

Treasure Trail

By Frederick Niven

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The newly appointed policeman of Kokanee had done nothing to stop the fight. In such places the police exercise their discretionary powers. They step in when they think the psychological moment has arrived. All was going well, and beyond the last house halted. "Going far?" he asked as they passed. He did not reply.

He smiled, and brushing aside his hat showed his star. Angus stood looking, pack-horse abruptly halted at the policeman. He was a short man, like two squares indeed, the lower square cut in two for legs, with a tremendous depth of chest. From front to back he was almost as broad as he was in the wonted sense of the word. He stood with his shoulders to the pack-horse, and his head a few feet forward instead of held back taut. His piercing eyes, a humorous mouth, short hook nose, a complexion as of ivory; that was the policeman of Kokanee. Angus trusted him, and stepping closer, in a low voice, he said: "We're supposed to be going up expecting on the Olask range, but we're going clean on over and down to the west Arm of Flat-Bow Lake."

"You'll never make it. Too much snow up there."

"Been up?" asked Angus.

"Not this year," admitted the policeman.

"Well, we'll try," said Angus.

"It's up to you. Good luck, Squire."

"Good luck to you, constable."

CHAPTER X

Scot Meets Scot

The pack horse had clearly been upon at road out of Kokanee before, for at the first trail it turned aside from the side of the wagon road. The two men watched him, uncertain. Piccolo glanced at Angus; Angus looked on along the trail.

"Let him go," said he. "It looks as if it was a cut-off."

And "cut-off" it was. Following the horse came out a couple of hundred feet higher up, and no more, upon another stretch of road. Opposite was another entrance to a cut-off, and on went the horse, looking around on the zig-zagging wagon road and the horse refused to heed at all the apparent cut-off. But as that one was near the end of a switch in the road the two men considered that perhaps it was not really a cut-off but a trail leading sharply away from the road altogether. Not so, however. The explanation for the horse's ignoring of that cut-off was merely that it was a very steep and rocky one.

The road ran for half-a-mile athwart the hill, bent sharply and came back over half-a-mile, and was in a way a cut-off where the cut-off entered the road below, just how steep it was. No wonder pack-horses had been allowed, there, to take the long way on.

The climbing to their unaccustomed was weariness. They trudged slowly, and the horse, looking around on the way, went leisurely too, tearing grass, eating all the way. Thus, sometimes by the road, sometimes by cut-offs they counted till there came to their ears the splash-splash of a creek, a little later the roar of it, and shortly after a rub-a-dub and waltzing sound of machinery. They reached on the edge of a broad water-gorge, a gorge, a falling stream that leapt, tumbled, down under the spread branches of tamarack and spruce, was an air-compressor plant.

Angus went to the door. Piccolo, sitting, watched him. The horse tore at the door.

"Hullo Jock! Hoo are ye the day?" Angus roared in a voice to penetrate the bounds of water power and machinery. "He's got a friend here," thought Piccolo.

To the door came a man who rubbed a bunch of cotton waste between his fingers, preparatory to shaking hands. He pump-handled Angus and these two stood there with the black cavern of the power house behind them, shouting to each other. Piccolo thought he might have been introduced, felt despised. His face showed this affection when Angus, all radiant, returned and nodded toward him and called "Friend of mine—Thomas."

Piccolo advanced to shake hands, and his amazement heard Angus enquire of the engineer: "Your name, sir?" "MacBride," said the man, grabbed Piccolo's hand and each assured the other of the pleasure of meeting. "MacPherson is my name, Angus MacPherson," said Angus.

Then he shook hands again with MacBride and he and Piccolo turned back to the horse. There was a "Git up, cayuse," and they continued the ascent.

Piccolo was puzzled; but when the roar of the place decreased, Angus explained.

"Ay! When I see machinery I try that," he said. "I just put my head in the door and cry out: 'Hullo, Jock. Hoo are ye the day?' and man, it mostly successful. You Scotland is an awful wee bit of an island, or part of an island; and an awful lot of them are engineers. He tells me he has a telephone up to the mill and to the mine, and he said for the sake of Auld Scotland he would let me know if I phoned him from above if anybody came up after us. He's going to watch out during the day. I know his name, you see, which is Glasgow, as well as I know Aberdeen. We mentioned names probably meaningless to you, Piccolo—the Broomielaw, Argyll Street, the Tron, the Clutha boats on the Clyde. He was an engineer once on a lark; and then I said: 'Man, an abominable idea has got around Kokanee that has struck a fine lead up in the moun-

tains here, and the truth is I was never here before; but I believe the rumour is so strong that I may be followed and watched. I'd like to know just for fun. I'd seen the wire coming out of his house, you see. And the sensible body understood, Pic. 'You go into the mill, or at the mine,' he said, 'and ask to speak down to the compressor and I'll tell ye who has passed up, if anybody.' That was when I called you to be introduced, so that I could have his name. A fine fellow! A fine fellow!"

It was about noon when they reached the mill. They came upon it suddenly, round a hump of hill where was nothing in the way of view at all, they tramping behind the dawdling, grass-plucking horse in deep woods. And there it was, on a cleared edge of hill, half-a-dozen frame houses, and the great ore bins, and the big barn-like edifices of the concentrator. Here they stopped to eat a packet of sandwiches, the first meal, as is the wont on such trips, having been put up for them at the hotel of the "jumping-off place," so that they could make some distance before halting to cook. The shingle roofs basked in the sun, squirrels chirped now and then, the horse continued to tear grass near them, calling all the tufts by the road edge. No human being showed anywhere. The only human movement was of two stretched wire ropes that disappeared up-hill along the timber. Ore-buckets pendant from these on one side came drifting across the scene into a high building and, equidistant, others came out and drifted away empty upward through the woods.

"I wonder which house we go to to phone," said Piccolo.

"Oh, we'll phone at the mine," said Angus. "I was casual in my remark to you Glasgow lad at the compressor. We'll not excite him by phoning twice. I just said to him I'd heard some silly bodies thought I had already found a bonanza whereas I had never been here before. 'It would tickle me,' I says, to be tickled only. Pic, amused—no more. That was my attitude. Says he: 'I'll watch and report to ye if anybody does go up that I don't know is just going to the mine.' Says I: 'Oh there's doubtless a few folk going up into the mountains this way prospecting in the ordinary way—but yes, I'll phone you anyhow to let you know we made the mine, and you can let me know if any suspicious comic characters have passed up.' Casual, casual, you see, Piccolo. Well, we'll take the road again."

Piccolo nodded and rose and clicked to the horse. From the mill onwards, the road was rougher, less travelled since the installation of the gravity-tram between mine and mill. It was less road than trail; or a compromise between the two. The rich odour of Linnæus' emblem, the American Tamarack, every where, and there was like a pool of strange sweet scent among the rougher scent of the firs and pines. The firs stood with boughs less wide-spread, indicating a higher level, the level where either they had more need of steepness to shoot the weight of snow, or were trained to that angle by the weight of winter snow. Mounting, as they were, the eastern slope of a steep mountain they were in shade by afternoon and, turning, could see the range across the lake all ablaze with sunlight. But even over there the dark began its upward course. The main lake ceased to sparkle like mackerel scales when they glimpsed it between the tree boles. The lower hog-backs turned to dark brown while still the high peaks gleamed blue and white.

The way twisted and twined, now athwart the slopes, and anon definitely ahead across a plateau where horse and man made no sound, passing, treading on a carpet of tamarack needles.

"One thing Mr. MacBride told me," said Angus. "It was the same as the policeman told me at Kokanee, and that was that we could not get over the top yet, for the snow."

"You told him where we were going—that we were going over the summit," asked Piccolo.

"No, no. He told me indirectly. Says he: 'I suppose you'll prospect upward, following the snow. There's a pass or two over to the other side. You go over

HIGHWAY NOTICE

Closing of Roads

The attention of the public is respectfully called to an Act to amend Chapter 77 of the Revised Statutes of 1923 of "The Load of Vehicles Act", passed the 9th day of April, 1924, A.D.

Be it enacted by the Governor, Council and Assembly, as follows:

1.—Section 7 of Chapter 77 of the Revised Statutes, 1923, the "Load of Vehicles Act", is repealed and the following substituted therefor:

7.—(1) No person shall operate a motor vehicle that is subject to the provisions of the Motor Vehicle Act on any highway in any municipality after the first day of March and before the first day of June following without the permission of the Superintendent of Highways or of such other officer as may be appointed by the Provincial Highways Board for that purpose first had and obtained.

(2) The Provincial Highways Board from time to time in each year may, and is hereby authorized and empowered with the approval of the Minister of Highways, to exempt from the provisions of Sub-section 1 of this section, for the whole or any part of the period between the first day of March and the first day of June following in the year and for which the exemption is granted, every person operating any motor vehicle or a motor vehicle of any particular class that is subject to the provisions of the Motor Vehicle Act, on all highways within any municipality or municipalities with highways in the opinion of the Provincial Highways Board will not be unreasonably damaged by reason of the granting such exemption.

all right in summer. I have as been up, he said, but so they tell me. There is the glaciers and passes though, on south, and one between them and one north of the north one. Tea Creek comes out of a lake below the north one. So you see he told me, without knowing what it is supposed to be like on top. Says he: "There's a prospector gone up to a claim he was working on last fall. He went up past here a fortnight ago, and I noticed he had snow-shoes on his pack." Snow-shoes, Pic. Well, we could make a makeshift snow-shoe out of string if the snow is soft; but my own impression is that we'll be able to make it, either on the edges of the rock slides, or by keeping up to where the snow is hard. Our boots are not the best for the job. It's a pity I did not think to tell you to bring shoe-packs. I've brought an old pair."

"I've brought three pairs of moccasins," replied Piccolo. "Got them at the Colvalli reserve. I always like to have them to put on round the camp-fire evenings, all the same as slippers." "Hech sirs!" said Angus, laughing. "Piccolo Thomas—telegraph operator, contented, out-fitter! Moccasins will be fine with two-three pair of socks to keep your feet warm. But we'll not meet trouble halfway. Many and many a time, from many and many a place, have I set out with the words of the storekeepers and town bodies in my ears: 'You'll never make it.' There was always a reason. In one place it was: 'The ice is breaking.' In others it was: 'The pass is full of snow.' In others: 'There is not a drop of water.' This is undoubtedly our best way—above timber and, if possible, between snow and timber. We haven't the time to break a trail all through the woods to the place on the West Arm where we cross. I'm too auld."

"It would tire you too much," said Piccolo.

"It wouldn't do that," answered Angus slowly. "I'm speaking somewhat metaphorically. I mean that the job would be too long. I want to get to our goal before I'm absolutely ancient and decrepit."

"Oh, I see," said Piccolo, and obligingly smiled.

"MacBride told me they had some snow-shoes stored up at the mine; but I think we'll not borrow them now. It would suggest going high indeed. Man, you can see the way the water is full and roaring in that creek that the snows are going rapidly up above."

Then before them was another steep ascent and they heard a cheep and chirp not of squirrel or chipmunk, and there, as the trail bent, over their heads swung the ore-buckets.

"Man it's wonderful!" exclaimed Angus. "In the midst of the wilderness they trestle towers and the buckets dangling along! The romance of it! The romance of it! And what is romance? Romance is just reality, Pic. I say romance is just reality."

"By heck," observed Piccolo, "I could do with supper, a pipe, and a darn good sleep."

And there in front of them were suddenly roofs among the high trees; and above the roofs jagged edges of treeless rock with patches and veins of snow, and an exquisite light was in that upland valley. The horse quickened its pace into a lush meadow just beside the mine buildings. On the edge of the

mine dumps men sat in attitudes of waiting, infinitely small-looking under the tremendous flaring ridges.

"Good evening, lads! Good evening, gentlemen!" Angus hailed the miners and muckers of the day shift waiting for their supper.

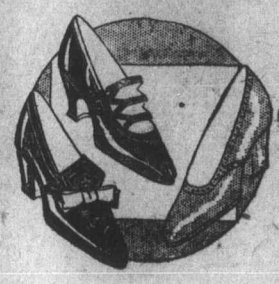
"Good evening," they replied.

"I want to telephone down to Mr. MacBride," said Angus. "Where do I go, if you please?"

"Right here, old timer," answered one of the younger men, rising. "I'll take you to the house."

To be continued

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