

The VALLEY OF THE GIANTS

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Pioneer in the California redwood region, John Cardigan, at forty-seven, is the leading citizen of Sequoia, owner of mills, ships, and many acres of timber, a widower after three years of married life, and father of two-day-old Bryce Cardigan.

CHAPTER II.—At fourteen Bryce makes the acquaintance of Shirley Sumner, a visitor to Sequoia, and his junior by a few years. Together they visit the Valley of the Giants, sacred to John Cardigan and his son as the burial place of Bryce's mother, and part with mutual regret.

CHAPTER III.—While Bryce is at college John Cardigan meets with heavy business losses and for the first time views the future with uncertainty.

CHAPTER IV.—After graduation from college, and a trip abroad, Bryce Cardigan comes home. On the train he meets Shirley Sumner, on her way to Sequoia to make her home there with her father, Col. Pennington. Bryce learns that his father's eyesight has failed and that Col. Pennington is seeking to take advantage of the old man's business misfortunes.

CHAPTER V.—In the Valley of the Giants young Cardigan finds a tree felled directly across his mother's grave. Indications are that it was cut down to secure the burl, and evidence seems to show that Pennington and his woods-boss, Jules Rondeau, are implicated in the outrage.

CHAPTER VI.—Dining with Col. Pennington and his niece, Bryce finds the room paneled with redwood burl, confirming his suspicions of Pennington's guilt. In a diplomatic way, unperceived by Shirley, the two men declare war.

CHAPTER VII.—Pennington refuses to renew his logging contract with the Cardigans, believing his action means bankruptcy for the latter. Bryce forces Rondeau to confess he felled the tree in the Valley of the Giants, at Pennington's order. After punishing the man, Bryce turns him at Col. Pennington, who, with Shirley, had witnessed the fight. Pennington is humiliated, and the girl, indignant, orders Bryce to leave her and forget their friendship. He leaves, but refuses to accept dismissal.

CHAPTER VIII.—Returning to Sequoia, the train on which Shirley, her uncle, and Bryce are traveling is attacked by a band of robbers, and Bryce, who could have escaped, at the risk of his life cuts out the caboose and saves them from certain death, being painfully injured in doing so.

CHAPTER IX.—Moirra McTavish, childhood friend of Bryce and employed in his office, makes Shirley's acquaintance and the two become friends. Needing money badly, John Cardigan offers to sell Pennington the Valley of the Giants, but the Colonel, confident the property must soon be his through the bankruptcy of his enemies, contemptuously refuses. Unknown to her uncle, Shirley buys the Valley and the Cardigans have a new lease of business life. They interest capital and decide on a scheme to parallel Pennington's logging railroad.

CHAPTER X.—Buchanan Ogilvy, railroad contractor and Bryce's college friend, is decided on by the Cardigans as the man to figure as the builder of the proposed railroad. Bryce goes to San Francisco to meet him.

CHAPTER XI.—Ogilvy ostentatiously begins work of surveying for the line, which is announced as a proposed through route. Pennington, vaguely alarmed, decides to block operations by making it impossible to secure a franchise for the line through Sequoia. In this he plans to enlist the aid of the mayor, Poundstone.

CHAPTER XII.—"Buck" Ogilvy, as builder of the projected Northern California & Oregon railroad, meets Moirra McTavish and is much impressed. Bryce and his father make plans for securing a franchise for the line from the city council.

CHAPTER XIII.—Ogilvy, in a business interview, favors the Mayor, and later engages that official's son as attorney for the new road. Through him they obtain the temporary franchise. Pennington, finally convinced that the Cardigan interests are behind the scheme, gets to work to balk them.

CHAPTER XIV.—Pennington refuses Bryce the use of a locomotive and trucks to move equipment for laying a switch, and Bryce and Ogilvy plan to steal both and during the night put in a crossing cutting Pennington's tracks in the city. Pennington bribes Mayor Poundstone to ignore the temporary franchise granted and to refuse a permanent one. That night Pennington hears the Cardigan tracklaying crew at work and hurries to the spot.

CHAPTER XV.—Bryce and Ogilvy disregard Pennington's frenzied remonstrances and continue work, but the Colonel gets word to the Mayor and also employs a desperado to shoot Bryce. Bryce is wounded. Work on the track is stopped by the chief of police. Shirley accuses her uncle of conniving at the murder of Bryce, and the Colonel leaves for San Francisco to safeguard his interests through further legal proceedings.

CHAPTER XVI.—Anticipating Pennington's action, Ogilvy has made arrangements to secure a restraining order from the federal courts, enjoining the Colonel from interfering with the construction of their line. Victory for the Cardigans is plainly in sight.

A cluster of wild orchids pendant from the great fungus-covered roots of a giant challenged her attention. She gathered them. Farther on, in a spot where a shaft of sunlight fell, she plucked an armful of golden California poppies and flaming rhododendrons, and with her delicate burden she came at length to the giant-guarded clearing where the halo of sunlight fell upon the grave of Bryce Cardigan's mother. There were red roses on it—a couple of dozen, at least, and these she rearranged in order to make room for her own offering.

"Poor dear!" she murmured audibly. "God didn't spare you for much happiness, did he?"

A voice, deep, resonant, kindly,



"Who is it?"

spoke a few feet away. "Who is it?" Shirley, startled, turned swiftly. Seated across the little amphitheater in a lumberjack's easy-chair fashioned from an old barrel, John Cardigan sat, his sightless gaze bent upon her. "Who is it?" he repeated.

"Shirley Sumner," she answered. "You do not know me, Mr. Cardigan." "No," replied he, "I do not. That is a name I have heard, however. You are Seth Pennington's niece. Is someone with you?"

"I am quite alone, Mr. Cardigan." "And why did you come here alone?" he queried.

"I—I wanted to think." "You mean you wanted to think clearly, my dear. Ah, yes, this is the place for thoughts." He was silent a moment. Then: "You were thinking aloud, Miss Shirley Sumner. I heard you. You said: 'Poor dear' God didn't spare you for much happiness, did he? Then you knew—about her being here."

"Yes, sir. Some ten years ago, when I was a very little girl, I met your son Bryce. He gave me a ride on his Indian pony, and we came here. So I remember."

"Well, I declare! Ten years ago, eh? You've met, eh? You've met Bryce since his return to Sequoia, I believe. He's quite a fellow now."

"He is indeed." John Cardigan nodded sagely. "So that's why you thought aloud," he remarked impersonally. "Bryce told you about her. You are right, Miss Shirley Sumner. God didn't give her much time for happiness—just three years; but oh, such wonderful years! Such wonderful years!"

"It was mighty fine of you to bring flowers," he announced presently. "I appreciate that. I wish I could see you. You must be a dear, nice, thoughtful girl. Won't you sit down and talk to me?"

"I should be glad to," she answered, and seated herself on the brown carpet of redwood twigs close to his chair.

"So you came up here to do a little clear thinking," he continued in his deliberate, amiable tones. "Do you come here often?"

"This is the third time in ten years," she answered. "I feel that I have no business to intrude here. This is your shrine, and strangers should not profane it."

"I think I should have resented the presence of any other person, Miss Sumner. I resented you—until you spoke."

"I'm glad you said that, Mr. Cardigan. It sets me at ease."

"I hadn't been up here for nearly two years until recently. You see I—I don't own the Valley of the Giants any more."

"Indeed. To whom have you sold it?"

"I do not know, Miss Sumner. I had to sell; there was no other way out of the jam Bryce and I were in; so I sacrificed my sentiment for my boy. However, the new owner has been wonderfully kind and thoughtful. She reorganized that old skid-road so even an old blind duffer like me can find his way in and out without getting lost—and she had this easy-chair made for me. I have told Judge Moore, who represents the unknown owner, to extend my thanks to his client. But words are so empty, Shirley Sumner. If that new owner could only understand how grateful I am—how profoundly her courtesy touches me—"

"Her courtesy?" Shirley echoed.

"Did a woman buy the Giants?"

He smiled down at her. "Why, certainly. Why, but a woman—and

dear, kind, thoughtful woman—would have thought to have this chair made and brought up here for me?"

Fell a long silence between them; then John Cardigan's trembling hand went groping out toward the girl's. "Why, how stupid of me not to have guessed it immediately!" he said. "You are the new owner. My dear child, if the silent prayers of a very unhappy old man will bring God's blessing on you—there, there, girl! I didn't intend to make you weep. What a tender heart it is, to be sure!"

She took his great toll-worn hand and her hot tears fell on it, for his gentleness, his benignancy, had touched her deeply. "Oh, you must not tell anybody! You mustn't," she cried.

He put his hand on her shoulder as she knelt before him. "Good land of love, girl, what made you do it? Why should a girl like you give a hundred thousand for my Valley of the Giants? Were you—hesitatingly—"your uncle's agent?"

"No. I bought it myself—with my own money. My uncle doesn't know I am the new owner. You see, he wanted it—for nothing."

"Ah, yes. I suspected as much a long time ago. Your uncle is the modern type of business man. Not very much of an idealist, I'm afraid. But tell me why you decided to thwart the plans of your relative."

"I knew it hurt you terribly to sell your Giants; they were dear to you for sentimental reasons. I understood, also, why you were forced to sell; so I—well, I decided the Giants would be safer in my possession than in my uncle's. In all probability he would have logged this valley for the sake of the clear seventy-two-inch boards he could get from these trees."

"That does not explain satisfactorily, to me, why you took sides with a stranger against your own kin," John Cardigan persisted. "There must be a deeper and more potent reason, Miss Shirley Sumner."

"Well," Shirley made answer, glad he could not see the flush of confusion and embarrassment that crimsoned her cheek, "when I came to Sequoia last May, your son and I met, quite accidentally. The stage to Sequoia had already gone, and he was gracious enough to invite me to make the journey in his car. Then we recalled having met as children, and presently I gathered from his conversation that he and his John-partner, as he called you, were very dear to each other. I was witness to your meeting that night—I saw him take you in his big arms and hold you tight because you'd—gone blind while he was away having a good time. And you hadn't told him! I thought that was brave of you; and later, when Bryce and Moirra McTavish told me about you—how kind you were, how you felt your responsibility toward your employees and the community—well, I just couldn't help a leaning toward John-partner and John-partner's boy, because the boy was so fine and true to his father's ideals."

"Ah, he's a man. He is indeed," old John Cardigan murmured proudly. "I dare say you'll never get to know him intimately, but if you should—"

"I know him intimately," she corrected him. "He saved my life the day the log-train ran away. And that was another reason. I owed him a debt, and so did my uncle; but Uncle wouldn't pay his share, and I had to pay for him."

"Wonderful," murmured John Cardigan, "wonderful! But still you haven't told me why you paid a hundred thousand dollars for the Giants when you could have bought them for fifty thousand. You had a woman's reason, I dare say, and women always reason from the heart, never the head. However, if you do not care to tell me, I shall not insist. Perhaps I have appeared unduly inquisitive."

"I would rather not tell you," she answered.

A gentle, prescient smile fringed his old mouth; he wagged his leonine head as if to say: "Why should I ask, when I know?" Fell again a restful silence. Then:

"Am I allowed one guess, Miss Shirley Sumner?"

"Yes, but you would never guess the reason."

"I am a very wise old man. When one sits in the dark, one sees much that was hidden from him in the full glare of the light. My son is proud, manly, independent, and the soul of honor. He needed a hundred thousand dollars; you knew it. Probably your uncle informed you. You wanted to loan him some money, but—you couldn't. You feared to offend him by proffering it; had you proffered it, he would have declined it. So you bought my Valley of the Giants at a preposterous price and kept your action a secret." And he patted her hand gently, as if to silence any denial, while far down the skid-road a voice—a half-trained baritone—floated faintly to them through the forest. Somebody was singing—or rather chanting—a singularly tuneless refrain, wild and barbaric.

"What is that?" Shirley cried.

"That is my son, coming to fetch his old daddy home," replied John Cardigan. "That thing he's howling is an Indian war-song or psalm of triumph—something his nurse taught him when he wore pinafores. If you'll excuse me, Miss Shirley Sumner, I'll leave you now. I generally contrive to meet him on the trail."

He bade her good-bye and started down the trail, his stick tapping against the old logging-cable stretched from tree to tree beside the trail and marking it.

Shirley was tremendously relieved. She did not wish to meet Bryce Cardigan-to-day, and she was distinctly

grateful to John Cardigan for his nice consideration in sparing her an interview. She seated herself in the lumber-jack's easy-chair so lately vacated, and chin in hand gave herself up to meditation on his extraordinary old man and his extraordinary son.

A couple of hundred yards down the trail Bryce met his father. "Hello, John Cardigan!" he called. "What do you mean by skallyhooting through these woods without a pilot? Eh? Explain your reckless conduct."

"You great overgrown duffer," his father retorted affectionately. "I thought you'd never come." He reached into his pocket for a handkerchief,

but failed to find it and searched through another pocket and still another. "By gravy, son," he remarked presently. "I do believe I left my silk handkerchief—the one Moirra gave me, for my last birthday—up



"I Wouldn't Lose That Handkerchief for a Farm."

youifer. I wouldn't lose that handkerchief for a farm. Skip along and find it for me, son. I'll wait for you here. Don't hurry."

"I'll be back in a pig's whisper," his son replied, and started briskly up the trail, while his father leaned against a madrone tree and smiled his present little smile.

Bryce's brisk step on the carpet of withered brown twigs aroused Shirley from her reverie. When she looked up he was standing in the center of the little amphitheater gazing at her.

"You—you!" she stammered, and rose as if to flee from him.

"The governor sent me back to look for his handkerchief, Shirley," he explained. "He didn't tell me you were here. Guess he didn't hear you." He advanced smilingly toward her. "I'm tremendously glad to see you today, Shirley," he said, and paused beside her. "Fate has been singularly kind to me. Indeed I've been pondering all day as to just how I was to arrange a private and confidential little chat with you, without calling upon you at your uncle's house."

"I don't feel like chatting today."

she answered a little drearily—and then he noted her wet lashes. Instantly he was on one knee beside her: with the amazing confidence that had always distinguished him in her eyes his big left arm went around her, and when her hands went to her face he drew them gently away.

"I've waited too long, sweetheart," he murmured. "Thank God, I can tell you at last all the things that have been accumulating in my heart. I love you, Shirley. I've loved you from that first day we met at the station, and all these months of strife and repression have merely served to make me love you the more. Perhaps you have been all the dearer to me because you seemed so hopelessly unattainable."

He drew her head down on his breast; his great hand patted her hot cheek; his honest brown eyes gazed earnestly, wistfully into hers. "I love you," he whispered. "All that I have—all that I am—all that I hope for—I offer to you, Shirley Sumner; and in the shrine of my heart I shall hold you sacred while life shall last. You are not indifferent to me, dear. I know you're not; but tell me—answer me—"

Her violet eyes were uplifted to his, and in them he read the answer to his cry. "Ah, may I?" he murmured, and kissed her.

"Oh, my dear, impulsive, gentle big sweetheart," she whispered—and then her arms went around his neck, and the fullness of her happiness found vent in tears he did not seek to have her repress. In the safe haven of his arms she rested; and there, quite without effort or distress, she managed to convey to him something more than an inkling of the thoughts that were wont to come to her whenever they met.

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