

THE VALLEY of the GIANTS

By PETER B. KYNE

Author of "Cappy Ricks"

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CHAPTER XVIII—Continued.

"I suppose so," she answered, "although I think until very recently that it was those sixteen townships of red cedar—that crown grant in British Columbia in which you induced me to invest four hundred thousand dollars. You will remember that you purchased that timber for me from the Caribou Timber company, Limited. You said it was an unparalleled investment. Quite recently I learned—no matter how—that you were the principal owner of the Caribou Timber company, Limited! Smart as you are, somebody swindled you with that red cedar. It was a wonderful stand of timber—so read the cruiser's report—but fifty per cent of it, despite its green and flourishing appearance, is hollow-butted! And the remaining fifty per cent of sound timber cannot be logged unless the rotten timber is logged also and gotten out of the way. And I am informed that logging it spells bankruptcy."

She gazed at him steadily, but without malice; his face crimsoned and then paled; presently his glance sought the carpet. While he struggled to formulate a verbal defense against her accusation Shirley continued:

"You had erected a huge sawmill and built and equipped a logging road before you discovered you had been swindled. So, in order to save as much as possible from the wreck, you decided to unload your white elephant on somebody else. I was the readiest victim. You were the executor of my father's estate—you were my guardian and financial adviser, and so you found it very, very easy to swindle me!"

"I had my back to the wall," he quavered. "I was desperate—and it wasn't at all the bad investment you have been told it is. You had the money—more money than you knew what to do with—and with the proceeds of the sale of those cedar lands, I knew I could make an investment in California redwood and more than retrieve my fortunes—make big money for both of us."

"You might have borrowed the money from me. You know I have never hesitated to join in your enterprises."

"This was too big a deal for you, Shirley. I had vision. I could see incalculable riches in this redwood empire, but it was a tremendous gamble and required twenty millions to swing it at the very start. I dreamed of the control of California redwood; and if you will stand by me, Shirley, I shall yet make my dream come true—and half of it shall be yours. It has always been my intention to buy back from you secretly and at a nice profit to you that Caribou red cedar, and with the acquisition of the Cardigan properties I would have been in position to do so. Why, that Cardigan tract in the San Heirln which we will buy in within a year for half a million, is worth five millions at least. And by that time, I feel certain—in fact, I know—the Northern Pacific will commence building in from the south, from Willets."

"I shall—" he began, but he paused abruptly, as if he had suddenly remembered that tact and not pugnacity was the requirement for the handling of this ticklish situation.

She silenced him with a disdainful gesture. "You shall not smother the Cardigans," she declared firmly. "You are devoid of mercy, of a sense of sportsmanship. Now, then, Uncle Seth, listen to me: You have twenty-four hours in which to make up your mind whether to accept my ultimatum or refuse it. If you refuse, I shall prosecute you for fraud and a betrayal of trust as my father's executor of that red cedar timber deal."

He brightened a trifle. "I'm afraid that would be a long, hard row to hoe, my dear, and of course, I shall have to defend myself."

"In addition," the girl went on quietly, "the county grand jury shall be furnished with a stenographic report of your conversation of Thursday night with Mayor Poundstone. That will not be a long, hard row to hoe, Uncle Seth, for in addition to the stenographer, I have another reliable witness, Judge Moore. Your casual disposal of my sedan as a bribe to the mayor will be hard to explain and rather amusing, in view of the fact that Bryce Cardigan managed to frighten Mr. Poundstone into returning the sedan while you were away. And if that is not sufficient for my purpose, I have the sworn confession of the Black Minorca that you gave him five hundred dollars to kill Bryce Cardigan. Your words, Rendou, will also swear that you approached him with a proposition to do away with Bryce Cardigan. I think, therefore, that you will readily see how impossible a situation you have managed to create and will not disagree with me when I suggest that it would be better for you to leave this county."

His face had gone gray and haggard. "I can't," he murmured. "I can't leave this great business now. Your own interests in the company render such a course unthinkable. Without my hand at the helm, things will go to smash."

"I'll risk that. I want to get rid of that worthless red cedar timber; so I think you had better buy it back from me at the same figures at which you sold it to me."

"But I haven't the money and I can't borrow it. I—I—"

"I will have the equivalent in stock of the Laguna Grande Lumber company. You will call on Judge Moore to complete the transaction and leave with him your resignation as president of the Laguna Grande Lumber company."

The Colonel raised his glance and bent it upon her in cold appraisal. She met it with firmness, and the thought came to him: "She is a Pennington!" And hope died out in his heart. He began pleading in maudlin fashion for mercy, for compromise. But the girl was obstinate.

"I am showing you more mercy than you deserve—you to whom mercy was ever a sign of weakness, of vacillation. There is a gulf between us, Uncle Seth—a gulf which for a long time I have dimly sensed and which, because of my recent discoveries, has widened until it can no longer be bridged."

He wrung his hands in desperation and slid to his knees before her; with hypocritical endearments he strove to take her hand, but she drew away from him. "Don't touch me," she cried sharply and with a breaking note in her voice. "You planned to kill Bryce Cardigan! And for that—and that alone—I shall never forgive you."

She fled from the office, leaving him cringing and groveling on the floor. "There will be no directors' meeting, Mr. Sexton," she informed the manager as she passed through the general office. "It is postponed."

That trying interview had wrenches Shirley's soul to a degree that left her faint and weak. She at once set out on a long drive, in the hope that before she turned homeward again she might regain something of her customary composure.

Presently the asphalt-paved street gave way to a dirt road and terminated abruptly at the boundaries of a field that sloped gently upward—a field studded with huge black redwood stumps showing dismally through coronets of young redwoods that grew riotously around the base of the departed parent trees. From the fringe of the thicket thus formed, the terminus of an old skid-road showed and a signboard, freshly painted, pointed the way to the Valley of the Giants.

Shirley had not intended to come here, but now that she had arrived, it occurred to her that it was here she wanted to come. Parking her car by the side of the road, she alighted and proceeded up the old skid, now newly planked and with the encroaching forestration cut away so that the daylight might enter from above. On over the gentle divide she went and down toward the amphitheater where the primeval giants grew. And as she approached it, the sound that is silence in the redwoods—the thunderous diapason of the centuries—wove its spell upon her; quickly, imperceptibly there faded from her mind the



"Who is it?"

memory of that groveling thing she had left behind in the mill-office and in its place there came a subtle peace, a feeling of awe, of wonder—such a feeling, indeed, as must come to one in the realization that man is distant and God is near.

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 arduous 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, 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 recognized 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. Who but a woman—and a 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, old, worn hand, and her hot tears fell on it, for his gentleness, his benignity, 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 Moira McFavish 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, present 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 is 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; but 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 unmaking 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 often in hand gave herself up to meditation on this 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 skullduggery 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 remark-

ed presently. "I do believe I left my silk handkerchief—the one Moira gave me, for my last birthday—up yonder. 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. In-

stantly 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.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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

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(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Emaciated Bride Considered Beau'ful.

Japanese marriage customs include a period of religious instruction for both the bride and the groom. The young man starts his instruction by paying daily visits to the priest of the village, and learning all the complicated phrases which he will have to utter on the day of his wedding. The pupil is placed in a tank of cold water and stays there submerged up to his chin while the priest bends over him and reads the Koran, the performance taking place in front of the church.

The girl begins her preparations for the great day by several weeks of semi-starvation during which time she takes only sufficient rice and hot water to sustain life. Because of this hunger strike enforced by custom, she loses considerable weight, an emaciated bride being considered a thing of beauty on the island of Java.—Detroit News.

He Had the Dough.

Mr. Blinks—Here's a \$75 millinery bill I've just paid, another instance that a fool and his money soon part.

Mrs. Blinks—I know, dear, but just think how fortunate it is that you are one of those who have money.—Boston Transcript.

UTAH STATE NEWS

Oats will probably average 60 cents per acre in Utah this year. A 700-pound black bear was shot in the mountains near Vermilion week.

Utah will produce 5,844,000 bushels of wheat this year, or 26 per cent more than last year.

The potato production of the state is estimated at 3,240,000 bushels, 130 per cent over last year.

Nearly 8,500,000 feet of timber sold to one purchaser in the Sevier forest timber conducted by.

Work on the large storage tank in Paradise park on the banks of the Whiterocks river is well on.

Sugar beet production in Utah placed at 1,381,000 tons this year compared with 1,015,000 tons a year ago.

More than 300 Christian workers of Utah attended the annual convention at Salt Lake week.

Founders' day was celebrated at Brigham Young university at on October 8, with an athletic gram and a parade.

Tomatoes are still being raised in many of the Weber county and at last reports there had been killing frosts in that section.

Utah stands at the head of the list of states in health teaching, it is noted in a bulletin issued by the United States bureau of education.

Late reports indicate a yield in this year of 77,420 bushels of seed, an increase of between 20 per cent over last year's record.

It is stated that hog cholera has appeared in the neighborhood of and that eight head have died, a number however have been exposed to disease.

The recent bazaar held by the city's organizations of Spanish for the benefit of the library and reading room, netted the library \$1031.94.

Morley Jones of Tridell is suffering ill as the result of having sustained a mouthful of gasoline while trying to start the gas siphon at the station.

With a view chiefly of aiding the States air mail flyers, the western states at Salt Lake will publish a special report on prevailing atmospheric conditions at Reno, Nev.

The new amusement hall at Ogden will be completed before Christmas. The building will house the city's amusements and the local amusement including a moving picture theater.

Flagstaff, Ariz., officials have offered a reward of \$1000 for the apprehension of the murderer of Dr. C. H. Schwab of Payson, whose body was found in an abandoned well in Flagstaff.

Shortage of water pipe has necessitated for the city to temporarily suspend work of extending mains in various parts of Ogden, soon as the pipe is received, work will be resumed.

The 2-year-old son of E. L. East of Murray may lose his right arm as the result of having placed his hand in an electrically operated wringer at Eckman home. The flesh was from the elbow downward.

Apples are now being picked on the Mori Mori orchard near Bear River City, it being estimated that 7000 bushels of marketable will be harvested. The apples are bringing upward of \$8.75 a bushel the grower.

Alleging that she was rendered unconscious on June 25 from a stroke on the head by one of the "airships" of the whirling machine concession at Saltair, Roy A. son has filed suit at Salt Lake cover \$10,130 damages.

The four automobile bandits Gravel, J. T. Smith, William and Frank Rodgers, who in September held up the Sugar bank and took approximately \$100,000 have been sentenced to indefinite terms in the state prison.

The section of school land in the Bryce canyon, containing only suitable approach to that fair land, from the rim of the canyon, has been leased for \$1000 to R. C. Syrett, the present Provision is to be made for the grounds for tourists.

In support of the parole of state prison authorities claim a board of pardons released 160 prisoners from September 1, 1919, to October 1, 1920, and that 93 of them now earning an honest living have been returned to prison, a number have not been heard from and are dead.

Out of 142 fires in Salt Lake during the month of July, 94 were due to carelessness, according to Chief Bywater.

John W. Gardner, lawyer and teacher, met instant death at the hands of Logan, when he came in with an electric wire while trying to get the power for an electric light.

Shock knocked him to the floor, and he was killed by the electric current.

Mrs. May Shelton, aged 48, was walking along the highway near Salt Lake with her husband and a child when she was struck by an automobile and injured. The driver assisted in getting the injured woman into a hospital and then disappeared and his whereabouts located.