

2 BATS AUTOGRAPHED by the AUSTRALIANS, and 7 OTHER BATS
won by "Popular" Readers!—See inside!

The POPULAR

2^d

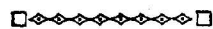
Week Ending
August 23rd,
1930.
No. 604
(New Series).
EVERY
TUESDAY.



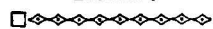
LASSOED!

REMARKABLE STORY of SCHOOL ADVENTURE inside!

RALPH REDWAY'S WESTERN YARNS ARE READ ALL OVER THE WORLD!



A Bunch on a Bender!



"THEY'RE coming, sheriff!" "Shucks!" growled the

Rio Kid. "They're sure coming!" said Colorado Bill.

"Feller," snapped the Kid, "do you figure that I'm blind and deaf? I guess I know they're coming, the pesky boneheads." Colorado grinned.

The new sheriff of Sassafras county seemed unusually edgewise that day.

The Rio Kid—known in the cow town of Plug Hat as "Texas Brown"—stood on the wooden piazza of the Plug Hat Hotel.

From that coign of vantage he had a view in one direction of the rugged street and plaza of the cow town, in the other, of the prairie trail from the open cow country.

It was in the latter direction that the Kid was looking.

Far away on the plain there was a cloud of dust, kicked up by the heels of many horses.

A dozen riders, at least, were in the bunch that galloped along the dusty trail towards Plug Hat.

The Kid's brow was wrinkled with troubled thought.

Trouble was coming to the new sheriff—in the shape of that bunch of reckless cowpunchers from the Bar-2 Ranch.

Plenty of trouble had come the Kid's way since he had become Sheriff of Sassafras. But this was a new kind of trouble that the Kid disliked.

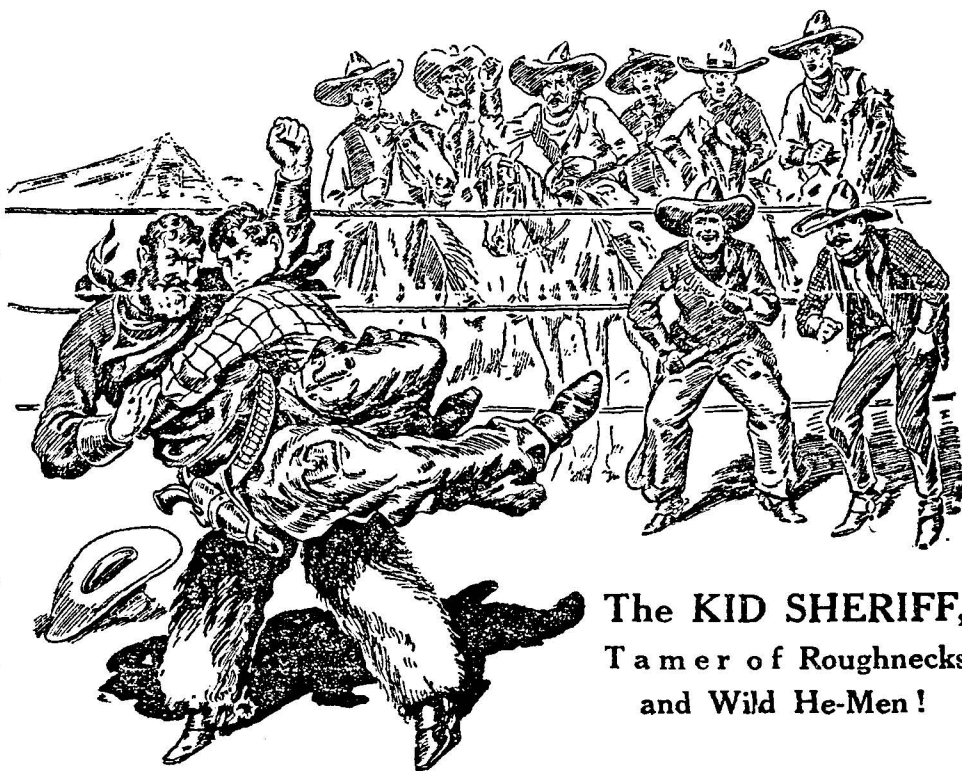
For the Kid himself had been bred a puncher, and though he had been an outlaw and was now a sheriff, he was still a cowman to the finger-tips, and his sympathy was all with the men who rode the ranges.

With the rough-necks of Plug Hat the sheriff had dealt with an unsparring hand. Cactus Carter and his gang had been run out of town, the gambling saloons had been shut down, shooting affrays sternly prohibited, horse-stealing barred. Plug Hat, once a byword for lawlessness, had become one of the most orderly cow towns in Texas, and a crowd of rough-necks and gunmen had cleared off in disgust, seeking fresh woods and pastures new. Plug Hat citizens hardly knew their town these days, so changed had it become under the rule of the new sheriff. The Kid's word, backed up by his gun, was law in Plug Hat; but with the punchers on the surrounding ranches it was a rather different matter.

All Plug Hat knew that the Bar-2 bunch were riding into town that day, and wondered what the sheriff would do.

For the Bar-2 men were coming on a "bender."

They had received their pay, and were



The KID SHERIFF, Tamer of Roughnecks and Wild He-Men!

THE BAR-2 BUNCH!

bent on spending it in the way to which they had been accustomed.

They were good fellows enough in their rough-and-ready way, and the Sheriff of Plug Hat, a puncher himself, could not help feeling a sort of sneaking sympathy with them, though they were out to break the law into small pieces.

They earned their money by long days and nights of hard work and hard riding, and when they got their leave they liked to spread themselves in a wild and whirling jamboree.

They were accustomed to ride into Plug Hat in a wild bunch, shooting up the town in sheer exuberance of spirit. Doors were closed, stores were shuttered, and peaceable citizens hunted cover, when a bunch of wild punchers rode into town, cavorting up and down the rugged street on shaggy bronchos, and firing their revolvers right and left. Not that they aimed to hurt anybody,

so long as nobody interfered with their fun. If some unfortunate citizen stopped a bullet it was his bad luck, one of those incidents which naturally occurred in a cow town like Plug Hat.

But Plug Hat was an orderly town now, and such entertainments as "shooting up the town" had to cease. The citizens looked to their sheriff to see that such wild proceedings ceased, and the Kid knew his duty, and was going to put it through.

But he was worried.

With gunmen and rough-necks and bushwhackers the Kid had a stern hand, but he hated the idea of coming into conflict with a bunch of merry punchers, who meant no real harm, though they did a great deal without meaning to.

Hence the troubled frown on the Kid's handsome, sunburnt face as he stood on the hotel piazza and watched the cloud of dust drawing nearer and nearer across the prairie.

Word had gone all through the town that the Bar-2 bunch were coming. It was known that the sheriff was not going to allow them to shoot up the town in their old wild way. When they came they were going to keep order, like a parcel of farmers on a trip to Austin. But they did not look like it as they came careering along the prairie trail, some of them already banging away with revolvers to show that they were out on a bender.

The sheriff had gathered his deputies, had six good men and true to back him up if it came to fighting. But he hated the idea.

"Say, sheriff, you ain't skered of that bunch, sure?" asked Mesquite, with a grinning look at the Kid's troubled face.

"Aw, forget it!" grunted the Kid. "I guess they mean trouble," said

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Colorado Bill. "Mohave Dave is leading that bunch, sheriff, and Mohave is sure hunting trouble. He allows they're going to see the faro game started at the Red Flare again. They sure want to throw their dust on the faro table like they used."

"There ain't going to be any faro game in Plug Hat so long's I'm sheriff," grunted the Kid. "Likewise, they ain't going to shoot up the town. This here town has been cleaned up, and it's going to stay cleaned up. But—"

He broke off discontentedly.

"There's going to be shooting if you stop them, sheriff," said Yuma Dan. "They are sure wild, and they mean trouble. The Bar-2 bunch are the wildest outfit in the county."

"They look it!" grunted the Kid.

"It's up to you, sheriff!" said Pop Short, the landlord of the lumber hotel. "You got to keep order in this here town."

"Ain't I wise to that?" snorted the Kid.

"There's plenty of rough-necks ready to join up with them if they get a riot going," said Mr. Short. "I guess there's a whole heap of guys in Plug Hat waiting for jest such a chance."

"Sure!" said Colorado Bill. "And Mohave has been swearing for days past that he's going to make Plug Hat jest like it used to be, and that he won't stand for turning it into a Sunday-school town."

Clatter, clatter! Thud, thud, thud! Bang, bang!

The beating of wild, galloping hoofs could be heard now, and the banging of revolvers fired in the air by the approaching bunch. Evidently the Bar-2 outfit were in great spirits, and looking forward to a bender in Plug Hat.

"They won't be long now!" said Colorado Bill.

The Kid sighed.

He had to get going at the risk of getting into a shooting affray with the punchers from the Bar-2 ranges. He hated the idea, but he had his duty to do as sheriff. In a very short time now the bunch would be riding in from the prairie, and if they were not stopped the whole town would be held up by the rioting punchers. Bullets would be flying right and left, windows smashing, peaceable citizens hunting cover, and the whole rough element of the town turning out to join in the riot. The Kid had to get going.

"Them guys are going to be stopped," he said. "We got to get a move on, fellows."

"They won't be stopped without gun-play, sheriff," said Colorado. "They're coming into town full gallop."

"I member the last sheriff," remarked Mesquite reminiscently. "He got in the way of a bunch that was riding into town. They rode over him."

"They won't ride over me," grunted the Kid.

He descended the steps of the piazza. His men followed him, but with rather doubtful looks.

Standing in the way of the wild bunch that was galloping into town was asking for the severest trouble, for it was quite certain that the Bar-2 men would not halt when ordered. They would come on at full gallop, and any guy standing in their way would have to jump lively or be trodden under the thundering bronchos. Nothing but a volley would stop the charge of the reckless punchers, and that was a

desperate measure of which the sheriff certainly was not thinking.

"Say, sheriff—" began Colorado.

"Aw, can it!" interrupted the Kid. "We ain't time now for chewing the rag. That bunch has got to be stopped and talked to."

"I'll say they won't stop—"

"Forget it," said the Kid. "Get a hustle on, you'uns, and get hold of a dozen riatas."

"Shucks! You ain't aiming to rope them in!" exclaimed Mesquite, in astonishment.

"Nope, you bonehead! Get them riatas, pronto!"

Riata was plentiful enough in Plug Hat. A dozen forty-foot ropes were quickly at the disposal of the sheriff.

He rapped out his orders quickly.

The lassos were stretched across the street, from the lumber hotel on one side, to Perkins' store on the other.

The ropes were placed one above another—the lower ones knotted to the hitching-posts, the upper to beams and window-frames.

In a few minutes there was a barrier of strong ropes across the street, barring the way of any horseman riding into town.

Behind the barrier the sheriff stood

like schoolboys on a holiday. But every man in the bunch packed a gun; and Mohave Dave, the foreman of the ranch, packed two, and was reputed to be very quick and handy with both of them. So long as they were not opposed or interfered with, the Bar-2 bunch were cheery and good-humoured, regarding the damage they were going to do as sheer fun, and recklessly heedless of an accidental death or two that might result from wild shooting. But if they found law and order in the way, the Bar-2 men were the guys to draw and fire without stopping to think. They had been used to having their own way at Plug Hat, and they did not approve of the changes brought in by the new sheriff. Indeed, it was known that those changes had been discussed with great animosity in the bunkhouse at the Bar-2, and that Mohave Dave and his friends had declared their fixed intention of restoring the old order. And if the pesky new sheriff stood in the way, the Bar-2 bunch made no secret of their aim to shoot up the new sheriff, as sheriffs in Plug Hat had been shot up before.

They came on at full gallop, banging away with their revolvers in the air, yelling like a bunch of Apaches.

They reached the town, and in a minute more, but for the sheriff's precaution, they would have been careering along the street, banging away with their guns at the windows of cabins and shacks, riding down any luckless galoot who was in the way, and generally turning Plug Hat into an imitation of the hot place with the lid off.

The barrier of ropes dawned suddenly on them, so suddenly that some of them had no time to draw rein.

Mohave Dave, riding a little ahead, brandishing a gun in either hand, crashed into the taut ropes, and he and his broncho went rolling over in a sprawling, kicking heap.

"Thunder!" roared the foreman

of the Bar-2 as he rolled.

Another puncher crashed into the ropes, and was hurled from his horse. But the rest reined in, barely in time, with the bronchos' muzzles on the stretched riatas.

There was a roar of surprise and wrath from the outfit.

Mohave Dave staggered up dizzily. His bronzed, bearded face was crimson with rage.

"Say!" he roared. "What's this game? What pesky guy's roped the street this-a-way? Say!"

"Hold in your hosses, fellers!" said the Rio Kid calmly. "I guess I want to talk to you guys a piece."

The Bar-2 bunch had been forced to

The Kid and his posse watched the newcomers charge down on them.

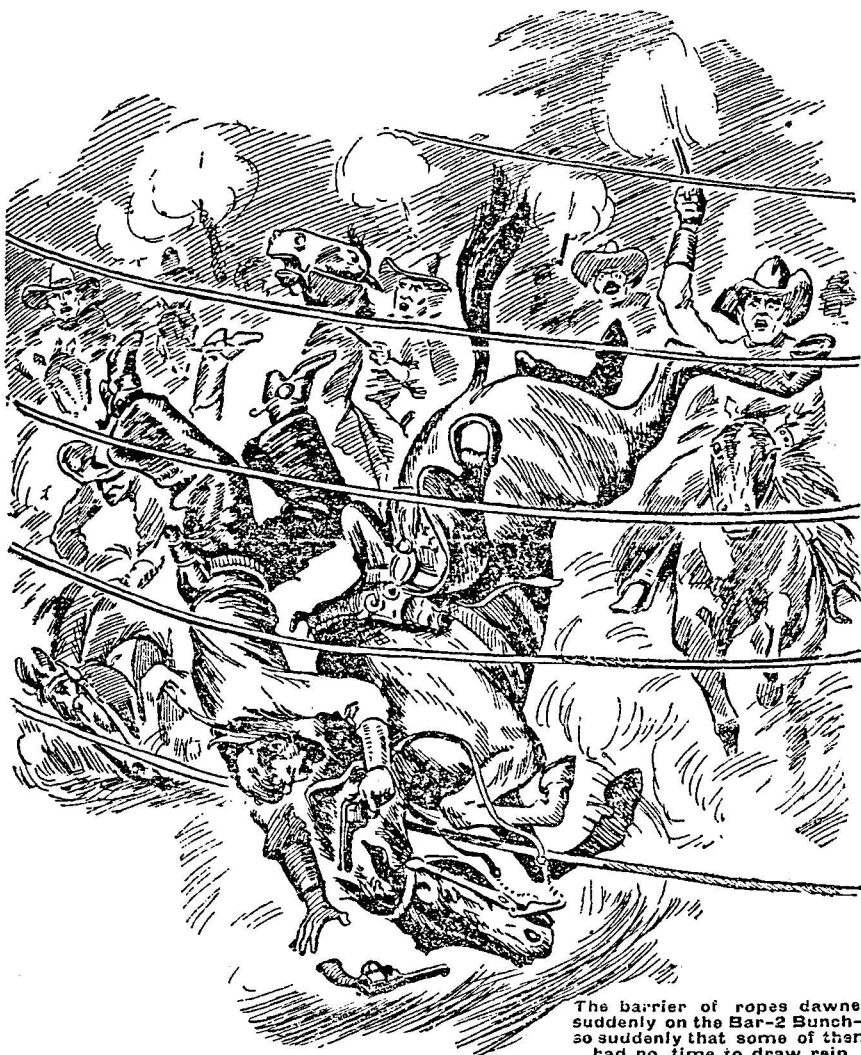


with his deputies, waiting for the arrival of the Bar-2 bunch—close at hand now.

Holding up the Bunch!

CLATTER, clatter! Thud, thud! The earth seemed to shake under the thundering hoofs as the Bar-2 bunch galloped in from the prairie.

There were more than a dozen punchers in the outfit: burly, bronzed men fresh from the ranges, exuberant at their release from duty, a good deal



The barrier of ropes dawned suddenly on the Bar-2 bunch—so suddenly that some of them had no time to draw rein.

halt. They sat their trampling bronchos, staring at the Kid and his men behind him.

"You!" roared Mohave Dave. "Who are you? What you got to say?"

"I guess I'm the sheriff."

"You the sheriff!"

"You've got it!" assented the Kid.

"Don't be in a hurry with the guns, fellers. I'm packing guns myself, and if you're set on gun-play, I ain't the guy to disappoint you. But I guess I want to talk first."

Mohave Dave glared at him.

His fall had shaken him up considerably, and he had dropped the guns he had been brandishing. Perhaps that was the only reason why he did not pull trigger on the spot.

The Kid had not drawn a weapon. But he stood with his hands on the walnut butts of the guns in his low-slung holsters, and he was ready. Behind him the deputies already had their Colts in their hands.

"You—you—" spluttered Mohave. "You durned pesky little coyote! You the sheriff! Where's your school-warm?"

The Kid smiled.

"I guess I'm the sheriff, elected to keep order in this cow town," he answered. "Gents, I'm powerful sorry to interfere with your fun. It sure does get my goat to chip in. But I'm sheriff, and I got to keep order in this

burg. Shooting up the town ain't allowed any more, not since Cactus Carter was run out of town. You guys keep your guns packed, and you're more than welcome in Plug Hat. But there ain't going to be shooting."

"Who says there ain't?" roared Mohave.

"This galoot!" answered the Kid.

"You pesky little gopher, you figure that this outfit is going to take any notice of you?" bellowed the cowman.

"I sure hope so," said the Kid. "I should hate to spill the juice of a puncher. Fellers, I been a puncher myself, and I sure know what you feel like when you get off the range and get on a bender. But—"

"You fixed up them pesky ropes—"

"Sure! Jest to stop you, so that I could chew the rag with you peaceable," said the Kid amiably.

"By thunder! You figure that you're going to get away with this?" gasped the foreman of the Bar-2.

"You've said it, feller."

Mohave Dave made a dive for a gun that lay at his feet. The Kid's smiling face set hard, and a Colt appeared in his hand as if by magic.

"Let that gun alone, feller!" he rapped out.

The Bar-2 foreman did not heed. He grabbed up the gun from the ground.

Bang!

The gun left his fingers even as they

closed on it. It whirled from his grasp, shot away by the Kid's prompt fire.

Mohave Dave gave a howl as he jerked away his tingling fingers.

There was a shout from the Bar-2 crowd, and guns were handled on all sides. For a moment it seemed that a desperate affray was inevitable; but the Kid's voice rang out sharply:

"Go slow, you galoots!"

His guns were at a level, his eyes gleaming over them through the rope barrier. And the cowpunchers, reckless as they were, paused.

"You dog-goned coyote—" growled one of the bunch.

"You durned pesky lobo-wolf—"

"Keep it up," said the Kid. "I guess hard words don't break any bones, feller; and I'm sure glad to hear cowboy talk. Fellers, I feel jest as friendly to you as if I was your Dutch uncle; and I'd hate to spill the juice of any guy of you. You want to believe me."

Some of the Bar-2 punchers laughed.

"You've got a heap of gall, anyhow," said a Bar-2 puncher. "You going back to school when you quit playing sheriff?"

The Kid smiled cheerily.

Mohave Dave stood rubbing his tingling hand. He had calmed down a little, perhaps that evidence of the Kid's good shooting having a calming effect on him.

"Now, fellers," said the Kid persuasively, "I'll say I'm sheriff, and I got my duty to do, and that's to stop any shooting in this here cow town. You keep the law, and I ain't the guy to interfere with any man's fun. Say the word, and these ropes'll be cut away, and you can ride in and spread yourselves. Nobody wants any trouble."

"I guess we can cut them ropes ourselves if we want, and then shoot up the pesky town!" growled one of the punchers.

"What's the good of huntin' trouble?" pleaded the Kid. "If you guys begin shootin', there's a lot of guns hyer will go off; for I'm tellin' you square that any guy shooting in this town will be drilled right on the spot. But I'll say I hate having trouble with you punchers."

"Leave it to Dave," said one of the Bar-2 outfit. "What Dave says goes."

Mohave Dave spat out an oath. "Look here, Mister Baby Sheriff," he said. "We've come in for fun, and we're going to have our fun. The faro game's going to be started again at the Red Flare—you hear me?"

"It ain't," said the Kid, shaking his head. "No gambling game is being run in this town. But I guess if you want to throw away your dollars I ain't aiming to stop you. Throw them down the first prairie dog's hole along the trail—I guess it will come to the same thing as a faro game—and no harm done."

There was a laugh from the punchers, and from the gathering crowd of Plug Hat citizens. Somehow the "Baby Sheriff," as Dave called him, seemed to have a placating effect on the wild

outfit. His evident desire to avoid trouble, added to his equally evident readiness for it, it came, had an effect. Moreover, there were two or three score of men gathered behind the Kid now; and the odds were heavy against the Bar-2 if it came to shooting. They wanted to ride around town kicking up a terrific shindy. But they did not want a pitched battle, with a dozen dead men on either side to show for the result. The Kid was holding the Bar-2 outfit. With a mixture of good nature and iron firmness, he had hoped to pull through without bloodshed, and it looked as if he would get by with it.

"You're some sheriff, you are," said Mohave Dave sarcastically. "You're going to turn us all into good little boys, I reckon."

"Feller," said the Kid, "you're good boys already—jest as good boys as ever I want to see, and the kind of guys I'd like to be friends with. If it wasn't in the way of duty I'd sure not stand in your way a dog-goned minute."

"Say, you do talk like a Dutch uncle," grinned one of the punchers. "What's it going to be, Dave?"

Mohave Dave gave a short. "You can pack away them guns," he said. "We ain't come here to spill juice all over the town. But I ain't taking all that lip from a kid what ought to be at school with his schoolmarm. Mister Baby Sheriff, I'm coming along to wipe up the street with you, if you've got sand enough to put away your gun and stand up to it."

The Kid holstered his guns instantly. "Mister Bonehead you sure do me proud," he answered. "Come along as soon as you like, and if I don't run you into the calaboose for breaking the peace of this town, you can call me a Greaser and a Digger Injun."

"The calaboose!" roared Mohave. "Jest that!" said the Kid. "Since I been sheriff we got a new gaol built, and I'll say it ain't been left empty a lot. But it's empty now, and if you break the peace, feller, you go in. I'm powerful sorry, but that's how it stands—and I'm sure hoping you'll be peaceable."

The Bar-2 foreman drew a deep breath.

"Dog-gone my boots," he said. "If you can run me into the calaboose, baby, you can keep me there till the cows come home."

"You've said it," answered the Kid. And the Bar-2 foreman ducked under a rope, put up a pair of brawny fists that looked like legs of mutton, and rushed at the Kid.

Run In!

"STAND back, you'uns!" rapped the Kid to his followers. "Sheriff—" began Colorado anxiously.

"Stand back!" "Waal, it's your say-so," said Colorado Bill. "But I guess our noo sheriff is going to be chewed up."

The deputies backed away. They looked on eagerly, and the punchers eyed the scene with keen interest. The Kid, strong and sturdy as he was, looked slim and boyish in comparison with the big cowman who was rushing down on him. Hardly a man in the street of Plug Hat but expected to see the boy sheriff knocked flying by the huge hammering fists of Mohave Dave.

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But the Kid knew what he was about. He had come through many a desperate rough-and-tumble in his time, and had found coolness and skill and courage hold their own against brawn and muscle.

He jumped back as the big cowman rushed him down, side-stepped swiftly, and greeted Mohave with a rap on the side of his head that made him stagger.

Dave spun round on him, red with rage, and leaped at him like a charging buffalo.

His heavy fists crashed at the Kid, and had they reached the cool, handsome face they would have done terrible damage. But Dave found those crashing fists brushed away as if they had been mosquitoes. And a fist, smaller but quite as solid, hard as a lump of iron, crashed on the cowman's jaw, and he spun over as if a mule had kicked him.

There was a crash as the burly foreman of the Bar-2 landed on his back on the hard earth.

"Say," roared Colorado, in huge delight—"say, wasn't that some sock-dodger? I'll tell the world that was some sockdodger!"

Mohave Dave sat up dazedly. He blinked dizzily at the Kid and felt his jaw with his hand, as if to ascertain that it was still there.

"Waal," he gasped, "I swow—I surely swow!"

"Wade in, Dave!" yelled the Bar-2 punchers. "Wade in, old-timer! You ain't letting that kid lay you out."

"Say, that kid's got a hit like the kick of a mule!" chuckled Pop Short, an interested spectator from his piazza. "I'll tell a man he's got a hit like the kick of a dog-goned mule."

Mohave slowly staggered up. The Kid smiled at him cheerily.

"Feller, let it drop!" he urged. "I ain't bearing no malice, and I sure don't want to run you into the calaboose. Forget it, feller."

"If I don't knock you into small pieces, boy, I ain't Mohave Dave, and I wasn't raised on the Panhandle!" gasped the foreman of the Bar-2.

"Well, if you want it, wade in," said the Kid. "But I got to run you in for breaking the peace, if you do. Mesquite, you go and set open the door of the calaboose, all ready for this guy." "You bet!" grinned Mesquite.

Mohave Dave breathed hard, and set his teeth. His comrades yelled to him to wade in, in great excitement. The Bar-2 crowd were enjoying this rookus even more than a shooting-up of the town.

The foreman came on again with a rush.

The Kid met him with right and left, and Mohave received, without heeding, a couple of hammering blows that few men could have stopped with impunity. Then his powerful arms grasped the Kid. "Now!" he panted.

"I guess Mohave has got him!" yelled a Bar-2 puncher. "Say, Mohave, we're watching you break him up."

The Kid returned grip for grip. The grasp of the big cowman was like an iron band, and Mohave sought to tear him from his footing—to dash him to the ground. But the Kid's feet seemed glued to the earth, though he rocked in the cowman's grasp.

For a long minute they struggled, and then, to the surprise of all beholders, it was the feet of Mohave that left the ground.

He was swung round the Kid's hip and dropped on the ground with a concussion that knocked every ounce of wind out of him.

He lay spluttering. "Carry me home to die!" ejaculated Pop Short.

"Wake up, Dave!" roared the Bar-2 crowd. "Get a move on! Say, you ain't going to sleep."

Mohave Dave lay and gasped for breath. The Kid stooped, and touched him on the shoulder.

"It's you for the calaboose," said the Kid gently. "I guess you want to get a move on, feller. I'm waiting."

Dave staggered up. Breathless, feeling himself beaten, but still full of vim, he hurled himself at the sheriff.

The Kid grasped him, swung him round, and fixed a grip of steel in the back of his neck-scarf. Mohave Dave, panting, struggling, and swearing, was run along the street in the Kid's grasp, in the direction of the calaboose.

Twice he rallied and struggled; each time he was whirled on again.

They reached the log-built calaboose, of which Mesquite had placed the door wide open. With a swing of his arms the Kid sent the Bar-2 foreman bundling headlong in.

Mohave Dave landed on the earthen floor with a crash.

The Kid returned quickly. He was ready for gunplay from the rough crowd of punchers, who had seen their leader defeated and run in, and his men were ready. But the Bar-2 outfit were not handling their guns. They were joining in the cheer that the Plug Hat crowd gave for the sheriff.

Mohave Dave sat up on the floor of the calaboose. He made an effort to rise, and sat back again. He was completely knocked out, and could only gasp.

"I guess," said the Kid, almost apologetically, "I got to run you in, feller, jest to show that there's law and order in this hyer barg. But as soon as you make up your mind to keep the peace of the town, jest sing out and I'll be back and let you out in two shakes of a coyote's tail."

And with that the Kid slammed the door of the calaboose, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

He turned and walked back to the spot where the Bar-2 punchers were gathered in a crowd by the rope barrier.

They eyed him very curiously. "Take down them ropes, you'uns," said the Kid. "I guess this crowd is going to be peaceable. Ain't that so, fellers?"

"You win, sheriff!" said one of the punchers, with a laugh. And the riatas were removed, and the Bar-2 bunch walked their horses into Plug Hat—as orderly a crowd as any sheriff could have wished to see.

Cactus Carter's Raid!

THE sheriff of Plug Hat sat in his office with an eye on the open doorway and the sunny plaza without.

The Kid was feeling good. He had upheld law and order in the town, and his authority as sheriff, and at the same time avoided the conflict he disliked with the men from the cattle-ranges.

For the first time since Plug Hat had had a local habitation and a name, a bunch of cowmen from the ranges had been prevented from shooting up the town, and order had been maintained without a drop of blood being spilled—

except that which was exuding from Mohave Dave's nose in the calaboose. That was a cause of great satisfaction to the sheriff and to the citizens of the cow town. For the first time on record, it was unnecessary to shutter the stores and to hunt cover when the Bar-2 bunch came in.

Meanwhile, Mohave Dave was still locked in the calaboose. He had not sung out that he was willing to keep the peace—on which condition the Kid was prepared to let him loose. And some of the Bar-2 punchers gathered at the Prairie Dog Saloon were talking of raiding the gaol and letting him loose, sheriff or no sheriff.

But the calaboose was next door to the sheriff's office, and the sheriff had his eyes open and his guns at hand. And so far the wild talk of the Bar-2 punchers remained only talk. The sun was setting behind the buttes to the west of the cow town, and the Kid wondered whether there would be a rookus after darkness fell. But he was not worrying.

with him—the gang that that pesky sheriff cleared out of town. They've been hiding in the buttes, and I guess Cactus has taken to cow-stealing now. Dog-gone that pesky sheriff!"

"Shucks!" said Colorado Bill. "I figured that that would be Cactus' game when he was run out of town, sheriff. He's wanted for shooting up more'n a dozen guys; and there ain't a town in Texas where he'd dare to show his face, excepting Plug Hat."

The Kid nodded.

He was not surprised by the news. He left the office and walked across to the dusty horseman, surrounded now by an excited crowd. He pushed his way through.

"Say, feller, what's happened at the ranch?" asked the Kid. "I want to know."

Buck Peters stared at him.

"Who the thunder are you, dog-gone you?" he retorted.

"Sheriff of Sassafraz County," answered the Kid quietly. "And I

"You want me to let daylight through you, you pesky jay?"

"Carry me home to die!" gasped Buck Peters.

"Now talk!" snapped the Kid. "This ain't a time for fooling; we got to get after them cattle-lifters. Cut it short!"

"Spill it, Buck!" exclaimed several of the Bar-2 punchers.

"I ain't a lot to spill," gasped Buck. "Cactus and his gang came down on the ranch arter you boys was gone—there was only three of us left—and they ran off the cows to the buttes—"

"Didn't you burn powder, you mutt?"

"I guess we did some," answered Buck. "And Jim White and Kansas Pete was laid out cold. And I guess I got on a cayuse and hit the trail to fetch you boys back, with lead whistling round my ears like a bunch of hornets."

"They shot up two men?" exclaimed the Kid.

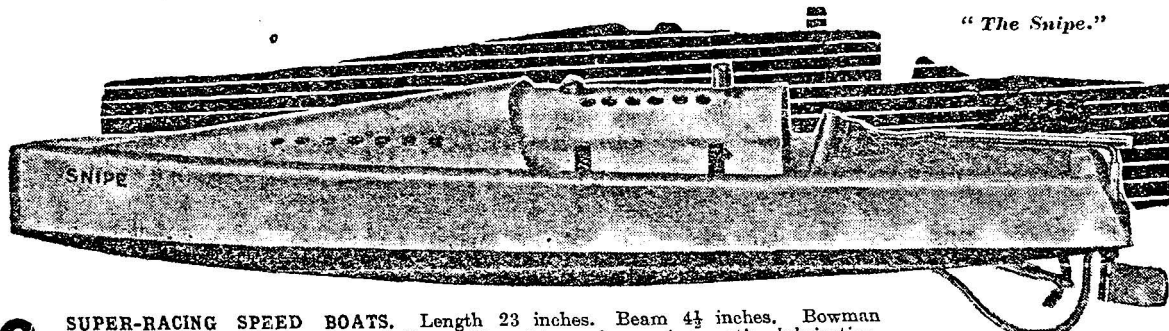
"They sure did."

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NEXT
WEEK.**

6 "BOWMAN" MODEL STEAM LOCOMOTIVES, 0-4-0, Tank Type, Model 265. COMPLETE WITH RAILS. Length of engine, 10½ inches. Weight 2½ lbs. Boiler of seamless drawn brass, with safety valve. Solid drawn brass cylinders, ¾-inch by ¾-inch stroke. Heavy gauge steel plate frames. Wheels of turned cast steel, with steel axles. Filling funnel, oil, and full instructions. RUNS FOR 1½ MILES!



"The Snipe."

6 SUPER-RACING SPEED BOATS. Length 23 inches. Beam 4½ inches. Bowman single cylinder engine. Brass boiler, with safety valve. Automatic lubrication. Safety spirit lamp. Superbly finished stream-lined wooden hull, spray-hood and burnished aluminium wind-shield. STEAMS FOR ONE MILE!

In the red sunset a horseman dashed into Plug Hat from the prairie.

Colorado Bill looked into the sheriff's office.

"Say, sheriff, that's Buck Peters, from the Bar-2," he drawled. "He's been hitting the trail in a mighty hurry, I guess."

The Kid nodded and watched the dusty rider with interest.

"Bar-2!" the horseman shouted. "Say, are the Bar-2 boys around?"

"What you here for, Buck?" called out two or three voices.

"I guess I've come for you'uns!" gasped the dusty rider. "Say, there's trouble at the Bar-2. I guess them rough-necks was watching and waiting for you boys to ride out. I'm telling you that Cactus Carter and his gang have cleared out the ranch!"

"Cactus Carter!" repeated a dozen voices.

"Sure! And he has a dozen guys

guess this here is my business. There ain't going to be no cow-stealing in this county, feller. Now, put it short."

"Aw—go and chop chips!" said the rider from the Bar-2. "I guess I've come here to call back the boys, and I ain't chewing the rag with no pesky sheriff. Say, you guys, where's Mohave?"

"Mohave's in the calaboose—"

"Oh, great gophers!" gasped the rider. "And who put Mohave in the calaboose?"

"The sheriff."

"And you let him?" roared Buck.

"They sure did let me; and if you don't watch out you'll be in the calaboose, too, afore you can say 'No sugar in mine!'" rapped out the Kid.

"I keep on telling you to put me wise to what's happened at the Bar-2. Don't pull that gun, you bonehead!" roared the Kid; and his Colt looked at the horseman as he grasped a weapon.

"And got the cows away?"

"They was driving off five hundred of the best cows in Texas when I started burning the trail," answered Buck. "They was hitting for the buttes, and I guess they got them cows in the hills by this time."

The Kid turned to Colorado Bill. "Colorado, you want to call up the boys pronto! We're going after them cow-stealers. We hit the trail in five minutes from now."

"You've said it, sheriff!" answered Colorado, and he hurried away.

The Kid strode across the plaza to the calaboose, Buck Peters staring after him blankly.

"Say, is that baby running this town?" he ejaculated.

"He sure is!" answered Mesquite, with a grin. "And I guess if anybody can get them cows back to the Bar-2, it's our sheriff—and don't you forget it!"

ploughed down half a dozen of the flags marking the inside of the course.

For Sid it was just a mixture of mad skids, flying flags, and the slithering whirling shape of the out-of-control Ace sliding in front of him. Then, by some miracle of fine driving, Jack had left it all behind. They were back on the course, with Sackville a dozen yards ahead of them.

Their Steven-Wills seemed to leap after him. It was almost as though the car had found renewed power out of its narrow escape from disaster. They were on his tail as they slemmed at the last corner.

Jack pulled out and charged straight, it seemed, at the pylon. They skidded faintly, and just escaped it, and were dead level with Sackville as they hit the last half-mile.

Down it they went, Sid yelling in his excitement. Jack was hunched behind the wheel, peering through the screen ahead.

"We're winnin'!" Sid roared, as the Steven-Wills pushed her nose in front of Sackville. "Stick it, Jack! Keep your foot down! Gwan!"

They were leaving Sackville behind. As they passed, Sid saw him muttering viciously to himself when he dropped away.

Ahead an official lifted a black-and-white checked flag, raising it high. They ripped up, then roared past as the winner's flag flashed down; and behind them came Sackville, with the Steven-Wills' thrashing wheels flinging sand triumphantly back at him.

"Done it! Licked him!" Sid yelled exultantly above the whining of the brake-shoes in their drums, as Jack slowed the machine. "Licked him, by gosh! An' we didn't clean an' polish the car!"

THE END.

(Another roaring motor-racing yarn of the Skid Kid next week!)

THE BAR-2 BUNCH!

(Continued from page 23.)

The Rio Kid unlocked the door of the calaboose and threw it open.

Mohave Dave, sitting on a bench in the little gaol, stared at him grimly as he stood in the doorway.

"You!" he growled. "Dog-gone you, if I had a gun I'd let daylight right through you, baby! I sure would!"

"Feller," said the Kid, "you're going to have your guns back, and you're going to git on your cayuse and ride with me."

"How come?" asked the cowman, staring.

"While you was hitting Plug Hat, Cactus Carter was hitting your ranch and running off your cows," said the Kid. "I'm getting after them rustlers; and I guess you want to take a hand."

Mohave leaped up from the bench.

"Say, you giving me the straight goods?" he exclaimed. "Great snakes! The cows run off the ranch, and the boss away at San Antonio—and me fooling around hyer! Dog-gone my cats!"

"I guess I'm taking my posse to look for them," said the Sheriff of Sassafras County. "And I'll say I ain't quitting the trail till I've rounded up Cactus Carter and his gang. If you and your outfit want to ride with us, we're starting pronto."

"Where's my hoss?" gasped Mohave.

The Kid stepped aside, and the foreman of the Bar-2 rushed out of the calaboose. The next moment his voice was heard roaring in the plaza to the Bar-2 bunch to mount and ride.

There was a buzzing of voices, a clattering of bridles, a jingling of spurs in the street of Plug Hat. In hot haste

Mohave Dave and his outfit mounted for the ride back to the ranch, breathing vengeance on the rustlers who had raided the herds and shot up two of the outfit.

The Rio Kid rapidly saddled and bridled the grey mustang and rode Side-Kicker down to the Plug Hat Hotel, outside which the posse was gathering.

Ten deputies were mounting there, ready to follow the sheriff on the trail of the cattlo-lifers.

Colorado wavers his Stetson in the air as the Rio Kid came galloping up.

"Hyer we are, sheriff!"

"Ride!" said the Kid.

With a clatter of hoofs the Bar-2 bunch came galloping down the street from the plaza. They were ready to ride as soon as the sheriff's posse. The two parties rode out of Plug Hat together in the red sunset and galloped on the prairie trail southward towards the Bar-2 ranch.

Mohave Dave pulled in his broncho by the side of the Kid as they galloped.

"Say, baby!" he exclaimed.

The Kid glanced round at him. The Bar-2 foreman grinned at him sheepishly.

"Say, I figured that I was coming hunting you, baby, when I got out of that dog-goned calaboose," he said. "I reckon I was feeling bad, and my jaw sure does feel as if a pesky mule had kicked it. But I'll say now that I ain't got no kick coming, sheriff. You sure are a white man; and the Bar-2 bunch is backing your play till the cows come home."

"You've said it, feller!" said the Kid.

And then in silence the wild riders dashed on under the falling darkness, the thunder of galloping hoofs ringing far through the night.

THE END.

(There's no peace for the Boy Sheriff. As soon as one trouble blows over, another comes up to blacken his horizon. But the Rio Kid doesn't mind so long as there's plenty of adventure for him. See next week's yarn: "UNDER FIRE!")

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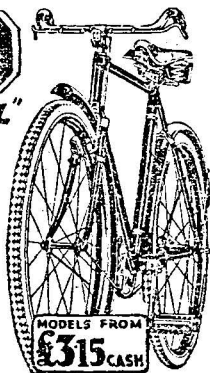
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