

black; I'd have to hurry. Wildly I whammed in the three other shots, missed—and turned away leaving my pal to dance in the breeze.

Clay Allison, reputed killer of eighteen less-speedy hombres, tossed playing cards into the air and while they floated and ducked above his head, knocked the spots off 'em. Now, I have plenty of trouble puncturing pint-size tin cans in the ozone, much less cards, so I wisely pinned my aces, deuces, and treys to a substantial backboard. I shot at these cards at twenty feet. Not, let me hasten to assure you, by slap-bang, rapid fire from the hip, but by deliberate slow fire with a carefully aimed gun. Altogether I shot away seventy-six black-powder loads. I missed the spots on the cards twice. In all the shooting, however, I hit the spots dead center only seven times. I nicked 'em, sure, but smack 'em plumb center I did not. At that stunt old Guntwist Allison has me licked forty ways!

I tried shooting corks from whisky bottles and, when given plenty of time—say four seconds a blast—I was deadly. I tried igniting matches at twenty feet, and could break a match stick about every second shot. I never did get one to burn. I snuffed candles, bounced empty cartridge hulls, and cut a string to which was suspended a bottle. But all this stuff smacked more of the circus than the prairie gun thrower, so I gave it up.

Billy the Kid got his lead-throwing practice by plinking fence posts, so why shouldn't I? I saddled Snake and galloped alongside a row of narrow silhouette targets at twenty yards. Six shots, six misses. H-m-m. Maybe the Kid edged over a bit closer than that to his unresisting targets. Yep, that must be it; he was closer to 'em. I got nearer. At fifty feet I thumbed out six shots as the horse plunged by. Tally: one hit for the full cylinder. At thirty feet, and with Snake running wide open, I smacked five of the six silhouettes. At twenty feet I got 'em all.

Shooting two guns, I tried riding between the silhouettes, placed in parallel rows facing each other and about twenty feet apart. This stunt invariably resulted in fifty percent hits. If I watched the figures on the left I hit all of them. If I concentrated on the right-hand targets I smacked a bullet into each of them. But, since I couldn't look in two directions at once, I'd always miss the targets on the blind side.

I tried riding hell-for-leather at the silhouettes, wheeling abruptly at thirty feet, and starting to shoot as I turned. This grandstand play netted exactly no hits at all. I rode closer. At about a dozen feet, I could ventilate the figures with satisfactory regularity, but had they been men and not make-believe, they'd have drilled me long before I reached them.

As I've said, I have fired upwards of 100,000 shots at man-shaped targets from the hip. At distances up to forty feet hip shooting is dangerously lethal—of that I am positive. Targets the size of a man can be plugged with a full cylinder of .45's in around two-and-one-half seconds, and with practice it does not matter which hand you use. Two guns fired together are not quite so accurate, but the gunner can expect about ninety percent kill hits. But that forty feet, in my experience, is extreme hip-shooting range. Half that distance is much more effective.

It is pure "toro" to say that the other fighter's gun can be shot out of his hand, that his wrist can be punctured, or that he can be hit in the shoulder, ear, alongside the head, or in any other selected part of the body with a shot fired from the hip in the heat of a kill-or-be-killed gun scrap. No man can do it, no man ever has done it except by accident. Which doesn't mean that I will not highly enjoy my next Western yarn in which the lightning-fast cowboy marshal sends six irons spinning from as many fists with as many bullets. I'll eat it up, same as usual.

I've tried fanning the hammer, too, but with only one gun. (I'll leave fanning two guns simultaneously to John Wesley Hardin.) With this style of shooting, at