



***PRENTISS
INGRAHAM***

***BUFFALO
BILL'S SPY
TRAILER; OR,
THE STRANGER
IN CAMP***

Prentiss Ingraham

Buffalo Bill's Spy Trailer; Or, The Stranger in Camp

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CHAPTER I.

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THE HERMIT OF THE GRAND CAÑON.

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A horseman drew rein one morning, upon the brink of the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, a mighty abyss, too vast for the eye to take in its grand immensity; a mighty mountain rent asunder and forming a chasm which is a valley of grandeur and beauty, through which flows the Colorado Grande. Ranges of mountains tower to cloudland on all sides with cliffs of scarlet, blue, violet, yes, all hues of the rainbow; crystal streams flowing merrily along; verdant meadows, vales and hills, with massive forests everywhere—such was the sight that met the admiring gaze of the horseman as he sat there in his saddle, his horse looking down into the cañon.

It was a spot avoided by Indians as the abiding-place of evil spirits; a scene shunned by white men, a mighty retreat where a fugitive, it would seem, would be forever safe, no matter what the crime that had driven him to seek a refuge there.

Adown from where the horseman had halted, was the bare trace of a trail, winding around the edge of an overhanging rock by a shelf that was not a yard in width and which only a man could tread whose head was cool and heart fearless.

Wrapt in admiration of the scene, the mist-clouds floating lazily upward from the cañon, the silver ribbon far away that

revealed the winding river, and the songs of birds coming from a hundred leafy retreats on the hillsides, the horseman gave a deep sigh, as though memories most sad were awakened in his breast by the scene, and then dismounting began to unwrap a lariat from his saddle-horn.

He was dressed as a miner, wore a slouch-hat, was of commanding presence, and his darkly bronzed face, heavily bearded, was full of determination, intelligence, and expression.

Two led horses, carrying heavy packs, were behind the animal he rode, and attaching the lariats to their bits he took one end and led the way down the most perilous and picturesque trail along the shelf running around the jutting point of rocks.

When he drew near the narrowest point, he took off the saddle and packs, and one at a time led the horses downward and around the hazardous rocks.

A false step, a movement of fright in one of the animals, would send him downward to the depths more than a mile below.

But the trembling animals seemed to have perfect confidence in their master, and after a long while he got them by the point of greatest peril.

Going back and forward he carried the packs and saddles, and replacing them upon the animals began once more the descent of the only trail leading down into the Grand Cañon, from that side.

The way was rugged, most dangerous in places, and several times his horses barely escaped a fall over the

precipice, the coolness and strong arm of the man alone saving them from death, and his stores from destruction.

It was nearly sunset when he at last reached the bottom of the stupendous rift, and only the tops of the cliffs were tinged with the golden light, the valley being in densest shadow.

Going on along the cañon at a brisk pace, as though anxious to reach some camping-place before nightfall, after a ride of several miles he came in sight of a wooded cañon, entering the one he was then in, and with heights towering toward heaven so far that all below seemed as black as night.

But a stream wound out of the cañon, to mingle its clear waters with the grand Colorado River a mile away, and massive trees grew near at hand, sheltering a cabin that stood upon the sloping hill at the base of a cliff that arose thousands of feet above it.

When within a few hundred yards of the lone cabin, suddenly there was a crashing, grinding sound, a terrific roar, a rumbling, and the earth seemed shaken violently as the whole face of the mighty cliff came crushing down into the valley, sending up showers of splintered rocks and clouds of dust that were blinding and appalling!

Back from the scene of danger fled the frightened horses, the rider showing no desire to check their flight until a spot of safety was reached.

Then, half a mile from the fallen cliff, he paused, his face white, his whole form quivering, while his horses stood trembling with terror.

"My God! the cliff has fallen upon my home, and my unfortunate comrade lies buried beneath a mountain of rocks. We mined too far beneath the cliff, thus causing a cave-in.

"A few minutes more and I would also have shared poor Langley's fate; but a strange destiny it is that protects me from death—a strange one indeed! He is gone, and I alone am now the Hermit of the Grand Cañon, a Croesus in wealth of gold, yet a fugitive from my fellow men. What a fate is mine, and how will it all end, I wonder?"

Thus musing the hermit-miner sat upon his own horse listening to the echoes rumbling through the Grand Cañon, growing fainter and fainter, like a retreating army fighting off its pursuing foes.

An hour passed before the unnerved man felt able to seek a camp for the night, so great had been the shock of the falling cliff, and the fate he had felt had overtaken his comrade.

At last he rode on up the cañon once more, determined to seek a spot he knew well where he could camp, a couple of miles above his destroyed home.

He passed the pile of rocks, heaped far up the cliff from which they had fallen, looking upon them as the sepulcher of his companion.

"Poor Lucas Langley! He, too, had his sorrows, and his secrets, which drove him, like me, to seek a retreat far from mankind, and become a hunted man. Alas! what has the future in store for me?"

With a sigh he rode on up the valley, his way now guided by the moonlight alone, and at last turned into another

cañon, for the Grand Cañon has hundreds of others branching off from it, some of them penetrating for miles back into the mountains.

He had gone up this cañon for a few hundred yards, and was just about to halt, and go into camp upon the banks of a small stream, when his eyes caught sight of a light ahead.

"Ah! what does that mean?" he ejaculated in surprise.

Hardly had he spoken when from up the cañon came the deep voice of a dog barking, his scent telling him of a human presence near.

"Ah! Savage is not dead then, and, after all, Lucas Langley may have escaped."

The horseman rode quickly on toward the light. The barking of the dog continued, but it was not a note of warning but of welcome, and as the horseman drew rein by a camp-fire a huge brute sprang up and greeted him with every manifestation of delight, while a man came forward from the shadows of the trees and cried:

"Thank Heaven you are back again, Pard Seldon, for I had begun to fear for your safety."

"And I was sure that I would never meet you again in life, Lucas, for I believed you at the bottom of that mountain of rocks that fell from the cliff and crushed out our little home," and the hands of the two men met in a warm grasp.

"It would have been so but for a warning I had, when working in the mine. I saw that the cliff was splitting and settling, and running out I discovered that it must fall, and before very long.

"I at once got the two mules out of the cañon above, packed all our traps upon them, and hastened away to a

spot of safety. Then I returned and got all else I could find, gathered up our gold, and came here and made our camp.

"To-night the cliff fell, but not expecting you to arrive by night, I was to be on the watch for you in the morning; but thank Heaven you are safe and home again."

"And I am happy to find you safe, Lucas. I was within an eighth of a mile of the cliff when it fell, and I shall never forget the sight, the sound, the appalling dread for a few moments, as I fled to a spot of safety, my horses bearing me along like the wind in their mad terror."

"It was appalling, and I have not dared leave my camp since, far as I am from it, for it resounded through the cañons like a mighty battle with heavy guns. But come, comrade, and we will have supper and talk over all that has happened."

The horses were staked out up the cañon, where grass and water were plentiful, and then the two men sat down to supper, though neither seemed to have much of an appetite after what had occurred.

But Savage, the huge, vicious-looking dog, felt no bad results from his fright of a few hours before, and ate heartily.

When their pipes were lighted the man who had lately arrived said:

"Well, Lucas, I brought back provisions and other things to last us a year, and I care not to go again from this cañon until I carry a fortune in gold with me."

"Yes, here we are safe, and I feel that something has happened to cause you to say what you do, pard."

"And I will tell you what it is," impressively returned the one who had spoken of himself as the Hermit of the Grand

Cañon.

"Yes," he added slowly. "I will tell you a secret, comrade."

CHAPTER II.

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THE MINER'S SECRET.

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"Pard, after what has happened, the falling of the cliff, and our narrow escape from death, I feel little like sleep, tired as I am, so, as I said, I will tell you a secret," continued Andrew Seldon, speaking in a way that showed his thoughts were roaming in the past.

"You will have a good listener, pard," was the answer.

"Yes, I feel that I will, and you having told me that you were a fugitive from the law, that your life had its curse upon it, I will tell you of mine, at least enough of it to prove to you that I also dare not show my face among my fellow men.

"You know me as Andrew Seldon, and I have with me proof that I could show to convince one that such is my name; but, in reality, Andrew Seldon is dead, and I am simply playing his part in life, for I am not unlike him in appearance, and, as I said, I have the proofs that enable me to impersonate him.

"My real name is Wallace Weston, whom circumstances beyond my control made a murderer and fugitive, and here I am. I entered the army as a private cavalry soldier, and worked my way up to sergeant, with the hope of getting a commission some day.

"But one day another regiment came to the frontier post where I was stationed, and a member of it was the man to

whom I owed all my sorrow and misfortune in life. Well, the recognition was mutual, a quarrel followed, and he—his name was Manton Mayhew—fell by my hand, and he, too, was a sergeant.

"I said nothing in my defense, for I would not reopen the story of the past for curious eyes to gaze upon, and accepted my fate, my sentence being to be shot to death. On one occasion, in an Indian fight, I had saved the life of the scout Buffalo Bill——"

"Ah, yes, I know of him," said the listener earnestly.

"He, in return, rode through the Indian country, to the quarters of the district commander, to try and get a reprieve, hoping to glean new evidence to clear me. He was refused, and returned just as I was led down on the banks of the river for execution.

"I heard the result and determined in a second to escape, or be killed in the attempt. Buffalo Bill's horse stood near, and with a bound I was upon his back, rushed him into the stream, swam across and escaped.

"I was fired upon by the scout, under an order to do so, but his bullets were not aimed to kill me. Night was near at hand, and pursuit was begun, but I had a good start, reached the desert and entered it.

"The next day, for the scout's horse was worn down, my pursuers would have overtaken me had I not suddenly come upon a stray horse in a clump of timber, an oasis in the desert.

"I mounted him and pushed straight on into the desert, and the next day came upon a solitary rock, by which lay the dead body of a man upon which the coyotes had just

begun to feed. He had starved to death in the desert, and the horse I had found was his.

"At once an idea seized me to let my pursuer believe that I was that dead man; so I dressed him in my uniform, killed the horse near him, left the scout's saddle and bridle there, and started off on foot over the desert, attired as the man whom I had found there.

"With him I had found letters, papers, and a map and diary, and these gave me his name, and more, for I found that the map would lead me to a gold-mine, the one in this cañon in which we have worked so well to our great profit.

"I wandered back, off the desert, and you know the rest: how I came to the camp where you lay wounded and threatened with death by your comrade, Black-heart Bill, who knew that you had a mine which he was determined to have.

"In Black-heart Bill I recognized a brother of Sergeant Manton Mayhew, another man whom I sought revenge upon. Hugh Mayhew had also wronged me as his brothers had, for there were three of them, strange to say—triplets—Manton, Hugh, and Richard Mayhew, and to them I owed it that I became a fugitive from home.

"You remember my duel with Hugh Mayhew, and that he fell by my hand? Well, there is one more yet, and some day we may meet, and then it must be his life or mine.

"Taking the name of Andrew Seldon, and leaving all to believe that I, Wallace Weston, died in the desert, I came here, with you as my companion. We are growing rich, and though the Cliff Mine has fallen in, there are others that will pan out even better.

"But, pard, when I went to the post this time for provisions, I came upon Buffalo Bill escorting a deserter to Fort Faraway, and a band of desperadoes from the mines of Last Chance had ambushed him to rescue the prisoner.

"I went to the rescue of the scout, saved him and his prisoner, and went on my way to the post; but yet I half-believe, in spite of believing me dead, and my changed appearance with my long hair and beard, that Buffalo Bill half-recognized me.

"I must take no more chances, so shall remain close in this cañon until ready to leave it and go far away with my fortune, to enjoy it elsewhere.

"Again, pard: I had written to the home of Andrew Seldon, whom I am now impersonating, and I find that he too, was a fugitive from the law, and that there is no reason for me to share this fortune with any one there, as I had intended to do: so now let us be lost to the world, hermits here in this weird land of mystery, the Grand Cañon, where no one dares come, until we are ready to seek new associations and homes elsewhere, and enjoy our riches."

"Pard, I thank you for your confidence, your secret. I felt that you had been a sufferer in the past, while I am sure you were not the one to do the first wrong. In all things I will be guided by you," said Lucas Langley warmly, and it being late the two men retired to their blankets to sleep.

CHAPTER III.

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THE GRAVE AT THE DESERTED CAMP.

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Two men had met in the remote wilds of the Grand Cañon country, as the district bordering upon the Colorado River was called, having appointed a mysterious, deserted camp as a rendezvous.

One of these men needs no description from my pen, hardly more than a passing pen introduction to say that he bore the name of Buffalo Bill.

He had come alone from Fort Faraway, to the deserted camp over a hundred miles from the nearest habitation, to meet a new-found friend, one known in Last Chance Claim as Doctor Dick, and a man of mystery.

The latter was, in person, almost as striking in appearance as was handsome, dashing Bill Cody, for he was tall, sinewy in build, graceful, and dressed in a way to attract attention, with his cavalry-boots, gold spurs, corduroy pants, velvet jacket, silk shirt, and broad black sombrero encircled by a chain of gold links.

Doctor Dick was not afraid, either, to make a lavish display of jewels. His weapons were gold-mounted, as was also his saddle and bridle, and from the fact that he was an ardent and successful gambler, and was supposed to be very rich, he was called in Last Chance The Gold King.

Doctor Dick had made his début into Last Chance mining-camp, by bringing in the coach, one day, with the dead body

of the driver on the box by his side, and two murdered passengers on the inside.

He had run off, single-handed, the road-agents who had held up the coach, and therefore became a hero at once, adding to his fame very quickly by showing that he could "shoot to kill" when attacked.

Signifying his intention of practising medicine and surgery in Last Chance, and gambling in his leisure moments, Doctor Dick had established himself in a pleasant cabin near the hotel, to at once become popular, and began to make money.

When Buffalo Bill went to Last Chance on a special secret-service mission, to investigate the holding up of the coach, and had recognized there a deserter, whom he had orders to take "dead or alive," Doctor Dick had helped him out of what appeared to be a very ugly scrape, and thus the two men had become friends.

Becoming confidential, Doctor Dick had told the scout a few chapters of his life, and he alone doubted that his foe from boyhood, Sergeant Wallace Weston—who had been reported as dying in the desert while seeking to escape—was dead, and the two, the scout and the gambler-doctor, had arranged to meet at the deserted camp and discover if the real truth could not be ascertained.

So it was at the deserted camp they had met, and Doctor Dick had stood with uncovered head before a quaking aspen-tree, at the foot of which was a grave.

Upon the tree had been cut a name and date, and this told that there lay the form of Hugh Mayhew, killed in a duel by one whom he had wronged.

It further told that Hugh Mayhew was known in the mines as a desperado, whose cruel deeds had gained for him the sobriquet of Black-heart Bill.

Convinced that the body in the grave was that of Hugh Mayhew, after he had unearthed the remains, and recognized in that decaying form his once brother—one of the triplets—Doctor Dick had seemed deeply moved when he told that he was the last of the trio and lived to avenge them: that he was sure Wallace Weston, their old foe, was their slayer, for he knew from the scout that he had killed his brother Manton at the fort, and hence he would not be convinced that the grave in the desert of Arizona held the body of Weston until he had certain proof of it.

"That man who came to your rescue, who called himself the Hermit of the Grand Cañon, who sought to shun you after his service to you, is either Wallace Weston, or knows something of him, and it is his trail we must pick up on his return to his retreat, and follow to the end, before I am satisfied," Doctor Dick had said to Buffalo Bill.

And so it was that the two had met at the deserted camp to pick up the trail of the hermit and follow it to the end, bring what it might to Doctor Dick.

The trail was taken up and followed to the brink of the grandest view in all nature's marvels, the Grand Cañon of the Colorado.

To a less experienced scout than Buffalo Bill, there would have appeared to be no trail down into the depths of that mighty chasm, and it would have been thought that the one whom they trailed had retraced his steps from there.

But the scout was not one to be thrown off the trail by any obstacle that perseverance, pluck, and hard work could overcome, and so he set about finding a way down into the cañon, though there was no trace of a traveled path left on the solid rocks upon which he stood.

Doctor Dick's determined assertion that he did not believe his old enemy, Wallace Weston, to be dead, really impressed the scout in spite of the fact that he had guided Lieutenant Tompkins and his troopers in the pursuit of the fugitive soldier, had found the body torn by wolves, dressed in uniform, and with his own saddle and bridle, taken when he had dashed away upon his horse, lying by his side.

Still, in the face of all these seeming proofs, the fugitive sergeant might yet be alive and he would do all he could to solve the mystery as to whether he was or not.

The scout had been anxious to go alone with the gambler-doctor in the search, for he did have the hope that, if really found, Wallace Weston might be reconciled with Doctor Dick, while, if taken by troopers, he would be returned to the fort and executed, as he was under death-sentence.

Buffalo Bill never forgot a service rendered him, and he did not wish to see the sergeant put to death, when he was already believed to be dead, and the secret might be kept.

After a long search Buffalo Bill found the perilous path down which the one he followed had gone with his packhorses.

He revealed the fact to Doctor Dick, and the two, after a long consultation, decided to take the risk and make the descent into the grand valley.

For men with less nerve than these two possessed it would have been impossible; and, as it was, there were times when the winding trail and dangers put their pluck to the test.

At last the valley was reached, and, greatly relieved, the two went into camp before prosecuting their search further.

The hermit had admitted to Buffalo Bill that he had a comrade dwelling with him in his retreat, wherever the retreat was.

Would it be that they held a secret there they did not wish known, and so would resist the intrusion of others? It might be, and that a death-struggle would follow the discovery of their retreat.

Still, Buffalo Bill was not one to dread whatever might turn up, and he had seen Doctor Dick tried and proven true as steel and brave as a lion.

And so the search continued, the scout unerringly clinging to the trail until, just as the two felt that the retreat of those mysterious dwellers in the Grand Cañon was almost before them, they came upon a sight that caused them to draw rein and sit upon their horses appalled at the scene presented to their view.

What they saw was the fallen cliff, and there, just peering out from among the piles of rocks, was the shattered end of a stout cabin. They had found the secret retreat, but they stood there feeling that those who had dwelt in that ruined cabin were beyond all human eye, buried beneath a monument of rocks an army could not remove in weeks.

"And this is the end?" said Buffalo Bill, the first to speak, breaking a silence that was appalling.

"Yes, his end, for he undoubtedly lies buried there beneath that mass of rocks. If it is my foe, Wallace Weston, who has met such a fate, so let it be."

The two did not tarry long in the cañon, for a dread of the weird spot seemed to have come over them both.

Doctor Dick roamed about, picking up bits of rock and examining it closely, while he muttered:

"It was a gold-mine that held them here, but that falling cliff has hidden the secret forever."

And Buffalo Bill went about searching for trails, yet made no comment, whether he found any or not, to indicate that the lone dwellers in the cañon had not both perished in their cabin, and lay buried beneath the hills of rock that had fallen from the heights above the valley.

But, as the two men rode away up the dangerous mountain-trail, there were eyes peering upon them they little dreamed of, and Wallace Weston muttered:

"They believe me dead now: so let it be."

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A VOW OF VENGEANCE.

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The night after leaving the Grand Cañon, Buffalo Bill and Doctor Dick camped again at the rendezvous of the deserted camp, which was marked by the grave of Black-heart Bill.

The two friends talked until a late hour into the night, though they intended making an early start in the morning for their respective homes, the scout going to the fort, the doctor to Last Chance.

"Well, Cody, you were satisfied before that Sergeant Wallace Weston was dead, that he died in the desert, but you yielded to my belief that he lived and was none other than the Hermit of the Grand Cañon who came to your rescue some time ago; but now you are assured that, the hermit-miner being buried beneath the walls of his cabin, there is no doubt left that, if he really was Wallace Weston, he is surely not among the living?"

"Yes, doctor, I can hardly bring myself to believe that Weston's body was not the one we buried in the desert, yet I grant that, it was just possible that it might not have been his."

"So you give up the search wholly?"

"Yes, I return to my duties at Fort Faraway."

"And I to my doctoring and gambling at Last Chance; but I thank you for coming with me on this trip, as my mind is