FREE—DANDY COLOURED AERO PLATE—INSIDE!

The RANGER

2d

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EVERY SATURDAY.

The OUTLAW KID!

A BREATH-TAKING YARN OF THE WILD AND WOOLLY WEST.

Fate has made the Rio Kid an Outlaw for something he's never done. But the Kid smiles through trouble. One day he'll clear his name.

The Kid Horns In!

"*On our mustangs grey,*
We rode away,
With the merry Ranger band,
And our campfires shone,
When the sun had gone,
On the banks of the Rio Grande."

A clear voice carolled the old song of the Texas Rangers, ringing and echoing through the dusky green shades of the chaparral.

It was the Rio Kid who was singing, from sheer lightness of heart, as his mustang picked its way by a tangled path, walled in by trees almost hidden by hanging vines and trailing masses of Spaniards-beard.

Through the arched boughs over his head glinted the hot sunlight of southern Texas. Ahead of him, through openings of the trees, came another glint—that of the shining waters of the Rio Grande.

The Kid was riding down to the great river, the border between Texas and Mexico. He was riding at his ease. In that remote corner of the Lone Star State the boy outlaw had shaken off the foes who hunted him. He was heading for the cow-town of Red Dog, which lay a few miles farther up the river. The Kid figured that in Red Dog, though they had heard of the Rio Kid, they would not know him when they saw him, and he was tired of lonely trails. Fate had made him an outlaw; but the Kid was a puncher born and bred, and he asked nothing better than to punch cows and be let alone.

"In the Indian pass,
In the prairie grass——"

Crack! crack! crack!

The Kid's cheery singing was interrupted.

From the direction of the river came a sudden outbreak of shooting, shattering the silence of the chaparral.

The Kid drew rein.

Crack! crack!

"Aw! By the great horned toad!" ejaculated the Kid, in exasperation. "If that ain't the elephant's hind leg!"

There was trouble ahead of the Kid—and he was riding into it. There never was a guy more anxious to avoid trouble than the Rio Kid; but trouble had a way of dogging his trail.

Crack! crack!

A bullet, tearing through branches and leaves, whizzed by a foot from the Kid, as he sat in the saddle listening. Another crashed into a tree trunk a yard from him. The galoots who were burning powder seemed to be loosing off lead almost at random.

"Dog-gone my cats!" growled the Kid. "Old hoss, I guess we're going to beat it and beat it quick. We ain't going to horn into this here trouble."

The Kid was about to wheel his horse and ride back the way he had come, when he paused.

Loud shouts, distant but plainly heard, came to his ears from the river—in Spanish. Mexicans were shouting and firing, and the Kid heard the splashing of horses in the water. And through an opening in the trees by which he had a glimpse of the wide river, he caught sight of a horseman riding desperately for the Texan side.

The rider was a Mexican, with an olive face under the shadow of a big sombrero. There was a streak of crimson on the olive face, where blood ran down from under the sombrero. The man was wounded and evidently closely pursued. Bullets splashed up the water round him as he rode, fired from the Mexican shore.

Instead of riding away the Rio Kid remained where he was—hesitating. It was no business of his—and the wounded fugitive was a Mexican, and the Kid had all a Texan's dislike of "Greasers." But it was rather with his head than with his heart that the Kid wanted to dodge trouble; there was something within him that made him hate to turn his back on it.

He hesitated—and then he rode forward.

Crack! crack! crack!

A few strides of his mustang and the Kid had a clear view of the river. On the other side, a bunch of Mexican soldiers were firing—with an aim that made the Kid snort with contempt. Rifles cracked every moment, and lead tore up the water round the fugitive — but half the shots whistled past the river and tore away through the thickets round the Kid. But with so much lead being wasted, the Kid figured that the soldados would get their man before he could reach the northern shore.

The shooting was bad; nine-tenths of the lead was wasted. But some of it was going close. The Kid saw the sombrero spin on the rider's head; he saw him start as another bullet grazed his shoulder, tearing a rent in the velvet jacket. And a shrill squeal from the horse showed that the animal was struck.

It was failing—struggling in vain with the current of the river. The Kid shook his head. He knew that the rider would never make the grade now.

Crack! crack! crack! crack!

What the cause of the trouble was, the Kid did not know or care. But his heart was with the man who was struggling for his life. And as he saw that the horse was floundering and about to sink, the Kid made up his mind—as had often happened before—to horn into another guy's trouble. In a twinkling the Kid's lariat was in his hand.

Whiz!

The riata whizzed through the air, uncoiling as it flew.

The loop dropped over the shoulders of the desperate rider, and the Kid heard the gasping cry of amazement that came from him. In an instant the noose tightened, and at the same moment the horse sank under, and the rider was left struggling in the water.

The Kid wheeled Side-Kicker and rode back into the trees. The pull of the rope dragged the man through the water with the swiftness almost of a lightning flash. He was crashing against the high muddy bank before he knew what was happening.

There was a yell from the soldados across the river, and they fired fast. Bullets crashed into the mud of the high bank, scattering it in lumps. But the fugitive, amazed as he must have been by finding himself in the grip of a lasso, kept his head. The pull of the rope dragged him up the steep bank, and he clambered with hands and feet. Quickly he was over the top of the bank, and the rope dragged him headlong into the cover of the thick undergrowth.

Crack! crack! crack! crack!

The Mexican soldados were firing fast. Five or six of them pushed their horses into the water, with the evident intention of crossing to the Texan side in pursuit of the man who had escaped.

The Kid checked his mustang, wheeled, and rode back to the man he had saved. The gasping man lay on the ground, breathless, exhausted, almost unable to move, tangled in masses of vines through which the rope had dragged him.

The Kid loosed him from the rope and coiled it. The gasping Mexican stared up at him, struggling for breath.

"I guess that was a close call, hombre," said the Kid.

"Verdad!" panted the Mexican. "Nombre de Dios! You—you dragged me out with your lasso——"

"Sure!"

"Gracias, senor! Muchas gracias!" gasped the Mexican. He staggered to his feet, holding on to a branch.

Crack! crack! crack! The firing came fast from the other bank and there was a splashing of horses in the water.

The Rio Kid's face grew grim.

"I guess them guys is hunting trouble!" he said. A walnut-butted gun leaped into his hand. "Say, you want to hunt cover."

"They—follow me——"

The Kid grinned.

"I guess they won't hit this side of the Rio. You don't want to worry about that, hombre."

He turned from the Mexican and pushed through the thickets to the bank. Keeping in cover the Kid sighted his long-barrelled Colt.

Five horsemen were in the water, pushing across. The Kid grinned over his gun.

Crack! crack! crack!

The Kid was firing now, so swiftly that the three shots sounded almost as one.

Loud yells burst from the riders in the river. The Kid was not shooting to kill; he had no hunch to spill the juice of the Greasers in the Rio Grande. The whizzing bullets tore strips of skin from dusky faces. The Kid could plant his lead where he liked within a fraction of an inch.

It went close enough to satisfy the soldados. Three men clapped hands to scratched faces, wheeled their horses hurriedly, and dashed back to the Mexican side. The others followed them fast, without waiting for lead.

With the air thick with flying bullets, it was touch-and-go whether the Kid could pull the stranger to the bank in time. He bent again at his lasso and strained desperately.

The Kid burst into a laugh.

From the Mexican bank came a furious crackling of rifles; but none of the soldados ventured into the river again. The Kid watched them for a few minutes longer; then he holstered his gun and walked back to the spot where he had left the fugitive.

Side-Kicker was standing there, waiting for his master. But there was no sign of the young Mexican.

The Kid stared round.

"Say, hombre!" he called. "Say, where you got to?"

There was no reply to his call. Through the tangled undergrowth there was a trail, where the Mexican had gone. The Kid glanced at it and called again, and stared. But there came no answer.

"Well, dog-gone my cats!" ejaculated the Kid.

He shrugged his shoulders, swung himself into the saddle, and rode away—taking a circuitous route through the thickets to keep out of sight of the river. On the farther bank the Mexican soldados were still firing; and the sound echoed in the Kid's ears as he rode through the chaparral, dying away in the distance, at last, as he left the brush behind him, and came out on the open trail to the cow-town of Red Dog.

The Deserted Ranch!

"HALT!"

The Rio Kid drew a quick breath.

The cow-town was in sight in the far distance; a straggle of shacks and frame houses on the bank of a stream flowing southward into the Rio Grande.

Between the Kid and the distant town a bunch of horsemen had ridden out of the prairie into the trail.

In the trail they had halted, facing the Kid as he came, evidently waiting for him to come up.

The Kid rode on towards them without slackening rein, his eyes searching them keenly as he drew nearer.

There were four men in the party. Two of them, the Kid saw at a glance, were cowpunchers, in chaps and Stetsons. One was a slim fellow in "store" clothes, who backed a handsome pinto horse; and on his looks the Kid set him down as a gunman. The fourth was a burly man with a bushy flaxen beard, and the star on his coat told the Kid that he was a man in authority. And the Kid's mood was a little grim as he rode up to the party.

In that remote cow-country, far from the places where he was known, he had figured that the Rio Kid might ride unrecognized. But as he saw the party halt and wait for him, and figured that one of them was the town marshal, he wondered whether he had taken too much for granted. Whether they guessed that he was the outlaw of the Rio Grande or not, it was clear that they were interested in him.

With a doubting mind, but a cool and composed face, the Kid rode on, till he came up with the bunch; and the burly-bearded man rapped out "halt!"

The Kid drew rein at once.

"Halt it is, hombres," he answered agreeably.

"Put up your hands!" rapped out

the slim man in store clothes, and he made a gesture towards the gun in his belt.

The Kid looked at him coolly.

"Say, who are you, when you're at home?" he drawled.

"I guess you'll find out fast enough, if you don't paw the air pronto," snapped the gunman.

"Aw, cut it out, Euchre Dick!" interrupted the big, bearded man. "I guess there ain't nothing to pull guns for."

"Got it in once, marshal," said the Kid amiably. "If there's trouble lying around, I'm the guy to ride ten miles round it and leave it alone. But if you want me to put up my hands, marshal, it goes! I was carefully raised to respect the law, and you only got to say the word."

The marshal of Red Dog grinned.

"I guess I told you to put up your hands, hombre!" said the gunman.

"I guess you can tell me again, and then again, and keep on till you get a crick in your craw, and still I shan't take a whole lot of notice," drawled the Kid. "If the marshal says jump, I'm the man to jump; but I ain't jumping for any other galoot in this county."

The two cowpunchers chuckled and the marshal laughed. The gunman scowled, and dropped his hand to the butt of a Colt.

Before he could draw it, the Kid's six-gun was looking at him.

"Don't!" said the Kid quietly.

Euchre Dick sat his horse, his hand on his gun, staring at the Kid. He did not draw the gun.

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated one of the punchers. "I guess that guy has sure learned to pull a gun quick."

The marshal pushed his horse between the Kid and the gunman.

"Put up your gun, puncher," he said, "and you keep your shooter where it is, Euchre Dick! We came out to look for rustlers, not to shoot up a kid puncher."

Euchre Dick muttered under his breath and released the butt of his Colt. The Kid's gun disappeared at once.

"I sure ain't hunting for trouble, hombres," he said amicably. "But I ain't a guy to be bulldozed and crowded. Say, marshal, if you're looking for rustlers, you want to look further. I ain't never rustled anything in my life except a prize at a beauty show."

"I guess you're a stranger here," said the marshal of Red Dog, "and there's cows missing from the Bar-T. But I reckon you're a white man, on your looks."

"Marshal," said the Kid, "they knowed you was a man of good judgment when they elected you. I sure never struck a town with such a first-rate marshal."

"Aw, can it!" said the marshal of Red Dog. "I guess I'm asking you a few questions, you being a stranger here. What you called?"

"If you call me Santa Fe Smith you won't be more than a day's ride from the truth!" answered the Kid.

"You from Santa Fe in New Mexico?"

"It ain't a whole life-time since I was in New Mexico," answered the Kid. "And Smith is a good name anywhere, I reckon."

"The hot place is full of such Smiths!" growled Euchre Dick. "You allow you're a puncher?"

"Jest that!" agreed the Kid.

"You're mighty sudden on the draw for a puncher. I guess if you said gunman you'd be nearer the mark."

"Feller, I wouldn't be found dead in the same graveyard with a gunman," answered the Kid. "But I guess you know more about gunmen than I do. You didn't buy them store clothes out of punching cows."

Euchre Dick's hand made an involuntary movement towards his holster again. The Kid's eye was on him. But the marshal interposed again.

"I keep on telling you to can it, Euchre Dick," he said sharply. "You're a member of my posse now, you want to remember."

"Jest as you like, marshal," grunted Euchre Dick. "I guess I'll take some of the gall out of that fresh galoot another time."

"Any old time will suit me, if you're honing for trouble, feller," answered the Kid politely. "You satisfied yet, marshal? I'm sure enjoying this meeting; but I've rode a long trail, and I allow I'm thinking of bacon and beans."

"What you want in Red Dog?"

"Punching cows," answered the Kid cheerfully. "I been told there's room for a really good man who knows the business from A to izzard! And that's me, marshal."

"Looking for a job?"

"You've said it."

"Hitting for Red Dog?"

"Yep!"

"Then what you doing riding the trail to the haunted ranch?" interjected Euchre Dick.

The Kid raised his eyebrows.

"I guess I never heard of any haunted ranch," he replied. "And I sure figured that this was the trail to Red Dog."

The gunman eyed him keenly and suspiciously.

"You missed the straight trail a mile back if you're going to Red Dog," said the marshal. "This here trail will take you there, but you'll have to go round by the haunted ranch. Say, boys, this here puncher is O.K. You can get on, Mister Santa Fe Smith, from New Mexico."

The horsemen drew back out of the Kid's path. The Kid lifted his Stetson politely and rode on.

The marshal and his men rode in the opposite direction. It was with relief that the Kid saw the last of them.

He rode on at a rapid trot. Evidently, from what the galoots had said, he had missed the direct trail to Red Dog, and was taking a more roundabout course than he need have taken. The trail was marked only by hoofs, and in places a keen eye was needed to pick it out from the surrounding prairie. But now that the cow-town was in sight across the rolling plains, the Kid could have struck for it across country. But the mention of the "haunted ranch" had rather interested the Kid. He kept on by the trail, to pass the ranch and take a look-see as he passed.

A quarter of an hour after leaving the marshal's posse behind, the Kid came in sight of a building, and slackened rein.

It was an old timber ranch-house, and looked as if it had been standing from the earliest days of settlement in Texas.

That it was deserted the Kid could see at a glance.

Fences were broken; the gate hung by a single rusty hinge. The bunk-house was a heap of fallen timber overgrown with vines and creepers.

But the rancho itself, strongly built of timber, still stood, though it had a neglected and forlorn look.

The Kid halted, and sat in the saddle staring curiously at the silent, forlorn-looking rancho. What had once been a garden was wildly overgrown with weeds and creeping plants. A belt of trees surrounded the house, hiding it from view from the prairie on all sides. Shutters were fastened on the windows, and the door was closed. There were a good many hoof-marks to be seen, as if the cattle from the surrounding ranges wandered at will in the unkempt grounds.

"So that's the haunted ranch, old hoss!" said the Kid. "I guess it looks as if it might be; but I sure don't go a whole lot on ghosts."

He swung his horse away and gave Side-Kicker a flick of the quirt. The haunted ranch vanished behind him as he rode on at a gallop to Red Dog.

Gun Play At Red Dog!

"RECKON you might have a chance at the Bar-T, feller!" said Hooky Jones, the landlord of the lumber hotel at Red Dog. "I guess they might have room for a good man. You want to ride over in the mornin', and see the foreman."

"I reckon I'll do jest that!" agreed the Kid.

The Kid was feeling good.

He had finished a good supper and was chatting with the landlord. It was the Kid's game to let Red Dog know that he was just a puncher—merely that and nothing more. He was ready to sign on in any outfit that suited him, and he asked nothing better than to be left alone to punch cows. But he could afford to wait till he found an outfit that suited him; the Kid had a fat roll tucked away and he could afford to take his time.

"I guess I passed a rancho on the trail here, Mr. Jones," he remarked. "Your marshal, who I met up with on the trail, allowed that it was haunted. I reckon you know the shebang?"

Hooky Jones nodded.

"That's Fernandez's old place," he said, "and it's sure haunted, feller. Old Fernandez was shot up there, years ago; but he sure walks, and I'll say a lot of guys have seen him. There ain't a galoot in Red Dog would bed down in that rancho for love or money."

The Kid grinned.

"Yep, you can snicker," said Mr. Jones, "but I'm giving you the straight goods. There's been guys who went up to Fernandez's old ranch to look for the ghost, but they was powerful glad not to go a second time."

"You seen the spook?" asked the Kid.

"I ain't been looking for it," answered Hooky, "but Texas Dave here has seen it."

The Kid glanced round. He recognized one of the cowpunchers who had been with the marshal on the trail.

"Sure thing!" said Texas Dave with a nod. "That shebang is sure haunted, Mister Smith, and I seen the ghost. And I got a gun here if there's any galoot allows I ain't seen it."

"Feller," said the Kid, "I allow you've seen all the ghosts this side of Jordan. Leave that gun where it is."

"Sure!" said Texas Dave, with a grin. "But I guess you had been shifting a lot of tanglefoot before you saw the ghost, feller?" added the Kid.

"Mebbe I'd had one or two," admitted the puncher. "But if you allow that I was too full to know a ghost when I saw one, I got a gun here——"

"Leave it there!" urged the Kid. "If there's one ghost around already, hombre, you don't want to make another."

Texas Dave chuckled.

"You said it," he agreed. "But Euchre Dick has seen that pesky ghost too. He had a bet he would sleep a night in the haunted ranch—and you bet a hull crowd saw him start, and watched him go into the shebang. Afore morning Euchre Dick was hitting the high spots as fast as his cayuse could shift its laigs. I'll tell a man! And Euchre Dick shot up a man what allowed he had been skeered by a shadow."

Euchre Dick, lounging by the bar at a little distance, had his eyes on the Rio Kid. The Kid's eyes were on the gunman though he appeared to be taking no heed of him.

The Kid had a hunch that he was scheduled for trouble with the gunman of Red Dog.

The Kid wanted trouble with no man in Red Dog, but he was ready for it if it came. And as the gunman heard his name mentioned, he detached himself from the bar, and came across to the group.

"I guess Dave is giving you the straight goods, puncher," said the gunman, his cold, keen eyes on the Kid. "I sure shot up a man who allowed I hadn't seen the ghost at Fernandez's joint."

"Me, I allow you've seen all the ghosts you want!" answered the Kid amiably. "I guess I ain't got no kick coming if you allow you've seen a whole herd of them, thicker'n fleas in a Mexican dog."

The gunman made a step towards him.

"I guess you're mighty fresh, Mister Sante Fe Smith, for a kid puncher from nobody knows where," he said, in a low, clear voice that had a ring of menace in it, "and I guess I ain't satisfied that

you don't know a whole lot about them cows that's been run off the Bar-T."

The gunman's eyes were glittering. There were a score or more of punchers looking on, and as if moved by the same spring, every man stepped back to leave a clear lane for bullets. The Rio Kid and the gunman were left facing one another with plenty of room.

The Kid was smiling pleasantly. But he was watching the gunman like a cat. He was ready to draw at the first sign of the Red Dog bully touching a gun.

"You allow I know suthin' about cows rustled off the Bar-T," went on the Kid.

"Sure!" snapped the gunman.

"You're surely making a mistake!" said the Kid, in the same pleasant tone, "I've sure never rustled a cow in my life, though I guess I'd jest as soon be a rustler as a dog-goned, pesky, sneaking gunman."

What followed was like lightning. The gunman's hand flashed to the butt of a Colt.

A second more and the six-gun would have been up, streaming bullets at the kid puncher.

But swift as the Red Dog gunman was, the Rio Kid was swifter.

His hand dropped to a Colt, and he fired with the gun at his hip, without troubling to lift it.

Bang!

The Colt roared with a deafening report in the silence of the hushed room. There was a fearful cry from Euchre Dick, as he staggered back. His gun went crashing to the floor, a spatter of crimson drops going with it. The Colt had been shot from his hand as he drew it, and the gunman's hand was sliced by the bullet.

There was a breathless buzz. Red Dog had seen swift shooting before, but nothing so swift as this. Euchre Dick staggered, the blood flowing from his wounded hand, his face white as chalk, his eyes burning. With his left hand he made a clutch at his second gun.

The Kid made a stride forward. His smoking Colt looked the gunman in the face.

"Drop it!" he said tersely.

For a second Euchre hesitated. Then the gun clanged on the floor. He stood panting, all eyes on him.

The Kid made a gesture towards the door with his gun.

"Git!" he said.

And slowly, driven by the levelled gun and the eyes that gleamed over it, the bully of Red Dog turned, tramped to the door, and disappeared into the street.

* * * * *

The Rio Kid came out of the timber hotel at Red Dog in the bright morning, with a cheery face.

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IN ADVANCE!

The hot sunshine of Texas streamed down on the cow-town. The Kid walked round to the stable for his mustang. The big cowman who was saddling a broncho in the yard gave him a nod and a grin.

"Mornin', Mister Smith!" said Texas Dave.

"Mornin', old-timer," answered the Kid. "Hitting the trail?"

"Sure! I got to get back to the Bar-T."

"I guess I'll ride along—if you'd like my company, feller," said the Kid.

"If I didn't I guess I wouldn't be shoutin' it out, seein' the way you handle a gun!" chuckled Texas Dave. "What you want at the Bar-T?"

"Looking for a place on the pay-roll," explained the Kid, "I guess I've come to this country to punch cows. Hooky Jones allows that your foreman may want a new man."

"Mebbe," assented Texas Dave. "Anyhow, it won't do no harm to ride in and see Black Alec, the foreman."

The Kid nodded, and in a moment had saddled his mount. He was ready when Texas was.

They rode round the timber hotel together, and clattered away down the dusty street, and out into the trail across the prairie.

"I guess I've ridden this trail before," the Kid remarked. "This here is the way I rode into town yesterday; it's the trail to the haunted ranch."

"You said it!" assented Texas Dave. "I guess we pass in sight of Fernandez's old rancho. You seen it?"

"I jest stopped for a look-see when I rode in yesterday," answered the Kid. "I didn't see any dog-goned ghost, feller."

He pulled in his mustang as they topped a ridge, and looked down on the deserted rancho. It lay in a hollow of the prairie, surrounded by trees and thickets. But Texas Dave did not stop. He was the length of a dozen riatas from the rancho, but evidently the Bar-T cowman did not like the vicinity. He rode on at a gallop, leaving the Kid behind.

The Kid looked down on the rancho for some minutes. It lay silent, deserted, desolate.

Suddenly he gave a start, and leaned forward in his saddle, his heart beating quicker. Was that a flickering light he saw in one of the rooms of the haunted ranch?

(The Rio Kid's on the trail of a mighty deep mystery. Read all about his adventures at the Haunted Ranch next week.)

CHARLEY THE CHUMP!

(Continued from page 3.)

more. He had heard enough. Pugnose Maginnis was selling the fight!

In the circumstances there was only one thing to be done, and in a few minutes Horace was laying all the facts before Sam Ponson. The latter nodded sadly.

"I heard rumours about it, Horace," he said. "This confirms it."

At that moment Pugnose Maginnis entered the dressing-room. The boxer sneered at Horace and was taking off his clothes when his manager addressed him.

"Listen, Pug," said Mr. Ponson. "I want to ask you a question. Are you or are you not selling this fight?"

Pugnose looked at his manager sharply. Then he grinned.

"Maybe I am!"

"But you can't do that, Pug!" protested Mr. Ponson. "Don't you want to be champ?"

"Aw, shut up!" snarled Pugnose Maginnis. "I can get a shot at Lefty Flanagan any time. And what are you squawking about? You get your percentage, don't you?"

"But my bets!"

"I ain't got nothing to do with your bets."

"By heck, Pug, I'll report you for this."

Pugnose grinned evilly.

"You go ahead and report, Sam. But maybe you better get some proof first!"

Mr. Ponson sank into a chair. Pugnose had him beaten there.

Just then a knock sounded on the door of the dressing-room and in response to the call a police sergeant entered.

"Mr. Binks here?"

"That's me," said Horace. "What's wrong?"

"Fellow by the name of Charley Jubb says you know him. We've got him down at the station charged with assault. Friend of yours?"

"That's right," gasped Horace. "But surely there's a mistake, sergeant. Charley wouldn't hurt a fly!"

"Maybe not. But this wasn't no fly he hit. The fellow's in hospital."

"Here, Horace," put in Sam Ponson, pulling out his pocket-book. "Here are twenty pounds. Better go down to the station and see if you can bail him out."

The great Binks hurried along with the sergeant but he had some difficulty getting Charley out. Several witnesses, however, had come forward to swear that Charley had acted in self-defence. After some persuasion Horace got his pal out of gaol on twenty pounds bail.

They took a taxi back to the boxing hall but so much time had been wasted at the police station that when they arrived the crowd was leaving the hall.

In the dressing-room they found Sam Ponson waiting for them. Pugnose Maginnis had already gone. The boxing manager seemed happy about something.

"How did the fight go?" gasped Horace.

"We won, boys!" cried Mr. Ponson.

"Then Maginnis didn't sell the fight?"

"He didn't get the chance. There was no fight!"

"No fight!"

Mr. Ponson nodded.

"Lefty Flanagan didn't turn up. So according to the agreement the contest was awarded to Pugnose Maginnis, though Lefty retains the championship!"

At the news that Lefty Flanagan hadn't shown up at the fight an idea struck the great Binks. He turned to his pal.

"What like was this fellow you assaulted Charley?"

Charley was staring at a photograph on the wall of the room. It was a photograph of a man in a boxing attitude.

"Why, Mister Horace, sir, that's the fellow there!"

"I thought so," said the great Binks. "Charley, my lad, that was the finest bit of work you ever did in your life. That was Lefty Flanagan you knocked out!"

"I dunno me own strength," said Charley modestly.

"By heck!" broke in Mr. Ponson. "Then I certainly owe you chaps something. You can keep that bail money!"

The great Binks did a war dance.

"Twenty pounds!" he gasped. "Charley, old scout, our fortunes are made!"

But Horace was mistaken. Charley had no difficulty in proving that he had fought in self-defence and the case against him was dismissed. Unfortunately, they engaged a lawyer just to be on the safe side. The lawyer's fees and expenses came to twenty pounds!

So once more the two partners found themselves back on the rocks. But the great Binks hadn't used up all his ideas yet.

THE END.

(The fortune-hunters try their luck again next week. How do they get on? Gee! You'll laugh when you read all about it.)