

FLAME TRAIL

BY MARIE DE NEVADA

SYNOPSIS: Josh Hastings, owner of the Flying Six, tries to buy Kay Crandon's Lazy Nine after her ranch house and barn burn. He also tries to court Kay. She distrusts him and is determined to keep her ranch and rebuild. Hastings' cousin, Scrap Johnson, molests Kay, but Ted Gaynor, a puncher she impulsively hired, rescues her and whips Scrap. Later they shoot it out, wounding each other. Hastings, having both, murders Scrap, using Ted's gun. Ted crawls to a shack where a girl takes him in. Sheriff Zeke Farley brings the gun to Kay to identify, telling her it killed Scrap. She had given Ted the gun.

Chapter 26

The Case Against Ted

"NO-NO! I'm all right!" Kay pushed away Seth and the sheriff, as they reached out to steady her. "It's just the horrible thought of Dad's gun being involved in a murder, that's all. But how do you know it was murdered? There might have been a perfectly fair fight!"

"Where's this Gaynor bird then? Why didn't he report it?"

A horrible fear clutched Kay. "Perhaps he's killed, too," she faltered.

"We've searched all around there," the sheriff answered. "Of course this two-day storm washed out any tracks or clues, but my hunch is that he made a get-away right after the killing."

"But why would he have left his gun behind?" Kay protested. "He'd never have done that if he'd murdered a man!"

"Search me, but we've no time for guessing," the sheriff answered impatiently. "Tell me all you know about him." He looked from Kay to Seth.

"All I know," Seth broke in, "is that he turned up here the night of the fire. Kay had been having him look over some timberland for her, and then decided to have him join the outfit."

"Where'd you get hold of him in the first place?" Zeke Farley turned to Kay, who braced herself for this question she had been dreading. In the midst of her confused horror at this terrible news, one thing was clear—nothing would make her give the real version of her meeting with Ted.

"Why, I wanted to get hold of some more timberland," she began, "and it seemed a good idea to get some one to go over it, so I—"

"Yes, yes. Never mind all that!" the sheriff cut her off. "What I want to know is, how did you come to choose Gaynor? Why not someone from around here?"

"I don't know just why," Kay decided the only line to take was a helpless, illogical feminine one. "I just thought I'd try him out, and then, if I liked him, he could join the outfit. You thought he was a good addition, didn't you, Seth?"

She appealed to Seth, with an attempt to defeat the sheriff's direct questions by irrelevance.

"Sure I did," Seth answered. "He seemed like an A1 hand to me. But I've been kind of wondering about him, when he didn't turn up when he said he would."

His Threat To Scrap

"HOW long has this man been dead?" Kay tried another tack to turn the line of the inquiry.

"About four or five days, I should judge," Zeke Farley came back to Seth's remark. "What's that about his being expected back?"

"I'll tell you how it was," Kay forestalled Seth. "He'd planned to go back and get his mother and sister, and bring them here to live. You see, he'd worked out a plan for rebuilding. With a few quick words she sketched Ted's ideas, ending, 'So I know he wouldn't have left us in the lurch unless something had happened to him. He might be wounded, and dead or dying himself, while you're accusing him of murder!' She choked up in spite of herself. 'I think you ought to be searching for him, to see if he's in trouble instead of fooling around about a gun!' She fixed the sheriff with an indignant eye."

"We'll be searching for him all right," the sheriff commented grimly. "I just wanted to make sure my hunch about the gun was right. I thought I'd seen your father totting it. Now that I know you gave it to Gaynor, it clears up a lot, and things look pretty black against him, all right. You probably don't know that he was heard threatening this Scrap Johnson's life before quite a few witnesses?"

"Before a witness?" Kay's mind flashed back to the fight on the mesa. When Ted had told Scrap Johnson he'd kill him if he ever showed up on the range again.

"Yes, Gaynor and Scrap Johnson had a fight at Kelly's one day last week, and Gaynor got the best of it. Some of the boys who were there say he threatened to get Scrap next time."

With a sick feeling, Kay realized how black the evidence was that was piling up against Ted.

"But that's neither here nor

there." The sheriff turned to the door. "The first thing is to join up with Sam Cutter, the Idaho sheriff, and catch the bird. We can save the evidence for later." He slipped the gun in his pocket and picked up his hat. "Sorry to be all this bother, Miss Kay. I've got to be getting on now, but while I'm away, you try to remember every single thing you can about this Gaynor."

"Where are you going?" Kay asked fearfully.

"Over into the Clear Water basin to look up his mother and sister first. Then I'll report to Sam Cutter's deputy and come back by the pass and search around there some more."

"You'll let me know the minute you hear anything, won't you?" Kay tried to keep the desperate anxiety out of her tone. "We have no telephone now, but you could get hold of Babe at the Flying Six, and she'll ride over and tell me."

"Sure I will," Zeke Farley climbed into his saddle and rode off.

Ted's Volunteer Nurse

THE early morning sun shone on the glistering dew that outlined the bunch grass in the small clearing on the south slope of the central divide. It tinted the dark green branches of the surrounding pines and tamaracs with golden flecks, and one or two first rays straightened out the tumbled down shadow.

The door of the shack slowly opened and a girl stepped out to lean against the door frame. Her whole attitude suggested intense weariness. As she closed her eyes, her face looked deadly pale in its frame of black hair.

Straightening up, she glanced back through the door, then tiptoed down the two dilapidated steps and walked through the dew-drenched grass to the center of the clearing where the sun was strongest. She took several deep breaths, picked a bit of fire weed and stood idly twirling it.

It was exactly a week since Marion Howell had looked out of her strange abode to find wounded Ted dragging himself toward her. No sooner had she brought him inside, than the storm had broken.

Ted had hovered by the slenderest thread between life and death, and Marion knew that nothing but her care and nursing had saved him. She had thrown herself into the task as a natural human response to the desperate need of a fellow creature and as a welcome escape from her own thoughts and troubles.

Two days before Ted had appeared, Marion's father had brought her to this hut, attacked it with provisions to last several weeks, and told her that if she valued her life and his, she must wait there, in hiding, until he came back.

His wild manner, coming as it did after a breakdown, had terrified her into acquiescence. She was entirely in the dark about his reason for this move, but she had suspicions that she hardly dared voice to herself. Deciding it was best to humor him, she had listened carefully to his instructions, and promised to carry them out to the letter.

He had made her swear that on no account would she let there be any sign that the hut was occupied. While it was extremely unlikely that any one would penetrate to the tiny clearing, he wanted her to lie low, if they did, and give the place every appearance of a deserted hut.

He left her a small oil stove, and a few gallons of oil, which he had packed up, along with the rest of the stuff, the two pack burros he had brought with them. Admonishing her on no account to light a fire, he had gone off, taking both his horses and the burros, after a scene that made her shudder even now.

It was her promise that had made her hesitate a moment when her horrified glance had first fallen on Ted. The severe battle she had had to save his life had been her own salvation. Marion realized as the days had slipped by and her father had not reappeared that the fever had broken, and she had felt an assurance that the battle was won. From Ted's delirious mutterings, Marion had been able to piece together something of his story. In this close association with a perfect stranger, she had come to be convinced that her first appraisal of him had been right, and that she need wait with no confidence until he recovered sufficiently to tell the rest of his story.

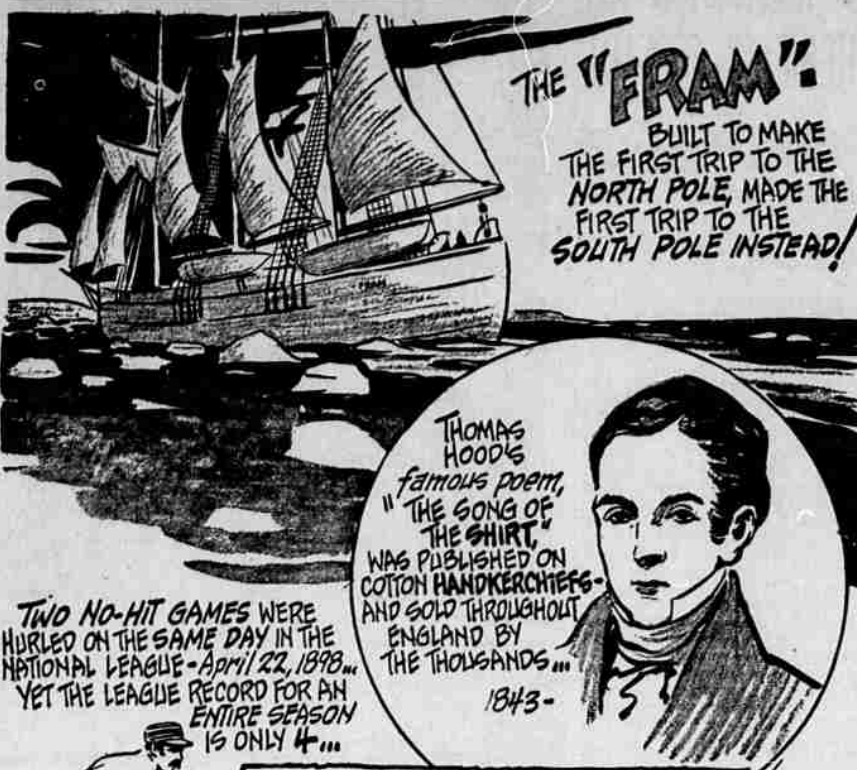
As she stood there in the sunshine, she felt her strength gradually returning. She decided that, as soon as Ted should be strong enough to leave, she would go in search of her father. If it was not back inside of the three weeks he had stipulated. She would give him the full time he had asked for, but after that she could no longer stand this inaction.

(Copyright, 1937, Marie de Nevada)

Searchers for Ted find the tiny clearing, tomorrow.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



TWO NO-HIT GAMES WERE HURLED ON THE SAME DAY IN THE NATIONAL LEAGUE—APRIL 22, 1898—YET THE LEAGUE RECORD FOR AN ENTIRE SEASON IS ONLY 4...



THIS TRUCK AT A JACKSONVILLE, Fla., AIRPORT HAS DELIVERED 1,000,000 GALLONS OF GASOLINE AND MADE 8 ROUND TRIPS DAILY FOR 2 YEARS—BUT HAS TRAVELED ONLY 80 MILES!



B-4-37 McLaughlin Syndicate, Inc.

The "Fram".

In the hope that by entering the Arctic near the New Siberian islands, he would be drifted over the North Pole by a current, Fridtjof Nansen, Norwegian explorer, built a steamer, the "Fram," with which he attempted the trip in 1893.

While his hopes of actually crossing the pole failed, Nansen did succeed in reaching a higher latitude than any previously attained—86 degrees, 14 minutes, on April 8, 1895.

Fourteen years later, Roald Amundsen secured the use of the "Fram" for an intended trip to the North Pole. Already in difficulties over raising enough funds for the voyage, he gave up the project after hearing

of Peary's discovery of the North Pole, feeling that his chance of getting enough financial backing had become too slim.

Instead, he secretly changed his plans to a South Polar expedition, started on August 9, 1910, and discovered the South Pole on December 16, 1911.

Airport Gasoline Truck.

Used for refueling airplanes, a truck at the Eastern Air Lines airport in Jacksonville, Fla., has established a remarkable record for short hauls in operation since June, 1933. It has averaged eight round trips a day, delivering over 40,000 gallons of gasoline a month. One each round trip

the truck travels only 70 feet—from the side of the landing field to a plane and back.

Song of the Shirt.

"... Stitch! Stitch! Stitch! In poverty, hunger and dirt, And still with a voice of dolorous pitch, She sang the song of the shirt."

With its theme deploring the "sweatshop" system of the day, "The Song of the Shirt" was first published in "Punch" in 1843. It proved so popular that it was printed on thousands of handkerchiefs which sold throughout England like wildfire. Tomorrow: What Bird Can Swim Better Than a Seal?

Bolt Catapults Cow.

BISBEE, Ariz.—(UP)—H-diddle-diddle, the cat and the fiddle, and the cow jumped over the moon—or, anyway, she went flying 10 feet through the air. During one of the season's heaviest rains the cow was standing next to a wire fence. The wire fence was near a high tension pole, and when lightning struck the pole it sent a current to the fence

which in turn sent the cow into the air.

Four Burn to Death.

DOLAND, S. D., Aug. 4.—(AP)—A mother and three daughters were burned fatally in a fire that destroyed the Frank Campbell farm home near here last night. The dead are Mrs. Frank Campbell; May, 14; Laurene, 18; Florence 7.

Game Ends; Balls Lost.

MARTINS FERRY, O.—(UP)—A shortage of balls caused the dedication game on the new WPA recreation lot to be called in the fourth inning. Balls that rolled over the edge of the city dump on which the field was built, had been mysteriously disappearing. Youngsters had laid in wait for the stray balls, grabbed them and tied.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—A Surprise for Tommy!

By HAL FORREST

THROUGH THE AID OF SKEETS, WHO ARRIVED IN TIME WITH A MACHINE GUN, TOMMY WAS ABLE TO OVERPOWER THE SPIES AND MAKE THEM PRISONERS. THEY WERE LOADED INTO THE TWO PLANES OUTSIDE THE HACIENDA, AND LATER, THE PLANES LANDED AT THREE-POINT.

2880

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT, SKEETS?

I DUNNO! TOM'LL EXPLAIN!

PHONE THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, CHIEF! WE'VE GOT SOME PEOPLE THEY WANT, BADLY!

COME WITH ME, TAILSPIN! I'LL SHOW YOU THE BIRD WHO CRASHED YOUR RACING PLANE!

TOMMY! NOW I KNOW WHY YOU WOULDN'T SPEAK TO ME AT THE BLUE LANTERN INN!

THOUGHT NOT! ALL RIGHT, CLEAR OUT O' HERE IN ONE WEEK OR I'LL HAVE THE SHERIFF CLEAR YOU OUT AN' DEPOSIT ALL THIS TRUCK IN THE STREET!

NO, WE CAN'T GIT IT!

WE HAVEN'T THE MONEY.

ALL RIGHT, BEN.

UNCLE NAT, YOU STAND AT THE DOOR AND HEAD OFF MRS. HIGGINS IF SHE COMES IN—WE WANT TO SAVE HER THIS—

I HEREBY DEMAND PAYMENT IN FULL, WITH INTEREST, ON THIS HERE \$10,000 MORTGAGE I HOLD ON THIS BUILDING.

CAN YOU GIT IT?

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