

RANCH MYSTERY

A Story For Children

By Paula Norton

Beth, a visitor from the East, learns there has been trouble brewing on her Uncle Walter's ranch for many months. Cattle have been stolen, Uncle Walter has been fired at by members of an unknown gang. Someone is determined to force the owner to give up his land. Beth is interested in finding out who these people are and why they want this particular property. She finds the rowel of a silver spur in one of the pastures and now is pretty sure who its owner is. Uncle Walter has started to drill for water, and when one of his boys rides into town for a new part for the drill, he is questioned about activities on the ranch. The man who is so curious is Mort Russell, the very man Beth suspects. In the midst of the drilling, Mort calls and offers to buy the property, but before her Uncle can close the deal Beth begs him to wait until she tells her him.

Chapter 10.

MORT RUSSELL was a disoriented man when he rode out of the ranch and headed back to town. He told Uncle Walter at the last that his offer to buy the ranch would not hold for long. With all the trouble and worry the ranch had brought in the last six months, Uncle Walter could not help but wonder if he was

it, and he was willing to take it off our hands."

"But Mort Russell has more land, now, than he needs for his herds."

"Yes, Aunt Mary," said Beth, "you're just right. Uncle Walter trusts Mort and maybe he's right to do so. You've all known him a lot longer than I have, but I don't trust him. . . I'll tell you why."

"We haven't known Mort a great while, child. Just you say what you've a mind to, and then we'll think about it."

"Thank you, Aunt Mary." Now everything was easier. Beth reached into the pocket of her jeans and drew forth the silver, star-shaped wheel. She placed it on the table where everyone could see.

Both boys reached out for it, and as they turned it over Uncle Walter said, "It's a rowel, Beth. Where did you get it?"

"Yes, it's a rowel and not an ordinary one, either."

"I'll say it's not an ordinary one. . . It's silver," said Ron.

"Yes, it's silver." And Beth plunged into her story. "I found it in the pasture the day I had my first riding lesson. It was up in the near pasture, just a few feet from the place where the men are drilling out there. I

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Polishing Off A Steak! ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



THE CONTACT CLUB

By DON ROBERTS



doing the right thing in not selling now, lock, stock, and barrel. The harassed man went out to the pasture where the well-drillers were at work. Ron, Tim and Beth watched him amble slowly toward them.

"Maybe Dad would've done well to sell the ranch, but, gee, I'd hate to see him do it, at that," said Ron.

"Nothin' doin'," Tim threw back at his brother. "We're not licked yet."

Beth waited until her uncle came up to them. There was question in his tired eyes.

"Well, honey," he said, "what was on your mind that you was so anxious for your old uncle not to sell his ranch? Mort sure made me a friendly offer. Did you have somethin' special that you thought woulda made any difference?"

"Will you come into the house with me, Uncle Walter?" she asked, "and you two boys come along. I've got something to show you and something to tell you."

Ron and Tim looked surprised indeed, but without question they followed. As they passed through the kitchen, Aunt Mary turned from the cookstove.

"Don't you think they're going to find water, Pa?" she asked. "Surely you haven't had 'em stop drilling yet?"

"Come on along into the parlor, Aunt Mary," said Beth. "I want you to hear what I've got to tell, too."

"Spill it, Beth. A guy can't wait forever," Ron could not hide his impatience.

"Pipe down," was Tim's ready retort.

"Well, first of all, Uncle Walter, I didn't want you to sell the ranch to Mort Russell just yet because I don't trust him the way you do."

Aunt Mary sat upright in the old rocker. "Sell the ranch? What on earth are you talking about, child?"

"Yes, mama, Mort offered to buy the place from me today. Said he knew right well we was having a tough time makin' a go of

it, and he was willing to take it off our hands."

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"After we got to town we went to the station. Claude wanted to see the train come in."

Ron was about to comment on this idea, too, but Tim anticipated him and clapped his hand, none too gently, across his brother's wide smile.

"At the depot there were two men. One of them was Mort Russell, and the other one a stranger. While Claude talked to them I noticed that Russell was wearing spurs, and one of them had a rowel missing. I even said something about it to him, and then Claude introduced me."

The family leaned forward, all eyes and interest.

"Mort said, yes, he had lost a rowel off his spur, and he had sent to San Francisco for a new one. Then he asked me how I liked the West, and all that. I said, 'Have you been out to see my uncle lately?' And since I was pretty sure the rowel I'd found was his, I was surely surprised when he said he hadn't been on the ranch in many months."

"Well, now, that's strange, ain't it?" said Uncle Walter.

"Funny he'd like that if he wasn't with the gang that's been raiding us right along," said Aunt Mary.

Beth nodded and went on. "Then I decided I'd not say anything about the rowel I'd found on our ranch. I figured that if he was as rich a man as Claude said he was, he wasn't stealing cattle for any reason except to frighten you off the land."

"But what could he want to run me out for?"

"That's the part I don't know, Uncle. And here's the rest!"

By now everyone was leaning forward with eagerness and admiration in their faces.

"There is some reason why Mort wants this land. And who was the man he put aboard the train that day? Claude hadn't ever seen him before. But this much I noticed; on his suitcase there were three letters after his name. They were F. G. S. Now that must be some kind of a business or profession. If we knew what those letters meant, we might be able to figure out why Mort Russell had that man out here, and . . ."

Beth did not finish for Ron had jumped to his feet, yelling, "Where's my school dictionary?" (Continued next week)

An Officer's Boots

By Paula Norton

LEVEL off there, fellows, and hold that glider for a minute while we sit her down for a lot of the old chatter.

Now dachshunds are clever little fellows and VERY fond of mischief—any mischief.

The officer's little boy used to play in his father's room, while that dignified gentleman was away at a big garrison all day. The boy liked that room best of

all the rooms in his home, because it was dark and filled with books and mysterious weapons and many curious souvenirs.

In the officer's room there was a great dark clothes cupboard, too, and there in the shadows hung many beautiful uniforms.

The dachshunt went to this interesting, mysterious room, too, whenever the boy went there. They never made much noise, however, because they knew if they did, someone would notice them and put them out at once.

The boy paid little attention to them, for he was always busy exploring among the many strange things he found there. He spent every afternoon for a week in that room looking at pictures of

and open the chute while still several hundred feet up.

YOU know there are lots of things not to do when you're flying, but lots of fellows are apt to forget this: "Don't make a down-wind turn on the takeoff!"

Why? Well, most of you know, probably, but here's a simple explanation.

Let's say the landing speed—which is also your takeoff speed—of the ship is 35 miles an hour. You're taking off into a 15-mile-an-hour wind. That means that when you're going 20 miles an hour—the wind supplying the other 15 m.p.h.'s—you take off. BUT, if you turn down wind at that time, you're still moving 20 mph—slower than the minimum flying speed. And smacko, off she falls!

That's why pilots keep straight ahead if the motor conks on a takeoff—ditches and fences to the contrary notwithstanding.

Over the Captain's Coffee Cup

Travel Tales from Everywhere

By Whit Wellman

MEN YOU hear about have wanted to accomplish certain things so much—that the price didn't matter.

Paul Gauguin deserted Paris to live on an island. He painted what he saw and felt, and went mad. Recognition followed long after.

Yet before the end, for several years of freedom his life was satisfying. More contented, probably, than the days of his European friends, who lived in the "world that is—"

He did what he wanted.

Not everyone can live according to their heart's desire. Responsibilities, conventions stifle all but one in a thousand or so. It takes strength not to care what people think. Stout belief in your own talent—or simply knowing that the customary routine is not for you. Of such are the beach combers, "ticket-of-leave" men, planters on some forgotten islet who'd rather swim in a warm coral lagoon than own a business.

A man will put a good job to build a boat and put out for the Pacific islands. Any island, so it's far enough. Gold is found up a waterway in Guinea, where cannibals have their own convention of "long-pig." Few have grown wealthy on corpa or sago plantations. Not many have brought out enough yellow metal from unexplored Papua to make up for malaria and blackwater fever—for native sorceries they've seen and cannot talk about or forget.

SEEKING NEW frontiers some few will disregard three meals a day, a place to sleep. In San Francisco a young portrait artist fishes much of the daylight hours near Fort Mason. Evening sees him sketching patrons of a Bohemian resort on the edge of Telegraph Hill. At a dollar a head, he gets little but experience—which an artist needs more than anything he could buy. Independent, he says "No" to more faces than he sketches, and depends upon an intuitive sense of selection when he "accepts" a model. In the dim candle light his drawings line the walls, some excellent, others experiments in technique. His last name is something Swedish, his first is Rich—a blond lad, who steadily sees more behind a smile than the surface pose. A philosophy of his own—poking around from city to city—concerned more in developing his work than in wealth or comfort. He's doing what he wants to do. Sacrifice now—some day, fame.

SPEAKING OF SAGO and corpa, coffee, rubber, and cacao planting—there exist even today opportunities in British Guinea for men with a few thousands of dollars. Between two and five. You can lease land for 99 years at a nominal figure, so low it's almost free. Native labor is higher than in Malaya or Africa, but this is amply balanced by the low living cost. You live as you please, cheaply or expensively—plant a crop of whatever strikes your fancy, and reap the harvest within a few years. Everything grows quickly in the rich soil and tropical climate. No great fortunes are made—you don't go down to become a millionaire—but your plantation and bush-made house can be beautiful, your boat is manned by loyal natives, the forests and rivers are virtually your private hunting preserves. A decent living, hunting—freedom.

LETTERS DRIFT IN not only from foreign ports, but

Polishing Off A Steak!

battle scenes of long ago. He'd read the big book over to the window to see the details of the fierce battle scenes.

NO one came to disturb the boy, and the Dachshunt left him alone, too—they had business of their own to handle.

Then one day the world fell with a crash around the ears of the boy, and it nearly landed on the Dachshunt.

There was to be a special, extra fancy dress parade of the soldiers in honor of the Emperor. The officer hurried to his home to dress in his special parade uniform.

It so happened the boy and the dogs were out fishing that afternoon, so the officer found his room quite as it should have been.

Then suddenly he bellowed in a voice like thunder.

The boy and dogs, returning from their fishing trip, were just passing under the window. THEY heard and all three shivered and shook and listened!

Then the thunder slowed down, and they heard shouts of command to servants and any one who would listen.

The nice, dignified, important officer said: "Someone, someone has chewed a great round hole in the heel of each of my special parade boots. I am furious!"

The boy grabbed a dog under each arm and flew to the woods, back where he'd been fishing. There he tied them to a tree and sat beside them. He was frightened and a little angry at his Dachshunt, too.

HE said: "Now you've done it! Stop wagging and listen! What did you have to be so smart for anyway? How can Father wear those boots to the parade for the Emperor with his white socks showing through the heels?"

Then he got up and walked around and around the tree. Now the Dachshunt felt badly, and they lay down on the ground and lifted their little brown eyebrows with ashamed, sad eyes, watching the boy.

After a long time of great silence, the boy untied the two villains and went slowly back to the house. He listened carefully when he went through the halls to his room. All was quiet. . . the band music of the parade could be heard in the distance.

That night the dogs slept in the boy's room (he built a tent house for them out of a plaid shawl draped over two chairs). They were VERY quiet and VERY good.

When the boy's father came in to tell him "good night," two pairs of soft brown eyes peeked from under the tent fringe. They were watching two dusty military boots and wondering how THEY'D taste!

CURFEW THE ringing of a curfew was first an English custom, originating with William the Conqueror. The word comes from "couvre-feu," a French word meaning "cover fire." The curfew in England meant that at 8 o'clock all fires and lights had to be "covered."

Tell Time By The Flowers — No Watch Needed in Garden Where Western Flowers Bloom

EVEN if your watch has stopped it is usually quite easy to tell what time it is in a garden. A large number of plants open their flowers at certain times of the day and this they do with amazing regularity. Other plants close their flowers with the same consistency—just as though they had an eye on the clock.

Probably the earliest garden plant to open its blooms is the well known climber, Ipomaea, the buds of which expand at 5 o'clock. Single roses of all kinds open about an hour later, at 6. Practically all kinds of Linum and the Day Lilies (Hemerocallis) open at 7. Just about the same time the Shirley Poppies burst their green chases and Irises expand. At 8 many kinds of Convolvulus expand their blooms. At 9 one will see the opening of many sorts of Veronica, Gentians, Oxalis, to mention only a few kinds.

Arenarias, Portulacas, Eschscholtzias and Marigolds display their flowers at 10 o'clock. At mid-day those great sun lovers, the Mesembryanthemums, open their blooms to the warm rays.

From about noon, until the late

afternoon, one must tell the time not by the opening of flowers but by their closing. Mallows of varying kinds close from 1 to 2, as also do the garden forms of Hawkweed (Hieracium). Potato and Tomato flowers shut up about 3, whilst an hour later, the Eschscholtzias and Marigolds close. At 5 you will see the gorgeous flowers of the Water Lilies draw their petals together and begin to sink below the surface.

At 6 quite a remarkable opening of flowers begins again. Then the Honeysuckle opens in addition to the Evening Primrose and many kinds of Lychnis. At 8 comes the Night-scented Stock and Mirabilis Jalapa. At 9 many of the Catchflies (Siliens) expand for the first time and the Woodruff and White Tobaccos do the same.

Those who have greenhouses, and grow the Night-flowering Cacti, will notice that the marvelous flowers of this plant open almost on the stroke of 10, only to be a mass of faded and crumpled petals a few hours later.

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from the Pacific Coast as well. Brigadier General J. A. Woodruff replies to an inquiry about the disappearance of Captain McLellan of the transport *Republic* . . . it seems doubtful if further . . . ever be thrown on the matter."

public brought the body of rather Damien "leper priest of Molokai" to San Francisco for high mass at Old St. Mary's . . . then sailed with the remains for Belgium. Hawaiians intimated that a curse would strike anyone removing a body buried in sacred ground. At 5:15 in the morning between the Farallon Islands and the lightship Captain McLellan—vanished. More of this later. Investigations are still under way.

Mrs. Jay Harvey, of Yelm, Washington—Dallas Alzman, of Astoria, Oregon—have collections of those interesting glass balls that sweep in with the Japanese current, rolling up on northwestern beaches. This is not a trading column—but if you'd like to possess rather lovely and unusual globes in rainbow colors, drop them a line.

BURIED TREASURE

Millions in plate and bar gold—treasure of Lima—still evade seekers on Cocos Island. Somewhere on Trinidad is buried a fortune supposed to hold fabulous wealth.

ONE OF DEWEY'S SHIPS

lies in San Francisco Bay—the U. S. S. Boston, which is tied up at the south end of Yerba Buena Island. The Navy has used it for years as a Receiving Ship, doing dull routine duty after the exciting Battle of Manila Bay. She is one of the few vessels left that served the Admiral when he humbled the Spanish fleet. Thousands of commuters pass within sight of her every day, completely unaware that close at hand is one of the romantic relics of the century.

SEEKING NEW

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IF YOU'VE LIVED

through adventures in any part of the world . . . and want to see them published in this column . . . write them down and send them to The Captain, Five Star Weekly, 450 Mills Tower, San Francisco, California.

SPEAKING OF SAGO

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Two beautiful Double Weight Professional Enlargements and 8 mounted Navy Photo Perfect Tone Prints. \$10.00. RAY'S PHOTO SERVICE, La Crosse, Wisconsin

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OLD STAMPS WANTED. Will pay \$100 for 1894 1c green Franklin rotary postmark. \$1 (\$1,000 if unusual). Write before sending. Large Illustrated Folder 10c. P. O. Box 444, Blythe, Ohio.

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