

# THE LONE STAR RANGER

A ROMANCE OF THE BORDER

BY

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HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS  
NEW YORK AND LONDON  
MCMXV

## CHAPTER VIII—(Continued).

She embraced him, and the sudden, violent, unfamiliar contact sent such a shock through him that he all but forgot the deep game he was playing. She, however, in her agitation did not notice his shrinking. From her embrace and the tender, incoherent words that flowed with it he gathered that Euchre had acquainted her of his action with Black. "He might have killed you," she whispered, more clearly; and if Duane had ever heard love in a voice he heard it then. It softened him. After all, she was a woman, weak, fated through her nature, unfortunate in her experience of life, doomed to unhappiness and tragedy. He met her advance so far that he returned the embrace and kissed her. Emotion such as she showed would have made any woman sweet, and she had a certain charm. It was easy, even pleasant, to kiss her; but Duane resolved that whatever her abandonment might become, he would go no further than the lie she made him act.

"Buck, you love me?" she whispered. "Yes—yes," he burst out, eager to get it over, and even as he spoke he caught the pale gleam of Jennie's face through the window. He felt a shame he was glad she could not see. Did she remember that she had promised not to misunderstand any action of his? What did she think of him, seeing him out there in the dusk with this bold woman in his arms? Somehow that dim sight of Jennie's pale face, the big dark eyes, thrilled him, inspired him to his hard task of the present.

"Listen, dear," he said to the woman, and he meant his words for the girl. "I'm going to take you away from this outlaw den if I have to kill Bland, Alloway, and anybody who stands in my path. You were dragged here. You are good—I know it. There's happiness for you somewhere—a home among good people who will care for you. Just wait till—"

His voice trailed off and failed from excess of emotion. Kate Bland closed her eyes and leaned her head on his breast. Duane felt her heart beat against his, his conscience smote him a keen blow, if she loved him so much! But memory and understanding of her character hardened him again and he gave her such commiseration as was due her sex, and no more.

"Boy, that's good of you," she whispered, "but it's too late. I'm done for. I can't leave Bland. All I ask is that you love me a little and stop your gun-throwing."

The moon had risen over the eastern bulge of dark hills, and now the valley was flooded with mellow light and shadows of cottonwoods wavered against the silver.

Suddenly the clip-clop, clip-clop of hoofs caused Duane to rise his head and listen. Horses were coming down the road from the head of the valley. The hour was unusual for riders to come in. Presently the narrow, moonlit lane was crossed at its far end by black moving objects. Duane discerned them.

"It's Bland!" whispered the woman, grasping Duane with shaking hands. "You must run! No, he'd see you. That'd be worse. It's Bland! I know his horse's trot."

"But you said he wouldn't mind my calling here," protested Duane. "Euchre's with me. It'll be all right."

"Maybe so," she replied, with visible effort at self-control. Manifestly she had a great fear of Bland. "If I could only think!"

Then she dragged Duane to the door, pushed him in.

"Euchre, come out with me! Duane you stay with the girl! I'll tell Bland you're in love with her. Jen, if you give us away I'll wring your neck."

The swift action and fierce whisper told Duane that Mrs. Bland was herself again. Duane stepped close to Jennie, who stood near the window. Neither spoke, but her hands were outstretched to meet his own. They were small, trembling hands, cold as ice. He held them close, trying to convey what he felt—that he would protect her. She leaned against him, and they looked out of the window. Duane felt calm and sure of himself. His most pronounced feeling besides that for the frightened girl was a curiosity as to how Mrs. Bland would rise to the occasion. He saw the riders dismount down the lane and wearily come forward. A boy led away the horses. Euchre, the old fox, was talking loud and with remarkable ease, considering what he claimed was his natural cowardice.

"That was way back in the '60s about the time of the war," he was saying. "Rustin' cattle wasn't nuthin' then to what it is now. An' times is rougher these days. This gun-throvin' has come to be a disease. Men have an itch for the draw same as they used to have fer poker. The only real gambler outside of greasers we ever had here was Bill, an' I presume Bill is burnin' now."

The approaching outlaws, hearing voices, halted a rod or so from the porch. Then Mrs. Bland uttered an exclamation, tensely meant to express surprise, and hurried out to meet them. She greeted her husband warmly and gave welcome to the other man. Duane could not see well enough in the shadow to recognize Bland's companion, but he believed it was Alloway.

"Dog-tired we are and starved," said Bland, readily. "Who's here with you?"

breath. The other man made a violent action of some kind and apparently was quieted by a restraining hand.

"Kate, you let Duane make love to Jennie?" queried Bland, in redulously. "Yes, I did," replied the wife stubbornly. "Why not? Jen's in love with him. If he takes her away and marries her she can be a decent woman."

Bland kept silent a moment, then his laugh pealed out loud and harsh. "Chess, did you get that? Well, by God! what do you think of my wife?" "She's lyin' or she's crazy," replied Alloway, and his voice carried an unpleasant ring.

Mrs. Bland promptly and indignantly told her husband's lieutenant to keep his mouth shut.

"Ho, ho, ho!" rolled out Bland's laugh. Then he led the way to the porch, his spurs clinking, the weapons he was carrying rattling, and he flopped down on a bench.

"How are you, boss?" asked Euchre. "Hello, old man. I'm well, but all in."

Alloway slowly walked on to the porch and leaned against the rail. He answered Euchre's greeting with a nod.

Mrs. Bland's full voice in eager questioning had a tendency to ease the situation. Bland replied briefly to her, reporting a remarkably successful trip.

Duane thought it time to show himself. He had a feeling that Bland and Alloway would let him go for the moment. They were plainly nonplussed, and Alloway seemed sullen, brooding.

"Jennie," whispered Duane, "that was clever of Mrs. Bland. We'll keep up the deception. Any day now be ready!"

She pressed close to him, and a barely audible "Hurry!" came breathing into his ear.

"Good night, Jennie," he said aloud. "Hope you feel better tomorrow."

Then he stepped out into the moonlight and spoke. Bland returned the greeting, and though he was not amiable, he did not show resentment.

"Met Jasper as I rode in," said Bland, presently. "He told me you made Bill Black mad, and there's liable to be a fight. What did you go off the handle about?"

Duane explained the incident. "I'm sorry I happened to be there," he went on. "It wasn't my business."

"Scurvy trick that'd been," muttered Bland. "You did right. All the same, Duane, I want you to stop quarreling with my men. If you were one of us—that'd be different. I can't keep my men from fighting. But I'm not called on to let an outsider hang around my camp and plug my rustlers."

"I guess I'll have to be hitting the trail for somewhere," said Duane.

"Why not join my band?" asked Duane, and he got a bad start, already, Duane, and if I know this border you'll never be a respectable citizen again. You're a born killer. I know every bad man on this frontier. More than one of them have told me that something exploded in their brain, and when sense came back there lay another dead man. It's not so with me. I've done a little shooting, too, but I never wanted to kill another man just to rid myself of the last one. My dead men don't sit on my chest at night. That's the gun fighter's trouble. He's crazy. He has to kill a new man—he's driven to it to forget the last one."

"But I'm no gun fighter," protested Duane. "Circumstances made me—"

"No doubt," interrupted Bland, with a laugh. "Circumstances made me a rustler. You don't know yourself. Your father was one of the most dangerous men Texas ever had. I don't see any other career for you. Instead of going it alone—a lone wolf, as the Texans say—why not make friends with other outlaws? You'll live longer."

Euchre squirmed in his seat.

"Been givin' the boy exactly that same line talk. That's why I took him in to bunk with me. If he makes pards among us there won't be any more trouble. An' he'd be a grand feller for the gang. I've seen Wild Bill Hickok throw a gun, an' Billy the Kid, an' Hardin, an' Chess here—all the fastest men on the border. An' with apologies to present company, I'm here to say Duane has them all skinned. His draw is different. You can't see how he does it."

Euchre's admiring praise served to create an effective little silence. Alloway shifted uneasily on his feet, his spurs jangling faintly, and did not lift his head. Bland seemed thoughtful.

"That's about the only qualification I have to make me eligible for your band," said Duane, easily.

"It's good enough," replied Bland, shortly. "Will you consider the idea?"

"I'll think it over. Good night."

He left the group, followed by Euchre. When they reached the end of the lane, and before they had exchanged a word, Bland called Euchre back. Duane proceeded slowly along the moonlit road to the cabin and sat down under the cottonwoods to wait for Euchre. The night was intense and quiet, a low hum of insects giving the effect of a congestion of life. The beauty of the soaring moon, the ebony canons of shadow under the mountain, the melancholy serenity of the perfect night, made Duane shudder in the realization of how far aloof he now was from enjoyment of these things. Never again so long as he lived could he be natural. His mind was clouded. His eye and ear henceforth must register impressions of nature, but the joy of them had fled.

Still, as he sat there with a foreboding of more and darker work ahead of him, there was yet a strange sweetness left to him, and it lay in thought of Jennie. The pressure of her cold little hands lingered in his. He did not think of her as a woman, and he did not analyze his feelings. He just had vague, dreamy thoughts and impressions that were interspersed with constant and stern revivings of

plans to save her.

A suffling, aroused him. Euchre's dark figure came crossing the moonlit grass under the cottonwoods. The moment the outlaw reached him Duane saw that he was laboring under great excitement. It scarcely affected Duane. He seemed to be acquiring patience, calmness, strength.

"Bland kept you pretty long," he said. "Habit till I git my breath," replied Euchre. He sat silent a little while, fanning himself with a sombrero, though the night was cool, and then he went into the cabin to return presently with a lighted pipe.

"Fine night," he said; and his tone further acquainted Duane with Euchre's quaint humor. "Fine night for love affairs, by gum!"

"I'd noticed that," rejoined Duane. "Wal, I'm a son of a gun if I didn't start an' watch Bland choke his wife till he longed to stick out an' she got black in the face."

"No!" ejaculated Duane. "Hope to die if I didn't. Buck, listen to this here yarn. When I got back to the porch I seen Bland was wakin' up. He'd been too fagged out to finger much. Alloway an' Kate had gone in the house, where they lit up the lamps. I heard Kate's high voice, but Alloway never chirped. He's not the talkin' kind, an' he's damn dangerous when he's that way. Bland asked me some questions right from the shoulder. I was ready for them, an' I swore the moon was green cheese. He was satisfied. Bland always trusted me, an' I liked me, too. I reckon. I hated to be black that way. But he's a hard man with bad intentions toward Jennie, an' I'd double-cross him any day."

"Then we went into the house, Jennie had gone to her little room, an' Bland called her out. She said she was undressin'." An' he ordered her to put her clothes back on. Then, Buck, his next move was some surprisin'. He deliberately threw a gun on Kate. Yes sir, he pointed his big blue Colt right at her, an' he says:

"I've a mind to blow out your brains."

"Go ahead," says Kate, cool as could be.

"You lied to me," he roars. Bland slammed the gun down an' made a grab fer her. She fought him, but wasn't a match fer him, an' he got her by the throat. He choked her till I thought she was strangled. Alloway made him stop. She flopped down on the bed an' gasped fer a while. When she come to them hard-shelled cusses went after her, tryin' to make her give herself away. I think Bland was jealous. He suspected she'd got thick with you an' was foolin' him. I reckon that's a sore feelin' for a man to have—to guess pretty nice, but not to be sure. Bland gave it up after a while. An' then he cussed an' raved at her. One sayin' of his is worth pinnin' in your sombrero: 'It ain't nuthin' to kill a man. I don't need much fer that. But I want to know, you hussy!'

"Then he went in an' dragged poor Jen out. She'd had time to dress. He so mad he hurt her sore leg. You know Jen got that injury fightin' off one of them devils in the dark. An' when I seen Bland twist her—hurt her—I had a queer hot feelin' deep down in me, an' fer the only time in my life I wished I was a gun-fighter."

"Wal, Jen amazed me. She was whiter'n a sheet, an' her eyes were big and stary, but she had nerve. Fust time I ever seen her show any."

"Jennie," he said, "my wife said Duane came here to see you. I believe she's lyin'. I think she's been carryin' on with him, an' I want to know, if she's been an' you tell me the truth, I'll let you go. I'll send you out to Huntsville, where you can communicate with your friends. I'll give you money."

"That must've been a hell of a minnit fer Kate Bland. If ever I seen death in a man's eye I seen it in Bland's. He loves her. That's the strange part of it."

"That's Duane comin' here to see my wife," Bland asked, fierce-like.

"No, said Jen, she's here to see me."

"He's been after you?"

"Yes."

"He has fallen in love with you?"

"I'm not—I don't know—he hasn't told me."

"But you're in love with him?"

"Yes," she said; an' Buck, if you only could have seen her! She threw up her hands, an' her eyes were full of fire. Bland seemed fagged out at sight of her. An' Alloway, why, he was hit plumb center. He's in love with Jen. An' the look of her then was enough to make any feller quit. He jest slunk out of the room. I told you, mebbe, that he'd been tryin' to git Bland to marry Jen to him. So even a tough like Alloway can love a woman!"

"Bland stamped up an' down the room. He swore he'd dyn' hard."

"Jennie," he said, once more turnin' to her. "You swear in fear of your life that you're tellin' truth. Kates not in love with Duane? She's let him come to see you? There's been nuthin' between them?"

"No, I swear," answered Jennie; an' Bland sat down like a man licked.

"Go to bed, you white-faced—" Bland choked on some word or other—a bad one, I reckon—an' he positively shook in his chair.

"Jennie went then, an' Kate began to have hysterics. An' your Uncle Euchre ducked his nut out of the door an' come home."

Duane did not have a word to say at the end of Euchre's long harangue. He experienced relief. As a matter of fact, he had expected a good deal worse. He thrilled at the thought of Jennie perjuring herself to save that abandoned woman. When mysteries these feminine creatures were.

"Wal, there's where our little deal stands now," resumed Euchre, meditatively. "You know, Buck, as well as me that if you'd been some feller who hadn't shown he was a wonder with a gun you'd now be full of lead. If you'd happen to kill Bland an' Alloway, I reckon you'd be as safe on this here border as you would in Santone. Such is gun fame in this land of the draw."

## CHAPTER IX

Both men were awake early, silent with the premonition of trouble ahead, thoughtful of the fact that the time for the long planned action was at hand. It was remarkable that a man so loquacious as Euchre could hold his tongue so long; and this was significant of the deadly nature of the intended deed. During breakfast he said a few words customary in the service of food. At the conclusion of the meal he seemed to come to an end of deliberation.

"Buck, the sooner the better now," he declared, with a glint in his eye. "The more time we use up now the

less surprised Bland'll be."

"I'm ready when you are," replied Duane quietly, and he rose from the table.

"Wal, saddle up, then," went on Euchre, gruffly. "Tie on them two packs I made, one fer each saddle. You can't tell—mebbe either hoss will be carryin' double. It's good they're both big, strong hosses. Guess that wasn't a wise move of your Uncle Euchre's—bringin' in your hosses an' havin' them ready."

"Euchre, I hope you're not going to get in bad here. I'm afraid you are. Let me do the rest now," said Duane. The old outlaw eyed him sarcastically.

"That'd be turrible now, wouldn't it? If you want to know, why, I'm in bad already. I didn't tell you that Alloway called me last night. He's gettin' wise pretty quick."

"Euchre, you're going with me?" queried Duane, suddenly divining the truth.

"Wal, I reckon. Either to hell or safe over the mountain! I wish I was a gun fighter. I hate to leave here without takin' a peg at Jackrabbit Benson. Now, Buck, you do some hard fingerin' while I go nosin' around. It's pretty early, which is all the better."

Euchre put on his sombrero, and as he went out Duane saw that he wore a gun and cartridge belt. It was the first time Duane had ever seen the outlaw armed.

Duane packed his few belongings into his saddlebags, and then carried the saddles out to the corral. An abundance of alfalfa in the corral showed that the horses had fared well. They had gotten almost fat during his stay in the valley. He watered them, and then the saddles loosely cinched, and then the bridles. His next move was to fill the two canvas water bottles. That done, he returned to the cabin to wait.

At the moment he felt no excitement or agitation of any kind. There was no more thinking and planning to do. The hour had arrived, and he was ready. He understood perfectly the desperate chances he must take. His thoughts continued to Euchre and the surprisingly loyalty and goodness in the hardened old outlaw. Time passed slowly. Duane kept glancing at his watch. He hoped to start the thing and get away before the outlaws were out of their beds. Finally he heard the shuffle of Euchre's boots on the hard path. The sound was quicker than usual.

When Euchre came around the corner of the cabin Duane was not so astounded as he was concerned to see the outlaw white and shaking. Sweat dripped from him. He had a wild look. "Luck's ours—so—fur, Buck!" he panted.

"You don't look it," replied Duane. "I'm turrible sick. Jest killed a man. Fust one I ever killed!"

"Who?" asked Duane, startled.

"Jackrabbit Benson. An' sick as I am, I'm gloryin' in it. I went nosin' round up the road. Saw Alloway goin' into Deger's. He's thick with the Degers. Reckon he's askin' questions. Anyway, I was sure glad to see him away from Bland's. An' he didn't see me. When I dropped into Benson's there wasn't nobody there but Jackrabbit an' some greasers he was startin' to work. Benson never had no use fer me. An' he up an' said he wouldn't give a two-bit piece fer my life. I asked him why."

"You're double crossin' the boss an' Chess," he said.

"Jack, what'd you give fer your own life? I asked him.

"He straightened up surprised an' mean lookin'. An' I let him have it, plumb center! He wilted, an' the greasers run. I reckon I'll never sleep again. But I had to do it."

Duane asked if the shot had attracted any attention outside.

"I didn't see anybody but the greasers, an' I sure looked sharp. Comin' back I cut across through the cottonwoods past Bland's cabin. I meant to keep out of sight, but somehow I had an idee I might find out if Bland was awake yet. Sure enough, I run plumb into Beppo, the boy who tends Bland's hosses. Beppo licks me. An' when I inquired of his boss he said Bland had been up all night fightin' with the senora. An' Buck, here's how I figger. Bland couldn't let up last night. He was sore, an' he went after Kate again, tryin' to wear her down. Jest as likely he might have went after Jennie, with wuss intentions. Anyway, he an' Kate must have had it hot an' heavy. We're pretty lucky."

"It seems so. Well, I'm going," said Duane, tersely.

"Lucky! I should smile! Bland's been up all night after a most draggin' ride home. He'll be fagged out this mornin', sleepy, sore, an' he won't be expectin' hell before breakfast. Now you walk over to his house. Meet him how you like. That's your game. But I'm suggestin', if he comes out an' you want to parley, you can jest say you'd thought over his proposition an' was ready to join his band, or you ain't. You've got to kill him, an' it'd save time to go over your gun on sight. Might be wise, too, fer it's likely he'll do that same."

"How about the horses?"

"I'll fetch them an' come along about two minutes behind you. Pears to me you ought to have the job done an' Jennie outside by the time I git there. Once on them hosses, we way or anybody else gits into action. Jennie ain't much heaverin' a rabbit. That big black will carry you both."

"All right. But once more let me persuade you to stay—not to mix any more in this," said Duane, earnestly.

"Nope, I'm goin'. You heard what Benson told me. Alloway wouldn't give me the benefit of any doubts. Buck, a man!"

Duane merely nodded, and then, saying that the horses were ready, he strode away through the grove. Accounting for the short cut across grove and field, it was about five minutes' walk up to Bland's house. To Duane it seemed long in time and distance, and he had difficulty in restraining his pace. As he walked there came a gradual and subtle change in his feelings. Again he was going out to meet a man in conflict. He could have avoided this meeting. But despite the fact of his counting the hot, inexplicable rush of blood. The motive of this deadly action was not personal, and somehow that made a difference.

No outlaws were in sight. He saw several Mexican riders with cattle. Blue columns of smoke curled up over some of the cabins. The fragrant smell of it reminded Duane of his home and cutting wood for the stove. He noted a cloud of creamy mist rising above the river, dissolving in the sunlight.

Then he entered Bland's lane.

While yet some distance from the cabin he heard loud, angry voices of man and woman. Bland and Kate still quarreling! He took a quick survey of the surroundings. There was now not even a Mexican in sight. Then he hurried a little. Halfway down the lane he turned his head to peer through the cottonwoods. This time he saw Euchre coming with the horses. There was no indication that the old outlaw might lose his nerve at the end. Duane had feared this.

Duane now changed his walk to a leisurely saunter. He reached the porch and then distinguished what was said inside the cabin.

"If you do, Bland, by heaven I'll fix you and her!" That was panted out in Kate Bland's full voice.

"Let me loose! I'm going in there, I tell you!" replied Bland, hoarsely.

"That for?"

"I want to make a little love to her. Ha! ha! It'll be fun to have the laugh on her new lover."

"You lie!" cried Kate Bland. "I'm not saying what I'll do to her afterwards!" His voice grew hoarser with passion. "Let me go now!"

"No! no! I won't let you go. You'll choke the—the truth out of her—you'll kill her."

"The truth!" hissed Bland. "Yes, I lied, Jen lied. But she lied to save me. You needn't—murder her—for that."

Bland cursed horribly. Then followed a wrestling sound of bodies in violent straining contact—the scrape of feet—the jangle of spurs—a crash of sliding table or chair, and then the cry of a woman in pain.

Duane stepped into the open door, inside the room. Kate Bland lay half across a table where she had been flung, and she was trying to get to her feet. Bland's back was turned. He had opened the door into Jennie's room and had one foot across the threshold. Duane caught the girl's low, shuddering cry. Then he called out loud and clear.

With cat-like swiftness Bland wheeled, then froze on the threshold. His sight, quick as his action, caught Duane's menacing, unmistakable position.

Bland's big frame filled the door. He was in a bad place to reach for his gun. But he would not have time for a step. Duane read in his eyes the desperate calculation of chances. For a fleeting instant Bland shifted his glance to his wife. Then his whole body seemed to vibrate with the swing of his arm.

(Continued next week.)

## Who Are the Unsung Song Writers?

From "Nights in London," by Thomas Burke.

Where are the song writers That seems to me one of the greatest tragedies of the vaudeville world; that a man should compose a song that puts a girdle round about the globe; a song that is sung on liners, on troop ships, at feasts in far away Singapore, or Mauritius; a song that inspires men in battle and helps soldiers to die; a song that like "Tipperary," is now the slogan of an empire; that a man should compose such a thing and live and die without one in 10,000 of his singers knowing even his name.

Who composed "Tipperary?" You do not know. I thought not. Who composed "Let's All Go Down the Strand," a song that surely should have been adopted as "The Anthem of London?" Who composed "Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight," the song that led the Americans to victory in Cuba and the Philippines? We know the names of hundreds of finicky little poets and novelists and pianists, but their work never shook a nation one inch, nor cheered men in sickness and despair. Of the men who really captured and interpreted the national soul we know nothing, and how much they get for their copy-right, is a matter that even they themselves do not seem to take with sufficient seriousness.

Yet, personally, I have an infinite tenderness for these unknowns; for they have done me more good than any other triflers with art forms. I should like to shake the composer of "La Maxixe" by the hand, and I owe many a debt of gratitude to the creator of "Red Pepper" and "Robert E. Lee." So many of these fugitive airs have been part of my life, as they are part of every cockney's life.

When I hear "La Maxixe," I shiver with frightful joy. It recalls the hot summer of 1906, when I had money and wine and possession and love. When I hear "Beautiful Doll," I become old and sad; I want to run away and hide myself. When I hear "Hiawatha" or "Bill Bailey," I get back to the mood of that year—a mood murderously bitter. Verily, the stood organ and its composers are things to be remembered in our prayers and toasts.

## The Skeleton in the Closet.

From the Boston Advertiser.

Professor Adams, of Yale, noting how much less Americanized large bodies of foreign-born citizens had become than most of us were supposing, raises the point that large immigration after the war may strengthen this doubtful element. It may, indeed. And if foresightedness and forehandedness were as common among us as they once were the interval separating us from the war's conclusion might be employed in preparing to meet this probable condition. They have, however, declined. Preparation involves clear and straight and hard thinking—and we are not prone to do that. We prefer watchful waiting, to trust to luck, to put off. We have done this in the matter of national military defense. We shall doubtless do it with respect to those economic and social crises arising out of the war, the shadows of which are being cast before. This is a depressing factor in American life, the skeleton in our democratic closet. It is partly atoned for, however, by the furiousness with which we try to make up for lost time once the gravity of a situation penetrates through our easy going optimism.

## Tommy's Reason.

From the Youth's Companion.

The reply of a small boy to the new minister who was making his first call on the family was pert. The boy shook hands very politely.

The minister said: "And now, my little man, what are you going to be when you grow up?"

To the surprise of the assembled family the child said: "I'm going to be a preacher."

"That's fine! I am glad to hear you say that," said the minister, taking the boy on his knee.

Encouraged by this friendliness, the boy continued: "Teth, thir, I'm going to be a preacher. I want to be a lawyer, but I haven't got sense enough, and I'll have to be a preacher."

A new machine for sharpening safety razor blades does the work with revolving cylinders so that the blades are concealed without the edges being worn down.