

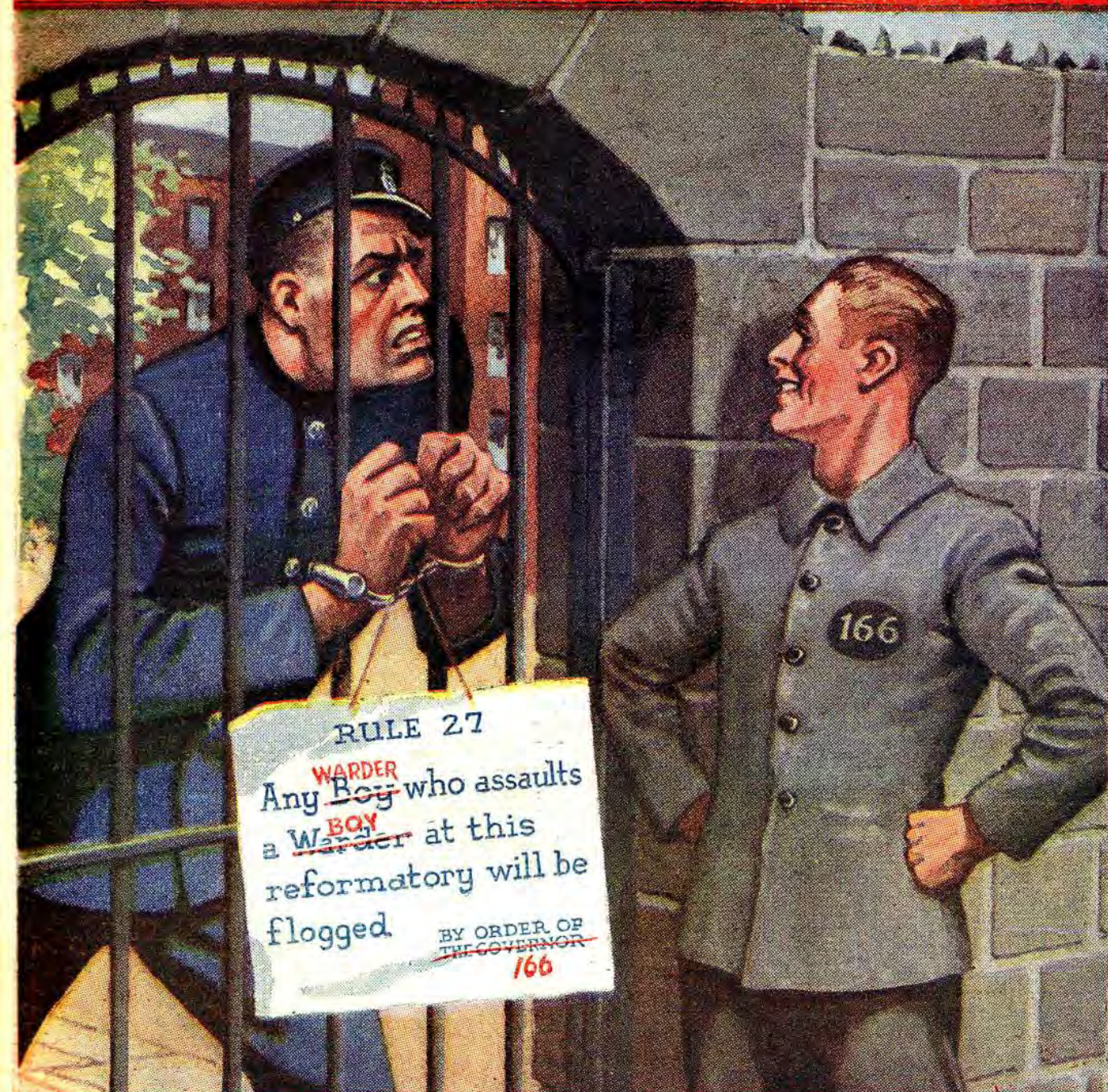
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# PILOT 2<sup>D</sup>

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The GREAT NEW PAPER for READERS OF ALL AGES



Read the Thrilling Adventures of —  
**The WORST BOY AT BORSTED**



FROM BEING HUNTED, THE OUTLAWED THREE BECAME THE HUNTERS, LURING HARDFIST HALL, THE RASCALLY MARSHAL, INTO A TRAP WHERE THEY'VE GOT HIM COLD!

# The Outlawed THREE

A BULLET zipped through the air a yard above Kid Byrne's head, and the cowboy dropped flat into the high grass by the bank of the Rio Rojo. From the veranda of the ranch-house on the river-bank a spurt of smoke drifted, but of the marksman who had fired the shot there was no sign.

"The dirty pizen-skunk!" muttered the Kid. He did not stir. Whoever was firing from the rancho was shooting with deadly purpose, and the Kid, unarmed, had no wish to argue with a loaded gun. He waited for another shot. Long minutes passed.

On hands and knees, the Kid began to crawl through the tall grass. Hardly a stirring of the leaves showed the way he went as, inch by inch, he wormed his way to a bunch of shrubs, where he could lift his head in cover and survey the rancho.

There was no sign of the man with the gun; the Kid guessed he must still be keeping out of sight, with his sights trained on the spot where the Kid had flopped down into the grass.

The young outlaw smiled grimly. Keeping his head low, taking advantage of every bush, fence, and hillock, he crept towards the back of the rancho. Every inch of the ground was familiar to him, for this was the place where he had lived ever since he could walk, until the day Sam Oak, his uncle, had been shot by an unknown hand, and Kid and his two side-kickers, Dan Oak and Tom Redway, accused of the shooting, had had to flee from their fellow-men.

Who the unknown gunman was the Kid could not guess. It was weeks since old Sam Oak, the owner of the Rojo Rancho, had been shot-up, by an unknown hand, and taken to Doc Baker's shack at Parksville.

Since then the old rancho had lain deserted. The Rojo cowboys, outlawed and hunted, were in hiding in the Mesa Mountains. The kid wondered whether Hardfist Hall, the marshal of Bullwhacker, might have left one of his roughnecks on the watch, in case Dan or Red or Kid revisited their old home.

More likely it was some rustler—perhaps one of the Jadson gang. Whoever he was, the Kid had made up his mind that he was going to handle him, gun and all.

The kitchen door at the back stood open. Kid Byrne, stepping silently in, noted at a glance the signs of camping—red embers in the rusty old stove, dirty platters on the trestle table.

Soft-footed as a cat, the Kid stepped through the rancho. He passed through old Sam Oak's room, that had a door opening on to the veranda in front.

The door stood wide, and the Kid, stopping there, looked out. His face was grim; but it broke into a grin at what he saw.

Bunched against the veranda rail, not ten feet from him, was a figure in velveteen jacket and bell trousers, red sash, and spurred boots, and high-crowned sombrero—evidently a Mexican. The sunlight glimmered on silver ear-rings in the man's dusky ears. He had his back to the Kid. He was watching the grass by the river, plainly without a suspicion that the Kid had left the spot where he had dropped into cover.

Rewards on their heads, relentless pursuers on their heels—and all because they won't give up the gold-mine which is theirs by right!



A gun was gripped in the man's hand, ready for a pot-shot. And the Kid grinned at the bandit's unconscious back. Pausing, he glanced round the room, and picking up a heavy, three-legged stool by one leg, aimed carefully, and flung the missile with all the strength of his sinewy arm.

It whizzed across the veranda and crashed fairly on the Mexican's back. A yell of surprise and agony burst from the bandit as the heavy pinewood struck. Almost paralysed by the crash, the greaser rolled over on the planks—and the Kid reached him with a bound.

A swift kick knocked the revolver from the relaxed, dusky fingers, and then the Kid's fist, with all his weight behind it, crashed into the Mexican's face. He sprawled on his back, and in a second more the Kid had grabbed up the revolver, his finger was on the trigger, and the bandit's own gun was looking him in the face.

"If you move, this is where you get yours!" said Kid Byrne grimly.

The Mexican, sprawling at his feet, stared up at him, the savage ferocity in his face changing to terror as he found himself looking into the barrel of his own revolver.

"Senor, senor, hold your fire!" he panted.

"Shut up, you doggoned, pesky pican!" snapped the Kid. "And get on your feet, you pizen-skunk, and stick your paws over your cabeza!"

"Si, senor, si!" snapped the bandillero.

He crawled to his feet, wriggling with pain, his mouth running red from the crash of the Kid's fist. His sombrero had fallen off, and he lifted his hands over his mop of black, greasy hair. He stood unsteadily, eyeing the Kid with mingled hate and terror.

Kid Byrne stepped up to him, and, with his left hand, removed a long cuchillo knife from his belt. Then he eyed the man thoughtfully. The Kid had visited his old home at Rojo to collect some things for the Outlawed Three's hide-out in the mesa; but finding the Mexican bandit there had put other thoughts into his mind.

"I guess," said the Kid at last, "that I sure ought to wipe you out! You pizen-pole-cat, pulling your gun at sight on a guy!

But I guess I'll let you skip. But just what's your name?"

"Domingo Gomez, senor," muttered the Mexican.

"I guess I've heard of you," said the Kid, "and you sure are wanted bad by the marshals on the other side of the border. You got a horse here?"

Gomez nodded.

"I'm borrowing that critter," drawled the Kid. "I'll say I'm borrowing your whole outfit. You get away with a whole skin, so you can figure yourself a lucky greaser. Get out of them rags I'll fix you up with a blanket."

The bandit stared at him in utter astonishment. He was not surprised that the man who had beaten him should take his gun and his knife and his horse. But what the Kid wanted with his clothes was a mystery to him.

"Senor—" he gasped.

"I guess," said the Kid grimly, "that I ain't telling you twice. Mr. Domingo Gomez! Hop into that room and strip, and fix yourself up with a blanket!"

Under the muzzle of the gun the Kid drove the bandit into the rancho. There the bandit stripped off his Mexican attire, and, stuttering with rage, belted on a blanket.

The Kid grinned at the sight of him in that strange guise, heedless of the fury and ferocity in the dusky face and the glittering black eyes.

"Now I guess you can beat it!" drawled the Kid. "Make it snappy! I'm goin' to shoot if you ain't out of range in three shakes of a 'possum's tail!"

He lifted the revolver. Domingo Gomez lost no time. With a leap he was across the veranda; with another leap he was down the steps. Then the Mexican was running for the plains.

Kid Byrne watched him, over the rail, and, as he paused at a distance to shake an infuriated fist back, fired a warning shot.

The bullet cut a strip from the blanket, and the bandit, with a yell, darted away at top speed.

The Kid grinned as he vanished. He reckoned that he had made Domingo Gomez, bandillero of Mexico, tired of Arizona as a health resort!

But Kid Byrne lost no time. Sam Oak's ranch was too near the Hall ranch and the cow town of Bullwhacker for the Kid to linger there. A quarter of an hour later he was riding away on the Mexican bandit's horse, with the bandit's clothes rolled up in a bundle, to rejoin Dan and Red at the hide-out in the mesa.

**H**ARDFIST HALL, marshal of Bullwhacker, scowled at the horseman riding up Main Street. The rider was in velvet jacket and calzoneros, red sash, and high-crowned sombrero, his face dark almost as an Indian's. There was nothing about that Spanish-looking rider to call for special attention from the town marshal of Bullwhacker.

Mexican vaqueros came up the Bullwhacker trail often enough; there were always two or three greasers to be seen about the cow town.

But Bill Hall scowled at the horseman, because he was in a mood to scowl at anybody or anything; and he had no use for greasers, anyway.

Standing in the doorway of his office on Main Street, Hardfist viewed the world with a jaundiced eye. The gold of the mesa—the secret mine found on Sam Oak's land by Kid, Red, and Dan—was as far off from his greedy clutches as ever. Like old Sam, Hardfist had clutches as ever. Like old Sam, Hardfist had always believed in that mine; and he was last.

He had driven the three into outlawry—they were hunted for their lives—and Hardfist Hall had counted on roping them in and forcing the secret from them. But days lengthened into weeks, and the hunt had slackened at last, and Dan and Kid and Red were still free.

On every wall in and around Bullwhacker, bills were posted offering five hundred dollars reward for the Outlawed Three. But no one had yet come in to claim the reward. Bill Hall was beginning to wonder whether the Rojo boys had pulled up stakes and quit westward into California, or eastward into New Mexico, or even south into Mexico proper. But he did not reckon so. He reckoned that they would stick by the mine they'd found in the mesa.

But where was it, and where were they? Hardfist would have given much to know. Scowling, the marshal looked out into the sunny street, hoping to see one of his riders come in with news of the hunted outlaws.

All he saw was the slim, dark-faced Mexican, who pulled in his horse opposite the marshal's office, and stared at a bill posted on the wall—one of the many notices giving the description of the wanted men.

The black-bearded marshal ceased to scowl as he noted the interest with which the swarthy man read the reward bill. There seemed to him something vaguely familiar in the Mexican's face. He had never, so far as he knew, seen this greaser before; but the cut of the man's features seemed somehow familiar. Probably he had seen the man on the cattle-trails at some time or other, and forgotten him. If he knew anything of the Outlawed Three, Bill Hall was glad to see him, and it was clear that he was keenly interested in the reward bill.

"Five hundred dollars!" he heard the man mutter.

The Mexican slipped from his saddle, glanced round him, and then came towards the marshal standing in his doorway. He made him a graceful Spanish bow, but without removing the big shady sombrero.

"Senor the marshal?" he asked.

"You said it!" grunted Big Hall.

The hard-bitten marshal of Bullwhacker had no more use for Spanish courtesies than for greasers generally.

The Mexican pointed to the reward bill.

"The three—I have seen them!" he said.

Hardfist's eyes glittered under his stetson. He had guessed as much as he watched the swarthy man carefully spelling through the description of the Rojo boys. This greaser was hunting the reward!

"Step right in!" said Bill Hall.

The Mexican entered the marshal's office. Hardfist waved him to a seat, and questioned him eagerly. The swarthy man's tale was soon told.

He had been chased in the mesa by the Jason gang, whom he had narrowly escaped. Seeking hiding from the Jasons, he had skulked in a deep, dried-up water-course, and there he had seen three young cowpunchers camped in an old shack. They had not seen him; he had been careful to keep out of sight, guessing that they were outlaws, camped in that solitary, hidden spot. But he was sure—he was prepared to swear by all the saints he knew—that they answered the description in the reward bill.

Bill Hall breathed hard and deep as he listened. Three cowboys, camped in a remote recess of the mesa. Who could they be but

the Outlawed Three! And the Mexican's description was accurate. One of them was big and burly—that was Dan Oak; another slim and quick in his movements, like a panther—Kid Byrne; the third, short and plump—that was Red!

No wonder his riders had failed to trail them if they were camped at the bottom of some ravine in the heart of the hills. By sheer chance he had gained the information he wanted.

"And the reward, senor?"

"I guess you'll finger it, greaser, when them young fire-bugs are roped in!" said Hardfist Hall. "You figure you can spot the place agin'?"

"Easy, senor!" said the Mexican. "I will ride with you and your men, if you wish. And afterwards, the reward—"

"Bank on that when I get my grip on the Rojo boys!" said Hardfist.

Leaving the Mexican seated in his office, the marshal called to Jake Sanders, his right-hand man, and gave him quick orders. Inside ten minutes six men were in the saddle, clattering outside the office in Main Street.

Bill Hall mounted his bronco, his black-bearded face grim, his eyes glinting. The Mexican remounted his shaggy mustang, and rode with the marshal's bunch down the street. Many eyes followed them as they rode out of the cow town, the news spreading through Bullwhacker that the marshal and his posse were on the trail of the Rojo cowboys.

"Burn the wind!" growled Bill Hall, as they reached the prairie trail. And the bunch of riders broke into a swift gallop, heading across the wide ranges of the Hall ranch for the Rio Rojo.

In an hour they were splashing through the ford, passing in sight of the deserted rancho where old Sam Oak and his three nephews had bred horses for a living. The Mexican's eyes, under his big sombrero, turned on the old rancho, as if he knew the place. But in a few minutes it was lost to sight again as the bunch galloped on for the mesa.

Under the burning sun of Arizona the broncos were driven on with quirt and spur. Bill Hall set the pace, riding hard, mile on mile, without drawing rein, and the bunch swept after him in a cloud of dust.

They came clattering at last into the great canyon of the Rojo, that split the high mesa deep and wide. There, in spite of his fierce impatience, Hardfist had to slacken. Once in the rugged hills the going was steep and hard.

At last the Mexican pointed with his quirt to a shadowy gulch that opened in the canyon-side. Hardfist rapped out an order to his men to dismount. Farther going had to be on foot. The horses were left tethered out of sight in a rocky draw, and the marshal and his men tramped on over rugged rocks, amid scattered boulders and ridges of lava, into the gulch, guided by the Mexican.

Between rugged walls of rocks, dotted here and there by stunted pines, they tramped on till they were stopped on the edge of a deep, wide gulf that split the floor of the gulch from side to side, and made further progress impossible.

Hardfist gave the Mexican a sharp stare.

"This the place?" he barked.

"Si, senor! There is a way down, if you will follow me!"

"Get to it!" grunted Hardfist. "Guns ready, and shoot on sight if they don't stick 'em up pronto!"

"You said it, marshal!" said Jake Sanders.

The marshal stared down for a moment or two into the deep, wide abyss that yawned at his feet. If that was the hide-out of the Rojo boys, it was no wonder they had never been trailed. But once cornered in that chasm, twenty feet deep, with almost perpendicular sides, there was no escape for them. He had them where he wanted them now!

The marshal's look was gloating as he followed his guide.

At one end of the abyss a steep, winding path, almost a natural staircase in the rock, led down. The Mexican descended it nimbly; the heavier, less active roughnecks clambering down after him. They stood at length in a bunch at the bottom, and Hardfist stared round him with eager eyes.



Marshal Hall stared hard at the Mexican who had reined in his horse outside his office and was studying the reward bill for the arrest of the Outlawed Three. There was something familiar about the horseman's face, thought Hall—but he never guessed it was Kid Byrne in disguise!



The Mexican touched his arm, and pointed. At a distance was a rough shack, built of rocks and branches. From a hole in the roof a thin spiral of smoke floated.

"They're at home, marshal!" muttered Jake Sanders, with a nod towards the wisp of smoke.

Hardfist nodded. "Sure!" he breathed. "I guess we've got them by the short hairs! Follow on—and shoot if they lift a finger!"

Gun in hand, the marshal of Bullwhacker led the way, his men at his heels. He needed no guide now, and he hardly noticed that the Mexican dropped back. The swarthy man stood watching them till they were at a distance, and had almost reached the shack. Then, swift as a mountain antelope, he clambered up the rocky path by which they had descended, and in a few moments had vanished. Unheeding—in fact, unaware of his going—Hardfist Hall and his men tramped on, their guns half-raised as they closed in on the shack.

"KID!" breathed Dan.

The Mexican, breathing hard from the steep climb, clambered out of the gulch into which he had led Hall and his men. From a bunch of scrubby pines, two figures emerged to meet him—Dan and Red.

Dan's rugged, tanned face was wrinkled in a grin; Red was chuckling. Hardfist Hall, had he seen that meeting, would have been enraged to see the Mexican throw off the big sombrero—revealing, not the dark head of a greaser, but the fair hair of the Kid.

The Kid grinned. "I guess Hardfist was powerful keen to get on our trail," he said, "and he was mighty glad to see a guy after the reward. I'll say Hardfist won't be honing to pay me that reward none. I sure have fooled that guy like he was a born bonehead. He won't cinch the Rojo outfit in that shack—but I'll say that the Rojo outfit are going to cinch him there!"

"You said it!" grinned Red. "I thought you was plumb loco, Kid, when you said you'd ride into Bullwhacker in the clothes you got from that greaser at the rancho. But you done pulled it off."

The Kid nodded. "Surest thing you know!" he said. He stooped over a rain-pool in a hollow of the rock, dipped his neckscarf in the water, and rubbed the swarthy stain from his face.

Meanwhile, big Dan Oak rolled a heavy boulder to the summit of the steep path that led down into the ravine. Hardfist Hall had gone down easily enough into the chasm; he would not find it so easy to come up again. It was war to the knife between the Outlawed Three and the plotting marshal who had made them outlaws. And it was Hardfist now who was coming out at the little end of the horn.

He did not know it yet. Below, the Bullwhacker posse had surrounded the shack, and Hardfist, gun in hand, stepped in at the doorway.

His finger was on the trigger of his gun, his eyes glittering over it. He was ready to

shoot at sight—and had the Rojo boys been in the shack, as he fully expected, they would have been at his mercy. But he stared blankly round an empty hut.

A fire smoldered on a hearth of rocks in the middle of the shack. Two or three cooking utensils and other articles lay about—proof of recent occupation. But the little building was untenanted. The marshal muttered a curse as he gave it the once-over. The sight of the wisp of smoke from the roof had made him sure that the hunted trio were at home in their hide-out. But he was cheered by the thought that, if they had taken the alarm at his approach and fled, they could not have escaped from the gulch; there was no way up, save by the steep path by which the Bullwhacker bunch had descended. Jake Sanders looked in over the marshal's burly shoulder.

"They've beat it!" he exclaimed. Hardfist gritted his teeth.

"I guess they ain't far!" he snarled. "That fire would have burned out if it hadn't been tended. They must have been here not long ago."

"You said it!" agreed Jake. "They skulked out of the shack when they heard us coming, and I guess we'll find them hiding!" "Search!" snapped the marshal.

As he tramped savagely out of the shack, one of his roughnecks called to him: "Say, marshal, that greaser's beat it!"

"Doggone the greaser!" snarled Hardfist. "I guess we're through with him, now we've got the hide-out. I guess he's skipped to keep clear of the shooting. Hunt out them young fire-bugs—they're sure not far away!"

There were innumerable nooks and crannies along the steep sides of the gulch—steep almost as the walls of a house, but broken in many places by crevices and cracks and fissures. Hardfist did not doubt that he would find his quarry hiding in some shadowy recess, and he searched, his eyes glinting—his finger on the trigger of his gun. His men scattered up and down, hunting among the rocks. Hardfist did not look up—he did not think of looking upward, till a voice called from above—and at the sound of that voice the marshal of Bullwhacker threw back his head wildly. For it was the voice of Kid Byrne.

"Say, Hardfist, you hunting for me?" "This way, marshal!" yelled Red.

Hardfist's eyes almost started from their sockets. He fixed them on the figure standing at the summit of the steep path up from the gulch. The Kid's clear and ringing tones came echoing down. And if the marshal had doubted the evidence of his amazed eyes, he had proof that the Mexican was the Kid—for on either side of him, at the summit of the rocks, stood Dan and Red. The Outlawed Three, whom he sought, stood twenty feet over his head, looking down at him—the Kid with a gun in his hand and a deadly smile on his face.

"The greaser!" yelled Jake Sanders. "Doggone my cats, he ain't no greaser—it's Kid Byrne!"

"Kid Byrne!" breathed the marshal. "Keep your gun down, marshal!" rang the Kid's voice. "Shooting won't buy you anything, Bill Hall! We got you, you doggoned

coyote—got you trapped like the lobo-wolf you are, you murderer!"

The marshal stood as if transfixed. He knew now how he had been trapped. The shack and its contents had been fixed up to meet his eyes when he came—to keep him busy while the disguised Kid got away to his pardners. They had no hide-out in the gulch; Dan and Red had been in cover up in the gulch, and had watched him and his men descend into a death-trap from which there was no escape. They had him—had him hard and fast—and he stood at the mercy of the boys he had driven outside the law—round whose necks he had placed the rope!

In mad fury he threw up his gun-arm. But Jake Sanders grabbed it, and dragged it down.

"Forget it, Bill Hall!" he muttered. "They got us—got us where the hair is short! Burning powder won't buy you a thing!"

The Rojo cowboys stood looking down. They were ready to back into cover at sight of a lifted gun. But Jake waved a hand.

"Say, you got us!" he called out. "You sure have got us salted down, Kid! I guess this bunch is ready to talk turkey!"

"Turkey nothing!" snapped the Kid. "You was after us with gats in your grip, and if we wipe out the whole bunch, I guess you ain't got no kick coming. But I'll say it's Hardfist we want!"

"And what'll you want with me?" hissed the marshal of Bullwhacker through his gritting teeth.

"What did you want us for?" asked the Kid grimly. "You framed it up agin us and made us outlaws, and you trailed us with a rope. I'll tell all Arizona, Bill Hall, it's you for the rope! You shot up old Sam Oak, you pizen polecat, and aimed to put it on us, that'd have died for him. When you crawl out of that hole, Hardfist, you're going up on your own rope."

Hardfist's eyes blazed. He wrenched his arm loose from Sanders, threw up his gun, and fired. But the Rojo cowboys stopped back, and the steep edge of the gulch hid them. The bullet crashed away among the rocks, and Hardfist Hall glared savagely round at his men.

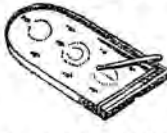
"Follow me!" he gritted. With desperate determination, he rushed up the steep path. And his Bullwhacker posse, guns in their hands, followed him in the rush.

KID BYRNE laughed—a grim, hard laugh, that was not pleasant to hear. He had the Bullwhacker bunch where he wanted them. The gun he had taken from the Mexican at the rancho was in his grip. Dan and Red were unarmed, but the Kid reckoned that one gun would stop the rush. And Dan and Red stood braced against a big rock, ready to topple it over the edge.

Up from the depths of the gulch, scrambling and clattering on the rough rock, came the Bullwhacker bunch, led by Hardfist Hall. Loose stones clinked and clattered from their feet as they came. The Kid, half crouched, his eyes glinting over his gun, waited. A stetson hat came into view, and he fired at sight of it.

(Continued on page 224.)

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after that the C.I.D. were looking for him once more, and the "wanted" man had to keep dodging.

Two days later Sam bumped straight into Tex Bailey again—at Charing Cross Railway Station, London!

Sam Foster, lounging furtively along, suddenly stopped and stared like one who sees a ghost. "There" before him was Tex Bailey himself, unmistakable, even in a city suit, and with that old steady, solemn look shining in his grey eyes.

"Sam—pardner! Aw, gosh, I've found you at last!" cried Sam's pard.

Tex had worked his way across the Atlantic on a cattle boat to search for his pal, and he sprang forward, hand outstretched.

But the reunion ended there. Even as Tex moved, another hand fell on Sam's shoulder—the hand of a watchful C.I.D. man! Right under Tex Bailey's nose, his pard was "picked up" and arrested on the spot.

Two constables had to fight Tex as Sam was hustled off to Cannon Row. But the youngster who had spent four months and travelled thousands of miles to find his old pard wasn't to be kept away, and he was there in court on the morning Sam came up for trial. Five years' penal servitude was the sentence, and at the finish Tex Bailey stood up straight.

"Don't forget, pardner! Any time, anywhere, I'm still your man!" he cried; and he snorted in the ushers' faces as they pitched him out of court.

Sam Foster came to Blackmoor. Meanwhile, Tex Bailey got a job as a trick-ride in some travelling circus. For the first three months of his sentence Sam worked inside the prison, as is the custom. Then he was put into the quarry gang. Finally, when he'd given proof of being a "good" prisoner, he went into one of the squads that were taken out farther on to the moors to cut peat.

And it was on his fourth day out there when Tex Bailey bobbed up again!

The afternoon was misty, and again, for a moment, Sam thought he was seeing a ghost. There, on that open expanse of peat-turf, was Tex Bailey, guns in hand! How the young

trapper had got there only Sam, who had seen him at work in Montana, could guess.

The two petrified warders certainly couldn't. They took one look at the youthful apparition, another at his levelled Colts, and, brave as they were, they reached for the sky.

Tex spoke softly: "That's right, buddies! Now git right back. You other convicts can please yourselves what you do, though I ain't here to help you, 'cos I don't like crooks. But you, Sam—come on, pard, follow me!"

He was off in a moment, Sam following at his heels, as the rest of the squad covered their getaway by swarming all over the warders.

But the fugitives didn't have it all their own way. Those warders were real fighting men, and, smashing aside his attackers, one of them grabbed up his rifle and fired. Tex pitched forward suddenly.

Sam halted, his face working strangely. "Tex—pard! You're hit?" he gasped.

And then relief flooded his face as Tex scrambled up.

"Hit, nothing! I just tripped. I always said English guys can't shoot," Tex grinned tightly, and ran on, pointing. "Pronto, Sam! I got two fine horses hidden behind them rocks, yonder. Circus hosses—saddled and ready. Run, pard!"

The horses were there, all right—two wiry hacks. But Sam, knowing English warders better than Tex Bailey, bit his lip, even as he was bunked into a saddle.

"Kid, you're a sport, but we'll never do it this way!" he panted. "They'll track us down—"

"Shucks!" The youngster's face was oddly white as he mounted, but he spoke decisively. "Listen, pard! I've been ranging these moors for a week, waitin' my chance, an' I know 'em backwards. No one ain't gonna track me! I've already found a safe hide-out, too, and—"

Tex suddenly flopped off his galloping horse.

With the promise of safety on his lips, Sam's pard came off in a heap—and Sam forgot all about escaping then. He was down beside the youngster next moment.

And for the first time he saw the blood that was flowing from Tex's left arm.

The wounded man's lips were twisted with pain. But his solemn eyes were half-open, and grief shone in them.

"Sorry, pard! Guess English guys can shoot a bit!" he muttered. "Yeah, that warder got me—plumb through the old arm. But you—git going, pard! Beat it!"

Sam stayed. Instead of riding on, he gathered his wounded pard up and started back—to Blackmoor! Before he had gone ten strides, however, two battered and infuriated warders charged to meet him. Sam was taken back to gaol, and Tex Bailey, crook hater, and convict's accomplice, went with him.

Sam had to start his five-years' sentence all over again; then. And Tex himself came in for a year as punishment for planning a prison-break! But by the kindness of the Blackmoor governor the English lag was allowed to spend a few minutes with his pard as the latter lay in the sick bay. The words he spoke amply repaid Tex for what he had done.

"Son," he said gruffly, "you've finished me. I never really knew there were blokes like you in the world till now—and I'm through with being a crook! Listen, Tex! When you come out of here, get back to your own ranges, and, honest, I'll join you there for keeps the moment I can."

Tex Bailey's eyes were as solemn as ever—and they were misty, too.

"Any time, anywhere, Sam!" he gulped—and he kept his word.

"So did Sam Foster, I'm mighty glad to say," concluded Warden Strong. "He's out in Montana, with his pard, now. I reckon, and you couldn't tempt Sam away again with a barrel-load of gold-dust."

"In fact, Sam wrote me once," chuckled the veteran warden, "and the only thing he and Tex Bailey squabble about is—whether English guys can shoot!"

*Next week Warden Strong will give you another real-life story from his experiences.*

*The veteran warden's revelations are creating a sensation—have you told your pals about them?*

## THE OUTLAWED THREE!

(Continued from page 219)

Through the stetson, through the head it covered, the bullet crashed, and a dead man went crashing back into the gulch. But it was not Hardist who had fallen, for his savage voice was heard the next moment:

"Get to it! Follow me!"

Dan Oak gave the big boulder a heave, and the others shoved with all their strength. It rolled over, and crashed over, thundering on the steep path that led downward—the path up which the Bullwhacker bunch were savagely crowding.

Crash came on crash, as the heavy boulder thundered down. One burly roughneck, struck fair and square, was hurled away to his death; the rest of the bunch, with yells of terror, scrambled wildly away, lost their footing, and rolled. With a final terrific crash, the rock landed at the bottom, and round it sprawled Hardist Hall and his men, swept from the steep path like flies. The echoes died away like rolling thunder in the hills.

Shouts of rage and fury rose. The Rojo boys listened—the Kid finger on trigger. If the rush came again, they were ready.

Bruised and battered, shaken and breathless, the marshal of Bullwhacker scrambled to his feet, amid a shower of loose stones dislodged by the crashing rock. He panted for breath, and, throwing up his gun-arm, fired again and again up the steep path. But he was wasting his lead, and he knew it; from below, nothing could be seen of the Outlawed Three, keeping well back from the range of fire. At his feet lay the man who had stopped the Kid's bullet; and near him the one crushed by the falling rock. But Hardist hardly gave them a glance.

He had lost two of his bunch; but if the remaining four backed him, he had a desperate hope yet of getting through.

"Try again!" he panted, husky with rage. Jake Sanders answered with an angry oath. "Aw, can it, marshal! There ain't a dog's chance! Forget it!"

Hardist Hall panted with rage.

His men were tough, hard-bitten ruffians, ready for any desperate affray. But they would not follow him to certain death. And it was certain death to charge up the steep path. The bullying marshal of Bullwhacker had to realise it at last. The Kid had laid his plans well—he had his enemy where he wanted him. Hardist gritted his teeth with helpless rage as he thought of it. Fooled—trapped like a wolf—and the rope with which he had threatened them dangling for his own neck!

The sun was sinking behind the western summits of the mountains. Shadows were lengthening, and at the bottom of the deep gulch the darkness thickened.

Jake Sanders and the rest, gathered at the shack, were muttering together, every now and then glancing surlily, and savagely towards the marshal standing at the foot of the steep path. But the thickening gloom hid him from their eyes at last.

They did not know what was in his mind. One desperate hope remained to him—of clambering unseen out of the death-trap under cover of the darkness; but that was an attempt better made alone.

Not till it had been dark a good hour did the marshal stir. He would have left it still later, but he knew that later the moon would be up.

Big and heavy man as he was, he trod lightly, moving with the caution of a creeping panther. His gun was in its holster at his

belt—he needed both hands to grope and feel his way.

He was out of it. He stepped from the steep path and stood on the verge of the gulch. His hand dropped on his gun—he would need that now!

And, even as his hand touched the butt of the Colt, hands touched him in the darkness on either side—hands that gripped his arms, and pinned them to his sides. He gave a choked cry—they had been watching, they had seen him—they had seized him! With a desperate effort, he wrenched out his gun. But the hands that grasped him flung him forward on his face to the hard rock; a sinewy knee was planted in his back, pinning him down, and the Kid's voice spoke tensely:

"I reckoned you'd try that game, Hardist!"

The marshal of Bullwhacker choked with rage and despair. Three shadowy figures gathered round him, and he was led away, with a gun in his ribs, to the Rojo canyon. He muttered savage curses as he went. The Kid's voice came, quietly to his ears again:

"Pack it up, Hardist! Cussin' won't help you, and I guess that ain't the talk for your last night on earth! You got till morning, Hardist—one hour after sun-up you go up on the branch of a cottonwood! Make the most of it—and stop cussin'!"

The moon came up over the mesa, glimmering through the pines. It gleamed on the fierce, enraged face of the marshal of Bullwhacker—stumbling along with bound hands, led away to his doom!

*The Outlawed Three have suffered untold misery at the hands of the rascally marshal—and now they have him where they want him! Watch out for next week's chapters of this great Western story!*