The Lone Star Ranger

A Fine Tale of the Open Country

By ZANE GREY

CHAPTER XXIV—Continued.

—14—

If not hate, then assuredly great passion toward Poggin manifested itself in Knell's scornful, fiery address, in the shaking hand he thrust before Poggin's face. In the ensuing silent pause Knell's panting could be plainly heard. The other men were pale, watchful, cautiously edging either way to the wall, leaving the principals and Duane in the corner of the room.

"Spring his name, then, you—" said Poggin, violently with a curse.

Strangely Knell did not even look at the man he was about to denounce. He leaned toward Poggin, his hands, his body, his long head all somewhat expressive of what his face disguised.

"Buck Duane!" he yelled, suddenly.

The name did not make any difference in Poggin. But Knell's passionate, swift utterance carried the suggestion that the name ought to bring Poggin to quick action. It was possible, too, that Knell's manner, the import of his denunciation, the meaning back of all his passion held Poggin bound more than the surprise. For the outlaw certainly was surprised, perhaps staggered at the idea that he, Poggin, had been about to stand sponsor with Fletcher for a famous outlaw hated and feared by all outlaws.

Knell waited a long moment, and then his face broke its cold immobility in an extraordinary expression of devilish glee. He had hounded the great Poggin into slouching that gave him victory, monstrous joy.

"Buck Duane! Yes," he broke out hotly. "The 'Success' gunman! That two-bit, ace-of-spades Duane-stuff! You an' I—we've herd 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 Chesedine—on you—on me! Bah! 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 maddness of the gunman, an' I know it. Well, Duane faced you—called you! An' when I sprung his name, what ought you have done? What would the boss—anybody—have expected of Poggin? Did you throw your gun, swift, like you have so often? Now 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 look his front, each to himself. If we all drew we'd kill him. Sure! But who's goin' to lead? Who was goin' to be first? Who was goin' to make him draw? Not you, Poggin! You leave that for a lesser man—him—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! There's once I show you up!"

The hoarse, taunting voice failed. Knell stepped back from the comrade he hated. He was wet, 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?"

"Yes."

"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. Even 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 bullets 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 flev to kill me!" he yelled.

With hands still up, he shouldered and herded Duane out of the room.

Duane leaped on his horse, spurred, and plunged away.

CHAPTER XXV.

Duane returned to Fairdale and camped in the mesquite till the twenty-third 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 and also duty. 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 harrying 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 further he went on the harder it was to continue. Had he turned his back upon love, happiness, perhaps on life itself?

There was no use to go on farther—he must be sure of himself. Duane received a clear warning, thought that such work as seemed haunting 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 low ridge, Fairdale lay bright and green before him, not far away, and the sight was a conclusive check. There were mesquites on the ridge, and Duane sought the shade beneath them. It was the noon hour, with the glary 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 insidiously alluring. Duane pictured a home. He saw himself riding through the cotton and rice and cane, home to a stately old mansion, where long-eared hounds bayed him welcome, and a woman looked for him and met him with happy and beautiful smiles. There might—there would be children. And something new, strange, confounding with its emotion, came to life deep in Duane's heart. There would be children—Ray Longstreth, their mother! This kind of life, a lonely outcast, always yearned for and never had! He saw it all, felt it all.

But beyond and above all other claims came Captain MacNelly's. It was then there was something cold and deadlike in Duane's soul. For he knew what were the thoughts of one thing he was sure—he would have to kill either Longstreth or Lawson. Longstreth might be trapped into arrest; but Lawson had no sense, no control, no fear. He would snarl like a panther and go for his gun, and he would have to be killed. One of all the combinations, was the one to be calculated upon.

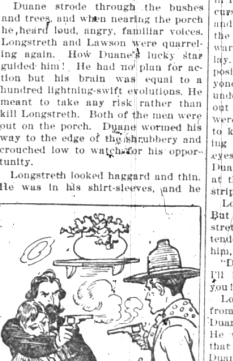
Duane came out of it all bitter and callous and sore—in the most fitting of moods to undertake a difficult and deadly enterprise. He had fallen upon his old, strange, futile dreams, now rendered poignant by reason of love. He drove away those dreams. In their place came the images of the olive-skinned Longstreth with his sharp eyes, and the dark, evil-faced Lawson, and then returned tenfold more thrilling and sinister the old strange passion to meet Poggin.

It was about one o'clock when Duane rode into Fairdale. The streets for the most part were deserted. He went directly to find Morton and Zimmer. He found them at length, restless, somber, anxious, but unaware of the part he had played at Ord. They said Longstreth was home too. It was possible that Longstreth had arrived home in ignorance.

Duane told them to be on hand in town with their men in case he might need them, and then with his teeth locked he set off for Longstreth's ranch.

Duane strode through the bushes and trees, and when nearing the porch he heard loud, angry, familiar voices. Longstreth and Lawson were quarreling again. How Duane's lucky star guided him! He had no plan for action but his brain was equal to a hundred lightning-swift evolutions. He meant to take any risk rather than kill Longstreth. Both of the men were out on the porch. Duane wormed his way to the edge of the shrubbery and crouched low to watch for his opportunity.

Longstreth looked haggard and thin. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and he



Duane Saw Red Flashes.

had come out with a gun in his hand. This he laid on a table near the wall. He wore no belt.

Lawson was red, bloated, thick-lipped, all fiery and sweaty from drink, though sober on the moment, and he had the expression of a desperate man in his last stand. It was his last stand, though he was ignorant of that.

"What's your news? You needn't be afraid of my feelings," said Lawson.

"Ray confessed to an interest in this ranger," replied Longstreth.

Duane thought Lawson would choke. He was thick-necked anyway, and the rush of blood made him tear at the soft collar of his shirt. Duane awaited his chance, patient, cold, all his feelings shut in a vise.

"But why should your daughter meet this ranger?" demanded Lawson, harshly.

"She's in love with him, and he's in love with her."

Duane reveled in Lawson's condition. The statement might have had the force of a juggernaut. Was Longstreth sincere? What was his game?

Lawson, finding his voice, Ray, cursed Ray, cursed her ranger, then Longstreth.

"You damned selfish fool!" cried Longstreth in bitter scorn. "All you think of is yourself—your loss of the girl. Think once of me—my home—my life!"

Then the connection subtly put out by Longstreth apparently dawned upon the other. Somehow through this girl her father and cousin were to be betrayed. Duane got that impression, though he could not tell how true it was. Certainly Lawson's jealousy was his paramount emotion.

"You help with you?" burst out Lawson, incoherently. He was frenzied. "I'll have her, or nobody else will!"

"You never will," returned Longstreth, stridently. "So help me God I'd rather see her the ranger's wife than yours!"

While Lawson absorbed that shock Longstreth leaned toward him, all of hate and menace in his mien.

"Lawson, you made me what I am," continued Longstreth. "I backed you—shielded you. You're Chesedine—if the truth is told! Now it's ended. I quit you. I'm done!"

Their gray passion-corded faces were still as stones.

"Gentlemen!" Duane called in far-reaching voice as he stepped out. "You're both done!"

They wheeled to confront Duane.

"Both more! Not a muscle! Not a finger!" he warned.

Longstreth read what Lawson had put the mind to read. His face turned from gray to ashen.

"What d'ye mean?" yelled Lawson, fiercely, shrilly. It was not in him to obey a command, for see imploding depths.

In a quivering end strung, yet with perfect control, Duane raised his left hand to turn back a lapel of his open vest. The silver star flashed brightly.

Lawson howled like a dog. With ludicrous 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, and his lightning forked 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 and yet shocking in impact, struck him, staggered him. The hot cold of lead followed the blow. Duane's heart seemed to explode, yet his third kept extraordinarily clear and rapid.

Duane heard Longstreth work the action of his empty guns. 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 to him. The table offered his own gun lay. But, considering the peril of exposing himself, he found the task beyond him. He bent peering at Duane under Lawson's arm, which flopped out from his side. Longstreth's eyes were the eyes of a man who meant murder. There was neither any mistaking the strange and terrible light in 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 you handcuffed—the proofs. There lies Lawson, dead alone. I've Morton and men to put aid. Give up. Surrender. Consent to demands, and I'll spare you. Maybe I can persuade MacNelly to let you go. For your sake, 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 escape a bullet. Your life 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 stalked to the chair and fell into it.

Longstreth looked strangely at the bloody blot 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 corrals. Miss Longstreth and Ruth had come in sight, were swiftly approaching, evidently alarmed. The two girls leaped on seeing Duane, then ran to the house before the girls were near.

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

"I'm sorry. If only you could have seen 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."

"Duane, will you, do 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 change places with Lawson if I could!"

"Glad 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, huskily. "Both of you girls will need your nerve. Duane is badly hurt. But Floyd is—is dead. Listen. Let me tell it quick. There's been a fight. It—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—secure so far as possible what I've stolen—leave Texas at once with Duane under arrest. He says maybe he can get MacNelly, 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 kill you. But, your calling is silver life will live it down. I'm sure I can promise you don't 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 men 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 worse."

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 for good. 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 MacNelly be there with his rangers, as Duane had planned for them to be? Memory of that tawny Poggin returned with strange persistence. Duane had borne hours and weeks and months of waiting, and 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, but was waiting for a sign—a cue. Then Duane, looking beyond, plainly clean-shaven. Without moustache he appeared different, younger.

When MacNelly 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. Certainly Longstreth did not look the part of an outlaw.

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

"MacNelly, shake hands with Chesedine," said Duane, low-voiced.

The ranger seemed numb, motionless. But he saw Longstreth's insolent action, and awkwardly he reached for the outstretched hand.

"Are you—any—down here?" queried Duane, sharply.

"No. There's—no—sign," replied MacNelly, mechanically. "We've had the posse with us. Been here—a week. Nothing doing. Reckon—we'll—go back—to-morrow. Duane, what's—the—matter?"

Duane's keen ear caught the hesitancy, the broken speech. MacNelly was quite MacNelly, yet he was not quite himself. He was under a strain, had acted queerly, spoken in fragments.

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

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

They crossed the street, went through office and lobby, and then Duane asked MacNelly to take them to a private room. Without a word the Captain complied. When they were all inside Duane closed the door, and, drawing a deep breath as if of relief, he faced them calmly.

"Miss Longstreth, you and Miss Ruth try to make yourselves comfortable now," he said. "And don't be distressed." Then he turned to his captain. "MacNelly, this girl is the daughter of the man I've brought to you, and this one is his niece."

Then Duane briefly related Longstreth's story, and, though he did not spare the rustler chief, he was generous.

"When I went after Longstreth," concluded Duane, "it was either to kill him or offer him his freedom on conditions. So I chose the latter for his daughter's sake. He has already disposed of all his property. I believe he'll live up to the conditions. He's to leave Texas never to return. Chesedine has been a mystery, and now it 'll fade."

A few moments later Duane followed MacNelly to a large room, like a hall, and here were men reading and smoking. Duane knew them—rangers!

MacNelly beckoned to his men. They crowded eager, like hounds ready to run. They all talked at once, and the word most significant and frequent in their speech was "outlaws."

MacNelly clapped his fist in his hand.

"This 'll make the adjutant sick with joy. Maybe he won't have it on the Governor! Well, show them about the ranger served. Duane! how—how—about it?"

"Now, Captain, not the half nor the quarter of this job's done. The gang's scattered down the road. They'll ride in to town on the 23d—two-thirty."

"How many?" asked MacNelly.

"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?"

"Knell's dead."

"Ah!" exclaimed MacNelly, softly. Then he grew businesslike, cool, afid 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 MacNelly, bluntly.

"Then it will 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 bad, desperate, know no fear, are lightning in action."

"Very well, Duane; then it's a fight. That 'll be easier, perhaps. The boys are spoiling 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—four at each open window. Let them hide till the game begins. The rest 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?"

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

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

"I'll wait in front—just inside the door," replied Duane, with an effort.

"But will you hide?" asked MacNelly.

Duane was silent.

MacNelly stared, 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 yourself. 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 tide of love, two weeks ago, to bring to the attention of those in that far-off corner what the land of Western Canada could do in the production of grains and roots from its soil. And these that did these farmers do? The first thing he was to carry off the first prize and sweepstakes for wheat. That was a foregone conclusion, for it has now become an established fact that nowhere else in the world is, there grown wheat of the high character and matchless value of Western Canadian wheat. Then they'll be said of oats, of barley and of rye. But when it came to notice that Western Canada took first prize for alfalfa, it was then that more special attention was given to the products from Western Canada. It showed that in that country there lies the opportunity for supplementing the wonderful native grasses—so full of nutrition that with the tamed varieties, among them being alfalfa, the cattle with no other food were fattened and fitted for the shambles. Western Canada's worth was proved as probably the greatest mixed farming portion of the continent. When it was known that the Western Canadian prairies reach the Chicago stockyards they bring the top price and outweigh those from other places where grass fattening is the process. But it was not only in grains that Western Canada carried off the highest honors at the Pan-American exhibition. Potatoes, turnips, beets, carrots and rutabagas also took the highest honors. In root production this country is becoming favorably known.

The question often arises as to markets. There is always the highest price awaiting the producer, and as soon as the Hudson Bay Railway, now about completed, reaches the Bay, there will be an additional outlet for the product of the farm. The Pacific coast trade, via the Panama canal, will give another outlet of much full advantage may be taken. With virgin land selling at from $15 to $20 per acre, and improved farms at reasonable prices and on easy terms, there is no better opportunity for the man with limited means and a desire to secure a home at the same time. In the country where he can soon become wealthy. Duane! oh, you can't fool me. I was wise in a minute. Fight with us from cover. You'll be free, honored, 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'm done," he said, somberly. "I've finished. Do we agree—or shall I meet Poggin and his gang alone?"

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

Duane was left alone.

Never had his mind been so quick, so clear, so wonderful in its understanding of what had heretofore been intricate and elusive impulses of his strange nature. His determination was to meet Poggin; meet him before anyone else had a chance—Poggin first—and then the others! He was as unalterable in that decision as if, on the instant of its acceptance he had become stone.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

ATMOSPHERE SUITED TO HIM

New Boarder's Tastes Were Musical, It Is True, but Could He Live Through This?

"So you are a great lover of music," said Mrs. Brindle to the new boarder, who was about to take possession of his room. "Really it is almost a coincidence that you should have come to us. I have a son who is a musical prodigy, so boarders are musical. You will find yourself in a real musical atmosphere.

"I play the piano a little myself, and I have a little granddaughter only nine years old who plays wonderfully for one of her years. I will have her play for you this evening if you are fond of it. Mr. Parkly, the very blonde young man who will sit opposite you at table has composed several two-steps, and Miss Stidgeon, who will sit at your left, sings very well, indeed. You must hear her sing 'Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight.'

"Then the lady on your right works in a phonograph store and naturally that makes her somewhat musical. The elderly, bald gentleman tunes pianos and I'm still red-headed man sells sheet music. The lady with the gray curls has a graphophone in her room and is very nice about asking the other boarders in to hear it. Then the lady with the blonde wig—only don't tell her that I told you it is a wig—belongs to the chorus of a church and sings in the choir every Sunday. After a Sunday for it, I—"

"Yes, yes," broke in the new boarder with me, "but I'm in the hands and my daughter is the manicurist. She also plays a little and my grandson is learning to cover getting thistle out of his trousers' cuffs with a bit of paper and spit it. We have delightful little evenings in the parlor and will be glad to have you join us. You will find yourself in a real musical atmosphere. You must hear me get five imitations of Harry Lauder. So glad you love music. I am sure that we will have a great deal in common."—Judge.

Price of Roses.

A small flower shop in the humbler quarters of a Southern city. A young hospital nurse, still in training, is asking the price of roses, her rounded cheek, itself a rose, half turned to the door.

The daily tasks of the hospital training school are exhausting. But she has indulged to embroider a work-bag, a wedding present, wrought by her own hands—and she seeks to adorn the package with a few buds.

To the question who puts there is no reply; only a thoughtful look.

Such voice as is "an excellent thing in woman" repeats it. Then the woman of the shop, quietly:

"I heard you the first time, dear, and I've heard your voice before. You were good, so good, to my Alice at the hospital. How she suffered! And how patient to the end!"

Then, turning to the boy, she bids him give the lady all the flowers she may need. And she herself piles a white rose on the young nurse's bosom.—New York Independent.

Plan New Sea Canal.

Amsterdam papers are discussing the advisability of enlarging and deepening the North sea canal and dispensing with the locks at Ymuiden, thus giving a free waterway without locks from the North sea to Amsterdam, only by doing this, it is said, can Amsterdam hope to check the steady inroads on her trade made by the rapidly growing port of Rotterdam, which has several canal connections.

How It Looked to Her.

Grandma was enjoying her first visit to the city. She loved music and was enjoying the popular musical play of the season. Watching the graceful couple in a daring waltz, she whispered to her hostess: "That'll be a watch all right."

CANADA AGAIN A PRIZE WINNER

Highest Premiums Awarded at Many Exhibitions.

The Fall fair season is past and a retrospect of them shows that Western Canada is stronger than ever in the matter of exhibits, and has taken more than her usual share of the prize money. From Western Canada to Texas is a long look, from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba to the southwestern corner of Texas is several days' journey, but the enterprising farmers from this new country to the, northwest were wide awake to the possibilities that waited them at the International Dry Farming Congress held at El Paso, Texas, a few weeks ago, to bring to the attention of those in that far-off corner what the land of Western Canada could do in the production of grains and roots from its soil. And these that did these farmers do? The first thing he was to carry off the first prize and sweepstakes for wheat. That was a foregone conclusion, for it has now become an established fact that nowhere else in the world is, there grown wheat of the high character and matchless value of Western Canadian wheat. Then they'll be said of oats, of barley and of rye. But when it came to notice that Western Canada took first prize for alfalfa, it was then that more special attention was given to the products from Western Canada. It showed that in that country there lies the opportunity for supplementing the wonderful native grasses—so full of nutrition that with the tamed varieties, among them being alfalfa, the cattle with no other food were fattened and fitted for the shambles. Western Canada's worth was proved as probably the greatest mixed farming portion of the continent. When it was known that the Western Canadian prairies reach the Chicago stockyards they bring the top price and outweigh those from other places where grass fattening is the process. But it was not only in grains that Western Canada carried off the highest honors at the El Paso exhibition. Potatoes, turnips, beets, carrots and rutabagas also took the highest honors. In root production this country is becoming favorably known.

The question often arises as to markets. There is always the highest price awaiting the producer, and as soon as the Hudson Bay Railway, now about completed, reaches the Bay, there will be an additional outlet for the product of the farm. The Pacific coast trade, via the Panama canal, will give another outlet of much full advantage may be taken. With virgin land selling at from $15 to $20 per acre, and improved farms at reasonable prices and on easy terms, there is no better opportunity for the man with limited means and a desire to secure a home at the same time. In the country where he can soon become wealthy. Duane! oh, you can't fool me. I was wise in a minute. Fight with us from cover. You'll be free, honored, 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'm done," he said, somberly. "I've finished. Do we agree—or shall I meet Poggin and his gang alone?"

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

Duane was left alone.

Never had his mind been so quick, so clear, so wonderful in its understanding of what had heretofore been intricate and elusive impulses of his strange nature. His determination was to meet Poggin; meet him before anyone else had a chance—Poggin first—and then the others! He was as unalterable in that decision as if, on the instant of its acceptance he had become stone.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Irish Wit Triumphant.

An Irish waiter named Kenny was noted for his wit and ready answers. A party of gentlemen who were staying at the hotel heard of Kenny's wit, and one of them made a bet that he would say something that Kenny couldn't answer at once.

A bottle of champagne was ordered, and the man who had made the bet took hold of the bottle and commenced to open it. The cork came out with a bang and flew into Kenny's mouth.

"Ah," he said, "that is not the way to Cork."

Kenny took the cork out of his mouth and replied:

"No; but it's the way to Kil-Kenny."

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To Clean White Paint.

To clean white paint that has not been varnished put upon a plate some of the best whiting; have ready some fresh, warm water and a piece of flannel. Dip into the water and squeeze nearly dry; then take as much whiting as will adhere to it, apply to the paint, when a little rubbing will instantly remove any dirt or grease. Wash off well with water and rub dry with a soft cloth. Paint thus cleaned looks equal to new and without doing the least injury to the most delicate color. It will preserve the paint much longer than if cleaned with soap and it does not require more than half the time usually occupied in cleaning.

A pear tree on the farm of J. E. Eade of Shoemakersville, Pa., one hundred and sixty-three years old, is bearing fruit.

A tiny electric lamp is mounted on the handle of a safety razor of English invention.

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Topeka, Kansas, has a Female Lamp Workers' union.