomed rider as he plunged headlong over the cliff; swift and sure, yet the Kid, had he had time to think, would hardly have reckoned that he could make the grade.

Over the rocky edge, down into the yawning chasm, the sheriff of Frio was shooting like a stone, when the whirling loop shot over his head and dropped round his body.

It was the tug on the rope that told the Kid that he had succeeded. His end of the riata was fast to his saddle; and Side-Kicker braced himself, instinctively, with planted forefeet to take the shock, as he was used to doing when the Kid roped in steer or broncho. But firmly as he stood, the sudden tug and twang of the tautening rope almost dragged the mustang

over the verge, and the Kid, for one wild moment, reckoned that he was going after the sheriff of Frio. But nobly the grey mustang stood the strain, braced back from the very verge of a terrible death; and at the other end of the riata swung Jake Watson, while his riderless horse plunged down, and down, and down, and disappeared into the far depths of the barranca below. Plucked from the saddle by the Kid's rope, even as he shot downward to death, the sheriff of Frio swung in space, not knowing, for the moment, whether he was alive or dead.



Over the rocky edge, down into the yawning chasm, the sheriff of Frio was shooting like a stone, when the Kid's whirling lasso shot over his head and dropped round his body. Next moment Jake Watson was plucked from the saddle, swinging in space.

" Gee-whiz ! " breathed the Kid.

He wiped a clot of perspiration from his brow. In all his wild life-trail, the Kid reckoned that he had never been nearer to grim death. For a long moment he sat in the saddle, while the sheriff of Frio swung below, breathing hard and deep.

Then he slipped from his mustang. Taking the reins, he led Side-Kicker back into the ravine, and the pull on the lasso dragged the swinging sheriff up to the rocky verge. The mustang pulled on, and the Kid stepped back to the edge of the precipice, grasped the lassoed sheriff, and dragged him up on the rock.

The sheriff of Frio did not speak. His bronzed face was white, his eyes fixed and glassy. He lay like a log as the Kid unhooked the riata, coiled it, and hooked it on his saddle again. He stirred at last, and dragged himself to his feet, leaning on the rock, breathing in great gulps.

The Kid smiled.

" I'll say that was a close call,

sheriff ! " he drawled. " Say, you sure was burning the wind after this baby."

Jake Watson looked at him. He nodded, but did not speak. His glance went, for a moment, to the edge of the precipice, and he shuddered. Then he looked at the Kid again.

" O.K., feller ! " smiled the Kid. " I guess it's shook you up a few—but I sure roped you in time, and Frio won't be looking for a new sheriff ! I guess I allowed that I'd string you up again, sheriff, if you hunted me in the Huecas ! " He chuckled. " But I'll tell a man I never figured on stringing you up that-a-way ! "

The sheriff found his voice.

" You roped me ! " he muttered. " I guess you're the only guy in Texas, Kid, so quick with the rope ! What have you saved my life for, Kid ? I guess you know I was hunting you with a gat in my grip, and if I'd got a bead on you it would have been you for the long jump ! What d'you save me for, you geck ? "

" You can search me ! " grinned the Kid. " I guess it's jest my way."

The sheriff of Frio looked at him, long and hard. The gun had gone from his hand, dropping to the bottom of the barranca. But if the gat had still been in his grip, it was not in the sheriff's mind to burn powder. Long and hard he looked at the smiling Kid.

" You get me guessing ! " he said. " You're a dog-goned outlaw, Kid, and a pesky firebug, and I guess I got to get you ; but I'll tell the world you're as white as any hombre in Texas. Burn the wind, Kid—burn the wind ! I guess I got to hoof it back to Frio, and I reckon I ain't going to hurry none—but when I get back I got to ride after you with my bunch. Burn the wind ! "

The Kid, laughing, swung himself into the saddle. The sheriff's eyes followed him as he wheeled his horse on to the narrow trail between the barranca and the cliff.

" So-long, sheriff ! " grinned the Kid. He swept off his Stetson in polite farewell. Then, with a clatter of hoofs and a light laugh, the Rio Kid was gone.

THE END

AN ODE TO HORACE COKER

By DICK PENFOLD

The Greyfriars Poet.

WHO seeks to take the world by storm,
And thinks he's ruler of his Form,
In class, and playing-field and dorm ?
Why, COKER !

Who grinds out poems by the yard,
And really is a comic card ?
Who'd benefit by " six months' hard " ?
Why, COKER !

Who once played footer in his pride,
And caused amusement far and wide
By netting for the other side ?
Why, COKER !

When Aunty's " tips " come on the scene,
Who sits before a spread serene
With one who's Potty, one who's Greene ?
Why, COKER !

Who keeps his schoolmates bright and gay
By spelling " captain " with a " k " ?
Who gave the " Koker Kup " away ?
Why, COKER !

Who really is a mighty man ?
Who japes Removites (when he can !) ?
Who leaves George Robey " also ran " ?
Why, COKER !