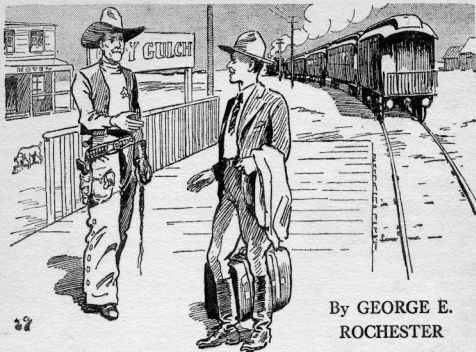


# A Chip of the Old Block!



By GEORGE E.  
ROCHESTER

## THE FIRST CHAPTER

BOUND FOR ARIZONA

MR. PIGGOTY, the family lawyer, laid down his papers on the dining-room table. Removing his spectacles, he polished them with his handkerchief, and said:

"And that, my boy, is the position."

"I see," said Trevor Ringwood Stalkington—popularly known as Stalky—late of the Fifth Form at Ravenscourt. "What it amounts to is that Uncle William, my guardian, has died practically penniless, and there's not enough money left to keep me at Ravenscourt."

*Indian Bend in Arizona is a far from healthy spot for a tenderfoot school-boy who is looking for gunmen. But "Stalky," fresh from England, has the murder of his sheriff uncle to avenge!*

"That, unfortunately, is precisely how the matter stands," assented Mr. Piggotty. "I'm afraid it will be impossible for you to return to Ravenscourt even for the duration of the present term. You must find a job, commercial or otherwise, without delay. I have some little influence in certain quarters, and I may be able to obtain for you a post in some bank or office—"

"No, thank you, sir!" cut in Stalky with a grimace of distaste. "I'm afraid I couldn't stick either a bank or an office, sir. I'd go completely crackers sitting on a high-legged

stool totting up ledgers all day. I've had a letter——"

He produced it from his pocket and handed it to Mr. Piggotty. Taking it, the little lawyer adjusted his spectacles and read the hastily-written scrawl :

" Indian Bend,  
" Arizona.

" My Dear Stalky,—Piggotty's cable just received re your Uncle William. Dreadfully sorry to hear the sad news. To get down to brass tacks, I'm afraid William can't have left much, as in the last letter I had from him he said he'd been badly hit financially in the City. If you find yourself up against things, why not join me out here? Needless to say I'd be more than delighted to see you. Am enclosing a money draft which will pay your passage should you decide to come. If you happen to have made any other plans keep the cash for any purpose you wish,

" Yours As Ever,

" UNCLE DICK."

" H'm ! " said Mr. Piggotty dubiously, folding the letter and handing it back to Stalky. " I've never had the pleasure of meeting your Uncle Dick, but I believe—er—h'm—that he's always been something of a rolling stone."

" Yes, he's knocked about all over the world," nodded Stalky, " tackling any job he fancied which came along. At the moment he's acting as sheriff in Indian Bend. It's a pretty tough spot as well, I believe, from what he's told me in his letters. The last two sheriffs of Indian Bend both died with their boots on."

" Really ? " exclaimed Mr. Piggotty. " Heart failure brought on by the dry and intense heat, I presume ? "

" Oh, no," said Stalky. " They were shot in the back—both of them. That's why Uncle Dick took the job on. The citizens of Indian Bend couldn't find anyone else to take it."

" Then if that is the case, I'm astonished at your Uncle Dick inviting you to join him out there," said Mr. Piggotty sharply. " You're not going, of course ? "

" I most certainly am," said Stalky firmly. " I'd twenty thousand times rather be out on the prairie, living in the open air, than sitting cooped up in a stuffy office all day. I'm sending Uncle Dick a cable this afternoon and I'm booking my passage on the first available boat."

In vain the little lawyer tried to dissuade him, pointing out the manifold disadvantages of taking up residence in a town where the citizens apparently thought nothing of shooting the sheriff through the back.

Stalky was determined to go. Since his earliest years he had looked upon his adventurous Uncle Dick with something pretty near to hero-worship, and the prospect of joining him out in the Golden West more than reconciled Stalky to having to leave Ravenscourt.

Three days later he was on the high seas bound for America and Indian Bend. On reaching New York he telegraphed his Uncle Dick, telling him of his arrival, and two mornings later he alighted from the train at Dry Gulch, the nearest railway depot to Indian Bend.

Stalky was the only passenger to alight at the quiet, little depot. As he stood a moment looking about him, he saw a tall, lanky cowpuncher, with two guns slung low on his belt, coming lounging towards him.

" Yore name's Stalkington, I reckon," drawled the stranger, gazing

at Stalky with a pair of quizzical blue eyes, startlingly clear against the dark tan of his lean, sunburnt face.

"Yes, that's right," nodded Stalky.

"I'm Hank Wilson, yore uncle's deputy," explained the other laconically. "He's sent me to meet yuh. He's mighty sorry he cain't git along hyar hisself, but he's kept kinda busy way back yonder at Indian Bend. You ready to ride?"

He indicated a couple of horses standing tethered outside the depot.

"Leave yore grip with the clerk and a buggy'll c'lect it later," he went on. "C'mon, we've got a twenty miles' ride in front of us, so we'd best be hitting the trail."

A few minutes later he and Stalky were riding for Indian Bend at an easy, effortless canter. Stalky was quite at home in the saddle, having

ridden in England since he was very young.

"How is Uncle Dick?" he asked.

"Waal, right now I reck'n he's okay, kiddo," drawled Hank. "But I'm aimin' to say there's no life insurance company what would call him a safe sort of investment. No, sir. In Indian Bend death's got a plaguey bad habit of coming mighty swift and sudden to hombres what wear the sheriff's badge."

"It's still a pretty tough spot, then?" asked Stalky.

"Tough?" repeated Hank. "Say, kiddo, it's that tough that guys there jest nat'rally chew bullets 'stead of baccy. Y'see, this hyar township of Indian Bend, being miles away from anywhere, has become a sort of hide-out for gunmen, rustlers, outlaws and suchlike guys who shoot first and talk



"What's biting you guys that you're hanging around thisaways?" rapped Hank. "Aw, h'lo, Hank!" drawled a voice. "The Britisher sheriff's bin plugged by the Kidd gang!"

after. Yore uncle's doing his best to clean the place up, but there's certain powerful factions in that there burg what are working against him behind the scenes. There's Bull Rawlins, fr'instance."

"Who's he?" asked Stalky.

"He's the Big Boss of Indian Bend," answered Hank. "He owns all the saloons and gambling joints in the place. Him and Seth Spratt, the lawyer, are mighty close pards. They profess to be all for law and order and backing up the sheriff, but it's all jest boloney. They're a couple of rattlesnakes and jest as deadly. If there's any gun-play and killings in Indian Bend—apart from private quarrels—it's a plumb safe bet that either Bull Rawlins or Seth Spratt or both of 'em are behind it sum-where."

"But they never come out into the open, eh?" asked Stalky shrewdly.

"No, kiddo, never!" answered Hank. "They're too blamed cunning for that. But there's no cattle rustling or bank hold-ups within a hun'erd miles of Indian Bend what they don't git their whack out of. The trouble is, it's so blamed hard to git proof."

"But I suppose there are some decent citizens in Indian Bend?" asked Stalky.

"Mighty few, kiddo, mighty few!" replied Hank. "And them what are decent are so plumb scairt of them what ain't that they jest lie low and say nuthin'. I tell you, it's more'n yore uncle and me kin do to raise a posse when one's needed, which is most about every other day."

As they rode on he told Stalky various tales of the wildness and lawlessness of Indian Bend.

"And there she lies!" he said when, during the afternoon, they approached a small, straggling town-

ship situated on the bank of a winding creek which cut through the dry and sun-baked prairie. "A real skunks' hole or buzzards' roost, whichever yuh like to call it."

"Yes, but I can understand Uncle Dick taking on the job of sheriff here," said Stalky. "It's just the sort of risky job that would appeal to him."

"You've said it!" agreed Hank heartily. "He's a real, one hun'erd per cent guy from the soles of his feet up, yore Uncle Dick, and if Bull Rawlins' gang don't git him afore he gits them, he'll clean up Indian Bend good and proper."

By this time he and Stalky had reached the outskirts of the little township. As they rode along the dusty, straggling main street which, even to Stalky, seemed strangely deserted, Hank suddenly rapped:

"Gosh snakes! Lookee yonder!"

Ahead of them, clustered outside a wooden building, was a crowd of men from whom came an excited buzz of conversation.

"That's yore uncle's shack—the sheriff's office!" ejaculated Hank. "Sumthing's happened! C'mon!"

Jerking his horse into a gallop he thundered along the street, with Stalky galloping by his side. As they reached the crowd of men gathered in front of the sheriff's office, Stalky thought he'd never seen such a rough, unprepossessing-looking bunch.

Every man had one gun or more slung in loosely-swinging belt holsters, and on many of the guns were some pretty sinister-looking notches.

"What's the trouble round hyar?" rapped Hank, reining in his horse almost to its haunches and swinging himself from the saddle. "What's biting you guys that you're hanging around thisaways?"

"Aw, h'lo, Hank!" drawled a



"I know nothing about the Kidd gang," said the big man angrily. "Shet your trap, Rawlins!" grated Hank. "I'll talk to you and these other coyotes in a minit!"

voice. "'Tain't nuthin' much, I reck'n. The Britisher sheriff's bin plugged by the Kidd gang an' folks is saying he's dead!"

With a glare at the speaker, who was a man swarthy of face and with a drooping, black moustache, Hank thrust his way roughly through the press and strode into the office with Stalky treading close at his heels.

### THE SECOND CHAPTER

"GET OUT OR THEY'LL GET YOU!"

THERE was a group of men in the office, all talking in low, excited voices. Two of the men Stalky noted at once were wearing city clothes.

One of the men was a huge, massively built fellow with a great bull-neck, heavy features and cruel little

eyes. The other was small and spare, with a wrinkled, yellowish face, shifty eyes, and a twist to his mouth which gave it the expression of being twisted in a permanent grin.

"Out of the way!" grated Hank, elbowing the pair of them savagely aside and bending over an old-fashioned horse-hair sofa on which was lying a man whom Stalky recognised in an instant as his Uncle Dick.

Uncle Dick's shirt had been ripped open, disclosing an ugly bullet wound. His face was sunken and deathly and there seemed to be life only in his eyes, which were fixed on Stalky.

"Hallö, lad!" he gasped, his livid lips twitching in a brave but fleeting smile. "You—you've got here, then, and—and just in time, I reckon."

"Who did it, Dick?" cut in Hank.

"It—it was the Kidd gang who got me," gasped the dying sheriff. "But—but that hound was behind it!"

His eyes blazed with momentary fury as they flickered towards the big, bull-necked man.

"You're raving, sheriff!" said the big man angrily. "I know nothing about the Kidd gang——"

"Shet your trap, Rawlins!" grated Hank. "I'll talk to you and these other coyotes in a minit!"

Stalky was kneeling down by the side of the dying man, whose limp hand he had taken in his. Stalky could see that the sands of life were running swiftly out for his uncle whom he had come so many thousands of miles to join.

"Listen, uncle," he said steadily, although his face was white. "Can you hear me?"

"Yes, Stalky," whispered the other.

"I'm glad I'm here in time," said Stalky, keeping his voice under control by an effort, "and I want you to know that I'll never leave here until the curs who shot you are brought to justice!"

With the last remnants of his fast-ebbing strength, Uncle Dick shook his head.

"No, Stalky, no!" he whispered. "You've got to go—to get out. If you try to interfere they'll get you—like they got me——"

"Perhaps so!" said Stalky grimly. "But I'm not quitting!"

He felt his uncle's fingers clasp convulsively on his.

"No, you'll never quit, Stalky," whispered the dying man, a look of pride and affection in his dimming eyes. "You never were—the sort to quit. Good-bye, lad, and—and God bless you!"

With the words, Uncle Dick's head fell back and those around knew that life had fled. Obeying Hank's touch on his shoulder, Stalky rose, his face white and set, his eyes cold and hard.

"Waal, yuh jackals," said Hank harshly when he had covered the still and lifeless form with a blanket, "p'raps yuh'll put me and the kiddo wise as to how this hyar shootin' comed about?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said the big, bull-necked man whom Stalky correctly took to be Bull Rawlins, the saloon and gambling-joint owner. "I'm still waiting to hear the details myself."

"Oh, yeah!" drawled Hank icily. "I s'pose none of youse know how it happened, hey? There ain't none of youse even so much as clapped an eye on the Kidd gang, hey?"

"Yes, we hev!" growled a voice. "They rode through the town less'n an hour ago and that's when it happened!"

"Is thasso?" said Hank, eyeing the speaker. "Waal, as you seem to know sumthing about it, Snake Cooper, s'pose you tell us jest exactly what did happen!"

"There ain't nuthin' much to tell," replied Snake Cooper sullenly. "Everybody knows that ever since the sheriff said he'd wipe the Kidd gang out, they've bin waitin' to git him. Waal, upwards of an hour ago they rode into town, the whole six of 'em, and pulled their hosses up outside the office here. 'Hey, sheriff!' bawls Big Pete, the leader. 'Hey, sheriff, c'm out. We wanna word with yuh!' Waal, out walks the sheriff jest as cool and unconcerned as if he'd jest come out for an airing. 'So it's you coyotes, is it?' he begins when he sees who his visitors was; then afore he could let out another word

the six of 'em was banging away at him with their guns. He didn't expect it coming as quick as that. He didn't hev a chance. He jest reeled for'ard and went down, but afore he hit the side-walk the Kidd gang was burning the wind outa town the way they'd come. The whole thing was over in less'n a minute—and that's how it happened, Hank!"

"I git you, Snake," said Hank grimly, "and I ain't misbelieving you none!" He looked at Bull Rawlins. "And I ain't misbelieving the sheriff none when he said you was behind this, Rawlins," he went on. "You and this skinny buzzard, Seth Spratt!"

He indicated the little, yellowish-faced individual, whose grinning, twisted mouth screwed into a snarling:

"Curse ye, Hank Wilson! Whad-yeer mean by that? Neither Bull Rawlins nor me knows anything about the Kidd gang!"

"Don't ye?" retorted Hank. "Yuh didn't git yore share, I s'pose, when they held up the bank over at Arrow Head 'bout ten days ago? Oh, no! It wasn't you nor Rawlins, neither, nor one of the dirty crooks what works for yuh, who tipped them off that the sheriff had got wise to their hide-out away in the Blue Hills yonder. Oh, no! You're quite the real innocents, aren't yuh, you and Rawlins?"

His voice rose to a roar.

"Waal, git out of hyar, the whole b'iling lot of youse, or if you wanna come out into the open and shoot it out hyar's yore chance!"

He was standing with shoulders hunched, his hands hovering above his loaded six-guns. But his challenge wasn't accepted. Instead, Bull Rawlins drawled:

"You're clean crazy, Hank, to

associate Seth Spratt and me with the Kidd gang, or with any of the other crooks around here. We've never had anything to do with them, as one day you'll find out unless you keep a more civil tongue in your head!"

With that he turned on his heel and moved towards the door, Seth Spratt and the rest of the men following him outside into the street.

Closing the door and locking it on them, Hank turned to Stalky.

"I'm sorry, kiddo," he said quietly. "There ain't nothing more I can say than that. If yuh care to stay the night here, you're more'n welcome; then in the mawning you'd better hit the trail back to the railroad depot

"No!" cut in Stalky. "I'm staying here, Hank, and I'm not leaving Indian Bend until that Kidd gang has been arrested for shooting down Uncle Dick!"

"Say, lissen, kiddo, you dunno what you're saying," protested Hank. "The Kidd gang'll never be took. There ain't a hombre here in Indian Bend that'll ride out in a posse agin them. You kin trust Bull Rawlins and Seth Spratt to see to that. 'Nother thing, it wouldn't make no diff'rence if a posse did ride out agin them. The Kidd gang hev got a hide-out in the hills yonder what an army couldn't take. Yore Uncle Dick trailed 'em there, and even he was beat as to how to smoke 'em out of it."

"What's the place like?" demanded Stalky. "What sort of a hide-out is it?"

"It's a basin in the hills," explained Hank. "On all four sides the cliffs rise up as straight as a wall. A long, narrow gulch, bone dry and full of loose stones, leads up to a narrow gap no more'n a couple of yards wide in the wall what faces the foothills.

That's the only possible way into the basin and one man could hold it agin an army, for they'd have to advance in single file up the gulch."

"I see," said Stalky. "And they've always got a guard set, I suppose?"

"You bet you they have!" assented Hank. "They've got a guard set day and night!"

"But suppose we could raise a posse," said Stalky. "Wouldn't it be possible to creep up the gulch under cover of night and rush the place?"

"Nary a hope!" answered Hank. "I tell you, kiddo, that gulch is plumb full of loose stones. In the stillness of them lonesome hills, a posse couldn't git within two hundred yards of the head of the gulch without being heard and jest mown down with gun fire. No, the gulch is hopeless, kiddo!"

Stalky was silent for a few moments, his brow puckered in thought.

"How high are the cliffs?" he demanded suddenly.

"Aw, up'ards of a hundred feet or more," replied Hank. "But you can't git in that way, neither. I tell you, they rise up as sheer as a wall from the bottom of the basin. There ain't a foothold for a cougar, let alone a human being!"

"What are the tops of the cliffs like?" demanded Stalky. "Are they bare or wooded?"

"Wooded," replied Hank. "But don't you git no ideas into yore head about lying up there and picking the Kidd gang off one by one as you spot 'em. On the other side of the basin, exactly opposite the head of the gulch, the cliff overhangs and its right in there that they've got their hut built. You can't reach it with a bullet except from the head of the gulch, and that would mean firing

right across the floor of the basin, if you git me."

"Yes, I get you," nodded Stalky, "but I'm not thinking about lying up there in the woods trying to pick them off. I've got another idea altogether. You listen to me!"

Hank listened. As he did so, he stared harder and harder at Stalky, bursting out almost before the boy had concluded:

"Gosh, snakes, kiddo, but it's a chance! I'll try it, blamed if I won't."

"You mean we'll try it," corrected Stalky.

"You?" ejaculated Hank. "Nos-sir, you're not in on this——"

"Oh, yes, I am!" cut in Stalky firmly. "It's my idea and two guns'll be better than one. Don't stare like that, man. I can shoot all right. I learned shooting as well as riding in England."

"But listen to me," began Hank agitatedly. "If anything goes wrong us'll be trapped like rats down yonder and jest shot to pieces——"

"We've got to risk that," cut in Stalky, "and if we're careful nothing need go wrong. It's no earthly use your arguing, Hank—I'm going!"

Hank looked at him.

"Yeah, you're jest like yore uncle," he opined. "Jest a chip off the old block. Okay, kiddo, we'll ride together!"

### THE THIRD CHAPTER

#### ROARING GUNS!

DUSK had deepened into night when Hank and Stalky saddled a couple of fresh horses and rode quietly out of Indian Bend. They wished to avoid being observed, if possible, but neither of them cared very much if they were seen, for it would never be suspected for an instant by the citizens of Indian Bend



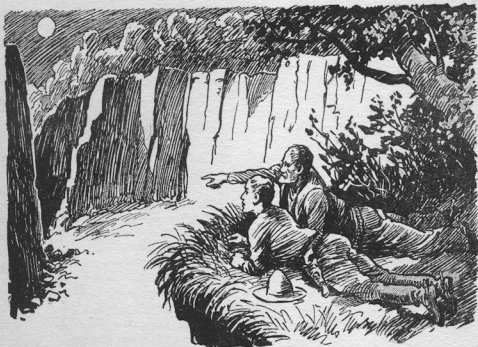
that Hank and the boy were riding out single-handed to tackle the murderous Kidd gang in their impregnable hide-out in the hills.

Once clear of the township, however, they jerked their horses into a long, raking gallop which quickly ate up the miles as they thundered through the night towards the hills.

The night was warm, and Stalky

that they were forced to abandon their horses. Taking several lariats from the pommels of their saddles, they left the horses hobbled in a hollow where there was a little sparse grass. Then, with Hank in the lead, they pressed up and up into the hills.

Half an hour's stumbling and climbing brought them to a dark belt of stunted timber.



Stretching themselves full length at the edge of the cliff, Stalky and Hank took careful stock of the position. "Yonder's the entrance, y'see—the head of the gulch," muttered Hank, pointing.

was riding in shirt, breeches, and riding boots only. About his waist was strapped his uncle's belt, with two cleaned and loaded six-guns in the twin holsters.

Before they reached the distant foothills, a prairie moon had swung up into a cloudless sky, bathing the dry and rolling rangeland in silvery light.

When well up into the foothills, the going became so rough and steep

"We're here!" muttered Hank, his hand laid warningly on Stalky's arm.

He moved cautiously on through the timber, then suddenly halted. Stalky also had halted, standing rigid and motionless as he stared down into a deep basin filled with moonlight and shadow directly below him.

The basin was about a quarter of a mile in diameter, and roughly circular in shape. The floor was grey and

stony in the moonlight, and as Hank had said, the cliffs dropped sheer and precipitous to their base a hundred feet or more below.

Stretching themselves full length on their stomachs at the edge of the cliff, Stalky and Hank took careful stock of the position.

"Yonder's the entrance, y'see—the head of the gulch," muttered Hank, pointing across the basin towards where a narrow, black gash showed in the moon-bathed cliff. "There'll be a guard there, but he'll be under cover behind a boulder, watching the gulch. The hut of the gang's directly below us here, hidden underneath the overhang of the cliff."

"Righto!" said Stalky. "Suppose we get busy!"

Crawling back into the black shadow of the timber, they went swiftly to work knotting into one long length the lariats which they had brought with them.

"I reck'n she's plenty long enough," said Hank at length when the last knot had been securely fastened and the long rope neatly coiled. "C'mon."

They moved away along the rim of the cliff until they came to where the moon was directly behind them and the cliff below them lost in inky-black shadow.

Tying one end of the rope to the foot of a tree and testing the knot by hauling the whole of his weight on it, Hank quietly paid out the rest of the rope until its full length was dangling down the dark, steep face of the cliff.

"Stalky," he muttered, laying his hand on the boy's arm, "lemme go alone, for there'll be no coming back this way. Once down there we're down for good, and if anything goes wrong—"

"Dry up!" cut in Stalky in a low

voice. "I'm going and I'm going now!"

Gripping the rope, he slithered over the edge of the cliff and commenced to slide down and down into the inky-black darkness.

He descended slowly and carefully, scared stiff of bumping against the cliff face and dislodging some stones which would fall with a clatter to the floor of the basin and raise the alarm.

Down and down he went, down into what would have seemed a bottomless pit had it not been for the moon-bathed floor of the basin beyond the black shadow of the cliff.

Suddenly he reached the end of the rope and hung there, his legs dangling in space. His face was pale and set, for the worst had happened. He and Hank had misjudged the height of the cliff and their rope was not long enough to reach the basin floor.

Stalky peered down into the darkness, striving desperately to gauge the distance of the drop between himself and the floor of the basin.

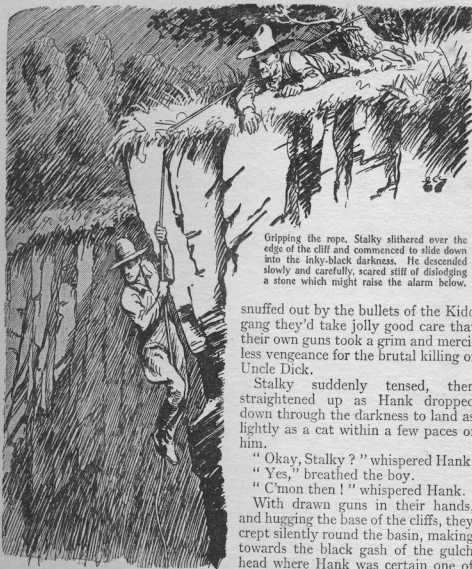
It was impossible to do so. He could see nothing below him except impenetrable darkness. Well, there could be no turning back now. He had come too far for that.

Easing himself a further few inches down the rope until he was gripping the very end of it, he released his hold and dropped down into the blackness.

He had relaxed every muscle so as to fall as lightly as possible, and next instant, with a fervent but stifled gasp of relief, he landed on his toes quite safe and sound.

Thank goodness the drop had not been a big one, he thought as, moving aside, he crouched rigid and motionless, waiting for Hank the while he peered about him with watchful eyes.

But one thing was very certain now. If anything went wrong in their daring



Gripping the rope, Stalky slithered over the edge of the cliff and commenced to slide down into the inky-black darkness. He descended slowly and carefully, scared stiff of dislodging a stone which might raise the alarm below.

snuffed out by the bullets of the Kidd gang they'd take jolly good care that their own guns took a grim and merciless vengeance for the brutal killing of Uncle Dick.

Stalky suddenly tensed, then straightened up as Hank dropped down through the darkness to land as lightly as a cat within a few paces of him.

"Okay, Stalky?" whispered Hank.

"Yes," breathed the boy.

"C'mon then!" whispered Hank.

With drawn guns in their hands, and hugging the base of the cliffs, they crept silently round the basin, making towards the black gash of the gulch head where Hank was certain one of the gang was on guard.

Suddenly Hank halted, tense and motionless, his lips at Stalky's ear.

"D'yuh smell it?" he breathed.

"Yes," whispered the boy as there came to his nostrils the faint aroma of cigarette smoke.

"Off with your boots," breathed Hank, beginning silently to remove his own.

attempt to capture the six members of the murderous Kidd gang, there could be no escape by means of the rope which dangled too far overhead to be within reach.

But Stalky was determined that nothing should go wrong. True, both he and Hank might never live to leave the basin alive, but before they were

A few minutes later they were crawling stealthily forward again, moving like shadows towards the boulders which marked the entrance to the basin.

The aroma of cigarette smoke was stronger now; then suddenly both Stalky and Hank froze. For within twelve paces of them the end of a lighted cigarette had described a glowing arc in the darkness as the guard threw it from him.

Long before this, the eyes of Stalky and Hank had become well attuned to the darkness and they could see the figure of the guard seated propped against a boulder, his back to them as he stared away down the gulch.

"Wait here!" breathed Hank. "There's no good both of us going!"

Next instant he was creeping silently forward towards the guard. Stalky waited, tense and rigid, eager to be with Hank, but knowing full well that one could do the job swifter and more neatly than two, who might get in each other's way and bungle the job at the crucial moment.

Silently as a shadow, Hank drew to within a couple of paces of the guard, who, blissfully unconscious of the impending attack, was sitting humming softly to himself, a rifle across his knees.

Next instant Hank leapt forward like an uncoiled spring, his gun whipping up to crash down on the guard's skull. With a grunt, the man reeled sideways, knocked out to the wide and never knowing what it was that had hit him.

A moment later Stalky had joined the jubilant Hank and together they bound the unconscious man with his own belt and handkerchief.

Apart from his rifle, he was armed with two loaded six-guns, Hank taking one and Stalky the other.

"Waal, that leaves five of the skunks," muttered Hank, staring across the basin towards a square glimmer of light which was the window of the hut. "I wonder when this hombre's due to be relieved?"

"We're not waiting for that!" said Stalky grimly. "I was always taught in the O.T.C. at school that the essence of attack is surprise. Come on!"

"Okay!" assented Hank.

Making a detour and moving as swiftly as was possible without their boots, they silently approached the lighted window of the hut. Reaching it, Stalky cautiously raised his head and peered in. Next instant he had ducked again and was breathing in Hank's ear:

"Four of 'em's sitting playing cards at the table. The fifth is lying on his bunk watching 'em!"

"Okay!" whispered Hank. "Now be ready to shoot—and shoot to kill if they go for their guns!"

He moved silently for the door of the hut. Without a sound his fingers groped for the latch. Next instant he sent the door crashing violently open and grated:

*"Up with yore hands—the lot of you!"*

The four card players and the man on the bunk stared for one split instant at the man and the boy whose four guns were covering them menacingly from the doorway.

Then with lightning-like swiftness they whipped into action, their guns leaping as though by magic from their holsters. But already the guns of Stalky and Hank were roaring into life, orange flame vomiting viciously from the blue-black barrels as the hut reverberated to the crashing roar of exploding cartridges.

Every bullet from the blazing guns of Stalky and Hank tore straight to its mark, for both were expert shots and the range was much too short to allow of a miss.

They shot for gun hands and shoulders and before the roar of their guns had died away, the five outlaws were cursing and moaning

street they were met by Bull Rawlins, Seth Spratt and a crowd of citizens.

"So you've come back," said Bull Rawlins. "We've been wondering where you'd got to."

"Aw, we've jest bin having a look round, I reck'n," drawled Hank.

"Yeah, we figgered you hadn't gone for good," grinned Bull Rawlins,



Hank sent the door crashing open. "Up with yore hands—the lot of you!" he grated. The four card players and the man in the bunk stared in astonishment at the man and boy covering them with four guns.

and clutching at their wounds, completely incapable of offering the slightest further resistance.

"Okay, Stalky, search 'em for weapons while I keep 'em covered," said Hank, "then we'll tie 'em up and tote 'em over to the county marshal at Fork Creek!"

It was sundown when next Stalky and Hank rode into Indian Bend. In the straggling and dusty main

"because the kid's grip's arrived from the railway depot."

Still grinning, he turned to Stalky. "Us citizens of this high-toned township reckon you had a mighty poor welcome here yesterday," he said. "It was real tough you getting here to find them nasty Kidd hombres had bumped your uncle off. So we've had a meeting to figger out how we can sort of make it up to you, and whadyer think we've done?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Stalky coolly, staring at the man's grinning face.

"We've decided to offer you our services to help round up the Kidd gang," guffawed Bull Rawlins, whilst a great shout of laughter went up from the crowd with him. "I reckon it's a handsome offer and it shows the respect what we had for your uncle. Haw, haw, haw!"

He bellowed with laughter; then wiping his streaming eyes he went on in a mocking voice:

"So now you'll be able to get after them nasty, rough Kidd fellers and round 'em up. You can't let 'em get away with killing your uncle, son!"

"He hasn't!" drawled Hank. "He got 'em last night—the whole gang of 'em. Him and me's just been toting 'em over to the county jail at Fork Creek!"

"What?" gasped Bull Rawlins. "Whadyer say? You've got the Kidd gang? Say, you're pulling our legs!"

"Oh, no, we're not," said Stalky. "I shan't need your help after all, Mr. Rawlins, or your pals either. In the meantime, d'you mind getting out of the way and taking your grubby pals with you. Hank and I want to get past. Thanks awfully!"

The dumbfounded crowd parted to give them passage, and riding on, Hank and Stalky dismounted outside the sheriff's office.

"I reckon you won't have no more trouble in Indian Bend, kiddo," said Hank dryly. "Them guys will give you a wide berth in future, I'm thinking."

"Thanks to you, Hank," said Stalky gratefully, holding out his hand.

THE END



## ROOKWOOD RHYMES—

TOMMY DOYLE

(of the Modern House).

THE "Tommies" on the Modern Side  
Are only three in number;  
But, causing havoc far and wide,  
They seldom seem to slumber.  
With Jimmy Silver and his host  
They wage perpetual warfare;  
And every day fresh scars they boast,  
Yet nothing could be more fair.

There's Tommy Cook and Tommy Dodd—  
A precious pair of beauties,  
Who sometimes—do not think it odd—  
Neglect their daily duties.  
They much prefer a rousing scrap  
To Q. Horatius Flaccus;  
And so do most of us, mayhap—  
Therefore, the masters whack us.

Another Tommy shares the spoil;  
He's always known to smile and  
Look pleasant; this is Tommy Doyle,  
Son of the Emerald Island.  
Without him, both his chums would find  
The game not worth the candle;  
For Doyle's is quite a master-mind—  
Vast problems he can handle.

Keen, daring, eager for a jape,  
He wins our admiration;  
Mixed up in many a boyish scrape  
And warlike operation.  
The Classic heroes must admit  
That Tommy Doyle's a terror;  
In youthful escapades he's IT,  
And seldom makes an error.

Go forth and prosper, Tommy lad;  
The future lies before you!  
Long may your merry japes make glad  
The readers who adore you!  
Your sunny smile, in calm or strife,  
Is ever bright and cheering  
To those who, up the hill of life,  
Are gamely persevering.