

# Treasure Trail

By Frederick Niven

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Continued from last issue

Movie Bill just looked at him with a gentle smile.

"You don't really believe, as you said, that he dropped it to have some of us on a string?" Bantling the quarellous growled.

"No, I don't really," said Movie Bill, with the frankest of expressions on his lined face. "I was just considering it from all possible standpoints when I said that."

You're not going to do anything about it yourself, are you?" asked Bantling.

"No, do anything?" I was never much struck on one prospecting. Horses are where I usually live. A little place excitement might tempt me away but the once or twice I've gone looking for floats I've spent more of the time fishing."

He smiled pleasantly, to Greer's seeming danger. "Thank you for inviting me to come in with you. Nothing doing."

"What are you going to do?" persisted Bantling.

"My great game—I've just been thinking it over all this day, oddity enough—my great game," said Movie Bill, "is solitaire."

His lips closed together rigidly. He looked, then more like Geronimo than any Greer could think of. There was a glint in his eyes too, almost as if the pupils were of obsidian.

Greer rose, eager to end the matter that he thought could never have been pushed so far. Bantling followed doubtfully. Then he decidedly spoiled all. He turned back.

"Well," he said, "we've invited you to come in with us, seeing you saw, and seeing that maybe you know more than we do! And now we just advise you to keep out."

Movie Bill said nothing—noting at all. His silence was so pronounced that Bantling waited to see if he had anything to say. No, nothing! He just sat looking at the two men, grim, and otherwise expressionless. All Bantling could do was to turn away with his head still toward Movie Bill, his jaw shot out, his eyes under lids a trifle dropped, meeting Bill's steady gaze in a side-wise fashion of unspoken threat that made Bill's eyes harder still.

While Movie was considering them they mounted and rode off. He opened his mouth to speak, then closed it. He had too much to say. They had gone a long way, far enough for the dust to be all settled on the road, before he found the words; and then they were just:

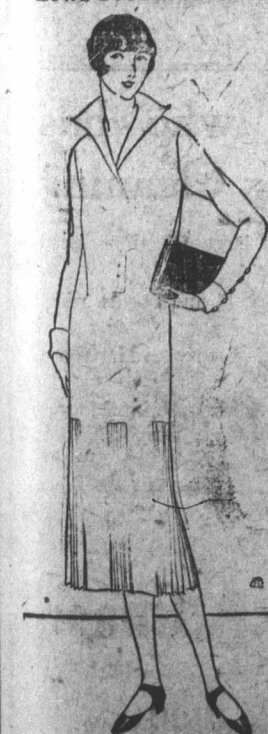
"To—Hanover—with—you!"

And this all explains how it was that Angus MacPherson did not see Movie Bill before departing with Piccolo. Movie Bill was away from Colvalli, meditating and, in the midst of his meditation, when he sought peace, receiving such a stirring up that he knew he was going to take some hand in the game. Movie Bantling and Greer had more recent news of Piccolo than he. They had heard Piccolo on the previous night, when he paused at the Benwell House on the way home after his visit to Angus—telling that he was off to Spokane, en route to Kokanee with old man MacPherson. They had ridden to Placer to see a friend there, and send him on the train to keep them company. Had they only realized it they knew more than Bill did. But a man of this type is of the order of "dark horse". Even his direct and truthful answers to some of Bantling's questions gave the latter the impression that he was not truthful but cunning.

"Deep man that," he said to Greer about a mile along the road.

Movie whistled to Baldy who came to him. He clapped the horse's neck gently. Whatever he was, for good or ill, he was not the kind of man to rouse.

## SPRING KASHA FROCK—SHOWS YOUTHFUL LINES



Soft gray kasha is the material used for this very youthful frock designed for Spring wear.

The dress is perfectly straight in the back, while the front width introduces fullness in the modish way, that is by cleverly inserted pleats.

This dress would also be lovely in mad kasha, or in any of the delicate shades of pastel, which will be the color of the season.

handle his horse because of a rage in him at something else. Maybe Piccolo's manner to him had exasperated him more than it might have done had he not, about that time, been somewhat ragged over the course of his life. But Baldy did not suffer because Bantling had infuriated him, above all, by that last side-long passing stare.

"The biggest fun of all," said he, "would be the lone hand, Baldy—the lone hand. It's like me. Solitaire! Patience! That's about it for your boss. Yes, sir, Movie Bill will show them."

He swung to the saddle and rode slowly up the bank, then on toward Colvalli, riding easily as a man conserving himself, quieting himself. But when his hand, thrust in his pocket, encountered the square little butt of his automatic he considered how near he had been to trouble.

"Baldy," said he, "nothing happened in the sense of the smell of powder, but it was surely tense at moments. Here's your master out pondering on the wisdom of never getting tangled up with anything at all. And he rides back surely determined to get tangled all right. He's in on this. It looks to me as if a good heavy Colt or Webley would be more to the purpose than this little automatic. It's working up that way."

And then he added:

"Well, dang it, this will help me to forget fooling my life away. Baldy, Baldy! We're going prospecting. Say, ain't I the boob? Ain't I the boob like the down-turned lover in the old story books who joins the army and goes killing Pathans and Afghans in the Indian northwest? No sircé," he told his horse, "that last look was a challenge. I'm going to find out about these specimens, and I'm going to go look for the mother-lode, and we'll call the prospect the Lone Hand."

But that was not the name that Destiny had in store.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Shadowed

Thus Angus MacPherson had no opportunity, either covertly or directly, to interrogate Movie Bill. Haste was the essence of their journey now. He did not see Movie Bill when they set out on the stage to Eagle Bend from Colvalli, for no Movie Bill was among those that clustered, as the way is, to watch its departure.

By the evening Piccolo and old man MacPherson sat in the train that roared through the rock cuts and rumbled over the ties, on the run to Spokane. The Pintsch light glimmered in the roof. Piccolo, sagged in a heap, snored a faint snore like a Hawaiian guitar heard from a distance. The journey was too short for a sleeping berth and too long for comfort in the Pullman. What weary attitudes! Angus MacPherson sat bunched up, and the shadow of his hat brim and of his bushy brows made it hard to tell if he slept or not. True, his head was pressed upon his chest, but he looked, to the gaze of the perambulating conductor in the aisle, more like one patient than asleep.

He was more than patient; he was wide awake; the brain part of him was all alive. His body rested, but his mind toyed with possibilities. He was memorizing all the faces in the coach. He had mental note of all who had boarded the train at Eagle Bend, whether in that coach or another.

One face that he had seen before came glimmering down the aisle. Drought seemed to weary that restless all-night stroller in the coach. He had lurched, bored and tousled-looking, thrice in an hour to the tank at the car end for a drink. He strolled along looking down at the sleeping faces, and twisted attitudes. He paused beside Angus, and nodded. Angus merely looked up under shaggy brows without moving.

"Going to the Fair at Spokane?" the man enquired.

"How's that?" asked Angus, for time to think.

"Going to the Spring Fair at Spokane?" repeated the man whom Angus knew but by sight.

"Fine!" said Angus. "I hope ye have a good time."

## 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 any 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 which highways in the opinion of the Provincial Highways Board will not be unreasonably damaged by reason of the granting of such exemption.

The young man looked at him doubtfully, strolled on, had another drink of water and came strolling back. At Angus's elbow he again stopped.

"I meant were you going to the Fair at Spokane," he said, stopping.

"No, sir," replied Angus. And then he added: "I seem to know your face. Have I seen you before?"

"Maybe. I've been around at Placer and Eagle Bend for a spell."

Being interrogated, however, seemed less to his mind than interrogating. He stood erect again, looking along the car each way, sighed and returned to his seat.

"I believe," thought Angus, "I have merely crushed a young gentleman who is tired of his own society. I don't think he is an undesirable in any other sense than that we should have little in common, although he is a kind of loose-jointed, easy-going, looking young rascal. It's none of his business anyhow where I'm going!"

An hour passed, and the thirsty one rose, strolled back again and, possibility to atone, thought Angus, for having asked another's business, announced his own.

"I'm going to take in the Fair and then I think I'll go up to this here new Excitement at Kokanee. What's your opinion of Kokanee, sir?"

"I've heard some fine reports of it," replied Angus. "Some may strike it, and others come out poorer than they went in."

The youth mused on that.

"Things are kind of worked out round Placer and Colvalli," he said, "I thought of trying Kokanee. Would you advise one to go?"

A man that understands mineral—yes, but there's no washing for gold there anywhere, I believe," said Angus.

"These creeks up there have all been tried by placer-men long ago."

"You going yourself, sir?"

Angus looked at him thoughtfully.

"I am," he said. "I'm getting auld for such things, but I want to have a visit, anyhow, to an Excitement just once more."

"You will prospect?" asked the man.

"I was going to continue to say—whether I do any prospecting or not," Angus went on. "I'm just visiting the Excitement at Kokanee much as you are presumably going to the Spokane Fair for relaxation. It's a kind of a holiday for me. I may go up into the mountains, or my partner here may do so, or we both may do so. Anyway, we are going to Kokanee where we will stop a spell, look, and listen."

He tucked his head down again, content that if he was inhuman to have snubbed the young man earlier in the evening he had amply atoned. The enquirer went back to his own place, rubbed the glass with his sleeve and shading his eyes from the light within looked out at the night.

Angus considered that if anyone was interested in him in a sinister way that person would not speak to him at all. Those he should look at and memorize were the people who were most invisible, or as if trying to obliterate themselves, with hats over faces. With dawn breaking in the coach, under the influence of the wan spreading light, he thought he was doubtless over-prepared for being watched by whoever it was who had taken the map from the T. T. ranch. That Movie Bill was not on the train he was certain.

"Next stop Spokane!" the conductor chanted, meandering past them.

Piccolo awakened up, said: "Oh, my, I'm stiff!" and, rising, urgently rum-

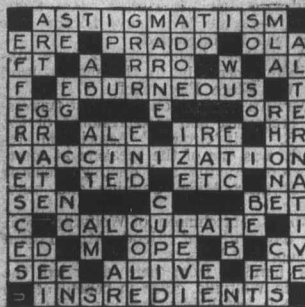
maged for his grip as though a dread lest the train should not give him time to alight. He knew nothing of Angus's midnight thoughts, nor of the young man alight. The possibility that they might be watched never occurred to him. He had given out in Colvalli that he was going to Kokanee with Angus MacPherson, and he was sure that that was enough to put Movie Bill off the scent—that villainous-faced Movie Bill, who had been on the veranda when he returned, and had asked (obviously a bluffer): "Are you looking for something?"

Piccolo had decided that Movie Bill would very likely come to the opinion that these little stones were merely specimens of Kokanee ore that he had had from some one. He was all content that, going out by this route, any damage done to the secrecy of their true quest was amended. He had no faintest notion that he should be reckoning with more than Movie Bill, that it was Mark Bantling who had culled the dropped splinters of rock before the veranda of the Benwell House.

As for Angus, he kept alert enough for two while continuing to seem, to any casual scrutiny, just a stolid and travel-bored elderly gentleman in serviceable non-showy clothes. And indeed in truth Angus had to admit that he had reached an age when train journeys made him cranky. It was with joy he went aboard the big white-painted stern-wheeler that lay beside the track at Bonington Landing, one of that breed of vessels (if one can speak of a breed of vessels) that he had seen in many parts. Spick and span relatives of

this one breathe grandly up the Oregon, wake the mountain echoes with their whistles, make Columbia River landings, carry tourists spell-bound under the peaks over Flathead Lake, break the reflections of Kootenay Lake like big swans by day, flare up their two searchlight eyes to dusk arrivals, illumining a jetty, a circle of houses, roofs, and a patch of firs. For Angus the romance of reality was aboard these boats. When he mounted the companionway and read the notice: "Lumbermen wearing spiked shoes not allowed on this deck!" an old thrill was revived in his heart. He felt like one going home, although going further from home.

To be continued.



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No. 95 From Halifax arrives 10.10 a.m.  
No. 98 From Yarmouth, arrives 3.12 p.m.  
No. 97 From Halifax, arrives 6.12 p.m.  
No. 99 From Halifax (Mon., Thurs., Sat.) arrives 11.48 p.m.  
No. 100 From Yarmouth (Mon., Wed., Sat.), arrives 4.13 a.m.

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