THE S'MI-WEEKLY TRIBUNE, NORTH PLATTE, NEBRASKA.

## THE LONE STAR RANGER By ZANE GREY This is a story about the Texas Plains People

This is a rushing story of the wild border days in Texas in the early seventies, with their desperate contests between outlaws and rangers. Incident after incident crowd upon another-hairbreadth escapes, deeds of thrilling adventures, manly chivalry, and devoted love. The hero is a murderer; a man-killer not by choice but by necessity. His deeds in a wild country rival the deeds of Scotch Highland chiefs which Sir Walter Scott has given us in his great romances. You'll want to follow the fortunes of Buck Duane in "The Lone Star Ranger."

## CHAPTER I.

So it was in him, then-an inherited fighting instinct, a driving intensity to kill. He was the last of the Duanes, that old fighting stock of Texas. But not the memory of his dead father, nor the plending of his sort-voiced mother, nor the warning of this uncle who stood before him now, had brought to Buckley Duane so much realization of the dark, passionate strain in his blood. It was the recurrence, a hundredfold increased in power, of a strange emotion that for the last three years had arisen in him.

"Yes, Cal Bain's in town, full of had whisky an' huntin' for you," repeated the elder man, gravely.

"But what's he want me for?" demanded Dunne. "To insult me again? I won't stand that twice."

"He's got a fever that's rampant in Texas these days, my boy. He wants gun-play. If he meets you he'll try to kill you.'

Here it stirred in Duane again, that bursting gush of blood, like a wind of he became a thoughtful man. flame shaking all his inner being, and subsiding to leave him strangely chilled.

"Kill me! What for?" he asked. shootin' these days? Didn't five cowwas sweet on you."

his girl.'

"I reckon she ain't quit. But never it had come into Duane's possession. mind her or reasons. Cal's here, just But the cold, bright polish of the drunk enough to be ugly. He's achin' weapon showed how it had been used. to kill somebody. He's one of them Duane could draw it with inconceivfour-flush gun-fighters. There's a lot able rapidity, and at twenty feet he

was told of him that he shot twice : after a bullet had passed through his There's been another raid at Flesher's the dodge.' heart. Think of the terrible nature of a man, to be able to do that. If An' so the town's shore wide open." you have any such blood in you, never give it a chance."

"What you say is all very well, length of the long block, meeting many done by." uncle," returned Dunne, "but the only people-farmers, ranchers, clerks, way out for me is to run, and I won't merchants, Mexicans, cowboys and in'. But now we can't stop to cry do it. Cal Bain and his outfit have women. It was a singular fact that over split blood. You've got to leave light of his campfire? It had taken on I reckon you'd better stock up before already made me look like a coward." when he turned to retrace his steps "Well, then, what're you goin' to the street was almost empty. If it

do?" inquired the elder man. "I haven't decided-yet."

"No, but you're comin' to it mighty with remarkable quickness the signs always feared." fast. That terrible spell is workin' in of a coming gun-play. Rumor could you. You're gettin' cool an' quiet, not fly so swiftly. In less than ten, an' you think deep, an' I don't like the minutes everybody who had been on light in your eye. It reminds me of the street or in the shops knew that His broad shoulders shook. your father." Buck Dunne ha' come forth to meet

"I wonder what dad would say to his enemy. me today if he were alive and here,' Dunne walked on. When he came said Duane to within fifty paces of a saloon he

"What do you think? What could swerved out into the middle of the you expect of a man who never word a glove on his right hand for twenty years? He passed on in this way the leng?

"Well, he'd hardly have said much. Dad never talked. But he would have in the door of his saloon. done a lot. And I guess I'll go downtoy n and let Cal Bain find me."

Then followed a long sllence, during which Duane sat with downcast as he brags, he'll show there." eyes, and the uncle appeared lost in sad thought of the future. Presently he turned to Duane with an expression that denoted resignation, and yet a spirit which showed wherein they were of the same blood.

"You've got e fast horse-the fast-Everall's place was on the corner. est I know of in this country. After you meet Bain hurry back home. I'll have a suddlebag packed for you and the horse ready.

With that he turned on his heel and went into the house, leaving Duane to revolve in his mind his singular speech. That hour of Duane's life was like years of actual living, and in it

He went into the house and inspected his belt and gun. The gun was a Colt .45, six-shot, and heavy, with an lvory handle. He had packed it, on "Lord knows there ain't any reason. and off, for five years. Before that it But what's that to do with most of the had been used by his father. There roar.

were a number of notches filed in the boys over to Everall's kill one another bulge of the ivory handle. This gun dead all because they got to jerkin' at | was the one his father had fired twice a quirt among themselves? An' Cal has no reason to love you. His girl and his hand had stiffened so tightly upon it in the death-grip that his fin-

it in his movement. He swaggered forward, rapidly closing up the gap. "I quit when I found out she was gers had to be pried open. It had Red, swenty, disheveled and hatless, never been drawn upon any man since his face distorted and expressive of ready killed a man, and this showed in his demeanor. His hands were extended before him, the right hand a little of wild cowboys who're ambitious for | could split a card pointing edgewis lower than the left. At every step he bellowed his rancor in speech mostly Duane wished to avoid meeting his curses. Gradually he slowed his walk, come home." rangers. Cal's sure not much for you mother. Fortunately, as he thought, then halted. A good twenty-five paces to bother with, if you only keep out she was away from home. He went separated the men. out and down the path toward the "Won't nothin' make you draw, you "You mean for me to run?" asked gate. The air was full of the fra--!" he shouted fiercely. grance of blossoms and the melody of "I'm waltin' on you, Cal," replied birds. Outside in the road a neighbor Duane. woman stood talking to a countryman

dozen rods from Everall's door.

Bain's right hand stiffened-moved.

had taught him. He pulled twice, his

Duane drew a deep breath and

Duane wheeled and hurried away.

"Reckon Cal got what he deserved.

CHAPTER II.

When Duane came to the gate of

his home and saw his uncle there with

a mettlesome horse, saddled, with can-

subtle shock pervaded his spirit. It

that he must now become a fugitive.

An unreasonable anger took hold of

him.

"Plumb center." said one.

ranch. The King Fisher gang, likely, "Son, you killed him-then?" asked the uncle, huskily. Dunne stalked outdoors and faced

"I knew it. Long ago I saw it comtown an' this part of the country," "Mother!" exclaimed Duane,

"She's away from home. You can was an instinct for Texans to fight, it walt. I'll break it to her-what she was also instinctive for them to sense

Suddenly Duane sat down and covsaw him. He lay there in the middle ered his face with his hands. of the green brightness, prostrate, mo-"My God ! Uncle, what have I done?" tionless, dying. Cal Bain!

"Listen, son, an' remember what I

say," replied the elder man, earnestly. "Don't ever forget. You're not to



ness that yet was ominous of a strange blame. I'm glad to see you take it this If Bain was drunk he did not show way, because maybe you'll never grow visitation, the peculiarly imagined hard an' callous. You're not to blame. This is Texas. You're your father's things that presaged the coming of Cal cover your cluster of bullet holes. son. These are wild times. The law Bain. Doggedly Duane fought against Thet's the word thet's gone down the the most malignant intent, he was a as the rangers are laying it down now wild and sinister figure. He had al- can't change life all in a minute." ing himself that it was just imagina- chicken, an' I've been long on the "I'm a murderer," said Duane snud- tion, that it would wear off in time. dodge. Mebbe a little of my society

"No, son, you're not. An' you never what he hoped. But he would not give learn the country."

"Wal, Buck," said Stevens, in a "Onks went away with the rangers, all. And for that I've got to go on ing, he still must hide his identity and take risks of detection. If he did not friendly manner, "I ain't presumin' on

a strange green luster and seemed to

be waving off into the outer shadows,

Duane heard no step, saw no move-

ment; nevertheless, there was another

present at that campfire vigil. Dunne

That haunting visitation left Duane

sitting there in a cold sweat, a remorse

gnawing at his vitals, fealizing the

curse that was on him. He divined

years old.

work on some distant, outlying ranch, your time or company. I see you're how was he to live? The Idea of headin' fer the river. But will you "Yes. I stood over him-watched stealing was repugnant to him. The stop long enough to stake a feller to down the street. He wniked the whole him die. I did as I would have been future seemed gray and somber a bite of grub?" enough. And he was twenty-three

"I'm out of grub and pretty hungry myself," admitted Duane. But what was the matter with the

"Been pushin' your hoss, I see. Wal, you hit thet stretch of country."

He made a wide sweep of his right arm, indicating the southwest, and there was that in his action which seemed significant of a vast and barren region.

"Stock up?" queried Duane, thoughtfully.

"Shore. A feller has jest got to eat. I can rustle along without whisky, but not without grub. Thet's what makes it so embarrassin' travelln' these parts dodgin' your shadow. Now, I'm on my way to Mercer. It's a little two-bit town up the river a ways. I'm goin' to pack out some grub."

Stevens' tone was inviting. Evidently he would welcome Duane's companionship, but he did not openly say so. Duane kept silence, however, and then Stevens went on.

"Stranger, in this here country two's a crowd. It's-safer. I never was much on this lone-wolf dodgin', though I've done it of necessity. It takes a mighty in a shady spot to rest and graze his good man to travel alone any length of time. Why, I've been thet sick I was jest achin' fer some ranger to come along an' plug me. Give me a broke the level of the monotonous ho- pardner any day. Now, mebbe you're rizon. About three in the afternoon he not thet kind of a feller, an' I'm shore came to a little river which marked not presumin' to ask. But I jest declares myself sufficient."

"You mean you'd like me to go with you?" asked Dunne.

In this kind of travel and camping Stevens grinned. "Wal, I should smile. I'd be particular proud to be braced with a man of your reputahad recently passed. He followed the tion."

"See here, my good fellow, that's all nonsense," declared Duane, in some neighborhood of the river, he picketed haste.

"Shore I think modesty becomin' to a youngster," replied Stevens. "I hate a brag. Buck, I don't know much him. He made efforts to think of other about you. But every man who's lived things, but in vain. Every moment he along the Texas border remembers a expected the chill, the sense of lonell- lot about your dad. I jest heerd thet you was lightnin' on the draw, an' when you cut loose with a gun, why lights and shades of the night-these the figger on the ace of spades would the insidious phantom. He kept tell- border. Now, Buck, I'm not a spring Still in his heart he did not believe won't hurt you none. You'll need to

a reputation. They laugh at the sher- toward him. Iffs an' brag about how they'd fix the of his way."

Duane, in scorn.

"I reckon I wouldn't put it that way.



"I'd Never Hang."

Just avoid him. Buck, I'm not afraid Cal would get you. What I'm most afraid of is that you'll kill Bain."

Duane was silent, letting his uncle's carnest words sink in, trying to realize their significance.

"Buck," went on the uncle, "you're twenty-three now, an' a powerful sight | ed his dark gaze for an instant. of a fine fellow, barrin' your temper. You've a chance in life. But if you go gun-fightin', if you kill a man, you're ruined. The rangers would anke you an outlaw. This even-break business doean't work with them. If you resist arrest they'll kill you. If you submit to arrest, then you go to Jail, an' mebbe you hang."

"I'd never hang," muttered Duane, darkly.

"I recken you wouldn't." replied the old man. "You'd he like your father. He was ever ready to draw-too ready. In times like these, with the Texas rangers enforcin' the law, your dad an' he's heah for keeps." would have been driven to the river. He was killed in a street-fight. An' it up if he's that bad?"

in a wagon; they spoke to him; and he heard, but did not reply. Then he began to stride down the road toward a ball underhand-a draw his father the town.

shots almost as one. Bain's big Colt Wellston was a small town, but imboomed while it was pointed downportant in that unsettled part of the ward and he was tailing. His bullet great state because it was the trading scattered dust and gravel at Duane's center of several hundred miles of territory. On the main street there were feet. He fell loosely, without contorperhaps fifty buildings, some brick, tion. In a flash all was reality for Duane.

some frame, mostly adobe, and one third of the lot, and by far the most He went forward and held his gun prosperous, were saloons. Duane's eye ready for the slightest movement on ranged down the street, taking in all the part of Bain. But Bain lay upon at a glance. By the time he reached his back, and all that moved were Sol White's place, which was the first his breast and his eyes. How strangely the red had left his face-and also the saloon, he was walking slowly. Sevdistortion! The devil that had showed eral people spoke to him and turned to look back after they had passed. In Bain was gone. He was sober and He paused at the door of White's saconscious. He tried to speak, but loon, took a sharp survey of the intefailed. His eyes expressed something rior, then stepped inside, pitifully human. They changed-

rolled-set blankly. The saloon was large and cool, full of men and noise and smoke. The noise ceased upon his entrance, and sheathed his gun. He felt calm and the silence ensuing presently broke to cool, glad the fray was over. One violent expression burst from him, the clink of Mexican silver dollars at a monte table. All eyes except those "The fool !" of the Mexican gamblers were turned apon Duane. Several of the cowboys around him. and ranchers present exchanged glances. Duane had been weighed by unerring Texas instinct, by men who had just left the gaming table, leaned all packed guns. The boy was the down and pulled open Bain's shirt. son of his father. Whereupon they He had the ace of spades in his hand. greeted him and returned to their He laid it on Bain's breast, and the drinks and cards. Sol White stood black figure on the card covered the with his big, red hands out upon the two bullet holes just over Bain's bar; he was a tall, rawboned Texan, heart. with a long mustache waxed to sharp points.

He heard another man say: "Howdy, Buck," was his greeting to Duane. He spoke carelessly and avert-Buck Duane's first gun-play. Like father like son !"

"Howdy, Sol," replied Duane, afbwly. "Say, Sol, I hear there's a gent in town looking for me bad."

"Reckon there is, Buck," replied White. "He came in heah aboot an hour ago. Shore he was some riled an' a-roarin' for gore. Told me confidential a certain party had given you a white allk scarf, an' he was hell-bent on wearin' it home spotted red."

"Anybody with him?" queried Duane.

"Burt an' Sam Outcalt an' a little cowpuncher I never seen before. Theyall was coaxin' him to leave town. But he's looked on the flowin' glass, Buck,

"Why doesn't Sheriff Oaks lock him

will be. But you've got to be an out- up; he would not accept the ghost of law till time makes it safe for you to his victim as a reality.

"An outlaw?"

a man, Good-by."

Duane, with blurred sight and conracting throat, gripped his uncle's well. Then he leaped astride the black and rode out of town.

As swiftly as was consistent with a care for his steed, Duane put a distance of fifteen or eighteen miles behind him. He passed several trail across country. It was a flat region with a poor growth of mesquite and prickly-pear cactus. Occasionally he caught a glimpse of low hills in the distance. He had hunted often in that section, and knew where to find grass and water. When he reached this higher ground he did not, however,

halt at the first favorable camping again. spot, but went on and on. At last he found a secluded spot, un-

der cover of thick mesquites and onks, at a goodly distance from the old trail. When he looked up there were men He took saddle and pack off the horse, made a small fire, prepared and ate his supper. This done, ending the work Another, a cowboy who evidently

pipe. When night set in and the place seemed all the more isolated and lonely for that Duane had a sense of

It dawned upon him all at once that from one man." he was nervous, watchful, sleepless,

The fact caused him surprise, and he him. He who had always been free, easy, happy, especially when out alone he was a good-natured ruffian. in the open, had become in a few short rest. He intended to be off by dawn,

heading toward the southwest. Had he a destination? It was vague as his teen, rope and bage all in place, a knowledge of that great waste of this stranger. mesquite and rock bordering the Rio

had slipped his mind-the consequence Grande. Somewhere out there was a of his act. But sight of the horse and refuge. For he was a fugitive from the look of his uncle recalled the fact justice, an outlaw. This being an outlaw then meant

hotly. "Meeting Bain wasn't much, must herd among men obnoxious to swiftly facts about gun-play traveled Uncle Jim. He dusted my boots, that's him. If he worked for an honest liv- 'on the Texas border,

relief.

Gray dawn found him in the saddle again, headed for the river. Half an "I said it. If we had money an' in- hour of riding brought him to the fluence, we'd risk a trial. But we've dense chaparral and willow thickets, neither. Strike for the wild country, These he threaded to come at length an' wherever you go an' whatever you | to the ford. Once upon the opposite do-be a man. You can't come home, shore, he reined in his horse and When this thing is lived down, if that looked darkly back. This action time ever comes, I'll get word into the marked his acknowledgment of his sit-Duane threw his gun as a boy throws unsettled country. It'll reach you uation: he had voluntarily sought the some day. That's all. Remember, be refuge of the outlaws; he was beyond the pale.

The trail led into a road which was hard packed and smooth from the hand and bade him a wordless fare- tracks of cattle. He doubted not that he had come across one of the roads used by border raiders. He headed into it, and had scarcely traveled a mile when, turning a curve, he came point-blank upon a single horseman riding toward him. Both riders wheeled ranches, and was seen by men. This their mounts sharply and were ready did not suit him, and he took an old to run and shoot back. Not more than a hundred paces separated them. They stood then for a moment watching each other.

"Mawnin', stranger," called the man, dropping his gun to his hip.

"Howdy," replied Duane shortly. They rode toward each other, closing half the gap, then they halted

"I seen you ain't no ranger," called the rider, "an' shore I ain't none." He laughed loudly, as if he had made a joke.

"How'd you know I wasn't i ranger?" asked Duane curiously, Somehow he had instantly divined that this of that day, he sat down and filled his horseman was no officer, or even a rancher trailing stolen stock.

"Wal," said the fellow, starting his never git ready to run the other way

He laughed again. He was small and wiry, slouchy of attire, and armed ably glad now to hear the sound of began to think back, to take note of to the teeth, and he bestrode a fine his own voice. Duane listened, and his late actions and their motives. The bay horse. He had quick, dancing sometimes he thought with a pang change one day had wrought amazed brown eyes, at once frank and hold, of the distinction of name and heritage and a coarse, bronzed face. Evidently of blood his father had left to him.

Duane acknowledged the truth of hours bound, serious, preoccupied. He the assertion, and turned over in lds felt tired, yet had no inclination to mind how shrewdly the fellow had guessed him to be a hunted man. "My name's Luze Stevens, an' I hall from the river. Who're you?" said

Duane was silent.

"I reckon you're Buck Duane," went on Stevens. "I heerd you was a bad man with a gun."

This time Duane laughed, not at the eternal vigilance. No home, no rest, doubtful compliment, but at the idea no sleep, no content, no life worth the that the first outlaw he met should "That d-d fool!" he exclaimed living! He must be a lone wolf or he know him. Here was proof of how

There was something sincere and likable about this outlaw.

"I dare say you're right," replied Duane, quietly. "And I'll go to Mercer with you."

Next moment he was riding down the road with Stevens. Duane had



Both Riders Wheeled Their Horses Sharply.

horse forward at a walk, "a ranger'd never been much of a talker, and now he found speech difficult. But his companion did not seem to mind that. He was a jocose, voluble fellow, prob-

CHAPTER III.

Late that day, a couple of hours before sunset, Duane and Stevens, having rested their horses in the shade of some mesquites near the town of Mercer. saddled up and prepared to move.

Do you believe that Buck dld the wrong thing by running away from home? Doesn't it seem that he could have proved selfdefense and saved himself from the outlaw life?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)