

Treasure Trail

By Frederick Niven

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(Continued from last issue)

Piccolo was mute. He gazed at his partner as though desiring a prompting. "Neither Pic nor I know the first thing about ore," said Jack. "I once washed a little gold dust out of a creek when I was up after stock in the Coeur d'Alenes—just for fun, but I don't even know bluestone out of a drugstore window."

"What have we to do?" piped Piccolo. "We go to the place where I got that ore," he paused. "Look for floats," his partner chipped in.

"Ay, that's it," said Angus, pleased to find some hint of knowledge. Jack laughed and disillusioned him. "I've only heard them talk," said he. "I don't know how to go about it. Then he added: 'It is sure white of you coming along with this news to us, Mr. MacPherson.'

"Oh pshaw!" exclaimed Angus. "Our righteousness is filthy rags. I've only a bit of a notion where you got it. About a hundred and eighty miles north of the boundary is all I know."

"There was a long pause. 'Would you?' began Piccolo and paused, then tried again, 'would you come in with us, go out with us, I mean?'"

Jack raised his head and laughed, and slapped Piccolo on the back. "Would I come in with you and go out with you?" enquired Angus. "It's a good thing I'm gleg in the upk! I get you, as they say in God's Country, all the same. Would I come in as a member of the prospecting party and go out into the land northward with you?"

"That's it," said Piccolo. "Virtue has its reward," said Angus. "Man, ye have proposed, just what I hoped ye would propose."

"All right," said Jack airily, "it's yours, Pic—yours and Mr. MacPherson's if you find it. I can't help you to round-up floats and corral Mother Hubbard!" He laughed again. "Go to it! I'll stay home and mind the ranch. We got that alfalfa to put in."

Angus nodded at the little splinter of stone on the table. "If we get a seam of that of any proportion worth talking about," said he, "we have a proposition that would support a large family."

"Well, you two go in," said Tremaine. "You're liable to find it anyhow! I guess Pic don't know where he picked up the stones. But you're the experienced prospector."

Angus bowed his head. "That," said he, "is a matter for you two to settle. I come from Aberdeen."

"Well, what does that mean?" asked Jack. "I only know I'm from Missouri. Oh, Aberdeen is entirely different. When I see a chance of having a half-share instead of one-third I feel in my bones that I come from Aberdeen. To translate: I have in me the quality known in this part of God's Country as squeezing a quarter hard enough to make the eagle squeal."

"You have—like fun!" said Jack. "You have—like fun!" piped Piccolo, simultaneously. "Ye haven't gone strewing other specimens of this around, have ye?" enquired Angus.

Piccolo blushed and—"No," he said. Jack frowned at him. Angus's brows came down and his bright eyes looked piercingly at Piccolo.

"I seem to remember you dusting away at your other pocket after we left Mr. MacPherson's today," Tremaine remarked.

"I was just putting the things back from my left pocket to the right," answered Piccolo in a voice like that of a school boy explaining away some deflection to a school-marm.

He rose abruptly and went to the little bookshelf above the Grand Piano, and there he produced an atlas, came back to the table and opened it before Angus, turned the pages, and found the one showing the Northwestern states.

"There's Cobalt," said he, dabbling a fingertip on the page. "Well, look, we went in this way."

Tremaine rose also and came to bend beside them, moved by the delight in maps of the average open-air man as much as by interest in their especial interest in this map.

"That fellow, Mr. Bill," he remarked. "I once heard him say: 'There are two things I can't resist—maps and the smell of woodsmoke.'"

Angus paid no heed to that, engrossed by the map; but although Piccolo made no reply to it either (taking it as a mere aside by his partner) it was to come back to his mind later.

"There," said Piccolo, "we went into B.C. thereabouts." He frowned, worried. "Ye said ye saw Flat-Bow Lake," said Angus.

"I thought so," said Piccolo. "How did it run, the lake you saw?" asked Angus.

"East and West," Piccolo answered promptly, and then: "I see Flat-Bow runs North and South," he added in accents of one puzzled, almost piqued.

"Oh, this is not a big enough scale man. There's an arm to Flat-Bow Lake, and ye doubtless saw it. There's a lot of wee lakes in there that are not on the map. See here: this might just be a river according to this map, but it's a lake—Trout Lake. A bonny lake, I've been up there. Glaciers, and big timber, and grizzly bears! Ay, ay. Here's Kootenay Lake, ve see. That's clear enough. And there's the Okanagan. That's marked clear enough too. They are turning that into a fruit country now and all the cattle will be gone soon, I suppose. I washed gold dust there once in a creek to the South end. It was a small bar but fine while it lasted. Give me a piece of paper and I'll just try to draw from memory the lake and river systems there where you've been in the lower Monashees. I've not been through it all, but many a time have I pored over the maps. Grand things,

maps! Good maps, I mean. Not but what this is a fine atlas ye have," he added quickly, for courtesy's sake. "Ay a fine atlas. I see Lake Angus MacDonald is indicated and St. Mary's Lake. That's a great place for towerists now. The paper—ay, that will do fine. Thank you. A pencil. Now I have a pencil somewhere. It will be in my last pocket, as Margaret says when I'm looking for things. And often it's in the first. But I only find it in the first on the second expedition round. Ay, there—I have my pencil."

He began to draw, Tremaine and Piccolo greatly interested. "You must have been there," said Jack.

Angus looked up at him. "Sir, I have not," he answered. "I went up the Kootenay Lake only to the head of it, and through the valley up to Trout Lake. I had a mineral claim in there, but I let it lapse. Good! Fine! But transport was the trouble. And then once I went in from the Skagit end to the South of the Okanagan country in British Columbia, washed a bit of colour and came out again. Well, see here: that's the way Flat-Bow lake runs as far as I can remember from the maps I've seen of that bit of country."

"We couldn't have seen that, then," said Piccolo. "The lake we saw where we turned ran like in there," and he indicated.

"Fine!" said Angus. "Or, as ye might say, Tremaine, fine and dandy! Flat-Bow has an arm running about East and West. I see by the Spokesman Review that there is a lake and river steamboat connection installed now on Flat-Bow Lake, to that new discovery at the camp they call Kokanee. I believe 'Kokanee' is a Kootenay Indian word for a fish they catch there. Ay, Ay! So."

He went on with his topography till Piccolo suddenly interjected a finger over his shoulder and said: "Now that fits it. That is how the West arm of Flat-Bow lies. That is about where we found the last of the horses and saw a lake to North."

"Fine," answered Angus. "Then if ye were at any altitude to speak of ye could see the arm of Flat-Bow. Ye were there when?"

"About two weeks ago," said Tremaine in response to Piccolo's enquiring turn to him.

"Yes," Piccolo agreed, "about a fortnight ago."

"About a fortnight ago," echoed MacPherson, "and there was still snow on the sheltered places. So you would maybe be up a matter of two thousand five hundred or three thousand feet above the lake level. If I mind the big map I saw rightly the lake is about seventeen hundred."

"That's the place we came to all right," said Tremaine. He had been cleaning out his pipe and, bending forward, he tapped the point of his knife blade on the sketch.

Angus raised the paper up between their gaze and the lamp. "So we begin to see light," he said, and laughed happily. Then he sat back, grabbing his beard. "It's a wee bit cold tonight," he remarked. "It's spring by day but winter by night still. I should have put a blanket over my horses," and he rose.

"I'll see to that," said Piccolo. "I'll cover them."

"No, man, no. I've said what I came to say. You come over to my place before long and see about this. I'm wondering if we should send out this to be assayed; but man, I have a kind of a

hunch, as they call it, that ye have strewed other samples from your pocket somewhere. I don't definitely say that ye seem not to be frank with me, Pic, but I feel we should get after this smartly. An assay would give us the exact proportion of the contents, but even without it I've seen enough of rocks in my day to know that it is a remarkable discovery of yours," and so saying he took the fragment of galena from the table and put it in his pocket as if unconscious of doing so.

Piccolo wet his lip. He frowned. He seemed as if desirous to speak, and yet he held his tongue—oddly sensitive. "Yes," said he, "I think we should start right away. We don't need an assay, seeing you know about mineral."

Angus peered at him, frowning, nodding his head slowly. "I must get back to Margaret," said he. "I didn't tell her what I was going out for. In a thing of this kind—" he waved his hand. "—mum! I have prospected in Rhodesia, Australia, Alaska, and I have learnt. Not a word till the chickens are hatched. There is nobody can give the thing away if nobody speaks, and then—if any one else gets on to it—ye don't need to wonder who blabbed."

"Sure!" echoed Piccolo. "I'll come over, then, and we'll discuss."

Angus stood plucking his beard, his mouth twisting, meditating. "Ay," he said, "quite so," and was lost in thought, staring at the dual twinkles of light on the bells above the telephone box. "Ye're on the telephone I see. Man, there are folks back East and in the Auld Country who think we have no conveniences in the West. But this country is growing up in the age of electricity so it just naturally uses it. Well, I just told Margaret I was driving over to Colvalli for some tobacco; I had some in my pouch but—well, ye see—she will wonder what's keeping me."

I wonder why Americans call Margaret Miggles? Maybe it was a custom in the Auld Country, for a lot of American ways are Auld Country ways transplanted and kept alive here though they have been forgotten in Great Britain. Ay, quite so," he talked on in a monotone. "Miggles! I like Miggles though, the name I mean, ever since I read your story of Bret Harte's. It's the way the stage driver calls. 'Miggles! Miggles!' that caught me, and I canna tell why."

Piccolo sat looking at him with head down, but a keenness in his eyes. He had a surmise that when Angus talked on in this fashion, as in soliloquy, monologue, he was thinking but little of what he said, was really thinking of other matters.

"Well," said Angus, "we'll leave it like this till I see you again. Come soon and," he paused, "tell me anything you have to tell me. But I expect we'll simply arrange about the starting out."

As one tidying up he lifted the map, folded it, and laid it in the open atlas, closed the atlas, then thrust it across the table.

"Good-night," he said. Piccolo went out to hold the horses' heads while Angus laboriously put foot to hub and clambered to his seat, and Jack stood in the doorway seeing him off. The pit-pattering of the hoofs in dust, the frou-frou of harness leather and squeal of wheels went away in the dark under the big blue vault, the tilted Dipper, tall Orion, all the twinkling world.

"Cold a bit," said Piccolo, and turned back into the house.

"Gee," said Tremaine. "I wonder what age he is. When he was drawing that map he looked like an old man, but he looked like a bright kid when he held it up to the lamp so that the little hole I made with my knife point showed light. It's a queer spell that prospecting has for the men it grips."

Piccolo laughed. "We are talking about our recently departed guest, all right," he paused; "but only good of him," he added. "He's a wonderful man."

"You betchar life," said Jack Tremaine. "He was straight about it, anyhow, Piccolo, whatever his reasons for coming to you. I ain't the Angel Gabriel; I don't see in his heart, so I give him the

credit of doing it so's to do the fair thing all right. But, oh shoot! That's the best policy. Nothing like being frank."

"That's so," said Piccolo, and replaced the atlas on its shelf. (To be continued)

Ten days per annum is the average amount of sickness in human life.

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The costume shown above is one of these overblouse affairs which may be worn with a coat to match the skirt or with any type of long coat. The skirt in question is of broadcloth in a lovely soft tan. The overblouse is in an old blue which blends beautifully with the skirt. The overblouse material is crepe de chine, which is tucked horizontally all through the body section. The sleeves are plain, and are finished at the wrists with effective puffs of the same material.