# The Vanishing Fleets

## By Robert W. Service

### Illustrated by A. Weil

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### SYNOPSIS.

"Vanishing Fleets," a story of "what might have happened," opens in Washington with the United States and Japan near war. Guy Hillier, secretary of the British embassy, and Miss Norma Roberts, chief aide of Inventor Roberts, are introduced as lovers. Japan declares war and takes the Philippines. Guy Hillier starts for England. Norma Roberts leaves Washington for the Florida coast. Hawaii is captured by the Japs. All ports are closed. Tokyo learns of missing Japanese fleet and whole world becomes convinced that United States has powerful war agency. England decides to send a fleet to American waters as a Canadian protection against what the British suppose to a terrible submarine flotilla. Hillier is sent with a message. Fleet mysteriously disappears. The kaiser is missing. King Edward of England is confronted by Admiral Bevins of the United States. The Dreadnaught, biggest of England's warships, is discovered at an impassable point in the Thames. The story now goes back to a time many months before the war breaks out, and Inventor Roberts visits the president and cabinet, telling of and exhibiting a metal production. This overcomes friction when electrified and is to be applied to vessels. Roberts evolves a great flying machine. The cabinet plans a "dollarless war against Japanese. The start is made for the scene of conflict. The Japanese fleet, believing Nippon supreme, suddenly discerns the radioplane fleet. After maneuvering the airships directly, and by use of strong magnets lift the warships, one by one, from the sea. The vessels are deposited in a mountain lake in the United States to await peace. The British fleet accepts American hospitality and is conveyed to the United States by the wingless terrors.

### CHAPTER XX.—Continued.

"Admiral, do you think there is any gunnery that can hurt us, anything that can overtake us, or that if we wish to we may not master the world?" he asked in a voice of extreme quiet.

Fields shrugged his shoulders hopelessly, made a grimace, and looked at his fellows. "Gentlemen," he said in a dry tone, "it seems to me that we should without any delay accept the hospitality which the United States has extended so courteously."

The others appreciated the grim humor of the situation, and in like vein acquiesced. The surprise which they had undergone was nothing compared to that with which, as the day waned, they witnessed the lifting of their craft from the waters. With the utmost care the task was accomplished, and everything made ready for the westward journey. Only one mishap occurred beyond the necessary damage to the ships, and that was not discovered until the following day. A sailor of the Dreadnought, maddened by the spectacle he had witnessed, had unleashed a life raft unobserved and thrown himself and it into the water by the use of the tackle at some hour of darkness when the vessels were traveling at slow speed and close to the surface of the waves. Bevins grieved more over this incident than any other, for he had set his heart upon a bloodless victory.

Thus it was that on the following day there rested in the Chesapeake a fleet whose fires were banked, whose men were prohibited from shore leave and whose chief officers were guests in the principal hotels of New York and Washington under pledge of secrecy. But in this they might take heart; although some slight damage had been inflicted on the vessels, in no instance did the flag come down, and from each staff floated the union jack unsullied. Communication between ships and shores was interdicted; so even the inhabitants of the borders could do no more than look and guess as to how the fleet had sailed in without attracting attention or meeting with rebuff.

Another report came from China that the fleet of the dragon was still under waiting orders; hence there was nothing for the administration to do but mark time, which it did with poor grace. Within a few days, however, a more disturbing report came from Europe by way of Canada, the usual source of communication. It was to the effect that the kaiser, learning of the disappearance of the British fleet, and believing it destroyed, was showing quick signs of aggression. Vainly the administration hoped that his belligerent intentions might be overestimated; but the passage of days proved that he might be a menace to the general plan.

It was hourly expected that the presence of the radioplanes would be required in the west to meet the Chinese. In view of this necessity, it was decided to dispatch Brockton and Jenkins to Berlin on a mission of diplomacy. They were ordered to visit the kaiser at night, landing at a time and place where they could escape observation, induce the emperor and his chancellor to get aboard the radioplane, and then, after it had been demonstrated that Germany would be powerless in the event of war, to deliver messages announcing that the United States purposed to gain what support she could for a world's peace voluntarily, but would compel it if need be.

Jenkins was familiar with the German capital, having been naval attache there for a number of years. It was he who evolved the details. The American ambassador was unaware of his country's defense until informed on the night of the arrival, and was speedily enlisted in the enterprise. Through him the kaiser granted the interview, which led to his visiting the radioplane which had been brought to rest beyond the outskirts of the city.

Brockton's task proved a most difficult one; for the emperor, a man of science and interested in all engines of warfare, insisted on being conveyed not only to the plant on the key, but across Chesapeake bay, where he might look down upon the British fleet. The night was ideal for the purpose, Nature seeming to lend herself in behalf of peace. The Norma, now fully fitted and comfortable, was utilized for the mission. Like all others of the American fleet, she carried provisions sufficient to enable her to pass many times round the world in case of emergency.

"Gott in Himmel!" Burst from the Emperor's Lips.

The kaiser marveled at the display of ingenuity, and was told all but the secret, without which no one could cast the radioactive metal. He was even permitted to handle the steering levers and direct her flight for a time, and entered into this with the enthusiasm of a boy. He would have driven her through the air at a speed which would have heated her interior had he not been cautioned, and relinquished his place in the hood only when the shores of the western continent were reached and loomed darkly far below.

It had not been Brockton's intention to show him over the plant on the key; but the sovereign insisted that he be permitted to alight, it being his first visit to America, which he had always longed to make, but had never anticipated. He was permitted to traverse the great machine shops and view the working of the blast furnace, and also to gaze at the formidable fleet of monsters that rested idly along the beach. Muffled in his great coat to avoid recognition, he was strictly incognito, and met neither the inventor, "the assistant," nor Bevins, who many hours before had retired to their rest.

His mood of curiosity had given way to one of thoughtfulness when the Norma again took him aboard and started northward. He sat silently in the central chamber of the radioplane, taking no part in the conversation between the chancellor and Brockton, until the machine hovered over the waters of the Chesapeake, on the bosom of which, at anchor, rested the British fleet, and then discussed the possibilities of crossing the continent to Lake Washington.

Brockton was compelled to enter a protest, explaining that inasmuch as the element of time for his return must enter into their calculations, they had only a small margin. The kaiser remembered that he was in a machine which annihilated space; but that in traveling from the west to the east the difference in the rising hour of the sun meant much in maintaining secrecy; so he reluctantly relinquished the idea.

"But it will not trouble you, will it, to carry me across the cordon which has been established between your country and Canada on the homeward flight?" he asked, and to this Brockton assented.

They turned to the north, and at a high altitude saw far below them the constant glow of searchlights dotting out in streamers of white the boundary line between the two countries. As far as the eye could reach to the east and the west the watch was being maintained unceasingly. The kaiser recovered his good humor, laughed, and then, having nothing more to view below, returned to the hood, where he again asked to manipulate the machine.

Jenkins was not pleased by the recklessness with which his august guest experimented with the levers and switches; but feared to remonstrate, though uttering an occasional word of caution. Suddenly, as if confused, the kaiser opened three switches at once. The machine gave a mighty lurch, and failed to obey the expert hand that was instantly reached forward to control it. The needle showing the direction took a swift leap and pointed to the northwest.

The kaiser stepped back from the hood, while Jenkins vainly strove to bring the Norma back into her eastward course. Rapidly he pulled the switches to and fro; but no answering spark showed that they were in contact. In alarm he checked the speed of the radioplane, and called to Brockton, who, frightened by the erratic movements of the craft, had entered the hood.

"I have to report, sir," Jenkins said, "that the steering currents of the radioplane are out of order, and that we can no longer direct her course. She is now heading nor'nor'west."

Brockton's brows came together in a scowl. Nothing but the presence of his majesty prevented an explosion. "What do you suggest?" he asked, sharply.

"That we come to land and make an examination and whatever repairs are necessary, sir."

"Very well. Do so at once!"

Within a few minutes the Norma had found a lower level and her searchlights were bringing into view the ground beneath. They were traveling slowly over the primeval forest in far upper Canada. A spot came to view where there were no trees, and into this, like a crippled bird, the Norma came to a stop and rested.

The emperor watched the first attempts to define the difficulty with anxiety, and then, yielding to his desire for a sight of the open, asked and obtained the unclosing of the port through which he sauntered into the night. Without observing what was around him, he stood leaning against the shell of the radioplane, thinking with annoyance of the difficulties of state which might accrue if his absence extended over a day. He was aroused by the sounds of hammering and rending within, and re-entered the craft, which was now flooded with a blinding glare of radiance brought into life by the ceaselessly turning dynamos.

On their knees, with uniforms cast aside, and recklessly tearing away the carefully wrought woodwork of the panelled side, were the admiral and the engineer, while back of them the distracted chancellor of the empire held a short crowbar in his hands and displayed muscular arms which had been bared to the elbow.

"I am sorry, your majesty," apologized the admiral, looking up from his work, "but I am afraid that a confused handling of the levers has exposed a weakness. A cross current, a burned insulation and a bad connection have fused our wires somewhere, and we may be delayed for a short time."

"How long?"

"I cannot say. Aside from the delay, there need be no apprehension, because we have abundant food. We shall have to uncover the damaged section before we can estimate the length of our stay."

Fairly gritting his teeth in rage, the kaiser turned on his heel and strode out into the open air again. What a fool he had been to intrust himself to a strange mechanism which at best was treacherous! A day's delay would not mean much; but what if they were detained for many? The waning moon had risen, and in its light he marched up and down a stretch of turf with military precision, until his anger began to disappear and his natural philosophy to afford relaxation. He became conscious of the beauties of the night and the wilderness, and as time went on was engrossed in contemplating them.

Only the moon and he seemed in possession of this cleft in the forest, this grass-carpeted glade in the center of whose breadth a hurrying brook threw strange ribbons of light upward. Bordering this asylum of the wilderness were the illimitable shadows cast by lofty spruce, fir and hemlock trees, which thrust their slender plumes like curious observers high above the denser growths of scrubby birch and jack pine. Here and there were splotches of light where the moon found ragged openings, making of the woods a royal robe spotted without regularity. It was a world of enchantment, mysterious in its stillness, mystic in its beauty and alluring in its strangeness. Cares of state were forgotten, and he was yielding to its spell when a voice at his elbow speaking in his native tongue interrupted his meditations.

"Your majesty," the chancellor said, "they have broken, and say that with the tools at command it will require several days perhaps to repair it. Admiral Bevins expresses his regrets and—"

"Gott im himmel!" burst from the emperor's lips, and with a gesture of hopelessness he waved his subject away and began an agitated march backward and forward, while the chancellor returned to render what assistance he could.

### CHAPTER XXI.

#### His Majesty's Visit.

In the heart of the woods, untrodden before by man, the sound of the hammer awoke the German emperor after his hours of anxious study. By choice he had declined to sleep in the radioplane, and rolled himself in his blankets on an open spot of turf. The cares of the day were upon him again with all their perplexities. The sun had not risen, and the cool breath of the morning came to his lungs with invigorating freshness, while a bird of the far north was beginning a thin piping to its mate, and a camp robber, brilliantly impertinent, hopped round his woodland couch and gazed unabashed at royalty.

He threw aside the blankets which had been tightly rolled round him, walked to the brook, whose song had lulled him in his dreams of the night, and bathed his hands and face in the icy water. A great trout, disturbed by the intrusion, sped swiftly away from a rock and disappeared in a dark pool with a final sweep of its tail. The emperor dried his face on his handkerchief and walked slowly across the glade to the Norma, which he entered curiously.

There they all were as on the night before, tired, work-worn and anxious, the chancellor still with his sleeves rolled up, the rear admiral stripped to his undershirt and the engineer peering through his glasses at the tangles of wire. On the night before the kaiser had stormed and threatened, had mumbled angry soliloquies, and sworn mighty oaths to the unheeding woods. Now at the sight of these faces before him he understood to the full that these, his hosts, must have labored throughout the night trying to undo the accident which perhaps his own hands had wrought. It softened his mood.

They saluted him, and Brockton rose stiffly to his feet, wiped his hands on his trousers, and repaired to the rear of the radioplane, from which he apologetically returned with breakfast for his guest. The emperor ate with an appetite which was made keen by the balsamy night air in which he had slept, and then began wishing that he, too, might take part in this manual toil. Almost involuntarily he assisted the fat old chancellor, who was prying loose another board with a crowbar; but he felt that he was in the way, and after lounging round the craft for a time decided that he would have another look at the brook. It was swarming with trout, and, half ashamed of his zest, he returned to the Norma, and, like a boy preparing to play truant, furtively secured a line, and attached it to a fly which he had in his pocket book.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

#### Arctic Dog Life.

Nowhere in the world has the dog such unrestricted right of way as in our most northerly possession—Alaska. In winter, when the more than 600,000 square miles of territory are sealed up in solid ice, dogs are almost the sole means of getting from place to place—in fact, they seem necessary to life itself.

The aristocrats of Arctic dog life are the mail teams in the service of the United States government. They are to-day a superior breed to the dogs employed some half dozen years ago before great gold discoveries demanded increased mail service.—St. Nicholas.

#### Juvenile Logic.

Marie is a very bright kindergarten pupil. She came home to her parents the other day and told them that the kindergarten teacher had said she will grow up to be a very nice looking young lady if she is a good girl, but will grow up to be a very ugly woman if she is a naughty girl. "Is that true, mamma?" asked Marie, and she was informed that if the teacher said so it was true. Marie sat still for a while pondering seriously. "But, mamma," she suddenly burst forth again, "why was the kindergarten teacher so naughty when she was a little girl?"


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DUTIFUL SON.

"You young scamp! I've caught you smoking my cigars!"

"Yes, pa—er—er—you see I heard ma say that you were smokin' yourself to death and er—I'm tryin' to save your life!"



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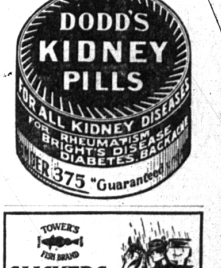

# Madonna Lilies and Other Flowers That Are Sacred

In these sunny days little grows reorient from the dust, a latent consciousness of wings stirs in the buried seed, and as if from very gladness of heart the sap in the naked trees mounts upward, ever upward, into the golden light. The tiny leaves, close clasped together in the bud, flutter timidly apart, to grow bravely green, and flaunt their colors on the passing breeze. The maple tree in the yard now hears a voice out of the unseen, calling from the blue skies, bidding it come up higher, and gladly does it make answer in the green tassels and shining leaves, telling of new growth and broader horizon.

Out on the old arbor, the rough and scraggy grapevine is sending forth little gray tendrils, reaching farther toward heaven and away from the earth that hides its foothold. How blithely does nature echo forth her yearly message to every waiting heart—her message of resurrection, joyous activity, high-mounting aspiration! Her myriad voices cry through every sense, to touch and penetrate the spirit with gladness and good cheer. New readings from the Gospel of eternal hope are seen on every side, in the growth of plant, the unfolding of leaf, the blossoming of flower. The woods are full of these shy, spring darlings—violets, dandelions, adder's tongues, spring beauties, bluebells and many a nameless wildling, all hurrying gayly to deck the earth and celebrate the Eastertide.

Certain flowers and plants have always been set apart as sacred things, and from the very dawn of history we hear of flower-decked altars and wreaths of sacrifice. The heathen temples were adorned with earth's fairest blossoms, scattered on the altars, and twined around the brow of priest and acolyte. The amaranth bloomed in deathless beauty upon the Olympian heights, the myrtle was beloved of Apollo, the rose, the lily, the mistletoe were favorites of legend and myth. The flower's once sacred to Freya, the spring goddess of northern mythology, were chosen for their spotless purity, in form and color. And when heathen myth gave place to Christian truth, these sacred treasures were transferred to the Virgin, and became symbols of the queen of heaven.

So it is that in every story of saint or madonna we find either the lily or the rose—the lily with its fragrance, its bending, bowing, waving bells, seems to whisper of purity and worship; the rose, with its faint and far away odor, which seems to hint of eternal hope. One might almost fill a garden with flowers all named for the Virgin Mary, generally because they chance to blossom on Our Lady's days (such as the visitation, the assumption, her birth, baptism, purification). There are lady's slipper, lady's mantle, lady's fingers, lady's smock, lady's tresses, Virgin's bower, or clematis, begins to bloom in July, the feast of visitation, and is at full bloom at assumption in August.

The lily was first found in connection with the Virgin in the story of her ascension to heaven, and it originated probably in the second century. According to this legend, it was three days after the burial of our Lord's mother that the apostles visited and opened her grave and found it filled with fragrant, spotless lilies. Since then these matchless flowers have been called "Madonna lilies," or "flowers of the Virgin." The common white lily of our gardens, that blooms in July, and is the sweetest and most graceful of all flowers, might well be called "holy." No one seems to know its origin. It is never found wild in Palestine, nor can we find just where it grows without culture. But we see it in the faded pictures of old Italian masters and Netherland painters, made long before the discovery of this New World.

Nearly all of our great poets have praised this flower. Chaucer and Spenser speak of it as a mystical blossom in their far away gardens and, lady's bowers. Shakespeare it was who first said: "To gild refined gold and paint the lily," and these lines from one of his sonnets tell a truth that can never be forgotten:

For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds.
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

Shelley has the lily in his wonderful garden along with his sensitive plant. Wordsworth often praises it. Burns mentions it frequently. Tennyson has lovely lily thoughts; but our own Longfellow draws the prettiest picture of maidenhood—

Bears a lily in thy hand—
Gates of brass can not withstand
One touch of that magic wand.

James Russell Lowell always comes near to the heart of things and left us more than one sweet lily poem and allusion, and our minor poets all tell their love for this perfect specimen of nature's handiwork.

"Our Sweet Will Shakespeare" was born in April, and it was of April's flowers that he sang most frequently and most sweetly.



# AN EASTER BONNET

Where lilies hid the Latin text,
And smilax wreathed the altar,
And every head was bravely bent
Over sacred psalm and psalter,
And all the bells were pink and white
With roses strewn upon it,
He saw a little maid in gray
Who wore an Easter bonnet.

He walked behind her from the church
And viewed her girlish grace;
And breathed the vague, delicious scent
Of dainty bows and lace.
A prayerbook was in her hand—
She kept her glances on it,
Till came a gust of frolic wind
And whisked away her bonnet.

Her eyes were full of April tears,
Her scarlet lips were smiling,
The sunny curls about her brow
Were made for man's beguiling,
Her face was like a dewy rose—
He paused to gaze upon it,
And found that he had lost his heart,
And she had lost her bonnet.

But now a spray of orange flowers
Is wreathed about the Latin;
The little maid is all in white—
A dream of lace and satin.
And, as he takes her slender hand,
And slips the ring upon it,
He murmurs softly in her ear—
A blessing on the bonnet!



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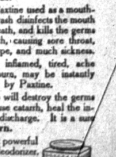


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