

THE ALMANACE GLEANER.

VOL. XLIII

GRAHAM, N. C., THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 1917

NO. 4

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The Lone Star Ranger

A ROMANCE OF THE BORDER

By ZANE GREY

AUTHOR OF "THE LIGHT OF WESTERN STARS" "RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE," ETC.



"Buck Duane! Yes," he broke out, hotly. "The Necesses gunnery. The two-shot, ace-of-spades, lone-wolf! You an' I—we've heard a thousand times of him—talked about him often. An' here he is in front of you! Poggin, you were backin' Fletcher's new pard, Buck Duane. An' he'd fooled you both but for me. But I know him. An' I know why he drifted in here. To flash a gun on Cheselaine—on you—on me! But! Don't tell me he wanted to join the gang. You know a gunman, for you're one yourself. Don't you always want to meet a real man, not a four-flush? It's the madness of the gunman, an' I know it. Well, Duane faced you—called you! An' when I sprung his name, what ought you to have done? What would the boss—anybody—have expected of Poggin? Did you throw your gun, swift, like you have so often? Naw; you froze. An' why? Because here's a man with the kind of nerve you'd love to have. Because he's great—meetin' us here alone. Because you know he's a wonder with a gun an' you love life. Because you an' I an' every damned man here has to take his front, each to himself. If we all drew we'd kill him. Sure! But who's goin' to lead? Who's goin' to be first? Who was goin' to make him draw? Not you, Poggin! You leave that for a lesser man—who've lived to see you a coward. It comes once to every gunman. You've met your match in Buck Duane. An', by God, I'm glad! Here's once I show you up!"

The hoarse, taunting voice failed. Knell stepped back from the comrade he had, he saw, shaking, haggard, but magnificent.

"Buck Duane, do you remember Hardin?" he asked, in scarcely audible voice.

"Yes," replied Duane, and a flash of insight made clear Knell's attitude. "You met him—forced him to draw—killed him?"

"Hardin was the best pard I ever had."

His teeth clicked together tight, and his lips set in a thin line.

The room grew still. Ever breathing ceased. The time for words had passed. In that long moment of suspense Knell's body gradually stiffened, and at last the quivering ceased. He crouched. His eyes had a soul-piercing fire.

Duane watched him. He waited. He caught the thought—the breaking of Knell's muscle-bound rigidity. Then he drew.

Through the smoke of his gun he saw two red spurts of flame. Knell's bullet thudded into the ceiling. He fell with a scream like a wild thing in agony.

Duane did not see Knell die. He watched Poggin. And Poggin, like a stricken and astounded man, looked down upon his prostrate comrade.

Fletcher ran at Duane with hands aloft.

"Hit the trail, you liar, or you'll hev to kill me!" he yelled.

With hands still up, he shouldered and leaped Duane out of the room. Duane looked on his horse, spurred, and plunged away.

CHAPTER XXV.

Duane returned to Fairdale and camped in the mesquite till the twentieth of the month. The few days seemed endless. All he could think of was that the hour in which he must disgrace Ray Longstreth was slowly but inexorably coming. In that waiting time he learned what love was, almost daily. When the day at last dawned he rode like one possessed down the rough slope, hurling stones and crashing through the bush, with a sound in his ears that was not all the rush of the wind. Something dragged at him.

Apparently one side of his mind was unalterably fixed, while the other was a hurrying conglomeration of flashes of thought, reception of sensations. He could not get calmness. By and by, almost involuntarily, he hurried faster on. Action seemed to make his state less oppressive; it eased the weight. But the farther he went on the harder it was to continue. Had he turned his back upon love, happiness, perhaps on life itself?

There seemed no use to go on farther until he was absolutely sure of himself. Duane received a clear warning thought that such work as seemed hunting and driving him could never be carried out in the mood under which he labored. He hung on to that thought. Several times he slowed up, then stopped, only to go on again. At length, as he mounted a lone ridge, Fairdale lay bright and green before him, not far away, and the slight was a conclusive check. There were mesquites on the ridge, and Duane sought the shade beneath them. It was the noon-hour, with hot, glaring sun and no wind. Here Duane had to have out his fight. Duane was utterly unlike himself; he could not bring the old self back; he was not the same man he once had been. But he could understand why. It was because of Ray Longstreth. Temptation assailed him. To have her his wife! It was impossible. The thought was indignantly alluring. Duane pictured a home. He saw himself riding through the cotton and rice and cane, home to a stately old mansion, where long-sared hounds bayed him welcome,

Lawson howled like a dog. With barbarous and insane fury, with sheer impotent folly, he swept a clawing hand for his gun. Duane's shot broke his action.

Before Lawson even tottered, before he loosed the gun, Longstreth leaped behind him, clasped him with left arm, quick as lightning jerked the gun from both clutching fingers and sheath. Longstreth protected himself with the body of the dead man. Duane saw red flashes, puffs of smoke; he heard quick reports. Something stung his left arm. Then a blow like wind, light of sound yet shocking in impact, struck him, staggered him. The hot rend of lead followed the blow. Duane's heart seemed to explode, yet his mind kept extraordinarily clear and rapid.

"Duane heard Longstreth work the action of Lawson's gun. He heard the hammer click, fall upon empty shell. Longstreth had used up all the loads in Lawson's gun. He cursed as a man cursed at defeat. Duane waited, cool and sure now. Longstreth tried to lift the dead man, to edge him closer toward the table where his own gun lay. But, considering the peril of exposing himself, he found the task beyond him. He bent peering at Duane



Duane Saw Red Flashes.

under Lawson's arm, which flopped out from his side. Longstreth's eyes were the eyes of a man who meant to kill. There was never any mistaking the strange and terrible light of eyes like those. More than once Duane had a chance to aim at them, at the top of Longstreth's head, at a strip of his side.

Longstreth flung Lawson's body off. But even as it dropped, before Longstreth could leap, as he surely intended, for the gun, Duane covered him, called piercingly to him:

"Don't jump for the gun! Don't! I'll kill you! Sure as God I'll kill you!"

Longstreth stood perhaps ten feet from the table where his gun lay. Duane saw him calculating chances. He was game. He had the courage that forced Duane to respect him. Duane just saw him measure the distance to that gun. Duane would have to kill him.

"Longstreth, listen," cried Duane, swiftly. "The game's up. You're done. But think of your daughter! I'll spare your life—I'll try to get you freedom on one condition. For her sake! I've got to nail—all the proofs. There lies Lawson. You're alone. I've Morton and men to my aid. Give up. Surrender. Consent to demands, and I'll spare you. Maybe I can persuade McNelly to let you go free back to your old country. It's for Ray's sake! Her life, perhaps her happiness, can be saved! Hurry, man! Your answer!"

"Suppose I refuse?" he queried, with a dark and terrible earnestness.

"Then I'll kill you in your tracks! You can't move a hand! I'll guard you or death! Hurry, Longstreth! Be a man! For her sake! Quick! Another second now—I'll kill you!"

"All right, Buck Duane, I give my word," he said, and deliberately walked to the chair and fell into it.

Longstreth looked strangely at the bloody bid on Duane's shoulder.

"There come the girls!" he suddenly exclaimed. "Can you help me drag Lawson inside? They mustn't see him."

Duane was facing down the porch toward the court and corral. Miss Longstreth and Ruth had come in, evidently alarmed. The two men succeeded in drawing Lawson into the house before the girls saw him.

"Duane, you're not hard hit?" said Longstreth.

"Reckon not," replied Duane.

"It's sorry. If only you could have told me sooner! Lawson! Always I've split over him!"

"But the last time, Longstreth."

"Yes, and I came near driving you to kill me, too. Duane, you talked me out of it. For Ray's sake! She'll be in here in a minute. This'll be harder than facing a gun."

"Hard now. But I hope it'll turn out all right. You do me a favor? Duane, will you let me a favor? He asked, and he seemed shamefaced.

"Sure."

"Let Ray and Ruth think Lawson shot you. He's dead. It can't matter. Duane, the old side of my life is coming back. It's been coming. And I'd glad places with Lawson—if I could!"

"Chance you said that, Longstreth," replied Duane. "And sure—Lawson plugged me. It's our secret."

Just then Ray and Ruth entered the room. Duane heard two low cries, so different in tone, and he saw two white faces. Ray came to his side. She lifted a shaking hand to point at the blood upon his breast. White and mute, she gazed from that to her father.

"Papa!" cried Ray, wringing her hands.

"Don't give way," he replied, husk-

ly. "Both you girls will need your nerve. Duane isn't badly hurt. But Floyd is—dead. Listen. Let me tell it quick. There's been a fight. It was Lawson—it was Lawson's gun that shot Duane. Duane let me off. In fact, Ray, he saved me. I'm to divide my property—return so far as possible what I've stolen—leave Texas at once with Duane, under arrest. He says maybe he can get McNelly, the ranger captain, to let me go. For your sake!"

She stood there, realizing her deliverance, with the dark and tragic glory of her eyes passing from her father to Duane.

"You must rise above this," said Duane to her. "I expected this to ruin you. But your father is alive. He will live it down. I'm sure I can promise you he'll be free. Perhaps back there in Louisiana the dishonor will never be known. This matter of land, water, a few stray head of stock had to be decided out of court. To protect himself he bound me to him. He could not control them. He became involved with them, and so he grew into the leader because he was the strongest. Whatever he is to be judged for, I think he could have been infinitely wiser."

CHAPTER XXVI.

On the morning of the twenty-sixth Duane rode into Bradford in time to catch the early train. His wound did not seriously incapacitate him. Longstreth was with him. And Miss Longstreth and Ruth Herbert would not be left behind. They were all leaving Fairdale forever. Longstreth had turned over the whole of his property to Morton, who was to divide it as he and his comrades believed just.

Duane had left Fairdale with his party by night, passed through Sanderson in the early hours of dawn, and reached Bradford as he had planned.

That fatal morning found Duane outwardly calm, but inwardly he was in a tumult. He wanted to rush to Val Verde. Would Captain McNelly be there with his rangers, as Duane had planned for them to be? Memory of that tawny Poggin returned with strange passion. Duane had borne hours and weeks and months of waiting, had endured the long hours of the outlaw, but now he had no patience. The whistle of the train made him leap.

It was a fast train, yet the ride seemed slow.

Duane did not speak to Longstreth and the passengers in the car, changed his seat to one behind his prisoner. The girls sat in a seat near by and were pale but composed.

Duane did not speak to Longstreth again till the train stopped at Val Verde.

They got off the car, and the girls followed as naturally as ordinary travelers. The station was a good deal larger than that at Bradford, and there was considerable action and bustle incident to the arrival of the train.

Duane's sweeping gaze searched faces, rested upon a man who seemed familiar. This fellow's look, too, was that of one who knew Duane. Then Duane, recognizing him—McNelly, clean-shaven, without mustache he appeared different, younger.

When McNelly saw that Duane intended to greet him, hurried forward to meet him. A keen light flashed from his eyes. He was glad, eager, yet suppressing himself, and the glances he sent back and forth from Duane to Longstreth were questioning, doubtful. Certain that Longstreth did not look the part of an outlaw.

"Duane! Lord, I'm glad to see you," was the Captain's greeting. Then at closer look into Duane's face his warmth fled—something he saw there checked his enthusiasm, or at least its utterance.

"McNelly, shake hands with Cheselaine," said Duane, low-voiced.

The ranger stood dumb, motionless. But he saw Longstreth's instant action, and awkwardly he reached for the outstretched hand.

"Any of your men down here?" queried Duane, sharply.

"No. They're up-town."

"Come, McNelly, you walk with him. We've ladies in the party. I'll come behind with them."

They set off up-town. Longstreth walked as if he were with friends on the way to dinner. The girls were mute. McNelly walked like a man in a trance. There was not a word spoken in four blocks.

Presently Duane espied a stone building on a corner of the broad street. There was a big sign, "Rancher's Bank."

"There's the hotel," said McNelly. "Some of my men are there. We've scattered around."

They crossed the street, went through office and lobby, and then Duane asked McNelly to take them



Road in National Estes Park.

FOR BETTER ROADS

GREATEST WASTE OF MONEYS

Proper Maintenance of Public Roads is More Important Than Building—Lax Methods Used.

By E. R. HOUSE, Colorado Agricultural College, Fort Collins, Colo.

The greatest waste of public moneys that is being committed today is in surfacing our country roads and then apparently abandoning the same. No county that engages in road building can afford to dismiss its workmen when the road has been constructed.

It rarely ever happens that the initial work on the road is done wisely.

MacNelly clapped his flat in his hand.

"This'll make the adjutant sick with joy. Maybe he won't have it on the Governor! We'll show them about the ranger service. Duane! how'd you ever do it?"

"Now, Captain, not the half nor the quarter of this job's done. The gang's coming down the road. They'll ride in to town on the dot—two-thirty."

"How many?" asked McNelly.

"Poggin, Blossom Kane, Panhandle Smith, Boldt, Jim Fletcher, and another man I don't know."

"Poggin—that's the hard nut to crack! I've heard their record since I've been in Val Verde. Where's Knell?"

"Ah!" exclaimed McNelly, softly. Then he grew businesslike, cool, and of harder aspect. "Duane, it's your game to-day. We're all under your orders."

"You understand there's no sense in trying to arrest Poggin, Kane and that lot?" queried Duane.

"No, I don't understand that," replied McNelly, bluntly.

"It can't be done. The drop can't be got on such men. Poggin! That outlaw has no equal with a gun—unless—He's got to be killed quick. They'll all have to be killed. They're all desperate, know no fear, are lightning in action."

"Very well, Duane; then it's a fight. That'll be easier, perhaps. The boys are spilling for a fight. Out with your plan now."

"Put one man at each end of this street, just at the edge of town. Put four men up in that room over the bank—two at each open window. Let them hide till the game begins. The lot of your men put inside behind the counters, where they'll hide. Now go over to the bank, spring the thing on the bank officials, send your men over one by one. No hurry, no excitement, no unusual thing to attract notice in the bank."

"All right, that's great. Tell me, where do you intend to wait?"

"I've heard McNelly's question, and it struck him peculiarly. He had seemed to be planning and speaking mechanically. As he was confronted by the fact it unplunged him somewhat, and he became thoughtful, with lowered head.

"Where'll you wait, Duane?" insisted McNelly, with keen eyes speculating.

"I'll wait in front—just inside the door," replied Duane, with an effort. "Will you hide?" asked McNelly.

Duane was silent.

McNelly started, and then a strange, comprehending light seemed to flit over his face.

"Duane, I can give you no orders to-day," he said, distinctly. "I'm only offering advice. Need you take any more risks? You've redeemed your word. The governor, the adjutant-general—the whole state will rise up and honor you. I say, as a ranger, need you take more risk than your captain?"

Still Duane remained silent. He was locked between two forces. And one, a tide that was bursting at its bounds, seemed about to overwhelm him. Finally that side of him, the retreating self, the weaker, found a voice.

"Captain, just what I'll do or where I'll be I can't say yet. In meetings like this the moment decides. But I'll be there!"

McNelly spread wide his hands, looked helplessly at his curious and sympathetic rangers, and shook his head.

"Now you've done your work—laid the trap—is this strange move of yours going to be fair to Miss Longstreth?" asked McNelly, in significant low voice.

Like a great tree chopped at the roots Duane vibrated to that. He looked up as if he had seen a ghost. Mercilessly the ranger captain went on: "You can win her, Duane! Oh, you can't fool me. I was wise in a minute. Fight with us from cover. You'll be free, honest, happy. That girl loves you! I saw it in her eyes. She's—"

But Duane cut him short with a fierce gesture. He lunged up to his feet, and the rangers fell back. Dark, silent, grim as he had been, still there was a transformation singularly more sinister, stranger.

"Enough, I've done," he said, soberly. "I've planned. Do we agree or shall I meet Poggin and his gang alone?"

McNelly cursed and again threw up his hands, this time in baffled chagrin. There was deep regret in his dark eyes as they rested upon Duane.

Duane was left alone.

TO BE CONTINUED.

NEGLECT SEEN ALONG ROADS

Many Farmers Fail to Clean Up Strip of Land by Side of Road—Keep It Seeded to Grass.

It is surprising how many folk have not gotten around to slicking up the strip of land by the side of the road that belongs to them.

That is a part of their domain—clear to the center of the highway, and it is their right, as well as their duty, to put it in the finest shape possible.

It makes the farm look so much better to clear out the old hedgerow and seed it down to grass.

IMPROVED ROAD-ADDS VALUE

Good Highways Are Wise Investment, As They Bring Farmers Into Closer Touch With World.

The department of agriculture is authority for the statement that road improvement in Dallas county, Alabama, has added \$5 an acre to the value of lands within half a mile of the improved road.

That road is a wise investment. They bring the farmer into closer touch with the world, increasing his access to markets and his opportunity for joy of living, as well as adding value to his farm.

RURAL ROADS AND BRIDGES

Increase in Annual Expenditures of More Than 250 Per Cent in Past Twelve Years.

During the past 12 years the annual expenditures on the rural roads and bridges in the United States have increased from about \$80,000,000 to about \$282,000,000, or an increase of more than 250 per cent. During this same period the annual expenditures from state funds for road and bridge construction and maintenance have increased from \$25,500,000 to \$53,402,000, or almost 200 per cent.

Increase Farm Land Values.

An increase in farm land values varying from 25 to 104 per cent has been produced by improvement of main market roads, according to statistics collected by the federal office of public roads and rural engineering.

Seamless Milk Pails.

Milk pails and cans should be smooth, with all cracks and seams flushed with solder. Seamless pails and cans have been placed on the market.

You Can Cure That Backache.

Pain along the back, dizziness, headache and general languor. Get a package of Mother Gray's Australian Balm, the Pains Expeller and Urinary tract. When you feel all run down, tired, weak and without energy use this remarkable combination of nature's herbs and roots. As a regulator it has no equal. Mother Gray's Australian Balm is Sold by Druggists or sent by mail for 50 cents in a tin. Address, The Mother Gray Co., Le Roy, N. Y.

Even when the February sales are on, national defense cannot be purchased at bargain prices.

- ### GRAHAM CHURCH DIRECTORY.
- Graham Baptist Church—Rev. W. E. Davis, Pastor. Preaching every first and third Sundays at 11:00 a. m. and 7:30 p. m. Sunday School every Sunday at 9:45 a. m. A. P. Williams Supt. Prayer meeting every Tuesday at 7:30 p. m.
 - Graham Christian Church—N. Main Street—Rev. J. F. Truitt, Pastor. Preaching services every Second and Fourth Sundays, at 11:00 a. m. Sunday School every Sunday at 10:00 a. m.—E. L. Henderson, Superintendent.
 - New Providence Christian Church—North Main Street, near Depot—Rev. J. G. Truitt, Pastor. Preaching every Second and Fourth Sunday nights at 8:00 o'clock. Sunday School every Sunday at 9:45 a. m.—J. A. Bayliff, Superintendent.
 - Christian Endeavor Prayer Meeting every Thursday night at 7:45 o'clock.
 - Friends—North of Graham Public School—Rev. Fleming Martin, Pastor. Preaching 1st, 2nd and 3rd Sundays. Sunday School every Sunday at 10:00 a. m.—James Crisco, Superintendent.
 - Methodist Episcopal, south—cor. Main and Maple St., H. E. Myers Pastor. Preaching every Sunday at 11:00 a. m. and at 7:30 p. m. Sunday School every Sunday at 10:00 a. m.—W. B. Green, Supt.
 - M. P. Church—N. Main Street, Rev. R. S. Fowler, Pastor. Preaching 1st and 3rd Sundays at 11 a. m. and 8 p. m. Sunday School every Sunday at 10 a. m.—J. L. Amick, Supt.
 - Brethren—Wat Elm Street—ev. T. M. McConnell, pastor. Sunday School every Sunday at 10 a. m.—Lynn B. Williamson, Superintendent.
 - Brethren (Travosa Chapel)—W. Clegg pastor. Preaching every Second and 4th Sundays at 7:30 p. m. Sunday School every Sunday at 10 p. m.—Harvey White, Superintendent.
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GRAHAM, N. C.

FREE DIARY.

We take pleasure in announcing that any of our readers can secure a pretty 1917 pocket diary, free of charge by sending the postage therefor, two cents in stamps, to D. Swift & Co., Patent Attorneys, Washington, D. C. The diary is a gold mine of useful information, contains the popular and electoral vote received by Wilson and Hughes from each State in 1916, and also by Wilson, Roosevelt and Taft in 1912; states the amount of the principal crops produced in each State in 1916; gives the census population of each State in 1910, and 1910; the population of about 600 of the largest cities in the United States, a synopsis of business laws, patent laws, household recipes and much other useful information. The diary would cost you 25c at a book store. For three cents in stamps we will send a nice wall calendar 10x11 inches. Send five one-cent stamps and get the diary and calendar.

Chance to See a Thrill.

Hotel Attendant—"Get your head out of the elevator shaft. What's the matter with you?" Uncle Eben—"Just a minute, son. There's a fellow just made an ascension in that darn thing, and I'm going to watch him make the parachute drop."—Puck.

Tagore's Philosophy.

My heart is full and I feel that happiness is simple like a meadow flower. . . . I look around me and see the silent sky and flowing water and feel that happiness is spread abroad as simply as a smile on a child's face.—Tagore.

Everything Complete.

"Well, Henry," I said to my neighbor's little boy, "I suppose you will soon be running the new automobile?" "O, no," he said. "My papa bought a chauffeur with the car."—Exchange.