

A speech such as this serves to make the point more than amply lucid: "Me friend to Crazy Dog people. Me travel many moons to say to Chief, put um pistol down chief, put um pistol down! Smoke calumet with Paleface brother. If not do, Great White Father Rutherford B. Hays send um long rifles. I have spoken."

Crime can no longer be done in concert; but it is still permissible in a duet—one villain, one henchman. Neither of these may be a Mexican any longer, for obvious good-neighbourly reasons. Pablo, Jiminez, or Ildefonso is frequently cast, in the modern Western, as the ally and devoted friend of the hero, a model of dignified conduct and elegant deportment.

After the picturization of high crime had been thoroughly bowdlerized, the movies found to their confusion that the hero himself was no meekling. He still shot to kill and never missed. Something had to be done about that. The lag between the reformation of the villain and the continued blood-thirstiness of the hero had to be taken up. Then for a period the hero had to content himself with merely getting the drop on his adversaries, disarming and sometimes whipping them. However, the frequent show of pistols and the infrequency of firing them was a recognizably false note in a proper Western.

It were better, the producers reasoned, if the hero carried no guns at all. They gave him instead, a guitar (pronounced "gitter"). They tailored him to the nines and barbered him until he glowed a cherry red.

The Pecos Kid would have shot him on sight.

The Kid in his day rode anything that had four legs and hair. Occasionally when it was fractious, he'd growl, "Whoa, yah jughead! Stan' quiet, or

I'll let yuh have one on the honker." But it was obvious that the new hero couldn't ride a common hoss, a bronc, or even a critter. It had to be a Sunday hoss, caparisoned in a thousand dollars' worth of saddle and tack, resplendent with silver filigree. This photogenic animal, like his master, now has a double who does the more perilous riding for him. He arrives on location in a padded van and eats nothing but irradiated barley soaked in sherry.

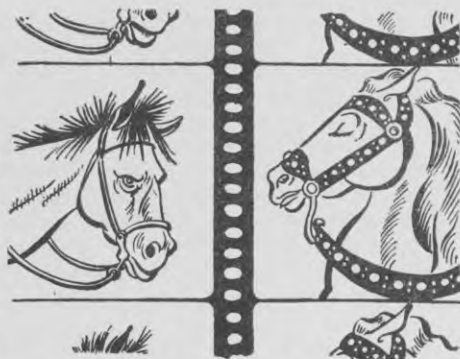
Upon this palfrey, the latter-day Western hero, accompanied by a comic aide, rides into the picture. He no longer enters that Xanadu of the horse-opera, the Western Town, but a flourishing prairie village complete with a handsome placard: "Welcome to the Incorporated Town of Happy Valley. Lions Club Meets Tuesdays 12.15 at Himmelfarb's Cafe."

Nobody calls him "Stranger" or snarls at him, "Better keep movin', cow-prod. Nobody in Singing Skull asts to see Cameo Dalton. If it wasn't he sent for you, bust brush and save yer pelt whole."

There is a saloon, of course, in Happy

Valley, but the drinking is done with genteel sleight-of-hand, so that the audience never sees the passage of glass to lip. The Singing Cowboy knows that this is the cocktail hour and it is here that he finds J. Pedley Dalton, banker, realtor, and secretary to the Junior Trade Council. Dalton has been identified by a kindly citizen as receiver-in-bankruptcy of the Rancho de los Quantros Ladrones.

The Pecos Kid would have asked for a job by simply stating that he'd hung his poncho on a vacant nail in the bunkhouse and is willing to let it hang there for the customary forty dollars a month and chuck; otherwise he'll drift, and no harm done. The Singing Cowboy, however, after properly declining a drink, a smoke, and the blandishments of a



"—four legs and hair."