

# Treasure Trail

By Frederick Niven

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## CHAPTER VII.

### Movie Bill Considers Solitaire

"You darn fool," Movie Bill addressed himself, riding on. "If you want to help anyone you ought to consider first whether you are ready to get kicked in return, metaphorically speaking." He rode on a little further, and then—"No," he said, "that's not true. That's cynical!" He rode on further, and then—"Though the cynical is sometimes true," he added.

He felt highly incensed at everything in general by then, even more than at Piccolo in particular. He reined in and looked over the long quiet rolls of Colvalli plains that expand there between the two far-distant ranges of mountain, east and west. He felt utterly unfit for converse with his kind. Perhaps the cause of this mood of irritation was in a growing sense he had of the ineffectuality of his remaining in Colvalli. The tiff with Piccolo had not created his discontent; the tiff was indeed perhaps partly due to the fact that he was troubled.

In the old phrase of the love stories, he was certain Margaret never could be his. According to his own deep thoughts how could he expect a girl to look at one with such a face and such a rolling record? He had always been the black sheep of his family. The others had "made good" back east. They had their names either on the headlines of their own memorandum forms, or else figuring in the small print to the left hand side where reads: "Treasurer"—"President". What he had acquired in his roving life, he considered, was of little value when a girl came drifting into it. To have seen the Mogolons; to know how the road looked, as in the old cow-puncher ballad, out of Holbrook, Arizona-o; to be able to talk in their own tongues with Chiefs Young Whirlwind of the Southern Cheyenne or Kicking Bull of the Sioux; to have a collection of Indian arrowheads, the low-grade ones of the Kootenays, the exquisite ones of the Umatillas—what was all that? Arrowheads were not a balance at the bank! A fine specimen here, to wish to take under his care a woman!

He looked over the long unfenced leagues of the prairie. He wondered where Mark Bantling had gone and then mused: "It does not matter anyhow. That darn fellow can take care of himself. Ungrateful squeaker."

He suddenly raised his arms in air, elbows out, in sign to his horse; and off it shot like an arrow from a bow, with a gathering and flying whirl of its hoofs, leaving a wavering pennon of dust behind, rub-a-dubbing the faint scent of the yet flowerless yellow sage into the air. He had turned away from Colvalli. The gallop! The gallop was the thing to re-oxygenate the blood, to clear the head, to forget!

He dismissed Piccolo. That was easy! But no sooner had he done so than Piccolo was thrust upon him again, for there, as he came bobbing up to the crest of one of the rolls, out of a clump of cottonwood that ribboned along near an irrigation ditch to south, he saw a rider emerge; and that rider was Mark Bantling. Movie Bill recognized him at half-a-mile distance—recognized the lines of the horse, the shape of the man. He reined in, dropping his elbows to his sides, and canting back in the saddle.

There was nothing astonishing in the fact that, in a region so open, Bantling should not have ridden back from the T. T. ranch by the wagon road. There was also the possibility, which Movie Bill did not ignore, that he had been given a mistaken connection by Central, that perhaps Bantling had not been at the T. T. ranch at all, that it was only by a coincidence that, ringing up Piccolo to warn him of the coming of Bantling, he had got in touch with Mark elsewhere. That was hardly likely.

Much more probable it was, thought he that Bantling, alarmed, even in his drunkenness, by the result of his answering the telephone call when in the T. T. ranch house, had chosen to return by another way than the road. That strip of trees gave good shelter. Perhaps he had even gone down into the belt of cottonwoods to rest a while, wash in the ditch, cool himself among the shadows. With the first leap of spring on Colvalli Plain the trees were already all sifted over with little leaves, not green yet, but like a sift of bright yellow over the twigs. Movie Bill watched Mark Bantling ride on, headed then across the open in the direction of Colvalli. He was riding at a tangent that would take him past the northwest corner of the Jarvis and Benwell horse ranch home pasture fence. Bill sat motionless. Not once did the diminishing figure of that rider turn to look around. It showed sometimes high, man and almost all horse visible, then dwindled down till

but a dot of shoulder and broad hat showed along a ridge.

Again Movie Bill dismissed Piccolo—Piccolo and Mark Bantling. He shook the lines and rode on, for the pleasure of riding in the good air. And well on in the afternoon he returned to Colvalli, the Piccolo episode dismissed, but not utterly dismissed his uncertainty as to whether he had not better get him gone from the place—forget Margaret MacPherson instead of, love-sick and dissembling his love, tarrying on indefinitely, hopelessly.

Deep in reverie that night after supper, he told himself, sitting aloof on the upper balcony, that he was by nature a lone man, a man who should not mix up in the affairs of others, even in the mood of Good Samaritan. He went a step further. He told himself that he should get away—away—from Colvalli; and then he went to bed.

"Oh, you ugly-faced son of a gun!" he addressed himself in the morning, shaving. "I'm going to take you out a-riding again today—a-riding and a-thinking." (Evidently the matter was not settled after all.) "I guess you'll come back to pack your little grips, and roll your little blankets, and pull your little freight. You have a face like a bad man, a tough; and I guess you better go be a tough instead of sentimentalizing around here."

He went down for breakfast and paid no heed to anyone in the room. He saw only the splashes of light on the floor; he felt only the freshness of the air fanning at an open window. Half-an-hour after breakfast he was riding south out of Colvalli, picturing all open America to himself, thinking of the grey-green rolls of Alberta, north, the mountains of British Columbia; the dry belts of Washington; the sandhills of New Mexico—the big open west he knew. Where, in all that west, he wondered, should he go?

He had a lunch in his pocket to left, and his automatic in the pocket to right, a pipe in his vest pocket, and a pouch of tobacco in his hip pocket. There were still some savings in the bank from his last long spell of work before chance led him to Colvalli, chance or perhaps a memory of days when he had been there before. When love comes in at the window self-analysis is a difficult matter.

By noon he was well down south of Colvalli Plains, where the benches lie in their long yellow bastions, and the

bull pines dot the scene, and Pauline Creek twists, silty, and with changing opalescent colours, to join the Columbia. There he halted for lunch—sandwiches, and water from the creek. On the bench opposite to him (the Indian Reservation side of the river) a democrat appeared, full of squaws and paposes, and with an old braided Indian driving. Bill raised a hand and wagged it, and the old Indian and all the paposes replied. Everyone of them knew him.

It was that soft sound of horse hoofs kicking sand that made him look round again to see what Baldy was about—but it was not Baldy that made the sound. Baldy was standing demurely with his nose against a bull-pine as if he thought it was the hayrack in the stable. The sifting of sand by hoofs came from two riders on the road behind him. They were Bantling and Greer.

They were riding toward Colvalli. He considered that he had not seen them at breakfast, and he wondered where they had been. They must have started off long before he rose to have gone far; and there was a steadiness in the gait of their horses, that automatic appearance that comes of miles, that suggested to him that they had been riding so for some time. Maybe they had been to Placer, the next station on the railroad. It was further than to Eagle Bend, Colvalli's usual railroad stop; but Placer was a larger place! A few more reputed toughs in Placer! More probability of replenishing supplies of bootch! They spoke one to the other, he saw; and then rode aside to where he sat on the sandy yellow bank.

"How-do," said Bantling.

"How-do," said Greer.

"How-do," said Movie Bill.

They dismounted, throwing the lines over their horses' heads, and squatted down beside him.

"Say, Bill," said Bantling. "I got a proposition to put to you."

"Bill" seemed highly friendly for one he hardly knew—knew but by sight, and had exchanged no more than a nod with at the hotel; but he would accept it as friendly, although to begin with, Allardyce—even without the handle of Mr.—would have seemed more fitting.

"Yep?" enquired Movie.

Bantling made a sudden movement of his hand from his right side coat pocket, where it had reposed. Bill had noted it there and wondered if Mark also, despite the law regarding concealed weapons, had a tendency toward being "heeled". Bantling's hand shot out, and the palm opened; and lying in it was a piece of sparkling galena, a stone splinter that fitted just the cup of his palm.

"Do you know what that is?" he asked.

"That," answered Bill, slowly, looks to me like the biggest piece of the little bits of rock that Piccolo Thomas slipped from his pocket at the Benwell House a few days back"; he paused, then decided to say it: "and you picked up then".

Greer and Bantling exchanged glances; and Greer's was of "I told you so" almost as plainly as though he had spoken the words.

"Oh!" said Bantling, wagging his head. "You saw."

"Sure I saw; but it doesn't concern me. What do you show it to me for? I can't assay it. You could get an assay in Placer, or from Fred Strand in Assafery."

"Ever prospected yourself?" asked Bantling.

"Oh, yes," said Movie Bill. "I've tread, till I got a headache, about mineralogy; and then I went out once or twice with a prospector who had practical knowledge too."

"So you know an ore like this when you see it."

"Yes. And I think even a novice ought to recognize it as maybe valuable."

That fellow Piccolo Thomas gets my goat slinging samples around that way. Or maybe he's trying to have you on a string, pull your leg. I saw from the way you asked him where he'd been that you were on to it. What I think is that he just picked it up on some road they crossed. Guess it dropped off an ore wagon. Maybe it slipped off an hide in winter, when they were rawhiding. If you knew the look of the ore of claims being worked up there in the parts they passed through you'd maybe see that that is only a specimen from a working mine after all."

"This was clearly a new suggestion to both Greer and Bantling. It was, however, but a momentary glance or doubt they gave one to the other, or that Greer gave towards Bantling. Bantling's glance at Greer may not have been of doubt at all. If Movie Bill's suggestion shook him it was only for a second. But quickly he pretended that he accepted such an explanation as feasible.

"Sure, sure!" said he.

They should have ridden on then; but they did not. They sat and studied Bill's lined and, at that moment, blank face. They were deeply desirous to ascertain just how much he knew.

Said Bantling, baffled by that mask-like expression: "Now I guess you don't believe that at all. What did you go to see Piccolo Thomas about yesterday?"

(The fact was that, leaving the T. T. ranch house, Bantling had just passed into the strip of cotton-woods when Movie Bill arrived there; and there he remained until after Bill departed. Unseen he had seen, and been sufficiently sobered by the talk over the 'phone to keep away, not plunge drunkenly back as the lees of the mad fumes prompted him to do.)

Movie Bill's face did then, it must be confessed, look a mighty "tough" face.

"Do you want me to repeat to you the Declaration of Independence?" he asked gently, and yet with an edge in his tone. "This is the Land of the Free. I can make a call without having to report, I hope?" and as he said these words his hand in his right hand pocket

gripped the automatic. He was prepared for Bantling's reposte to that being the sudden drawing of a "gun" from somewhere, though no gun was in his belt.

"What do you mean?" blazed Bantling.

"Well, I don't know either of you well enough to tell you if I went to play poker or craps with him. What's your game?"

"Game?"

Bantling frowned.

"It's like this," he said. "We don't believe that fool Piccolo has the first notion of what he picked up."

"Guess I agree about 'fool,'" said Movie Bill.

"You do?"

"Sure. He's no friend of mine."

"All right, I see. I didn't think he was, somehow. Now I guess I get you better. You saw what we picked up. And what I think is that you went to see Piccolo to pump him about where he got it."

"Same as you," remarked Movie Bill.

"Oh, was it you talked on the 'phone? I thought so, even the way I was then, kind of lit up. If I hadn't been that way I would never have answered it."

Movie Bill smiled his queer smile.

"By your intellect you're a prohibitionist," said he.

Bantling paid no heed to that aside.

"Now I want to ask you," said he.

"Did Piccolo give you any further indication where he got it?"

"Not a particle," answered Movie Bill.

"You said on the 'phone you were on to it yourself."

"Shucks! That was just my danged temper, without being lit up with either actual or alleged whisky," said Bill.

Bantling laughed, unbelievably.

Greer, thinking the conference went wrong, put in:

"What's the matter with you coming in with us?"

"What on?" asked Movie Bill.

"Finding this ore-body," said Bantling in reply, instead of Greer, which showed their unanimity in that suggestion.

"Why should I do that? It's there somewhere. I don't see that it belongs to anybody yet—that is, granting he didn't just pick up some bits that had joggled off a rawhide during some hauling from a mine in operation up there. If he didn't pick it up as I suggest, then it's free to anybody to find. You're making an awful sewing circle fuss about it all. That's the way trouble comes. Life is simple enough, and it's just the way danged fools of people go complicating it that makes trouble. Go and get it—if you can. It is only when you begin to talk about hazing Piccolo into telling you where it was he found the samples that the crooked begins."

"I said so—without heat. This is an ethical discussion."

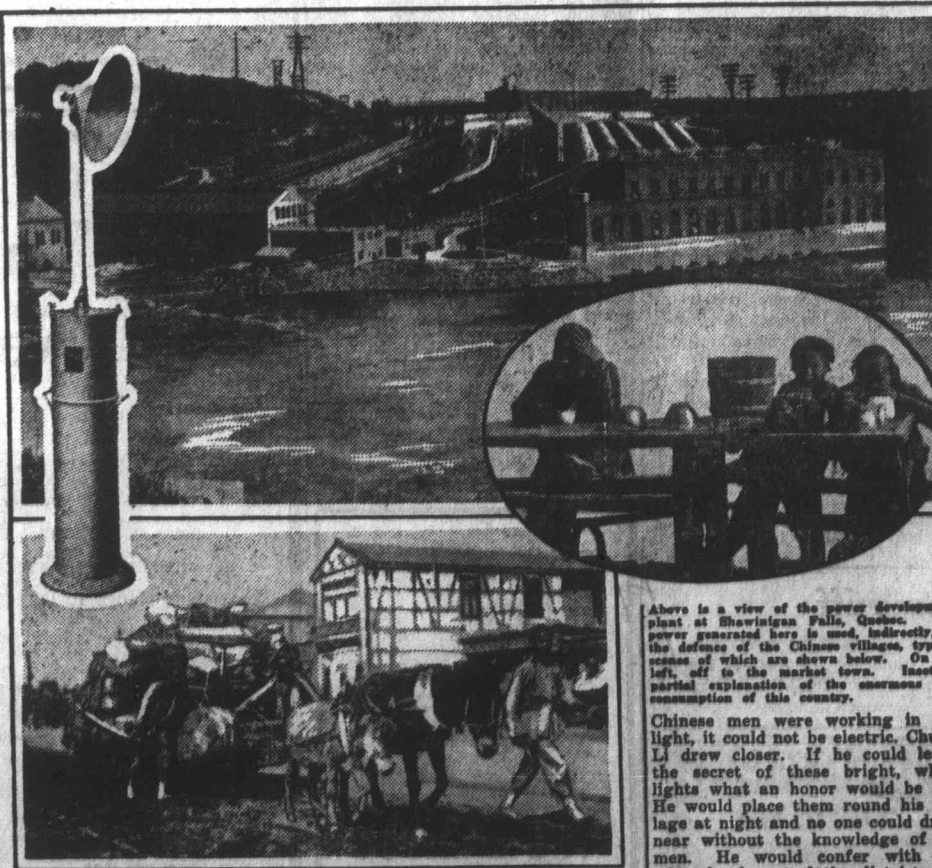
"You got me on ethical!" said Bantling. "Sounds like a word out of a book. But talk on anyhow. You was about to remark?"

"Well, go and look for it. That's all," said Allardyce. "I don't say there is anything crooked in even picking up that bit of rock and saying nothing to Piccolo about it. I don't say there is anything crooked even in not drawing his attention to what he dropped—unless he knew what he dropped. Funny! But there seems to be a difference. So far as I can see it was nothing to him, just dust and splinters in a pocket that he cleaned out."

"That's straight talk," said Greer to Bantling. "You can't ask more than that. You're all right, Mr. Allardyce, Bill."

To be continued.

## Canadian Power Defends Chinese Villagers



Now what on earth has power development at Shawinigan Falls got to do with Chinese village life? you ask. The answer is that it helps to protect Mr. Chinaman, Mrs. Chinaman and all the little Chinamen from bandits. Yes! it's a long cry from the waters of the St. Maurice Valley to the interior Chinese village, but there you are. And it came about thus. A harassed Chinese head-man driven to desperation and from his native village by badmen from the hills, came down to Hong Kong, or perhaps it was Shanghai, and down by the dock-

side saw men of his race working by night as if by day on the unloading of one of the giant Canadian Pacific Empire steamships. What wonderful things were these that could so defy the darkness? Chung Li drew closer, and saw that at intervals along the shed in which the stevedores were working much light came from little cans that glowed softly in the breeze. Now everyone knows that electric lights are the invention of the devil and were introduced by the white races to burn the eyes of Chinese babies and shorten the life of Chinese men. Therefore, as

Above is a view of the power development plant at Shawinigan Falls, Quebec. The power generated here is used, indirectly, in the defence of the Chinese villages, typical scenes of which are shown below. On the left, off in the market town. Next, a partial explanation of the enormous risk Chinese men were working in the light, it could not be electric. Chung Li drew closer. If he could learn the secret of these bright, white lights what an honor would be his. He would place them round his village at night and no one could draw near without the knowledge of his men. He would confer with the other head-men of the district. And so it came about that the Canada Carbide Company, which uses the power developed at Shawinigan Falls to fuse coke and lime into carbide, received an order for many flare lights. A deputation of the villagers made a long journey to Hong Kong to receive the shipment as it was discharged from the Empress of Russia, and returned, knowing that as long as the carbide hung out they were comparatively safe from the marauding bandits. There you have the connection. Shawinigan Falls lighting a Chinese village and protecting it from bandits.

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I. O. D. E. B.

Presentation... Coats and Pa... by Lette

There was a good... Orpheum Theatre... when the musical... Petticoats" was... Sir Robert Borden... The entertainment... the direction of M... convener of the... mittee, was much... present, and Miss... congratulated on... performance. She w... bouquet of red and... acts.

In the comedy... Hilda Johnson and... jamie were particu... songs of Mrs. W... Threwey, Annie... Eaton were much... in the cast were M... Beth Corey, Elizab... Shaw. The chorus... Helen Harris, Maric... and Virginia McL... several numbers w... received by the a... furnished by the o... Misses Grace Beal... ney, Messrs. Geral... Goudy, added not... of the performance... On Monday even... ment was repeated... Canning, before a

INTERESTING R... DIA SEN

A recital was given... at Acadia Seminary... ing, and was much... attendance. The sel... no, violin and voc... semble selection. ... follows:

- Gentle Row France
- The Cricket and the wick Jean
- The Wounded Knee Gene
- Hungarian Melody Peggy
- Allegretto Betty
- Little Patriot Jean Ar
- Album Leaf Sidney
- Rondo du Villageois Dorothy
- Cradle Song Lloyd M
- Fantoccini Frances
- Hope March Frances
- Kathleen Bancroft, Eaton, 2nd violin; J. violin; Jean Shaw, Miss Minnie
- Daddy's Sweetheart Goldie H
- Petite Berceuse Ruth In
- Feu Follet Bertha
- Lancelot Natica

WANTS TO KNOW MONEY SPENT VILLE-KEN

In the Local Hou... B. A. LeBlanc, Cons... and the following... highways:

- 1.—What amount expended on the ma... Kentville and Wolf... since the first day
- 2.—If this work v... tract, who were t... what amount was p... contractors during
- 3.—What amount... from the Dominion... said road as federal

The electrical stor... last Thursday even... usual at this season... ber of vivid flashes... eastern sky were w... evening by a number... eastern part of the... was of much grate

PRESENTED BUD

Hon. James A. R... of Finance, who pr... budget in the Hou... Tuesday. The mo... change as it affects... proposal to make a... from the United Sta... ton instead of 14