

# TRAILS' END

by AGNES LOUISE PROVOST



## FIRST INSTALLMENT

Life was not real. It was a castle of lovely brittle glass, and it was cracking and splintering all around her.

The girl in the cream-colored roadster tried to realize it in all its ugly implications, tried to see her way through the bristling wreckage which had closed in on her.

Things didn't happen like that; they simply didn't. To some, perhaps, to the reckless and hardboiled who did things that invited disaster; lived on excitement and wild parties. Not to girls who led normal, healthy lives and did the usual pleasant, agreeable things, and were thrilled to pieces over their work and the glorious chance of success in it. It could not happen.

But it had. What was she going to do about it?

The girl kept haunted young eyes on the road ahead, mechanically efficient while her thoughts darted and turned, hunting frantically for a way out. The speedometer needle trembled at sixty, and slid back to forty-five. She must not drive too fast, and risk being stopped for speeding. Of all times, not now.

What was she going to do?

For the first time the firm little hands on the wheel slackened and shook, but she steadied them again resolutely. The roadster hummed softly on. The wind that rushed by her face was sharp with the night chill and damp with the smell of the Pacific. Long fingers of light reached out for her and were dimmed; a nondescript car rattled past its driver sending a curious glance at the smart roadster with the pretty girl at the wheel, alone.

The air on her cheek was noticeably wet, bringing its own message. A thin fog was creeping in from the sea. Presently it would be thicker, a fleecy white blanket. She saw its woolly whiteness closing silently around a dark beach bungalow, miles back of her, shrouding it, hiding it, something sight and sound.

There were no lights in that bungalow, to beat through in a golden haze. She saw it as she had last seen it, blank-windowed, dark and furtive on its strip of sheltered beach. A silhouette against the pale rectangle of a door. A man's silhouette.

Memories came like black wings, swooping down on her. Other things . . . things that were said. She didn't want to think of them.

The road curved again. She saw a single light ahead, and her own headlights picked up a motorcycle drawn to one side of the highway, and a man in uniform bending over it. A motorcycle policeman. He looked up, with a professional eye on the oncoming car.

She wanted to step on the gas

and go roaring past him, but she didn't. Somehow she stopped. Somehow she kept her voice cool and natural.

"Any trouble, officer? Can I call up a garage for you—or anything?"

"Why no, lady. Much obliged."

The man in uniform was disillusioned and hardboiled, but he grinned appreciatively at the small creature completely offering help. Drivers of speedy cars didn't usually waste much grief over a motor cop stalled by the roadside. And this was a pretty girl, pretty even for this favored strip of the coast, where pretty girls flocked from all over the country. A little thing, with big soft eyes and a red beret pulled at a gallant angle over a small, dark head. Looked like a nice kid, for all she was tearing around the country alone at this hour of the night. A swell car, too; it must have cost a hatful of money. Later he was to remember that car, and the girl who had driven it.

He swung a sturdy leg over his saddle.

"Better detour inland if you're going far. The fog's getting thick back there. Driving's going to be bad before long."

"Thanks, I'll remember."

She smiled, and the cream-colored roadster slid past him. Fog and dangerous riving along the coast road. It was so very simple.

She had bene up and down this road a score of times since the new roadster had been hers. She knew its curves, grades, its ragged coast line. She knew, now where she was going. The speedometer needle crept a little higher.

A road appeared, branching obliquely from the main highway. Tall trees marched along each side of it, and a denser planting showed ahead. In the darkness beneath the trees she brought the roadster to a standstill, and let her hands drop from the wheel.

It was lucky that she had remembered this place. So accessible and yet so secluded, with no curious eyes to see the queer preparations that she had to make. . . . Funny how wobbly she felt, now that she could just drop back and let go. . . . It wouldn't do. She must get herself in hand, keep her head clear and her nerve steady.

It was not so easy. She seemed to be two people, and one of them was a sly, persistent imp which hovered close to her ear, fleecing and wheedling.

"You're running away! Running away! You've never been a quitter before!"

"But I've never," she found herself arguing, "been in such a ghastly jam before."

"If you go now, you can't come back. You'll be giving up everything. All this that you've worked for. You can't ever go back to that."

"I know. That's all finished

. . . ." She shook herself impatiently and swung the door open with a vigorous jab.

The pocket of her light sports coat bumped clumsily against her as she stepped down. She stood very still for a moment, with an odd, arrested look on her face. Then she thrust her hand into the overloaded pocket and drew out the thing which had weighed it down.

Starlight had all but vanished before the stealing mist, but even in that obscurity it was a bright and lovely rifle, a woman's jeweled bag, extraordinarily full. The strained catch must have been too hastily snapped shut, for it yawned open at a touch, and the bulging contents oozed into view. Bills. The bag was fairly stuffed with them, high denomination bills, tightly crammed in.

The girl in the red beret stared at it soberly. It seemed to give her no pleasure, not even any particular sense of the risk she ran in carrying such a sum with her, through lonely roads and at all hours of the night. She just let the bag lie there on her open hand, looking at it.

There was a faint aversion in that look she meant deliberately to let that opulent roll slide to the dust at her feet. Then with a brief grimace of distaste she righted her hand again, thrust the bag deep into the coat pocket and turned, a little blindly, back to the car.

The girl looked very small beside the big car, very young and troubled, yet somehow determined and every move now was brisk and efficient. A vigorous tug, and a smart traveling case came out of the car—was hidden behind a mass of shrubbery.

"Lucky," she reflected, "that I was all set to stay. . . . If there is any luck in such a miserable snarl as this."

She slipped quickly into her seat again, and the engine's heavy purr cut abruptly into the stillness. The roadster swung smoothly out of the shadowed drive and down toward the highway. The fog had thickened perceptibly and the road was dark, but she drove without lights. Time enough to switch those on. There must be no one who could remember, later, a distant glimpse of flaring lights.

On the last turn she had a good view of the main road in both directions. No dazzle of oncoming lights showed either way, blurring through the fog. She swept out into the highway, and her own came on.

There was no placid strip of beach here; only rough ground and dark rocky headland, now fairly close, now farther away, cropping sheer. About an eighth of a mile beyond there should be a place where it jutted boldly into the sea.

There it was. A queer little tingle went skipping over her as she caught sight of it, vaguely outlined. How much distance would she need? Ten—no, twenty feet before striking the incline. It would be too dangerous beyond that. She brought the car slowly to a standstill. Shut off the engine.

For a moment she sat listening, every nerve alert. There was not a sound except for the heavy murmur of the sea below. Even though fog might muffle distant sounds, it wasn't dense enough yet to matter. She started the engine again.

Her heart was beating fast as she stepped down. The roadster was pointing at a strange angle. It looked so sleek and beautiful, and she let a hand rest on it softly. This was a shabby trick to play on a good friend, but it had to be done. She would miss it, too.

There was no time to be wasted. She stepped up and leaned in, and her hands moved swiftly and competently. She gave a last tug and a hasty glance toward the naked ledge beyond.

The car lurched and started, and left the smooth road with a protesting head. It was gathering speed, bumping over the uneven ground. She jumped, staggered for a few steps and fell.

Huddled there on hands and knees, panting but unhurt, she saw the big car strike the slope and go hurtling down. Lurching, with lights flaring toward the empty sea. On the brink it seemed almost to rear back, hung for a split second and flashed down. She saw it turning, and pressed her hands to

## Traveling Around America

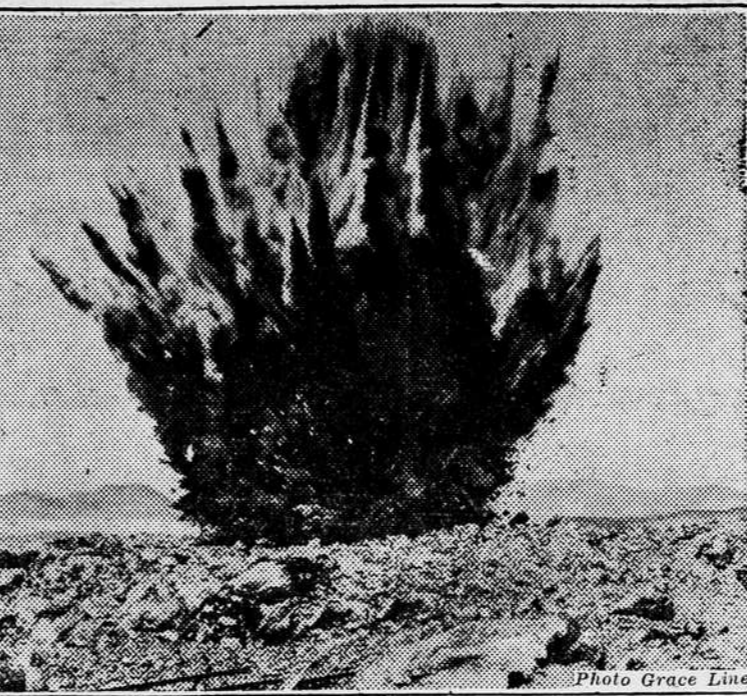


Photo Grace Line

### AN UPHEAVAL IN CHILE

THIS spectacular upheaval is the result of blasting in Chile's nitrate fields. They are located in the desert region in the northern part of the Republic and store the world's only supply of naturally produced nitrate of soda or "salitre" which is the country's chief source of wealth. There are five major districts: the Tarapaca, Tocopilla, Antofagasta, Aguas Blancas, and Taltal fields.

The blasting which releases and breaks up the caliche, or ore, the giant crushers at work, the huge "leaching" vats in which the salitre is transferred from the caliche to the "mother liquor," the final crystallization of the salitre extracted from the mother liquor—are fascinating sights which can be seen nowhere else in the world.

pearance of small towns, arranged around a barren plaza cut by deep trenches and upflung in fantastic ridges by the work of blast and shovel. They provide houses for hundreds of miners or parturales, large factory buildings, and offices for technical and engineering staffs.

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her ears against the grinding crash of its fall.

The silence that followed was blank and empty. She pulled her hands down shamefully and found the palms moist.

"That's done," she muttered shakily, and got to her feet. Her face was a white patch against the darkness.

She knew that she must hurry away, before some belated motorist came by and saw her. A girl in a red beret had ceased to exist, and her flitting ghost must not be seen. How queer it seemed. . . . there wasn't any such girl any more.

A dusty train jolted steadily through empty country. It was a short train, only three coaches and a baggage car, and the coaches had left their first youth far behind. But this was a branch line, crawling long miles out of the beaten track of the big transcontinentals, and Number Twelve's patrons did not expect the pampered ease of Pullman and dining car.

About midway of the last car a girl sat looking out of the window. The outlook was not particularly interesting, that she should be so absorbed in it. Sand and low bushes, endlessly slipping by. A distant peak. A smear of blue which might be still more distant mountains. Sand, bushes, sand. The girl hadn't seen a house for miles.

The scattered half dozen of her fellow passengers, looked at her with undeniable frequency, partly because she was the pleasant thing there was to look at in their whole journey, and partly from a healthy curiosity. Strangers, and particularly strangers as pretty as that, did not often travel on Number Twelve.

The girl felt that friendly scrutiny. She had been restless under any interested glance for days, and it was not merely interest in the marsh waste beyond the window which kept her face so steadily turned that way. She wondered, with a prickle of uneasiness, what newspaper people saw out here.

Newspapers! She turned a little further toward the window, remembering a terrifying, heart-squizzing day when she had last heard them cried on the streets of a big city.

What a morning that had been. The cheerful Saturday crowd thronging the downtown streets. The jamming good-naturedly at the crossings; newsboys shouting their wares; people buying them, talking about something that had just happened. Himself among them, feeling curiously unwell as she handed over her pennies, and rather small and quaking as she looked at a front page splashed with headlines and pictures. Her picture. Feeling all chilly and gone inside, even though the face on the front page was so different from that of the girl on the street, with her hair pulled forward in loose, dark waves under a low-brimmed hat. Putting nervous finger tips up to the framing hair, to make sure that it completely hid the uncomfortable strips of adhesive which gave her eyes and

eyebrows that long, unfamiliar tilt. Wondering if the tiny pads under her lip were still properly in place, and if they really did change her mouth as much as she had thought—and then passing a long mirror and seeing a queer looking stranger there. Thanking her stars—her one remaining star—that she had learned how to do such things. Hurrying at last to a railroad station, to get as far away as she could before another day came.

In the nearly empty station, with an hour's wait for her train, she had sat in a secluded corner and read the paper from the first page to the last.

It had been rather ghastly. All those pictures of a girl who was supposed to be dead and mustn't ever come back to life again; insets of other people whose lives had touched hers; a snapshot taken from a boat, showing curling waves against the cliff's dark background, black, ragged rocks thrusting out of the water, and sprawled helplessly on one of them the twisted, shattered wreckage of a car.

It was news. There had been several columns about it. Reports, conjectures, interviews. A motorcycle policeman had testified to meeting a fount lady in that same roadster and warning her about the thickening fog. No, there had been nothing in that young lady's manner to indicate any suicidal intent.

One thing had puzzled her badly. There had been all this about the base of a cliff, but not one line in the whole story about the thing she had feared most. How could that be suppressed?

The man across the aisle was saying something to another man several seats back. Everybody here seemed to know everybody else. Perhaps it would have been better, after all, to have buried herself in a big city. One can be lost so quickly in the shifting crowds. But there would be always the tingling expectancy of seeing someone she knew some day, or someone who knew her. In shop or office, in restaurant, or on a crowded street.

She wasn't going to be actually in any town. It was some miles out of this town of Marston, whatever that was like, at the end of a long private road, the agent had admitted. She had named it already. Trail's End. She liked the sound of that Remoteness Safety. Home. And work of course.

Marston Station barked in the afternoon sunshine. Northeast and southwest the long line of rails winked and flashed to a disappearing glimmer. Southward, beyond the limits of the little town, dune-colored desert sand stretched on and on, shimmering with heat and dotted sparsely with the low, greyed brush of the waterless lands. To the north and northwest lay a similar stretch, cut off obliquely by an abrupt line of hills.

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

Many motorists who disobey the "Stop" signs, will obey them when they say "Stop and eat."

# The Family DOCTOR

by JOHN JOSEPH GAINES, M.D.

## BITES OF DOGS

I always view the pet dog as an extra hazard in the household. The animal is always harmless if you keep far enough away from him. Our children are entitled to our most watchful care. One baby's life is worth—but you know what is on my mind.

Suppose the patient has been snapped by angry poodle. Nobody knows anything worth depending on. Even the doctor cannot tell if hydrophobia germs are in the dog's makeup. It takes from two weeks to a hundred days for hydrophobia to develop in the patient. The only real safety is in giving the victim Pasteur treatment, and losing no time about it. Also, confine that dog for the hundred days, if possible, to see it develop the dread symptoms. Don't kill the dog as soon as he bites; you destroy some very valuable evidence as to his condition. Pen him up safely and watch him.

But—if the offender be killed early, its head should be sent at once to a testing laboratory for examination. Your doctor will direct you in the proper procedure. The Pasteur treatment is so prepared now, that any capable physician may administer it. If he cannot, then seek somebody who can, for no chances should be taken once hydrophobia is contracted, a cure has never been known, so far as I know.

I may be writing nothing new. But, only last week an old citizen came into my office and asked me if I knew where she could sell a very valuable "mad-stone!" People are, it seems, still believing in that old bit witchery of our forefathers. Mad-stones have long ago been proven without effect in preventing or curing hydrophobia. You will not be misled by any such thing.

## Black-Draught Brings Refreshing Relief of Constipation Troubles

Constipation produces many disagreeable sensations, several of which are mentioned by Mr. T. E. Stith, of Boonville, Ind., who writes: "I have used Theodor's Black-Draught many years when needed for biliousness and other minor ills when a laxative was needed. I have a tight feeling in my chest when I get bilious. I get dizzy and feel very tired, just don't feel like doing my work. After taking Black-Draught, I feel much better. This is why I continue to use it when needed." . . . Theodor's Black-Draught is a good, purely vegetable laxative, obtainable for 25¢ a package.

## Births Control Jobs In Germany

Berlin—Germany's Propaganda Ministry, has figured out the real cause of unemployment here—it's the 15,000,000 children the Reich's women didn't have the past 15 years.

"You can work it out by figures," writes a Ministry official, Dr. Hermann Thomalla, in the Nazi Welfare organ.

The newly wedded couples play the honeymoon march with enthusiasm, but how about the month to the work bench and kitchen stove?

Mules are said to be coming back, and if you get too near their heels, you will probably realize that something is.

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