

RANCH MYSTERY

A STORY FOR CHILDREN

By Paula Norton

BETH came out to a Nevada cattle ranch to spend several months with her Aunt Mary and Uncle Walter and their two sons Tim and Ron. When she arrived at the ranch she found her aunt was away caring for a sick neighbor at a distant ranch, and her uncle had been slightly wounded by cattle thieves who had robbed him of two fine saddle horses.

The first night Beth overheard a conversation between her uncle and the boys in which the man cautioned the boys not to worry her with their troubles, which were more real than the boys had led her to believe. She learned of their fear that the constant thieving of their cattle was a plot to drive them from the land. Why? They mentioned Juan, a lazy

join in the laugh that followed.

"This great leader of airplane mysteries," Tim explained, nodding toward Ron, "means that a lanky guy named Claude, driving a lanky horse hitched to a rattling old buggy, comes past here every day about noon, and he is our mail-carrier. He'll take your letter to town."

"I think, Uncle Walter, I'll write my letter now, and do the dishes afterwards," she said.

"There's no hurry about the dishes, honey," smiled her uncle. "They've waited plenty since the boys' mother's been away."

Beth sat in her room trying to write a newswy letter to her mother without telling all she knew about the ranch mystery that filled her mind so com-



Mexican hired man, whom Uncle Walter had had to discharge. Was Juan in this picture? The uncle seemed to think him too stupid to engineer anything as big as this plot threatened to be.

Chapter 5.
BETH was awakened by the voices of Ron and Tim outside her door. They were discussing in loud whispers the advisability of awakening her.

"You needn't argue about that," she called out to them. "I'll be right out." She heard the boys scurry out to the kitchen.

When Beth joined them, they were "washing-up" at the bench on the screen porch. And woman-like she accused them of leaving grey smudges on the roller-towel.

Ron, ever quick to say something, anything, defended himself by accusing his brother, Tim. "Those marks came off the back of Tim's neck. Let's see, Tim, you washed your neck last Easter, didn't you?" And he wisely ducked out the door to avoid the hair brush Tim salled after him.

Uncle Walter joined them at the breakfast table, holding his wounded shoulder high as if to protect it. Beth looked at the tall Westerner with interest. She saw a strong man weighted down with a great worry . . . the possible loss of his ranch.

However, no word was mentioned about the conversation she had heard the night before. Instead the boys and their father talked about the work to be done that day on the ranch. Orders were planned for the two old ranch hands who bunked in the little shack beyond the harness house. Then Uncle Walter mentioned, quite casually, that he planned to ride into town the next day and "have a look around."

Ron and Tim glanced up at him and Beth saw the look of approval and understanding that passed between them. She hurried through her breakfast, folded her napkin to fit the steer's-horn ring that lay by her plate, and stood up.

"Where do you mail letters out here?" she asked. "I think I'd better be getting one off to my mother."

RON grinned. "You don't mail 'em. . . . Claude, the great air-dare-devil comes zooming out here in his tri-motor plane and scoops 'em up in a butterfly net. In bad weather we send 'em by carrier-pigeon." Even Tim had to

pletely. She chewed the end of the pen holder. . . . it WAS hard not to keep thinking about the things that concerned the ranch family and therefore concerned her too. She was determined to help if she could. Surely there was SOMETHING even SHE could do! She'd think about it . . . all of it! What about Juan? Was he just a disgruntled ex-employee looking for revenge?

She wrote to her mother and told her how she loved the ranch and her uncle, how amusing the boys were and how she looked forward to a long visit.

The boys went out to the barns and Uncle Walter dragged an old rocker into a patch of sunlight on the porch. There he sat all morning, smoking his pipe and gazing through sun-squinted eyes at the distant hills.

Just before noon he called to Beth. "Here comes Claude, honey. Have you got your letter handy?"

The girl came running out to the porch and saw the wobbly rig coming down the dusty road. Uncle Walter waved to the lanky figure on the seat.

WHEN the buggy drew up at the mailbox down by the gate, Beth went out to meet the lean man who crawled from the wobbly seat.

"How you feelin' neighbor?" the man shouted up to the porch. "I heard you had some trouble out here. I sure hope you're comin' along alright now."

"Oh, I'm first rate, first rate," Uncle Walter shouted back.

Then Claude turned to Beth with a friendly grin. He shuffled among the papers in a leather pouch he wore slung across his shoulder. "Morning, young lady. Where'd you come from? Stranger to us, ain't you?"

"Yes," Beth liked this tall friendly man with the smiling pale blue eyes. "I'm Uncle Walter's niece. I came here from the East. Will you please post this letter for me?"

"Sure thing, sure thing," and he tucked the letter into the side of the leather pouch. "Here's a paper for your uncle. Too bad about that shootin'." He nodded toward the man on the porch. "He got any idea who done it?"

Beth was surprised at the abrupt question. But the man seemed so friendly and concerned.

"No," she answered. "I don't think so."

Claude turned then and climbed into the dusty buggy. He gathered up the reins and clicked to the old horse. "Well, I have," he muttered. . . . the old rig started off down the road.

(Continued next week)

Another Thumber!



THE BUG EATER

DID you know that there are some plants that eat insects, just as though they were the very tastiest diet?

The bright red splashes on the green leaves make it appear very like a flower, and thus little winged creatures are fooled. A beetle or a wasp may go sailing happily by . . . see the bright flower, and stop to peer into its depths. Alas, if Mr. Beetle goes down into the cup to explore, he never comes out again!

There he will tangle in the white, soft hairs, and the leaves of the pitcher plant will begin to close. Mr. Beetle is TRAPPED. He can never get out again, and naturally he dies of starvation.

IT IS possible that the word "star" comes from the Sanskrit words "to strew." So stars are little flames "strewn" over the sky. At least that is the pretty thought Hendrik van Loon gives us in "Van Loon's Geography."



NOW that we have the American continent discovered and named "America," we might just as well leave those European sailors, for their business is with the sea; so we'll turn to that other determined tribe of adventurers who explored the land!

Now the Frenchman comes into the picture. While the Spanish were rushing around claiming bits of America for their king and country, the French were doing a little hiking and land-claiming.

The most important of all these Frenchmen was, no doubt, Samuel de Champlain (his real name was much longer but just Champlain will do for now). By the way, my hearties, this Frenchman was the fellow who first suggested a Panama Canal.

Now Champlain got off to a hunt for India by way of Northern America! In fact, he was brave enough to tackle the St. Lawrence River without a very definite idea of what hardships he might meet. You see, men then were pretty well convinced that the world was round all right; that they could find their way around the world they believed to be a fact. But, they thought the world was much smaller. They had no idea that it is about 25,000 miles around. Champlain thought that by traveling the St. Lawrence River he might find India at the end of it!

Champlain got acquainted with the American natives and learned a new mode of travel from them. He found the "canoe" a very handy way to get along the shallow waterways, and since he did not travel with a great group of followers (never more than two companions) he managed to cover a great deal of territory.

CHAMPLAIN was seeking a way to the Indies all right, but while he was about it he sought to secure a little of this

ARCTIC ARTIST

HOWARD ROCK is 21 years of age and has been judged a very promising young artist. He came to this country just two years ago from his home in Point Hope, Alaska. Yes, Howard is a full-blood Eskimo and was sent to this country by his teachers in the White Mountain School in Alaska.

UP IN THE AIR
By Marjorie Flack

DID YOU know that long, long ago in France . . . it was in the year 1783 . . . a sheep, a cook and a duck took a ride in a green balloon? Well, that's what the story says.

However, in this new book for little folk, UP IN THE AIR, you will read all about their great adventure.

Marjorie Flack tells this story with all the simple charm a fable deserves.

THE pictures are just what you would expect, colorful, quaint and with just enough detail to make them fascinating to little people.

FOUR TALES FROM HANS ANDERSON
Translated by R. P. Kelgwin

ANDERSON'S fairy tales are ever new to each generation, so they deserve a new cover and new pictures. The four stories chosen for this new book are: The Tinder Box, Little Claus and Big Claus, The Princess and the Pea (ah, that delicate little lady) and Ida's Flowers.

The old stories retold, are dressed in new pictures . . . beautiful woodcuts made by Gwen Raverat.

MONKEY SHINES
THREE little monkeys were playing on the edge of the jungle. They were two brothers and a sister, just looking for mischief to be done.

There was a water-hole near by and after awhile the animals of the jungle came down for their evening drink. The first to come was a big black snake. He had been eating all day so he was very slow and lazy. He was even too lazy to drink, so he just curled up near the pool and went to sleep.

The three little monkeys sat up and watched him. They were a little afraid of him, but they were curious too.

After while a beautiful young deer came down to the water and drank long and thirstily. He kept one eye on the monkeys and one on the sleeping snake. (He drank without looking at the water.) Finally he stopped drinking and loped away into the underbrush. But, before he left he spoke to the three innocent looking monks "You better behave yourselves."

But monkeys just can't behave themselves when they feel like making mischief. Well, believe it or not, when they were SURE the snake was well asleep, those little scamps got a great length of tough grass (there is a great deal of such handy material in a jungle) and they tied that snake up into a nice neat bundle. Then they dropped him far out in the deepest part of the water hole.

Then they scampered back to the highest limb of a palm tree and there they sat and sang and laughed all the rest of the evening. One of them said, "Now HE'LL never scare anyone again." And all the little animals in the jungle that DO fear snakes laughed too.

GREEN AND GOLD
By Berta and Elmer Hader

ALL you children love to eat bananas but how few of you know anything much about them. In this beautiful new book you will find their history and their culture throughout the world.

This book is more than a story of a market product, it is the fascinating yarn back of the delicious fruit you find in your school lunch-box.

There are forty-eight pages of colored pictures. Any child from eight to twelve years of age will find it entertaining.

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Garden Comment

By Cecil Solly

A KEEN enthusiast, who makes a special hobby of growing Sweet Peas for exhibition or other purposes, usually grows them on highly developed

Corden plants on canes or trellis. The great majority of gardeners are most appreciative of really fine flowers and anxious to do the best they can by growing a few rows of seeds planted in the open ground on what may be termed normal lines.

The success obtained will depend about equally on the quality of seed used and the labor put into the task. If one's foremost idea is to buy as big a packet of seeds for a dime as possible, the resulting flowers are likely to be ordinary and at the same time, the best seeds from the finest firms cannot do justice to themselves if their treatment is casual and indifferent.

Sweet Peas are quite hardy in any section of the Pacific Coast. It is quite safe to plant them now, but the condition of soil is of greater importance than the date of sowing.

SOIL PREPARATION
One should not be content with digging the ground immediately before sowing the seed. The soil should be made so friable and porous that the roots will be able to travel as far as they wish. His condition is obtained by digging the ground, in what we call "trench," several times. The lumps and clods should be carefully broken up at each digging. Incorporate anything in the way of humus or nourishment provider through the whole area of the soil.

Despite the frequency with which it is urged that a thick layer of manure should be placed at the bottom of a deep trench and covered with soil, I strongly contend that this is decidedly not the best method of providing nourishment for Peas or any other plants.

Deep digging is very essential, but a narrow, drain-like trench of loose soil and manure running through hard and undug land often becomes a water-logged

WATERING
The question of supplying water correctly to Sweet Peas is a knotty problem. The difficulty is that the roots suffer quickly from drought. They are also highly susceptible to chills from cold water from a hose. Many Sweet Pea plantings turn brown through too much flooding with cold water.

Every endeavor should be made to use the "hoses" and not the "hose," by working the ground as much as possible to create a tilth to check evaporation. The best watering that Sweet Peas can get is from water that is drawn upward from below. Prevent a crust forming on the surface at all times. If a crust forms evaporation is very rapid. The easiest method of loosening the soil surface is by the use of a hoe.

When watering by hose, if possible, the water should be of the same temperature as the soil.

Staking the peas should be commenced while the young plants are quite small. When they are about an inch out of the ground, surround the seedlings with little twigs or sticks that are about nine inches high. By the time the growing plants reach the top of the twigs the full size stakes, strings or bush should be in position.

HORATIUS
DID you boys know that one man alone once held back a whole army? Well, he did, and his name was Horatius. This brave soldier lived and fought during the sixth century B. C.

His reward for his bravery was a novel one indeed. It was decided that he should have for his own as much land as he could circle with a plow—in one day.

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prison for sickly roots. Better results can be obtained by trenching a piece of ground three or four feet wide, to a depth of two feet. Distribute plenty of humus in the dug soil, mixing in necessary fertilizers at the same time.

Sow the Sweet Pea seeds down the center of this ground. There will be no need to waste the rest of the ground. Dwarf plants, such as Pansies, Violas, Snapdragons, Stocks or Asters may be planted on both sides of the Peas.

PLANTING THE SEED
Firm planting is very necessary. The best way to firm a row of Sweet Pea seeds is to walk up and down it immediately after planting, but before the ground is watered.

It is thoroughly understood that Sweet Peas need an unusual supply of nourishment. To provide this, it is necessary to use a good brand of commercial fertilizer, and to see that this fertilizer is used effectively and properly.

Humus in the form of peat moss, leaf mold, manure or compost must be worked into the ground to provide a condition there that will allow the plants to take up the fertilizer continuously. To assure this, the question of humus content must be studied first. Not only the above mentioned, but decayed grass clippings and decayed leaves are very helpful, especially if they have been allowed to rot together in a compost heap. Depending on the soil condition it may be necessary that a little lime be worked into the ground, too.

When mixing a commercial fertilizer into the ground before planting be sure that it is a good blend of plant foods so as to provide a correct diet during the season. The soil condition of the particular garden should be studied but, generally, it is better to fertilize Sweet Peas by sprinkling a small amount of plant food along each side of the row every two weeks during the growing period. The ground should be raked to incorporate the fertilizer in it before watering.

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