

# THE TRAIL OF '98

A Northland Romance  
by  
Robert W. Service  
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WNU Service

## CHAPTER XI—Continued

I am in a box at the Palace Grand. The place is packed with rowdy men and ribald women. I am at the zenith of my shame. Right and left I am buying wine.

How I loathe myself! But I think of Berna, and the thought goads me to fresh excesses. I will go on till flesh and blood can stand it no longer. I'll drop in my tracks. I realize that somehow I must make her pity me, must awake in her that guardian angel which exists in every woman. Only in that way can I break down the barrier of her pride and arouse the love latent in her heart.

Always amid that lurid carnival of sin floats the figure of Blossom, Blossom with her child-face of dazzling fairness, her china-blue eyes, her round, smooth cheeks. How different from the pinched pallid face of Berna I poor Berna! I never see her, but amid all the saturnalia she haunts me. The thought of her is agony. I cannot bear to think of her. I know she watches me. If she would only stoop and save me now! Or have I not fallen low enough? I must go deeper yet. Faster and faster must I swirl into the vortex.

In all that fierce madness of debauch, thank God, I retained my honor. They beguiled me, they tried to lure me into their rooms; but at the moment I went to enter I recoiled. It was as if an invisible arm stretched across the doorway and barred me out.

And Blossom, she, too, tried so hard to lure me, and because I resisted it inflamed her. She would coax me with the prettiest gestures, and cajole me with the sweetest endearments; then, when I steadfastly resisted her, she would fly into a fury and flout me with the foulness of the stew.

It was in one of the corridors of the dance hall in the early hours of the morning. The place was deserted, strewn with debris of the night's debauch. We were up there, Blossom and I. I was in a strange state of mind, a state bordering on frenzy. Not much longer, I felt, could I keep up this pace. Something had to happen, and that soon.

She put her arms around me. "Come," she said. She led me toward her room. No longer was I able to resist. My foot was on the threshold and I was almost over when she said: "Telegram, sir."

It was a messenger. Confusedly I took the flimsy envelope and tore it open. Blantly I stared at the line of type. I stared like a man in a dream. I was sober enough now.

"Ain't you coming?" said Blossom, putting her arms round me.

"No," I said hoarsely, "leave me, please leave me. Oh, my God!"

Her face changed, became vindictive, the face of a fury. "Curse you!" she hissed. "Oh, I knew it's that other, that white-faced doll you care for. Look at me! Am I not better than her? And you scorn me. Oh, I hate you. I'll get even with you and her. Curse you, curse you—"

She snatched up an empty wine bottle. Swinging it by the neck she struck me square on the forehead. I felt a stunning blow, a warm rush of blood. Then I fell limply forward, and all the lights seemed to go out.

There I lay in a heap, and the blood spurting from my wound soaked the little piece of paper. On it was written:

"Mother died this morning, Garry."

"Where an it?"

"Here, with me."

Low and sweet and tender was the voice. I was in bed and my head was heavily bandaged, so that the clothes weighed upon my eyelids. By my bedside some one was sitting, and a soft, gentle hand was holding mine.

"Is that you, Berna?"

"Aye, please don't talk."

I thrilled with a sudden sweetness of joy. A flood of sunshine bathed me. It was all over, then, the turmoil, the storm, the shipwreck. I was drifting on a tranquil ocean of content.

Blissfully I closed my eyes.

Yet there was something, some memory darker than the others, some shadow of shadows that baffled me. As I battled with a growing terror and suspense, it all came back to me, the telegram, the news, my collapse. A great grief welled up in me, and in my agony I spoke to the girl.

"Berna, tell me, is it true? Is my mother dead?"

"Yes, it's true dear. You must try to bear it bravely."

I could feel her bending over me, could feel her hand holding mine, could feel her hair brush my cheek. Yet I forgot even her just then. I thought only of mother, of her devotion and of how little I had done to deserve it. So this was the end: a narrow grave, a rending grief and the haunting specter of reproach.

My sobs were choking me, and Berna was holding my hand very lightly. Yet in a little I grew calmer. "Berna," I said, "I've only got you now, only you, little girl. So you must love me, you mustn't leave me."

"I'll never leave you—if you want me to stay."

"God bless you, dear. I can't tell you the comfort you are to me. I'll try to be quiet now."

I was always remember those days when I grew slowly again. Berna and I were much alone, alone with my

thoughts. Often when all was quiet I knew she was sitting there beyond the curtain, sitting thinking, just as I was thinking. Quiet was the keynote of our life, quiet and sunshine. That little cabin might have been a hundred miles from the gold-born city, it was so quiet. How sweet she looked in her spotless home attire, her neat waist, her white apron with bib and sleeves, her general air of a little housewife. And never was there so devoted a nurse.



The Place Is Packed With Rowdy Men and Ribald Women.

there was but that curtain. The faintest draught stirred it. There I lay through the long, long night in that quiet cabin. I heard her breathing. Sometimes even I heard her murmur in her sleep. I knew she was there, within a few yards of me. I thought of her always. I loved her beyond all else on earth. I was gaining daily in health and strength, yet not for the wealth of the world would I have passed that little curtain. She was as safe there as if she were guarded with swords. And she knew it.

"I'll play the game fair," I said to myself. I must be very careful. Our position was full of danger. So I forced myself to be cold to her, and she looked both surprised and pained at the change in me. Her heart was innocent, and she could not understand my sudden coldness. The girl was winsome beyond words, and I knew I had but to say it and she would come to me. Yet I checked myself. I retreated behind a barrier of reserve. "Play the game," I said; "play the game."

So as I grew better and stronger she seemed to lose her cheerfulness. Always she had that anxious, wistful look. Once came a sound from the kitchen like stifled sobbing, and in the night I heard her cry. Then the time came when I was well enough to get up, to go away.

I dressed, looking like the cadaverous ghost I felt myself to be. She was there in the kitchen, sitting quietly, waiting.

"Berna," I called.

"She came, with a smile lighting up her face."

"I'm going."

The smile vanished, and left her with that high proud look, yet behind it was a lurking fear.

"Are you ready?" I went on.

"Ready?"

"Yes, you're going, too."

"Where?"

I took her suddenly in my arms.

"Why, you dear little angel, to get married, of course. Come on, Berna, we'll find the nearest parson. We won't lose any more precious time."

Then a great rush of tears came into her eyes. But still she hung back. She shook her head.

"Why, Berna, what's the matter? Won't you come? Don't you love me?"

"Yes, I love you. It's because I love you I won't come."

"Won't you marry me?"

"No, no, I can't. You know what I said before. I haven't changed any. I'm still the same dishonored girl. Everybody knows. No, I could never marry you, never take your name, never bind you to me. You must go away, or—stay."

"Stay?"

"Yes. You've been living alone with me for a month. I picked you up that night in the dance hall. I had you brought here. I nursed you. Do you think people don't give us credit for the worst? I am supposed to be your mistress. Everybody knows; nobody cares. There are so many living that way here."

"What shall I do?"

"Just stay. Oh, why can't we go on as we've been doing? What does the ceremony matter? We love each other. Isn't that the real marriage? It's more; it's an ideal. We'll both

be free to go if we wish. There will be no bonds but those of love. Oh, stay, stay!"

Her arms were round my neck. The gray eyes were full of pleading. The sweet lips had the old, pathetic droop. I yielded to the empire of love.

"Well," I said, "we will go on awhile, on one condition—that by-and-by you marry me."

"Yes, I will, I will; I promise. If you don't tire of me; if you are sure beyond all doubt you will never regret it, then I will marry you with the greatest joy in the world."

So it came about that I stayed.

The year following, in which Berna and I kept house, was not altogether a happy one. Somehow we had both just missed something. The thought of her terrible experience haunted her. I knew, and I, too, suffered.

I tried to make her forget, yet I could not succeed; and even in my most happy moments there was always a shadow of Locesto; there was always a fear, the fear of his return.

My partners and I were up to our necks in business these days. Our Gold Hill property had turned out well. Jim was busy installing his hydraulic plant on Ophir creek, and altogether we had enough to think about. I had set my heart on making a hundred thousand dollars, and as things were looking it seemed as if two more years would bring me to that mark.

"Men," said I to Berna, "we'll go and travel all over the world, and do it in style."

"Will we, dear?" she answered tenderly. "But I don't want money much now, and I don't know that I care so much about travel either. What I would like would be to go to your home, settle down and live quietly."

She was greatly interested in my description of Glengyle. Particularly was she interested in my accounts of Garry, and rather scoffed at my enthusiastic description of him.

"Oh, that wonderful brother of yours! One would think he was a small god, to hear you talk. I declare I'm half afraid of him. Do you think he would love me?"

"He would love you, little girl; anyone would."

"Don't be foolish," she chided me. "And then she drew my head down and kissed me."

"Oh, I'm so happy," she said with a sigh.

"Are you, dearest?" I caressed the soft floss of her hair.

"Aye, she was happy, and I will always bless the memory of those days, and thank God I was the means of bringing a little gladness into her married life. She was happy, and yet we were living in what society would call sin. Conventionally we were not man and wife, and yet were man and wife more devoted, more self-respecting. Never were man and wife endowed with purer ideals, with a more exalted conception of the sanctity of love."

## CHAPTER XII

Two men were crawling over the winter-locked plain. One, the leader, was of great bulk and of a vast strength; while the other was small and wiry, of the breed that clings like a louse to life while better men perish.

The small man was breaking trail. Down almost to his knees in the soft snow, he sank at every step; yet ever he dragged a foot painfully upward, and made another forward plunge.

"Come on there, you darned little shrimp; get a move on you," growled the big man from within the frost-fringed hood of his parka.

The little man started as if galvanized into sudden life. His eyes, thickly wadded with frost, glared out with the fear of a hunted beast.

"Curse him, curse him," he whimpered.

## Pleasure and Profit in Scorpion Hunting

One of the most peculiar hunting expeditions on record is that which takes place at more or less regular intervals in the town of Maridine, in Asia Minor. The town is surrounded by ancient walls built to protect it from invaders, and hidden in various places in these walls are hordes of scorpions which often become a menace to the population. In order to keep down the number of these pests, said to be death-dealing, a bonus is offered by the municipality and regular hunts are organized. The hunts take place at night when the hunters, armed with lanterns, poke around the walls and dislodge the scorpions. The next day they carry them to the town officials

and collect the money due them as a reward. It frequently happens that they must wait upon the pleasure of that official, when they while away the time by making their ferocious captives engage in combat. Bets are made on the results, and it often happens that members of the waiting party have lost their money before they receive it.

**Business Reverse**  
The wayfarer was making an appeal for charity from a well-dressed gentleman.

"Well," said the other, "I seem to remember you. Didn't you have a little business of some sort once upon a time? Don't tell me you've taken up begging?"

"Yes, I have, sir," returned the other. "I've got no other way to get along since I lost my business."

"But how did you come to lose it?" "My business was a one-hand lann dry," said the mournful soul, "an one day my wife just up an' left me."

**Hold the Horses**  
America faces the responsibility of handling more power than ever before was entrusted to a nation.—American Magazine.

Why does a man always promise to do good when he's too sick to be able

pered; but once more he lifted from the leaden snowshoes and staggered on.

The big man lashed fiercely at the dogs, and as they screamed at his blows he laughed cruelly.

"Mush on there, you curs, or I'll cut you in two," he stormed, and the heavy whip fell on the yelling pack. They were pulling for all they were worth, their heads down, their shoulders squared. Their breath came panting, their tongues gleamed redly, their white teeth shone.

Wary and worn were men and dogs as they struggled onward in the growing gloom, but because of the feeling in his heart the little man no longer was conscious of bodily pain. It was black murder that raged there.

At last they reached the forest fringe, and after a few harsh directions the big man had the little one making camp. The little man worked with a strange willingness. As he gathered the firewood and filled the Yukon stove, he hummed a merry air. He produced sough bread (which he fried in bacon fat), and some dried moose-meat.

To men of the trail this was a treat. They ate ravenously, but they did not speak.

The silence was broken by a whimpering and a scratching outside. It was the five dogs crying for their supper, crying for the frozen fish they had earned so well. They wondered why it was not forthcoming.

"Dog feed all gone?"

"Yep," said the small man.

"H—I'll silence these brutes anyway."

He went to the door and laid onto them so that they slunk away into the shadows. But they did not bury themselves in the snow and sleep. They continued to howl round the tent, hunger-mad and desperate.

Then rolling himself in a robe, the big man lay down and slept.

The little man did not sleep. He was still turning over the thought that had come to him. Outside in the atrocious cold the whining malamutes crept nearer and nearer. In the agonies of hunger, they cried for fish, and there was none for them, only kishes and curses. They howled their woes to the weary man.

The little man crawled into his sleeping bag, but he did not close his eyes. He was watching.

About dawn he rose. An evil dawn it was, sallow, sinister and askew. The little man selected the heavy-handled whip for the job. Carefully he felt its butt, then he struck. It was a shrewd blow and a neatly delivered, for the little man had been in the business before. It fell on the big man's head, and he crumpled up. Then the little man took some rawhide thongs and trussed up his victim.

He gathered up the rest of the provisions, made a pack of the food and lashed it on his back. Then, after a final look of gloating hate, he went off and left the big man to his fate. At last the Worm had turned.

The dogs were closing in. Nearer and nearer they drew. They wondered why their master did not wake; they wondered why the little tent was so still; why no plume of smoke rose from the slim stovepipe. All was oddly quiet and lifeless. Closer and closer they crept to the silent tent.

The man opened his eyes. Within a foot of his face were the fangs of a malamute. At his slight movement it drew back with a snarl, and retreated to the door. Locesto could see the other dogs crouching and eying him fixedly. What could be the matter? What had gotten into the brutes? Where was the Worm? Where were the provisions? Why was the tent flap open and the stove stone-cold? Then with a dawning comprehension that he had been deserted, Locesto uttered a curse and tried to rise.

At first he thought he was stiff with cold, but a downward glance showed him his condition. He was helpless. He grew sick at the pit of his stomach, and glared at the dogs. They were drawing in on him. Their gleaming teeth snapped in his face. Violently he shuddered. He must try to free himself, so that he could fight.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## SAFETY FIRST AIM OF "DO X" BUILDER

### Why Dornier Constructed Huge German Plane.

Berlin.—"Safety First"—this typical American slogan prompted the Dornier company to build the gigantic 12-motored "Do X," the world's largest airplane.

"Do X" was designed and constructed by Dr. Claudius Dornier, it was declared, principally to demonstrate that safety in the air can be substantially increased, and secondarily to prove that airplanes can be made to pay for themselves. Asked "What is today the cause of most aviation accidents?" Dornier officials listed them as follows:

**Causes of Accidents.**  
"The pilots have too much to do. They are almost always overworked. They must steer the aircraft, keep an eye on a multitude of instruments and at the same time navigate the ship. Moreover, they are rarely protected against weather changes."

"The motors are almost always overstrained. They must run constantly under full power. Stopping them or repairing them in the air is hardly to be thought of."

"Gasoline and oil feedpipes and parts of the steering apparatus are often inaccessibly. Hundreds of emergency landings can be traced to difficulties arising in this connection. Such landings often result in serious accidents."

"Fire forms a tragic chapter in the history of aviation. The majority of these fires have been due to gasoline leaking from tanks standing close to overhead motors."

**Making Flying Safer.**  
Explaining how some, if not all, of these drawbacks to safe flying have been overcome, the Dornier officials said:

"Aboard the airplane 'Do X' the pilot can devote his attention solely to the task of piloting the craft. He need not be omnipotent or be a pilot, engineer, navigator and commander all in one. The technical work will be handled by a number of specialists. The commander will be just that; he will command the ship and the crew, determine the course to be followed and so forth. No one will be overworked. Each will be able to give his undivided attention to his special task."

"Nor will the motors be overtaxed. They have sufficient surplus power to make it possible to reduce their power by 40 per cent immediately after the start."

"Up until now, hidden parts on airplanes have been almost inaccessible. As for the 'Do X,' provisions have been made to develop to the utmost facilities for repairing the motors and equipment. The possibility of making repairs does not alone depend on accessibility, but also on the ability to disconnect damaged parts without interrupting the flight of the airplane."

"The danger of fire has been met by placing the fuel tanks as far as possible from motors."

**Argentina Is Ideal Country for Flying**  
Washington.—Argentina is an ideal country for flying, almost the whole country being a natural landing field, according to the information section of the aeronautics branch, Department of Commerce.

The country is largely level and the distances are great. It has been developing natural resources rapidly and the public and government are keenly interested in the development of commercial aviation.

These conditions, prevailing in a country heretofore lacking adequate transportation facilities, indicate great potential development of the industry. There are, according to recent dispatches, approximately 20 regularly equipped airports in the country.

## Camera Shoots Plane, Shows Bullet's Route

New York.—In outward appearance, shape and weight, an exact duplicate of the standard machine gun used on fighting planes, a recently devised motion picture camera enables military aviators to practice all the evolutions of aerial combat in entire safety from bullets. Instead of firing bullets, the gun cameras take small photographs showing exactly where bullets would have struck.

The exact time of the exposure also is registered, so that aviators practicing "dog-fights" can determine which would have been shot down if the fights had been actual.

## Plane With pontoons Lands Well in Field

Montreal.—Giuseppe M. Ballanca now has a new precept for pilots flying his planes with pontoon landing gear—if you can't make the water make a hay field! Harold P. Ayers, Montreal flyer, found out about it recently while returning from a fishing trip in the Laurentian lake region. A water-clogged fuel line betrayed the faith in Wright motors that lured him out over twenty miles of land, but the "fast" landing he executed didn't even open the seams in his metal pontoons. When the gas line had been cleaned the plane was rolled on beaching wheels to the nearest water and launched again.

## Flyers Learn to Avoid Sensation of Falling

San Antonio, Texas.—The sensation of falling may be an optical illusion, after all. Two lieutenants at Brooks field, Robert J. Smith and Frederick K. Sauer, have discovered that no falling sensation is felt if neither the earth nor the starting point of descent is visible to a parachute jumper.

With eight men, none of whom had made a parachute jump before, they left planes simultaneously. Under directions they did not look at the craft or the ground below. None reported that they felt the sensation of falling.

## Capital's Big Airport

Construction of a thousand-acre airport in Washington, D. C., is under way. The field will give the National Capital adequate commercial airport facilities. It may be reached from the center of Washington in less than ten minutes.

## Texas Youth Only 18 Gets Pilot's License

Fort Worth, Texas.—Homer Truax, eighteen-year-old Fort Worth flyer, may be the youngest aviator in the country to possess a transport pilot's license.

Veteran flyers call the boy "just a natural born pilot." He won the highest rating granted by the Department of Commerce after a year and a half of experience. Most of his lessons were taken piecemeal.

Truax is employed as a pilot by Fort Worth oil men and airplane distributors.

## JUMPS FROM PLANE NOT FOR PRISONER

### He Didn't Try to Escape on Flight to Colorado.

Denver, Colo.—Prisoners of the law who think nothing of jumping from speeding trains as a method of escaping, would doubtless give the matter a second thought before taking this route to freedom while being transported in an airplane.

At least a Colorado sheriff who was returning a prisoner to Lamar, Colo., from Chicago recently, found no trouble keeping his man aboard the ship, according to Pilot J. G. Ingram, of Universal Air lines, who flew the Fokker trimotor on which the two were passengers and thus probably became the first pilot to serve the law in this manner.

The sheriff was L. E. Alderman, of Lamar, and his prisoner was a suspect in the robbery of the Lamar bank in May, 1928, which resulted in the killing of the bank president and his son and the subsequent murder of a kidnaped teller and of a doctor who dressed the wounds of one of the bandit gang. The two were traveling by plane because Sheriff Alderman wanted to get his man to Colorado before he changed his mind about waiving extradition.

"The air was bumpy," relates Ingram, "and the prisoner got very airsick. It was his first flight and he seemed to get a great kick out of it up to the time when he began to notice the bumpiness."

"He wore handcuffs, although they were not fastened to the sheriff's wrist, and all the other passengers knew that they had a suspected murderer in the cabin with them."

It has been thought that criminals have made good their disappearance from scenes of their crimes by boarding air liners, but this is the first time one of the fraternity has been returned via air.

## BOOSTS AIR DEFENSE

Thomas L. Hill, war flyer and president of the American Society for Promotion of Aviation, who is leading a movement to have congress appropriate \$40,000,000 to provide airplanes free of charge to civilian flying clubs organized throughout the United States. Under this plan, according to the society, 250,000 trained flyers would be available for any national emergency within a period of five years.

**Coal From Ice Fields**  
Every one in a while some scientist undertakes to figure out the amount of coal available, but it seems to be generally agreed among polar explorers that the world's greatest untouched coal fields lie in the Antarctic. There have been several reports of the presence of coal in the Antarctic regions and it is expected that they will be confirmed by Byrd.

**Extreme of Boldness**  
"She certainly is a bold thing."  
"Terribly. She even high-hats her milliner."

**Uh?**  
"Women no longer wear elaborate hats."  
"Well, who looks at hats?"

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Life at your drugist's or write Besseil Chemical Co., Hackensack, N. J.

## Corn Flakes Employed for "Movie" Snowstorm

There is still hope for the salvation of the great American corn raiser. Corn has gone into the movies in a business-like way. Heretofore the slapstick comedies may have used a few roasting-ears, with sound effects, but now corn is going into Hollywood in a determined manner and mingling with the great and near great in its most commonplace form—hominy.

"The film experts," says Farm and Fireside, "have discovered that there is nothing quite so good as corn flakes for faking a real, old-fashioned blizzard. The corn flakes are especially made from hominy and are thin, white and airy. A bushel of corn flakes and an electric fan will make a snowstorm anywhere, even in California."