RANCH MYSTERY

A STORY FOR CHILDREN

By Paula Norton

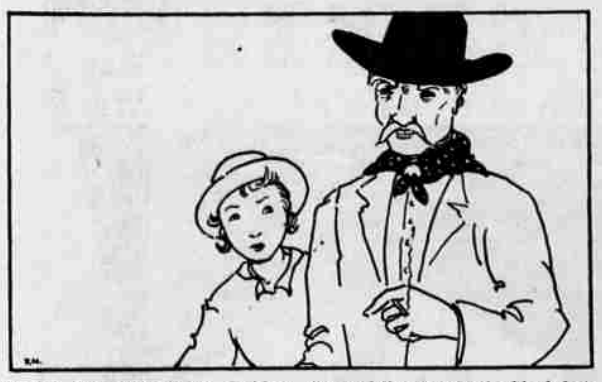
There had been trouble brewing for months on the Nevada ranch where Tim and Ron and their parents lived. Numbers of their cattle had been stolen, and the night Beth came out from the East to regain her health on her Uncle's ranch, that uncle was shot in the shoulder during a new raid on his horses. Beth, interested in trying to solve the plot, found a little silver wheel in a little-used pasture and kept it as her own special secret. She thought it might be some clew to the identity of the men seeking to discourage her uncle in the cattle-business and to run him off his land. Beth obtained a promise from Claude, the mail-carrier, to take her into see the little Western town not many miles away.

Chapter 8.

IT WAS two weeks before Beth had an opportunity to make the trip with Claude. There was much for her to do on the ranch, and, too, she stayed with Aunt Mary when the boys and her uncle took the cattle to the railroad.

When that was over, the men started looking for a new location to drill a well.

The location for the new well



was a long time being decided upon, but at last Beth and Claude drove off in the mail carrier's rig with Bob, Beth's new horse, hitched on behind.

As the carriage neared the little Western town, Beth pulled the star-shaped wheel from her pocket.

"Claude," she said, "what is this?"

The man took the shining wheel and turned it over and over in his rough hand. "Why, miss, that's a rowel. And in case you don't know what a rowel is, it's the business-end of a spur . . . the part you jab a horse with to make him step out."

While Beth thought her own private thoughts, Claude lapsed into a long dissertation on the possible cruelty in using spurs. All Claude needed was a subject, and he could make a twenty-minute speech about it.

Beth put the wheel back in her pocket. So THAT was what it was!

"Where do you wanna' start seeing the town first, miss? Shall we start at the depot?" asked Claude.

"Yes, that suits me."

There were two or three groups of people standing on the station platform, so Beth knew there must be a train due soon. A new kind of people they were to her, too . . . suntanned and gaunt men in jeans and wide, dusty hats . . . women with wind-burned faces and tired eyes.

The mail-carrier and Beth walked out on the platform. She knew from the eager expression on his face that seeing a train come in was a joyous experience for Claude.

While Beth busied herself looking around, Claude walked boldly up to two men and greeted them with friendly respect. One was a tall gray-haired man wearing a wide black hat. The other man, who was introduced to Claude, had a city-look about him.

Beth found the men interesting, and since no one addressed her directly she stood back a bit and listened. It was all so different from the Eastern city that had been her home. Here there was so much that was interesting, almost like a scene in the movies.

She noted the dress of the men with whom Claude was exchanging remarks. The younger man was dressed in a well tailored suit of whipcord and wore brown leather boots. His horn-rimmed glasses gave him a studious look. His handbag was marked with the initials F. G. S. Beth puzzled over this. What could those letters mean? They weren't his name; that was written above.

The older man's clothes were well made, too, but in a loose easy style, and his boots were short and not very shiny.

Suddenly Beth noticed a strange thing! The man in the black hat was wearing spurs . . . silver spurs . . . and the rowel was missing from the spur on the man's left boot!

Timidly, Beth leaned around into the very center of the group. "You've lost the little wheel off one of your spurs, Mister," she said.

The man turned and looked at her, smiling. He had not noticed her before. "Well, you're just right, sister. I did do that, and I've sent to San Francisco for a new one. They're darned good spurs, and I wouldn't put 'em aside for just a lost rowel."

Claude suddenly awoke to his duties and introduced Beth. "This is Walter Chaney's niece. She's out from the East visitin' her kin, and I brought her in today to see a real city." Then he laughed heartily.

"Well, now, that's right nice," beamed the man in the black hat. "How do you like this wild and woolly country, sister?"

"I like it fine," smiled Beth, but her heart was beating like a trip-hammer. "I like living on my uncle's ranch." Then she heard herself asking, "Do you know my uncle?"

"Sure I know your Uncle Walter. Been friends with him for years."

"Have you been out to the ranch lately?" NOW she'd done it!

The man smiled tolerantly down at her and said, "No, ma'm, I ain't been out to your uncle's place for many a long month. Been too busy on my own place."

It seemed a little strange that he did not mention the "trouble" they'd had at the ranch.

Driving back through the Main street, Beth asked, "Who are those men, Claude?"

"Well, the fella with the glasses is a stranger in these parts. I ain't never seen him before . . . must have been stayin' at Mort Russel's place. That's the old fella . . . Mort Russel."

"Tell me about him."

"Well, I'll swan, if you ain't the curiousist one," laughed Claude. "He's one of the richest men in these parts. Ain't been here long, but everything that man touches turns to gold, as the sayin' goes Smart, too, he is."

Riding back to the ranch alone Beth turned the silver rowel over and over in her hand. She thought, "Hasn't been on the ranch for many a month?" Then she smiled to herself and said . . "Yes, he's smart . . . and some thing of a story-teller."

The rest of the way home she tried desperately to think just what those initials after the name on the hand-bag at the depot ha meant.

(Continued next week)

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MAKING A FISH POND

If you're planning to make a fishpond in your yard . . . and it's a mighty nice idea . . . here are some of the things you must be sure about. Be sure the pool is water-tight, so that a small inflow is quite enough. Have one part of the pool as shallow as from 18 to 20 inches deep. This is a place where the fish can spawn. Then have a much deeper area where the fish can go for winter quarters. Be sure there is enough fertility on the bottom of the pond so plants will grow.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

CLEAN AQUARIUM

If you have an aquarium in your home and you notice bubbles on the top of the water, that water lacks oxygen. You had better clean out the thank and put in fresh water.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

MILE LONG WORDS

THE words aviators write in the sky require a deal of traveling. A two-word name requires between 10 and 15 miles of flying.

THE CONTACT CLUB

by DON ROBERTS

HELLO, fellows! That goes for you air-minded girls, too. Here's a new corner for a weekly hunk of gossip, news and so on about the flying world. The editor says it better be interesting—and you can help make it so by dropping us a line.

Lots of things happening to chatter about these days. Airports just getting ready for the best months of flying. One thing about model building—you can write off weather worries.

Speaking of weather, this past couple of months have seen some pretty swell stuff done by pilots. They've conquered blizzards, fog, storms of all kinds. It's a pretty good indication of how fast things move in this present-day world of ours—ten years ago no radio beams were available to guide "lost" ships; no blind flying training equipment was available. Wonder what they'll be doing ten years from now?

Every evening on our way home from a hard lot of desk flying, we have the chance to watch seagulls, ducks and other sure fliers in action. Not a bad notion, this, for all of us. The study of bird flight brought about the first gliders. Every pioneer—Otto Lilienthal, the Wright brothers, Octave Chanute, John J. Montgomery—got his ideas from birds. And it's a funny thing, but there is still a lot to learn! Noting the camber of bird wings, the dihedral for stability, the use of tail surfaces—is a darn good lesson in flying!

As a matter of fact it has only been recently that we discovered the secret of soaring flight: rising columns of air, and where and when they occur. Birds knew it all the time. Too bad parrots couldn't tell us about it, instead of popping out with the usual, "Polly wanta cracker"!

When those early-day students were trying to build flapping-wing flying machines, they didn't know that their eyes were kidding them. No matter how carefully they watched, they couldn't see FAST enough to discover that birds don't flap their wings straight up and down! Nope, the motion when a bird rises is upward-backward; downward-forward. In other words, the wings rotate in semi-circles. It took speedy cameras to prove this; no wonder the old-timers missed their calculations!

We sort of wandered off the airplane subject there a little bit, but if you're interested enough, we'll dig up some more dope on the first fliers for you—maybe some action photos.

Talking about those old days brings up the thought that you model plane builders are missing an interesting—yep, maybe profitable, too—lot of fun when you stick to present-day and wartime jobs.

We'd like to see large flying models of the first Wright Brothers' ship; Glenn Curtiss' "June Bug"; an early Bleriot; a box-winged Farman; an Antoinette. Don't forget that authentic models of the old sailing ships are highly prized—and cost plenty, too. Dig up some specifications out of your local libraries, and let's hear what luck you have.

By the way, here's an item about those early ships: Ever notice that the Bleriot and other pioneer monoplanes supported the wings with a cabane strut? (If you don't know—you probably do—a cabane strut is usually a pyramidal framework above the fuselage with landing wires running from it to wing tips.) Well, the late Boeing P-26A has the same arrangement.

Sort of going back to the old stuff, eh? Don't get the idea that all the early jobs were unsound—plenty of advanced ideas were in use along about 1910 and 1911, believe it or something. Saw a photo a short time back of the 1909 model Demoiselle racing monoplane that did 51 miles an hour top speed and was a trim, neat job. Of course it didn't have the structural strength and mechanical features of today's ships, but it LOOKED good. And Tony Fokker says that one of the best ways to judge a ship is by its looks. (Back to birds again—the speediest fliers, you know, are the trimmest, neatest birds. Look up a photo of the Swift—the little fellow who has been timed around 200 miles an hour.)

SOME Records:

Lewin B. Barringer set up an American glider record of 160 miles last April in 6 hours, 45 minutes.

Claimant to world's gliding record is Ludwig Hoffman of Germany, who soared from Wasserkuppe, Germany, to Oskovice, Czechoslovakia, about 300 miles.

First flight across the English Channel was made by Louis Bleriot July 25, 1909—37 minutes for the 25 miles from Calais to Dover. (That's the crossing that always makes ship passengers seasick, incidentally, and the cross-channel steamers take two hours for it, even today.)

Glenn Curtiss, whose name still carries on in the Curtiss ships of today, called his first job the "June Bug," and on July 4, 1908, at Hammondsport, he won the Scientific American trophy for a one-kilometer flight at the breath-taking speed of 39 miles an hour.

There's a "Flying Flea" coming into popularity now. Here are some of the early-day names designers and fliers hung on their crates: Red Wing, White Wing, Silver Dart, Golden Flyer, Bird of Prey, Yellow Hen, Red Devil, Tin Goose. (And then there was our own Jenny.)

Bull Fighting In Peru Offers Exciting Pastime For Tourists

IN SUMMER months famous bull-fighters from Spain invade Lima, Peru . . . at salaries that compare with those paid opera stars. Although Peru is not noted for punctuality, a bull-fight begins on time.

A bugle blows, a large iron door swings open. A big black and white bull rushes into the ring . . . head down he plunges for the nearest bull-fighter. Another catches the bull's eye . . . waving his cloak. The bull is kept running until his breath is exhausted.

Then a *torero* flicks his cape . . twists it about the bull's head. The beast is bewildered; it hesitates. A picador advances with outstretched lance, mounted on an old horse which is bandaged over one eye. The bull charges the blind side of the horse, and lifts both horse and rider into the air. Attendants help the rider up . . . and the main performance begins.

The chief bull-fighter plays the serious business of the *muleta*. This is a red cloth stretched over a stick. The bull-fighter plays the tired bull about the ring—his drawn sword in his hand. The bull charges again and again. Each time the man deftly steps to one side. One misstep and his life is forfeit. According to his skill, the bull-fighters reputation is enhanced or ruined.

The bugle blows for the *coup-de-grace*. The muleta is held in the bull-fighter's left hand; with the right he darts his sword at a spot on top of the bull's neck. The bull charges at the red rag—the man leans forward, thrusting his sword to the hilt in the bull's body. He leaps swiftly back and to one side.

Hesitating, dying, the beast stumbles. Legs weaken, and it falls.

Whistles, rounds of applause, a shower of straw hats greet the *torero*. He strides about the great ring accepting the cheers with a wave of his hand.

YOUNG FLYERS

If there is a nest of young birds near your house, why not pretend they are your pets? Put crumbs near enough that the mother bird may find them.

Get to a place where you can see into the nest if possible, and yet not frighten the birds. You will be fascinated with the sight of the little fellows. The first two weeks they will keep the mother busy filling those ever-open beaks.

Then, when the two weeks are up you are pretty likely to see a lesson in flying. There will be no parachutes and if a "cadet" loses control during the flight, he is pretty likely to do a forced landing.

Be interested in the birds in your neighborhood. Learn their names and their songs. See that they have food and water handy . . . a bird-house is real fun, too.

Over the Captain's Coffee Cup

Travel Tales From Everywhere

by Whit Wellman

CURIOUS, uncanny things have happened since the world began. Because no one knew their cause, they were attributed to the supernatural. A man saw something extraordinary. It became a legend—or a miracle. He didn't deny his own experience. He admitted the existance of things he couldn't understand. Ignorance, once upon a time, did not limit a man's belief . . . or stop his faith in marvels. Until scientists came along to make a cult of science, the unexplainable did not mean the false.

Today it's different. A strange occurance pops up in the newspapers. Scientists investigate. Failing to find a reasonable answer, they decide it didn't happen. Such men deserve pity. Being a scientist is not an imaginative career. Nor an easy life. When you're asked to explain things you can't measure and test and weigh (file in cubby-hole X-319-899 for future reference), it gets discouraging.

TAKE SEA-SERPENTS

for one thing. They haven't been classified as to species or habits or anything else. Just a hoax. Sailors are notoriously credulous, and people like to believe queer tales. No sea-serpent has been caught and examined.

So—it's annoying when evidence piles up. A date: 1919. J. Mackintosh Bell on August 5 went fishing off the Orkneys. Thirty yards from his boat rose a long neck with a head like a dog. On the head were black whiskers. The beast's neck was six feet out of water, as thick as an elephant's leg. Bell aimed his camera, but the shutter did not snap. The townspeople of Brims Walls had seen the same animal annually for several years.

Another date: the last of April, 1920. The Third Officer of the *Tyne*, sailing past St. Paul's Rocks along the coast of South America bound for Rio . . . saw a huge creature keeping up with the ship. It's head was like "an umbrella handle." If followed beside the vessel for five minutes, then curved down and sank. The Captain refused to enter this in the Log; the wine bills might be stopped.

In August, 1923: The surveying ship *Kellett* was operating in the Black Deep, Thames Estuary. The sun was shining. Close to the ship (about 200 yards) a serpentine neck jerked up ten feet from the water. The snake-like body that followed the neck was thought to be eighty feet long. The head itself was hard to distinguish because of its swaying movement. It's interesting to note that Black Deep had been closed to navigation since the beginning of the war—leaving eight years for monsters to congregate.

1935: The serpent of Loch Ness, Scotland—and the shy monster seen in Puget Sound, Oregon.

NO SCHEDULED ECLIPSE

is the cause of historic dark hours in various parts of the world. One place was Oshkosh, Wisconsin. March 19, 1886. The day was light, a little cloudy. Suddenly a wave of total darkness swept down over the town. There was panic. Some people prayed, some ran about frantically. Scientists offered no explanation.

There was no eclipse at Wimbledon, England, on April 17, 1904—no thunder, no rain, no clouds. But for 10 minutes it was dark as midnight.

If you go looking for odd events, you'll find them all too easily—in supposedly scientific magazines, authentic reports of actual happenings.

PHENOMENA, ENDLESS

and fascinating, if you like to puzzle for reasons. This column has told of red rain that fell in Australia a few weeks ago. In November, 1902, mud rained down on Tasmania. If it came via a whirlwind, why was the mud dropped in one place only? Not long ago a heavy red rain covered the south of England, swept to Ireland, and reached the Canary Islands . . . leaving a thick layer of orange-red dust. Chemists collected the substance, said it came from the Sahara. Some said it came from English country roads. These were opinions, based on the fact that dust storms had occured on the great desert. However, such storms are always occuring. And . . . one chemist reported the substance to be 36 per cent organic matter.

No satisfying reason is given.

NOT MANY YEARS AGO

anyone who believed that stones fell from the sky would have been laughed at—or locked up. No stones were in the sky. How could they fall?

It's less difficult to believe things which happen fairly close to home, rather than across the world—Europe, Asia, India.

A Signal Service observer made a report to the Monthly Weather Review that in Bismarck, North Dakota, a heavy fall of sharp stones broke windows. Fifteen hours later the fall was repeated. There was no wind, and the stones fell straight from the sky—rattling against the houses.

Further away—At Poorhundur, India—flat pieces of ice have fallen. Some weighed several pounds. The sky was clear, but something was happening high overhead. Thunder was heard. And ice descended.

NO ONE BELIEVED MUCH

in radio before it was discovered, or in the telephone, or 14-passenger planes. Or that a great clipper ship of the air would take off from the Alameda air port for China. In the last fifty years there's been more mechanical progress than in the previous thousand or more.

It was impossible fifty years ago to fly 'round the world. Interplanetary space will one day be conquered in the same way—by children or grandchildren of men who doubt today.

HAVE YOU COME

across a sea-serpent recently or odd experiences that baffle good common sense . . . events that scientists don't explain to your satisfaction? Write to "The Captain," Five Star Weekly, Mills Tower, San Francisco, California.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Thirsty? Not Much! ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

On and On

DID you think we were through with that old, old argument about a trade route to the Indies? Well, you're wrong.

It was over a century since Columbus first sailed away from Spain, and the search was still going on. Oh, the Europeans knew HOW to get to the Indies, but the competition between the various countries for the exclusive right to trade there was keen.

Pirates roamed that seaway to the Indies, and the Spaniards were driven off their course by the Dutch—everyone wanting his share (that meant the biggest share) of the Indies trade.

Then the Dutch decided to find still another route to the East and keep it just for themselves.

They sent to England and hired one Henry Hudson, who already had a reputation for exploration. This gentleman they fitted out with a ship and a crew of sailors and ordered him to go to the North Pole to find a new way to the Indies!

Well, Henry started north all right, but it was too late in the season for him to make his way through the icy seas. So, back he turned and decided to try a trip through America instead of around it. He'd heard about the big waterways that Champlain had spoken of!

He sailed up a great swift river, and he was hopeful. There was game and vegetation on every side. (On your geography map this is the Hudson River.)

The next year, Henry started for the North Pole passage again, but his crew didn't fancy going with him. As a matter of fact, they took things in their own rough hands and dumped poor Henry Hudson into a little boat with a handful of ailing sailors and Hudson's young son. (It all sounds rather like "Mutiny on the Bounty," but Hudson didn't fare so well as the wicked Captain Blythe.) He was never heard of again.

The men who sent Hudson searching for a northern route to the Indies didn't give a hang about his reports of the treasures to be had in furs on the Hudson River. But many people already in America were interested, and men from several European countries traded with the Indians there.

With this going on, the Dutch did get interested enough to settle New Amsterdam, at the mouth of the Hudson River. Then, because they wanted more than anything to raise sugar down in Guiana, they traded what is now New York for a measly little hunk of South America!

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