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"THIS NOTE IS COUNTERFEIT!"

THE ROOKWOOD CHUMS INVOLVED IN A SENSATIONAL ADVENTURE

See the Special School Tale inside

THE SHANGHAIED PUNCHER!

It's one thing to shanghai the Rio Kid aboard the schooner, Pony Lily, but quite another thing to keep him there, as Captain Shack learns to his cost!

TURNING the

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
The Missing Puncher!

OLD MAN SAMPSON sat up in his rocker on the porch of the ranch-house, and stared under his knitted grizzled eyebrows at the puncher who came up the trail from San Pedro.

The Old Man frowned grimly.

It was morning on the Sampson ranch, and Old Man Sampson was chewing his after-breakfast cigar as he sat on the porch and watched the trail.

The Old Man had a heart of gold, as all his outfit knew; but he had also the temper of a Tartar, and the outfit knew that also. When he let himself go, the Old Man had a flow of language that was scarcely to be equalled by any cowman or horse-wrangler in all the ranches of Texas.

As Santa Fe Sam came up the trail, riding his broncho, and leading a black-muzzled mustang, Old Man Sampson removed the cigar from his mouth preparatory to greeting the puncher when he arrived. Jeff Barstow, the foreman of the ranch, strolled along to the porch.

"Here comes Sam back from San Pedro, boss," he said.

Sport, from the Old Man.

"I guess I've got eyes, Jeff Barstow! I sure can sight the fog-goned geck. And where's that Carfax? Why ain't he back? And why wasn't they both back yesterday? Huh!"

"I guess Sam will spill it when he gets right here," suggested Jeff. "They're both good boys——"

"Good boys nothin'!" snorted the boss.

If Jeff Barstow had aimed to avert the storm, he had failed. The Old Man was evidently going to make the fur fly. The fact was, the Old Man was anxious. Santa Fe Sam and the Rio Kid should have been back at the ranch well before sundown the day before. The Kid was a partner in the Sampson ranch, with a share of ten thousand dollars; and the Kid's buying in had saved the Old Man from ruin. The Old Man was not likely to forget that; but apart from that, he liked the handsome, cheery young puncher, and his frank and pleasant ways. Even had he learned that young Carfax was the Rio Kid, the outlaw of the Rio Grande, wanted by a dozen sheriffs in the pecos country, he would probably not have liked him the less. There were a good many questionable characters in the little coast town of San Pedro; and the Old Man had been worried when the two punchers did not return. And the sight of Santa Fe Sam returning, leading the Kid's horse, made him all the more worried for the one who had not returned.

Santa Fe Sam hitched the two horses at the gate, where the wrangler came to take them to the corral, and walked on to the ranch-house. His face was clouded and troubled. The Old Man did not wait for him to begin.

"You pesky, goldarned son-of-a-gun, you've got back!" he barked. "You was sent to drive a bunch of cows, and you kinder reckoned you was going on a bender. I'm sure s'prised you come back at all. You been painting the town red, I reckon, and filling your carcase up to the neck with hooch. You sure are one loafing hombre. Where's Carfax?"

"You can search me," answered Sam dismally.

"You durned gink! You been horning into a rookus with the toughs down in San Pedro, and getting my partner shot up, or knifed by a dog-goned greaser," roared the Old Man.

"I guess——"

"You pie-faced geck, what's happened to young Carfax?" roared Old Man Sampson. "Can't you spill it, you dumb *hobo*?"

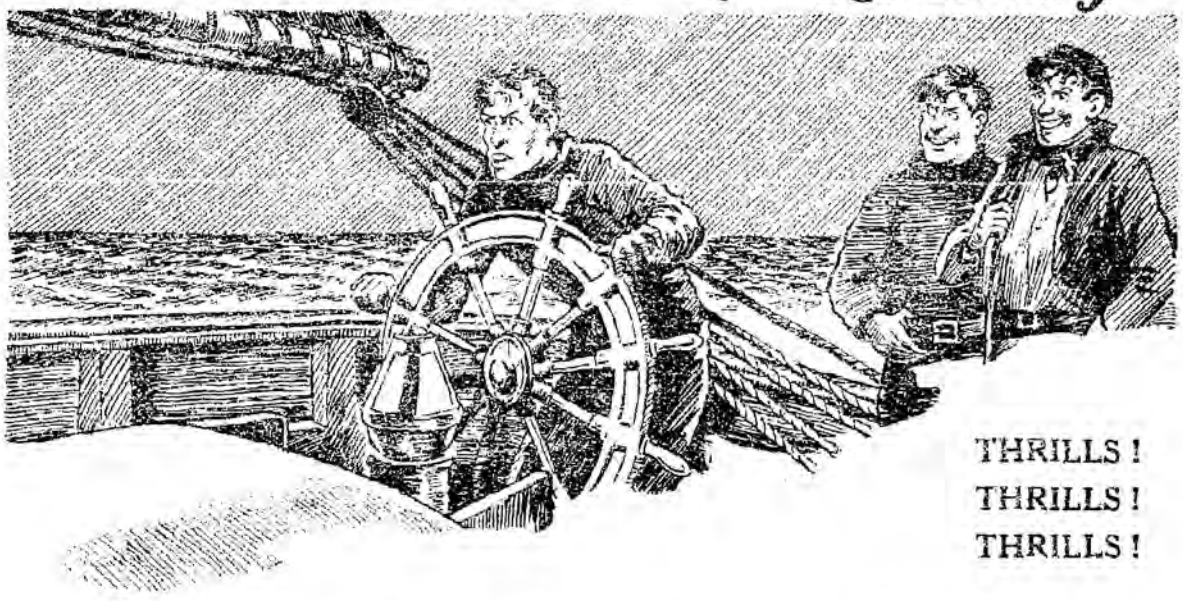
"I ain't wise to it," said the young puncher. "We sure handed over them cows in San Pedro, and I moseyed along to the posada to scare up a drink, and the Kid took a leetle pasear along the shore. He allowed he was goin' to look at the ships while I was hornin' into the posada."

"Ships!" snorted the old rancher.

HERE'S A FINE LONG COMPLETE TALE OF WESTERN ADVENTURE—STARRING THE WORLD-FAMOUS CHARACTER—THE RIO KID!

TABLES!

by Ralph Redway



THRILLS!
THRILLS!
THRILLS!

"What in thunder does a cow-puncher want roberrin' at ships? You mean he was loafin' around while you was fillin' up on bootleg hooch, you pesky scallywag."

"I looked around for him," said Santa Fe Sam. "I reckon he sure must have dropped into a hole and pulled it in after him. Not a hide nor a hair of him was left in San Pedro, and nobody knowed where he had vamoosed to. He left his cayuse tied up along o' mine, so he never hit any trail. But he ain't in San Pedro no more, and I stayed on all night huntin' sign—and he hadn't left any sign. So I humped it home."

The Old Man jumped up.

"Some of them dog-goned greasers in San Pedro have got him," he *hooted*. "Mebbe some friends of the beef stealers he rounded up. Thunder! If they've hurt one hair of that Kid I'll sure ride the whole gol-darned way to San Pedro and shoot up the town."

"It ain't there," said Santa Fe Sam, shaking his head. "I've sure combed San Pedro from the horns to the tail, and no galoot there is wise to it. The Kid never got into any rookus in that burg. He jest walked along to the wick and then he jest dropped out of sight. Unless he's gone on a ship——"

"What would a puncher be doing on a ship?" roared the Old Man. "Talk horse-sense if you ain't quite loco."

The Old Man stared away towards San Pedro.

From the porch of the Sampson ranch the wide blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico could be seen stretching away to the sky. By the swampy inlet on the shore, the handful of shacks and 'dobby houses nestled, and the sail of a lugger could be seen.

Jeff Barstow broke in.

"Any pesky ship goes out since you was there, Sam?"

"Yep; a schooner went out in the night."

The foreman scowled.

"More'n one galoot has been roped on to a coasting craft, as that dog-goned hole at San Pedro," he said. "But I reckon they wouldn't want to rope in a puncher."

The Old Man started.

"Smoke and blaze!" he ejaculated. "If that's what——"

He broke off.

If anything had happened to the Kid in the coast town the Old Man was prepared to paint rough-shod over that town with the Sampson outfit. But if some lawless skipper had shanghaied the young puncher, and run him out to sea, the Sampson outfit were powerless. The Old Man sat back in his *rocker*.

"If that's what——" he repeated.

"I guess that Kid Carlax will sure be a packet of dynamite if they've got him on a ship," said Jeff Barstow. "I sure wouldn't like to be the skipper that had the lowerin' of him. I'd rather break the all-firecest buck-jumper in any rodeo in Texas. But——"

Old Man Sampson rose from his rocker. There was a deadly glint in the eyes under the grizzled brows.

"I'm goin' down to San Pedro," he said. "Tell six men to saddle up and foller me, Jeff. If the Kid's there we'll make that pesky burg sorry for itself if they've harmed him. I guess we owe them beef thieves a score, anyhow. Every galoot in that burg is a cow-stealer, or a smuggler, or a shanghai man. We're goin' after the Kid, and if we don't find him safe and sound we're goin' to make that burg sit up and howl. You hear me?"

And in five minutes the Old Man had packed his gun and mounted his horse, and was riding down the trail to San Pedro at the head of a bunch of punchers. If Kid Carlax was not found safe and sound in the coast town, there was a wild time ahead for San Pedro. And the Rio Kid was many a long mile away on board the schooner that was ploughing the blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Gun Play!

UNDER the full round moon the wide waters of the gulf stretched like a sea of silver. More than a day's sail from the coast where the Rio Kid had been shanghaied, the schooner Pond Lily was far out of the sight of land.

In his bunk in his cabin Captain Ezra Shack was sleeping. On deck the mate, Starboy, was in charge of the watch. Under the moon the schooner glided on with billying sails before the breeze. Starboy, the mate, tramped the after-deck and pulled at a cigar. The man at the wheel chewed tobacco, and methodically squirted *juice round about him. Only three* other seamen were in the watch on deck; the schooner was short-handed. A bullying skipper and a bucko mate did not make the *Pond Lily* a popular craft, and there had been desertions from the crew, for which reason the Rio Kid had been knocked on the head and shanghaied. Shanghai-ing a man for his crew was no new device of Captain Shack's, and Starboy, the mate, prided himself upon the fact that in twenty-four hours—or two days at the most—he could have the roughest and fiercest recruit feeding from his hand. Mr. Starboy's belief was founded upon a long experience; he had shanghaied many a man in his time, and he had never failed.

But it was written that his first failure was to be the Rio Kid.

Mr. Starboy, as he tramped the after-deck, pulled at his cigar, watched the sails, and occasionally flung a curse at the crew, did not suspect what was happening in the forecastle in those quiet moments. The port watch were below, and the Kid and the boatswain were in the port watch. Hucker, the boatswain, packed a gun, a necessary precaution on a craft like the Pond Lily, and the Kid's guns had been

taken away and were safe in the cabin. Not that the mate expected any more trouble from the shanghaied puncher. The Kid had given trouble, lots of it, but a rope's-ending had, Mr. Starboy reckoned, cut the freshness out of him. He might need a few more lashings, and a blow or two from a capstan bar—which Mr. Starboy was ready and willing to hand out. So far, Bill Starboy had not the slightest idea that he had met with his first failure in breaking in a shanghaied man.

He was about to make that interesting discovery.

Had Mr. Starboy only known it, the boatswain lay stunned in his bunk in the dingy little forecastle of the schooner, and his gun was in the grip of the kidnapped puncher. And the two seamen in the for'ard had only needed a glimpse of that gun, and the glint in the Kid's eyes, to make them decide to remain very quiet in their bunks. They were not looking for any trouble with a reckless puncher who was on the shoot.

So there was no alarm from the forecastle when the Rio Kid got ready for business; not that the Kid would have cared if there had been. Once he had his grip on the butt of a six-gun, the Kid was prepared to wade in and handle the whole crew of the schooner. There was a lingering ache in the Kid's head from the stunning blow he had received at San Pedro, and his back was sore and burning from the flogging, a first sample of Mr. Starboy's methods of breaking in an unwilling recruit. That had to be paid for, and the Kid was ready to exact payment, now that he had the boatswain's six-gun in his grasp.

It was with a light heart, and with a smile on his face, that the Kid stepped on deck from the forecastle. The Kid was on the prod now with a vengeance. In a suit of dirty dungarees, the boy puncher looked very little like the handsome, natty Kid, but when it came to shooting, he was the same Rio Kid who never failed to ring the bell every time he pulled a trigger.

The Kid kept his right hand down at his side, the revolver hidden in the baggy dungarees, as he lounged coolly on deck. The men in the watch on deck stared at him without interest, but they looked rather curious as the puncher went aft. After what he had already had from the bucko mate, they considered that the shanghaied man would have done well to keep clear of Mr. Starboy; yet it looked as if he was hunting trouble. They looked on with interest to see what would happen.

Mr. Starboy's eyes fell on the Kid, in the bright moonlight that made almost day on deck, and he stared.

"Hyer, you!" he barked.

"Hallo, feller!" drawled the Kid.

The mate glared.

"You pesky land-lubber, don't you know you don't come on deck till the next watch?" snorted the mate. "You got a lot to learn about the sea, you sure have, and, by the holy poker, I'm the man to teach you! Now you're here, you can turn to, and I'll sure give you a job that will keep you busy till eight bells in the morning watch."

"You don't say," grinned the Kid, still keeping the revolver hidden in the baggy dungarees.

"I sure do!" barked the mate. "You see that chain piled by the hawser-hole?"

"Yep."

"Get down to scraping it," said Mr. Starboy grimly. "I guess you can see that that chain is some rusty."

"Jest a few," agreed the Kid.

"If there's a speck of rust left on it by eight bells in the morning watch, look out for blue blazes," said the mate. "Get down to it!"

The Kid smiled cheerily.

Setting a man to scrape the rust from a chain was one of Mr. Starboy's methods of breaking the heart of an unwilling recruit. No doubt it was a good method, from Mr. Starboy's point of view.

The mate came a few steps nearer to the Kid. There was something in the shanghaied man's manner that puzzled him. He had reckoned that the manhandling the Kid had already had, had put him wise, and that he had learned that he had to jump when he was told to jump. But if he wanted another lesson Mr. Starboy was the man to give it him. Indeed, he rather welcomed the task as a relief to the monotony of the night watch. Breaking in a rebellious spirit was pie to Mr. Starboy.

"You sure was fresh when you came on board this packet," said Mr. Starboy. "You look as if you've got it back again."

"Then my looks don't tell no lie," said the Kid. "I'm sure as fresh as ever I was, feller."

The mate grinned savagely.

"You reckon you ain't obeying orders on this hooker?" he asked.

"You've said it."

"I guess I'll give you something to cure all that," grinned Starboy. "I'm the very man you want to meet. I've broke in swabs that was as full of fight as a wild cat, in my time. I reckon when you've polished that chain you'll be ready to feed out of my hand."

"I ain't polished that 'ornery chain yet," drawled the Kid. "I guess I ain't honing for the job. What I want is, to have this pesky outfit turned back to take me to San Pedro."

"Blue blazes!" gasped the mate, more astonished than enraged, and a snicker came from the men on deck.

"That's what I want," said the Kid, with a nod. "That's what's the matter with Hanner, feller. I'm telling you to swing round this outfit and hit the trail for Texas. You want to do it quick."

"Loco," said the mate—"plumb loco! Hacker!" he roared. "Hacker! Turn out, there! Show a leg!"

The Kid chuckled.

"I guess Hacker ain't showing a leg, to any great extent, this side of dawn," he remarked. "He's sure cinched in that hole up you call a forecastle. He's had such a seekdolager on the cabeza, that I sure reckon he won't open his peepers before sun-up."

"You've handled Hacker?" yelled the mate.

"Sure," said the Kid.

"Men," the mate yelled to the watch on deck, "seize that man! Trice him up to the rigging!"

There was a forward movement of the rough crew. The Kid's hand leaped out from the baggy folds of the dungarees, with the revolver in it. The moonlight glimmered on the barrel as he raised it.

"Stand pat, you-uns!" he rapped out.

The seamen jumped back from the revolver. The Kid had the corner of his eye on them, but he was watching Starboy like a cat. He knew that it would come to shooting, but the Rio Kid would not shoot a man without a gun in his hand.

The mate, crimson with fury, reached to his hip-pocket for a gun.

"Drop that shooter!" he bellowed.

"Aw, forget it!" drawled the Kid. "I'm offering to let you off a funeral if you turn this outfit round and hit for Texas."

Starboy dragged out his revolver.

"Drop that gun, or I'll shoot you dead in your tracks!" he roared.

He swung up the revolver, and there was no doubt that he meant every word of it. The Rio Kid had to drop the gun or use it, and he fired without a second's hesitation.

There was a gasping yell from the mate as he crumpled up on the deck. His revolver cracked at random, the bullet flying away through the rigging. The next moment the Kid had kicked the gun from his hand and picked it up. With a gun in either hand now the Kid faced the crew, who were starting forward at him.

"You'uns horning in?" grinned the Kid. "Horn in all you want, you dogoned scallywags."

Two lifted guns, with two glinting eyes behind them, drove the crew scuttling into the forecastle for cover. The Kid laughed.

He glanced down at the mate.

Starboy lay on the deck, his tanned face white. He had been shot through the chest.

"Mutiny, by the blue blazes!" he gasped. He made an effort to rise, and sank back again helplessly.

"I guess you've got yours," said the Kid coolly. "You sure roped in the wrong steer when you shanghaied a puncher about my size, feller! Now I reckon I'm honing to see the boss of this outfit."

The Kid had not long to wait for the "boss of the outfit." The roar of the heavy Navy revolver had awakened the captain, and he came tramping up the companion, shouting out angry questions, with a gun in his hand. As he emerged on the deck, he looked two levelled revolvers full in the face.

"Put 'em up!" said the Rio Kid.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
The Kid Takes Control!

CAPTAIN SHACK stared blankly at the Kid.

He made a movement to raise the revolver in his hand, but checked that movement as he caught the cold, bleak glint in the puncher's eyes. He checked it barely in time to save his life.

"You—you——" he stuttered.

"I've told you to put 'em up, feller," drawled the Kid. "I ain't waiting long when I tell a galoot to saw the air."

"You—you've shot Starboy——" stuttered the skipper.

"Sure! I guess I'm ready to let daylight through every galoot in this outfit!" answered the Kid cheerfully. "Drop that gun and put up your paws! Pronto!"

Crash! went the captain's revolver to the deck. Stammering with rage, he put his hands above his head.

"I'll bang you for this!" he yapped.

"I guess you ain't got a rope in the outfit that'll do it, feller," said the Kid. "Jest get it into your cabeza that I'm boss of this shebang now, and it will be good for your health. I'd shoot you as soon as look at you, you durned ornery man-stealing thief! Keep them paws up, if you don't want to hit Jordan so sudden you won't know how you got there!"

"I guess——"

"That's enough from you!" interrupted the Kid. "I ain't woke you up to hear you chew the rag. You've spilled enough for me."

He belted one of his guns, picked up

the captain's revolver, and tossed it into the sea.

"I reckon I can handle all the shooting-irons on this outfit," he remarked. "Keep them paws up, and back across to the fence of the corral."

By which the Kid meant the starboard rail. The captain, white with fury, did as he was bid, for there was sudden death in the Kid's gun, and pitiless purpose in his glinting eyes. Back to the rail, the skipper sawed the air with his hands, his eyes flaming.

"You want a seat in this circus?" asked the Kid, glancing at the helmsman, who was staring at him like a man in a dream.

"Nope!" gasped the man. "Not any in mine, thanks. I sure ain't hunting trouble with a gunman about your size!"

"You're wise," smiled the Kid. "I reckoned, when I was getting that rope on my back, that I'd wipe out every galoot in this outfit; but I sure hate to spill a man's juice if he ain't honing for trouble. The boss and the foreman are my game, so long as you other galoots keep quiet. Chew on it that if you begin any shananigan, you get yours so sudden it will sure surprise you!"

"Count me out, pardner," said the helmsman.

The Kid nodded, and turned away from him. He glanced along the deck to the forecastle, where startled faces were peering out at him.

"Hyer, you'uns!" shouted the Kid. "Come out of that! I ain't shooting if you're good little men. Pronto!"

There was a muttering of hoarse voices in the forecastle, but not a man stepped on deck.

"You hear me toot?" roared the Kid. "Step lively, or I'll sure shoot up that bunkhouse of yourn!"

And, as the men did not emerge, the Kid fired, and the bullet smashed into the forecastle.

There was a howl.

"Let up, puncher! We're sure coming!"

"Pronto, then!" snapped the Kid.

The crew of the Pond Lily came on deck. Rough and brutal as they were, the scum of New Orleans, they eyed the Kid with uneasy fear. They knew a gunman when they saw one, and never had they seen a gunman so dangerous as the Kid was at that moment.

"Bring out that foreman of yourn—the guy you call the boatswain," rapped the Kid. "I guess I want this outfit all under my eye."

"Sure!" gasped one of the seamen.

Hacker, the boatswain, was dragged out of his bunk, and dragged up the steps to the deck. He was still insensible.

"Now get hold of a rope, some of you'uns, and hog-tie that galoot," directed the Kid. "It may save his life if he can't use his hands when he comes to."

The boatswain's arms were bound. Some of the rough crew were grinning now. The afterguard of the Pond Lily were not popular forward, and, ruffians as they were, the crew of the schooner could admire courage and reckless hardihood. It was sheer satisfaction to them to see their captain backed up to the rail, holding up his hands, in terror of his life.

"Now bring a rope hyer, and hog-tie that boss of yourn," said the Kid. "Fix him to that fence."

"You dare——" began Captain Shack.

The Kid gave him a grim look.

"Ain't I told you you've spilled enough, feller?" he asked. "You want to keep that bully-beef trap of yourn cinched tight, if you know what's healthy for you."

The skipper lapsed into infuriated silence.

"I ain't honing to spill your juice," said the Kid. "I got other ideas about you, feller. But raise a dust, and you get yours, same as your gol-darned foreman." He called to the crew.

TIT FOR TAT! The rope descended across the captain's shoulders with all the strength of the Kid's hefty arm. Shack let out a yell of rage and pain. "You sure let out plenty of yauping, feller," said the Kid. "But you didn't hear me yaup when I was getting the same yesterday!" *(See Chapter 3.)*

"Pronto, you galoots—ain't you wise to it that you've got a new boss? Put his paws along the fence and rope 'em!"

Captain Shack's hands were tied to the rail.

A gesture from the Kid drove the crew back, and he examined the ropes. The skipper was quite secure.

"I reckon you're cinched, feller," said the Kid, smiling at the glare of hatred he received from the captain. "Now, tell me where you cached my guns."

Captain Shack made no answer.

"I've kinder got a hunch to handle my own guns," the Kid explained. "You goin' to put me wise?"

Still the captain did not speak, only his eyes burned with impotent fury at the Kid.

"Hyer, you'uns!" called out the Kid. "Bring a rope here and give that galoot six across the shoulders, same as the boatswain did me yesterday."

The men hesitated.

"You hear me yaup?" asked the Kid. Then he grinned. "By the great horned toad, if you're scared of him, hand me the rope!"

"You—you——" panted the captain, as the Kid took hold of a length of rope and coiled it.

The rope descended across the captain's shoulders, with all the strength of the Kid's hefty arm. Six times it rose and fell, and Captain Shack yelled with rage and pain.

The Kid paused.

"You sure let out plenty yauping, feller!" he remarked. "You sure didn't hear me yauping to that extent when I was getting it yesterday—you sure did not! You lettin' on where you cached them guns?"

"You durned mutineer——" hissed the skipper.

The coiled rope rose and fell again.

"Let up!" shrieked Esau Shack. "Let up, gol-darn you! Them guns are in my cabin shelf over the bunk, durn your hide!"

"I'll go see!" drawled the Kid.

He went down the companion. A kerosene lamp burned below, and by its light the Kid found the walnut-butted guns and the cartridge-belt which had been taken from him when he had been shanghaied at San Pedro. Carefully the Kid loaded the guns, and belted them. His heart was lighter with those tried and trusty Colts in his possession. The guns he had taken from the mate and the boatswain he tossed through the porthole into the sea. Then he returned to the deck—warily. But he had nothing to fear from the crew of the schooner. They were bunched forward, muttering among themselves, and some of them grinning.

"Hyer, you!" called out the Kid. "Carry that galoot down to his bunk!"

He pointed to the wounded man, who had laid unregarded where he had fallen. Starboy was unconscious now.

The mate was carried down and placed in his bunk. And the Kid, his good-nature in the hour of victory getting the better of his resentment, bound up the mate's wound with strips torn from a sheet. Starboy's eyes opened, glaring at him with hatred.

The Kid nodded to him with a smile.

"I was reckoning I'd make it last sickness for you, you pesky man-stealer!" he said. "But you're sure kenoed, and I guess you can take your chance. If we get to a doc. pretty sure, you may pull through, and you're welcome to the chance, you dog-goned rustler!"

And with a deaf ear to the mate's muttering curses, the Kid left him and went back to the deck. Captain Shack eyed him with bitter malevolence. The Kid spoke to the helmsman.

"I guess I don't rightly know the run of this hyer outfit," he said. "Put me on a trail in the sierras or the chaparral, and I sure reckon I'd find my way blindfold; but this outfit has got me beat. I aim to hit the trail for San Pedro, and I aim to hit it pronto. You figure that you know how to work the riffle?"

The helmsman grinned.

"I guess I can steer a course," he

answered. "But you've got to get the skipper to set a course."

"That so?" asked the Kid. "I reckon I could ride any hoss without a boss or a foreman putting me wise. But this hyer outfit is sure new to me, and I allow there may be more to it than I savvy. You can't hit San Pedro on your own?"

"Nope."

"Then I guess the boss will sure blaze the trail for you," said the Kid. He crossed to the captain. "I guess you're going to put that galoot on the trail for San Pedro. Pronto."

"You 2-arned lubbery landsman!" hissed the skipper. "How you reckon we're to make Texas in this wind?"

The Kid scratched his head.

"I ain't wise to this game," he answered. "Ships is sure different from hosses, and that's a cinch. But you got to hit Texas, and you got to do it quick. I've got a rope here that says you'll find out some way of doin' it, savvy?"

"I tell you——"

"You can't do it?" asked the Kid.

"Nope!" hissed the skipper.

The rope rose and fell with a mighty lash, and the skipper of the Pond Lily howled.

"You figure you can work the riffle now?" asked the Kid.

"I tell you—keep that rope off!" shrieked Captain Shack. "I reckon we can make a tack."

"I reckon you can make anything you durn well like, so long as we hit Texas," answered the Kid. "If we don't sight San Pedro mighty soon, you won't have much skin on your back to take ashore with you, feller. Get down to it and don't lost time."

Captain Shack, stuttering with rage, hissed orders to the crew. The schooner swung round; and during the remainder of the night the whole crew were kept busy, for it was only by a series of tacks that the schooner was able to retrace her way. The Kid, to whom the sailing of a ship was a deep mystery, was suspicious at first, and disposed to take the knotted rope again to the captain, suspecting him of deliberately losing time. But he gathered from the words and actions of the crew that the skipper was giving the right orders, and settled down to be patient. Progress was slow, but he was on his way back to Texas, and the Kid was satisfied with that.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Tit for Tat!

"LAND!"

The Rio Kid's eyes brightened.

The night, and a whole day and another night, had passed. During that time the Rio Kid had not closed his eyes in sleep. That cost the hardy Kid little; on the prairie, and in the chaparral, he had often passed three days and nights wakeful. In the sunrise the coast of Texas loomed over the blue waters to the west, and the Kid's adventures afloat were drawing near their end. After the first night, the captain had been unbound from the rail, with a warning that at the first sign of trickery he would get cold lead. The warning was more than enough for Captain Shack. The Kid's walnut-butted guns were the only firearms left on the schooner: the Kid had taken care of that. Had he closed his eyes in slumber, Esau Shack might have induced the crew, by promises and threats, to back him up in making an attack on the puncher who had taken command of the schooner. But the Kid's wary eyes did not close; and so long as he was wakeful, with guns at hand, no man on board the Pond Lily dared to raise a finger against him—least of all Esau Shack. Once the boatswain's hand had lingered over a capstan bar, when the Kid's back seemed to be turned. But the Kid seemed to have eyes in the back of his head, for before Hacker could get a grip on the bar, a puff of smoke came from the Kid's hip, and the boatswain withdrew his hand with a shriek, with a bullet-hole clean through the palm. The boatswain was now carrying an arm in a sling, and the lesson was not lost on the crew, if they had needed one.

And now, in the sunrise, land was in sight; the schooner was approaching San Pedro once more. Captain Shack had been as eager to sight the coast town as the Kid could be. For the long delay in the return was making the Kid suspicious, and the glint that came into his eyes when he looked at the skipper, sent cold chills down Esau Shack's spine. Once the Kid felt sure that the skipper was losing time, Esau Shack was a dead man, and he knew it. And he did not lose time; he was getting better speed out of the schooner than he had ever got before, and he gasped with relief when he saw land ahead.

THE LATEST CRAZE!

Are you collecting the fine Metal Motor Car Badge, which are being given away every week in the "Magnet" Library? They're the goods—everybody's collecting 'em!

The schooner beat down to San Pedro, and the Kid's eyes glistened at sight of the rolling prairie beyond the coast town.

"That's sure a sight for sore eyes," said the Kid genially, "and it ain't come any too soon for you, feller. I was sure beginning to reckon you was fooling. How long before we bed down at San Pedro?"

The skipper licked his dry lips. His heart was aching with hatred and fury. The humiliation of sailing his ship under the orders of the puncher whom he had shanghaied was gall and wormwood to him. He had been shamed before the eyes of all his crew, and he did not need telling that they had enjoyed his humiliation, and would spin the yarn in port. But there was sudden death in opposing the Kid, and the cowed bully was not prepared to face that. His thoughts dwelt longingly on the near future, when he might have a chance to deal with the puncher. He did not guess what the near future held in store for him. The Rio Kid was not by any means done with him yet.

"I reckon we'll make the inlet in a couple of hours now," he answered sullenly.

"Muy bien!" smiled the Kid.

His eyes dwelt pleasantly on the grassland beyond the coast, and the humps of chaparral, and a grazing herd of cows. The schooner ran down at last to San Pedro, glided into the inlet, and the sails dropped, and the anchor swung down to the mud. Half a dozen loafers on the bank stared curiously at her. The schooner had not been expected back at San Pedro. Captain Shack fixed his eyes, burning with hate, and on the Rio Kid.

"Now get out of my ship, you dog-goned puncher!" he said, between his teeth. "I'll give you a beat ashore. You've made me lose three days and more on my trip——"

The Kid laughed softly.

"That ain't all the time you're going to lose, feller," he said. "You're coming off this outfit with me."

"What?"

The Kid's eyes fixed on him, cold as steel.

"You reckoned you could rope in a puncher, and make a seaman of him, whether he stood for it or not," he said. "Now I guess you're going to get your own medicine, and get it where you've asked for it. You're coming on the ranch with me, feller."

Esau Shack stared at him, open-mouthed.

"Get me?" smiled the Kid. "You ain't made a seaman of me, feller—you sure did slip up on it, and slipped up on it bad. But I'm goin' to try my hand at making a puncher of you, and I reckon I'll have better luck. I've had three days on your outfit. You're going to have three weeks on mine, and then I'll call it square. Get me?"

The skipper could only glare. There was a chuckle from the men on the schooner's deck.

"You—you durn pesky puncher!" gasped the skipper at last. "What you reckon's goin' to happen to my schooner all that time?"

"I sure don't care a continental red cent what happens to your schooner, feller. I reckon that bunch of yours will desert, and I shan't be surprised if they take along with them everything that they can lay their hands on. That's your funeral, not mine. You should sure have thought about it before you roped in a Texas puncher. You're going to punch cows on the ranch for three weeks, feller, and that's a cinch." He turned to the grinning crew. "You 'uns put that boat into the water, pronto."

The boat was lowered.

"You want to step into that boat, and step lively, you Shack," said the Kid pleasantly.

And as Esau Shack, instead of stepping into the boat, raved out oaths, the Kid grasped him in a sinewy grip, one grip on his collar, the other on the back of his belt, ran him to the side, and tossed him bodily into the boat. Esau Shack landed there with a crash that knocked every ounce of breath out of his fat body. The Kid followed him in, with a jump. The Rio Kid knew how to handle a boat, if not a ship; he picked up the oars, shoved off from the schooner, and pulled for the shore. From the rail of the schooner a row of grinning faces watched them depart—the Kid rowing, the skipper feebly cursing in the bottom of the boat—shanghaied in his turn, and booked for three weeks of cow-punching on the Sampson ranch.

THE END.

(There's sensation and amusement in next week's stirring long Western yarn, entitled: "THE RIO KID'S REVENGE". You'll miss a treat if you miss this fine story.)