

THE VALLEY of the GIANTS

By PETER B. KYNE

Author of "Cappy Ricks"

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"GOD HELP YOU!"

Synopsis—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-year-old Bryce Cardigan. At fourteen Bryce makes the acquaintance of Shirley Sumner, a visitor at 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. While Bryce is at college John Cardigan meets with heavy business losses and for the first time views the future with uncertainty. 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 uncle, Colonel Pennington. Bryce learns that his father's eyesight has failed and that Colonel Pennington is seeking to take advantage of the old man's business misfortunes. John Cardigan is despairing, but Bryce is full of fight. Bryce finds a burl redwood felled across his mother's grave. He goes to dinner at Pennington's on Shirley's invitation and finds the dining room paneled with burl from the tree. Bryce and Pennington declare war, though Shirley does not know it. Bryce beats Jules Rondeau, Pennington's fighting logging boss, and forces him to confess that Pennington ordered the burl tree cut. Pennington butts into the fight and gets hurt. Bryce stands off a gang of Pennington's lumbermen. Shirley, who sees it all, tells Bryce it must be "goodby." Bryce renews acquaintance with Moira McTavish, daughter of his drunken woods-boss.

CHAPTER VIII—Continued.

The thought that he so readily understood touched her; a glint of tears was in her sad eyes. He saw them and placed his arms fraternally around her shoulders. "Tut-tut, Moira! Don't cry," he soothed her. "I understand perfectly, and of course we'll have to do something about it. You're too fine for this." With a sweep of his hand he indicated the camp. "Sit down on the steps, Moira, and we'll talk it over. I really called to see your father, but I guess I don't want to see him after all—if he's sick."

She looked at him bravely. "I didn't know you at first, Mr. Bryce. I fibbed. Father isn't sick. He's drunk."

"I thought so when I saw the logging-crew taking it easy at the log-lading. I'm terribly sorry."

"I loathe it—and I cannot leave it," she burst out vehemently. "I'm chained to my degradation. I dream dreams, and they'll never come true. I—I—oh, Mr. Bryce, Mr. Bryce, I'm so unhappy."

"So am I," he retorted. "We all get our dose of it, you know, and just at present I'm having an extra helping. It seems. You're cursed with too much imagination, Moira. I'm sorry about your father. For all his sixty years, Moira, your confounded parent



"Father Isn't Sick. He's Drunk."

can still manhandle any man on the pay-roll, and as fast as Dad put in a new woods-boss old Mac drove him off the job. He simply declines to be fired, and Dad's worn out and too tired to bother about his old woods-boss any more. He's been waiting until I should get back."

"I know," said Moira wearily. "Nobody wants to be Cardigan's woods-boss and have to fight my father to hold his job. I realize what a nuisance he has become."

Bryce chuckled. "Of course the matter simmers down to this: Dad is so fond of your father that he just hasn't got the moral courage to work him over—and now that job is up to me, Moira. I'm not going to beat about the bush with you. They tell me your father is a hopeless inebriate."

"How long has he been drinking to excess?"

"About ten years, I think. Of course, he would always take a few drinks with the men around pay-day, but after mother died, he began taking his drinks between pay-days. Then he took to going down to Sequoia on Saturday nights and coming back on the mad-train, the maddest of the lot. I suppose he was lonely, too. He didn't get real bad, however, till about two years ago."

"Well, we have to get logs to the mill, and we can't get them with old John Barleycorn for a woods-boss, Moira. So we're going to change woods-bosses, and the new woods-boss will not be driven off the job, because I'm going to stay up here a couple of weeks and break him in myself. But how do you manage to get money to clothe yourself? Sinclair tells me Mac needs every cent of his two hundred and fifty dollars a month to enjoy himself."

"I used to steal from him," the girl admitted. "Then I grew ashamed of that, and for the past six months I've been earning my own living. Mr. Sinclair was very kind. He gave me a job waiting on table in the camp dining room. You see, I had to have something here. I couldn't leave my father. He had to have somebody to take care of him. Don't you see, Mr. Bryce?"

"Sinclair is a fuzzy old fool," Bryce declared with emphasis. "The idea of our woods-boss's daughter slinging hash to lumberjacks. Poor Moira!"

He took one of her hands in his, noting the callous spots on the plump palm, the thick finger-joints that hinted so of toll the nails that had never been manicured save by Moira herself. "Do you remember when I was a boy, Moira, how I used to come up to the logging-camps to hunt and fish? I always lived with the McTavishes then. And in September, when the huckleberries were ripe, we used to go out and pick them together. Poor Moira! Why, we're old pals, and I'll be shot if I'm going to see you suffer. Listen, Moira. I'm going to fire your father, as I've said, because he's working for old J. B. now, not the Cardigan Redwood Lumber company. I really ought to pension him after his long years in the Cardigan service, but I'll be hanged if we can afford pensions any more—particularly to keep a man in booze; so the best our old woods-boss gets from me is this shanty, or another like it when we move to new cuttings, and a perpetual meal-ticket for our camp dining room while the Cardigans remain in business. I'd finance him for a trip to some state institution where they sometimes reclaim such wreckage, if I didn't think he's too old a dog to be taught new tricks."

"Perhaps," she suggested sadly, "you had better talk the matter over with him."

"No, I'd rather not. I'm fond of your father, Moira. He was a man when I saw him last—such a man as these woods will never see again—and I don't want to see him again until he's cold sober. I'll write him a letter. As for you, Moira, you're fired, too. I'll not have you waiting on table in my logging-camp—not by a jugful! You're to come down to Sequoia and go to work in our office. We can use you on the books, helping Sinclair, and relieve him of the task of billing, checking tallies, and looking after the pay roll. I'll pay you a hundred dollars a month, Moira. Can you get along on that?"

Her hand closed over his tightly, but she did not speak.

"All right, Moira. It's a go, then. There, there, girl, don't cry. We Cardigans had twenty-five years of faithful service from Donald McTavish before he commenced slipping; after all, we owe him something, I think."

She drew his hand suddenly to her lips and kissed it; her hot tears of joy fell on it, but her heart was too full for mere words.

"Fiddle-de-dee, Moira! Buck up," he protested, hugely pleased, but embarrassed withal. "The way you take this, one would think you had expected me to go back on an old pal and had been pleasantly surprised when I didn't. Cheer up, Moira! I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll advance you two months' salary for—well, you'll need a lot of clothes and things in Sequoia that you don't need here. And I'm glad I've managed to settle the McTavish hash without kicking up a row and hurting your feelings. Poor old Mac! I'm sorry I can't bear with him but we simply have to have the logs you know."

He rose, stooped, and pinched her ear; for had he not known her since childhood, and had they not gathered huckleberries together in the long ago? She was sister to him—just another one of his problems—and nothing more. "Report on the job as soon as possible, Moira," he called to her from the gate.

Presently, when Moira lifted her Madonna glance to the frieze of timber on the skyline, there was a new glory in her eyes; and lo, it was autumn in the woods, for over that hill Prince Charming had come to her, and life was all crimson and gold!

When the train loaded with Cardigan

logs crawled in on the main track and stopped at the log-lading in Pennington's camp, the locomotive uncoupled and backed in on the siding for the purpose of kicking the caboose, in which Shirley and Colonel Pennington had ridden to the woods, out onto the main line again—where, owing to a slight downhill grade, the caboose controlled by the brakeman could coast gently forward and be hooked onto the end of the log train for the return journey to Sequoia.

Throughout the afternoon Shirley, following the battle royal between Bryce and the Pennington retainers, had sat dismally in the caboose. She was prey to many conflicting emotions; but having had what her sex term "a good cry," she had to a great extent recovered her customary poise—and was busily speculating on the rapidity with which she could leave Sequoia and forget she had ever met Bryce Cardigan—when the log train rumbled into the landing and the last of the long string of trucks came to a stop directly opposite the caboose.

Shirley happened to be looking through the grimy caboose window at that moment. On the top log of the load the object of her unhappy speculations was seated, apparently quite oblivious of the fact that he was back once more in the haunt of his enemies, although knowledge that the double-bitted ax he had so unceremoniously borrowed of Colonel Pennington was driven deep into the log beside him, with the haft convenient to his hand, probably had much to do with Bryce's air of detached indifference.

Shirley told herself that should he move, should he show the slightest disposition to raise his head and bring his eyes on a level with hers, she would dodge away from the window in time to escape his scrutiny.

She reckoned without the engine. With a smart bump it struck the caboose and shunted it briskly up the siding; at the sound of the impact Bryce raised his troubled glance just in time to see Shirley's body, yielding to the shock, away into full view at the window.

With difficulty he suppressed a grin. "I'll bet my immortal soul she was peeking at me," he soliloquized. "Confound the luck! Another meeting this afternoon would be embarrassing." Tacitly he resumed his study of his feet, not even looking up when the caboose, after gaining the main track, slid gently down the slight grade and was coupled to the rear logging truck. He heard the engineer shout to the brakeman—who had ridden down from the head of the train to unlock the sliding switch and couple the caboose—to hurry up, lock the switch, and get back aboard the engine.

"Can't get this damned key to turn in the lock," the brakeman shouted presently. "Lock's rusty, and something's gone bust inside."

Minutes passed. Bryce's assumed abstraction became real, for he had many matters to occupy his busy brain, and it was impossible for him to sit idle without adverting to some of them. Presently he was subconsciously aware that the train was moving gently forward; almost immediately, it seemed to him, the long string of trucks had gathered their customary speed; and then suddenly it dawned upon Bryce that the train had started off without a single jerk—and that it was gathering headway rapidly.

He looked ahead—and his hair grew creepy at the roots. There was no locomotive attached to the train! It was running away down a two per cent grade, and because of the tremendous weight of the train, it was gathering momentum at a fearful rate.

The reason for the runaway dawned on Bryce instantly. The road, being privately owned, was, like most logging roads, neglected as to roadbed and rolling stock; also it was unmanned, and the brakeman, who also acted as switchman, had failed to set the hand-brakes on the leading truck after the engineer had locked the air-brakes. As a result, during the five or six minutes required to "spot in" the caboose, and an extra minute or two lost while the brakeman struggled with the recalcitrant lock on the switch, the air had leaked away through the worn valves and rubber tubing, and the brakes had been released—so that the train, without warning, had quietly and almost noiselessly slid out of the log-lading and started on its mad career. There was nothing to do now save watch the wild runaway and pray, for of all the mad runaways in a mad world, a loaded logging train is by far the worst.

For an instant after realizing his predicament, Bryce Cardigan was tempted to jump and take his chance on a few broken bones, before the train could reach a greater speed than twenty miles an hour. His next impulse was to run forward and set the hand-brake on the leading truck, but a glance showed him that even with the train standing still he could not hope to leap from truck to truck and land on the round, freshly peeled surface of the logs without slipping, for he had no clogs in his boots. And to slip now meant swift and horrible death.

Then he remembered. In the wildly rolling caboose Shirley Sumner rode with her uncle, while less than two miles ahead, the track swung in a sharp curve high up along the hillside above Mad river. Bryce knew the leading truck would never take that curve at high speed, even if the ancient rolling stock should hold together until the curve was reached, but would shoot off at a tangent into the canyon, carrying trucks, logs, and caboose with it, rolling over and over down the hillside to the river.

"The caboose must be cut out of this runaway," Bryce soliloquized, "and it must be cut out in a devil of a hurry. Here goes nothing in particular, and may God be good to my dear old man."

He jerked his axe out of the log, drove it deep into the top log toward the end, and by using the haft to cling to, crawled toward the rear of the load and looked down at the caboose coupling. The top log was a sixteen-



"I'll Hold You Yet, You Brute."

foot butt; the two bottom logs were eighteen-footers. With a silent prayer of thanks to Providence, Bryce slid down to the landing thus formed. He was still five feet above the coupling, however; but by leaning over the swaying, bumping edge and swinging the axe with one hand, he managed to cut through the rubber hose on the air connection.

After accomplishing this, axe in hand, he leaped down to the narrow ledge formed by the bumper in front of the caboose—driving his face into the front of the caboose; and he only grasped the steel rod leading from the brake-chains to the wheel on the roof in time to avoid falling half stunned between the front of the caboose and the rest of the logging truck. The caboose had once been a box car; hence there was no railed front platform to which Bryce might have leaped in safety. Clinging perilously on the bumper, he reached with his foot, got his toe under the lever on the side, jerked it upward, and threw the pin out of the coupling; then with his free hand he swung the axe and drove the great steel jaws of the coupling apart.

The caboose was cut out! But already the deadly curve was in sight; in two minutes the first truck would reach it; and the caboose, though cut loose, had to be stopped, else with the headway it had gathered, it, too, would follow the logging trucks to glory.

For a moment Bryce clung to the brake-rod, weak and dizzy from the effects of the blow when, leaping down from the loaded truck to the caboose bumper, his face had smashed into the front of the caboose. His chin was bruised, skinned, and bloody; his nose had been broken, and twin rivulets of blood ran from his nostrils. He wiped it away, swung his axe, drove the blade deep into the bumper and left it there with the haft quivering; turning, he climbed swiftly up the narrow iron ladder beside the brake-rod until he reached the roof; then, still standing on the ladder, he reached the brake-wheel and drew it promptly but gradually around until the wheel-blocks began to bite, when he exerted his tremendous strength to the utmost and with his knees braced doggedly against the front of the caboose, held the wheel.

The brake screamed, but the speed of the caboose was not appreciably slackened. "It's had too good a start!" Bryce moaned. "The momentum is more than I can overcome. Oh, Shirley, my love! God help you!"

He cast a sudden despairing look over his shoulder downward at the coupling. He was winning, after all, for a space of six feet now yawned between the end of the logging truck and the bumper of the caboose. If he could but hold that tremendous strain on the wheel for a quarter of

a mile, he might get the demon caboose under control!

After what seemed an eon of waiting, he ventured another look ahead. The rear logging-truck was a hundred yards in front of him now, and from the wheels of the caboose an odor of something burning drifted up to him. "I've got your wheels locked!" he half sobbed. "I'll hold you yet, you brute. Slide! That's it! Slide, and flatten your infernal wheels. Hah! You're quitting—quitting. I'll have you in control before we reach the curve. Burn, curse you, burn!"

With a shriek of metal scraping metal, the head of the Juggernaut ahead took the curve, clung there an instant, and was catapulted into space. Logs weighing twenty tons were flung about like kindling; one instant, Bryce could see them in the air; the next they had disappeared down the hillside. A deafening crash, a splash, a cloud of dust—

With a protesting squeal, the caboose came to the point where the logging-train had left the right of way, carrying rails and ties with it. The wheels on the side nearest the bank slid into the dirt first and plowed deep into the soil; the caboose came to an abrupt stop, trembled and rattled, overtopped its center of gravity, and fell over against the cut-bank, wearily, like a drunken hag.

Bryce, still clinging to the brake, was fully braced for the shock and was not flung off. Calmly he descended the ladder, recovered the axe from the bumper, climbed back to the roof, tiptoed off the roof to the top of the bank and sat calmly down under a manzanita bush to await results, for he was quite confident that none of the occupants of the confounded caboose had been treated to anything worse than a wild ride and a rare fright, and he was curious to see how Shirley Sumner would behave in an emergency.

Colonel Pennington was first to emerge at the rear of the caboose. He leaped lightly down the steps, ran to the front of the car, looked down the track, and swore feelingly. Then he darted back to the rear of the caboose.

"All clear and snug as a bug under a chip, my dear," he called to Shirley. "Thank God, the caboose became uncoupled—guess that fool brakeman forgot to drop the pin; it was the last car, and when it jumped the track and plowed into the dirt, it just naturally quit and toppled over against the bank. Come out, my dear."

Shirley came out, dry-eyed, but white and trembling. The Colonel placed his arm around her, and she hid her face on his shoulder and shuddered. "There, there!" he soothed her affectionately. "It's all over, my dear. All's well that ends well."

"The train," she cried in a choking voice. "Where is it?"

"In little pieces—down in Mad river."

"Bryce Cardigan," she sobbed. "I saw him—he was riding atop on the train. He—ah, God help him!"

The Colonel shook her with sudden ferocity. "Young Cardigan," he cried sharply. "Riding the logs? Are you certain?"

She nodded, and her shoulders shook piteously.

"Then Bryce Cardigan is gone!" Pennington's pronouncement was solemn, deadly with its flat finality. "No man could have rolled down into Mad river with a trainload of logs and survived. The devil himself couldn't." He heaved a great sigh, and added: "Well, that clears the atmosphere considerably, although for all his faults, I regret, for his father's sake, that this dreadful affair has happened. Well, it can't be helped, Shirley. Poor devil! For all his damnable treatment of me, I wouldn't have had this happen for a million dollars."

Shirley burst into wild weeping. Bryce's heart leaped, for he understood the reason for her grief. She had sent him away in anger, and he had gone to his death; ergo it would be long before Shirley would forgive herself. Bryce had not intended presenting himself before her in his battered and bloody condition, but the sight of her distress now was more than he could bear. He coughed slightly, and the alert colonel glanced up at him instantly.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" The words fell from Pennington's lips with a heartiness that was almost touching. "I thought you'd gone with the train."

"Sorry to have disappointed you, old top," Bryce replied blithely. "But I'm just naturally stubborn. Too bad about the atmosphere you thought cleared a moment ago! It's clogged worse than ever now."

Bryce turns a deaf ear to Shirley and forces the fighting.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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After a tour of the post, the proud and happy parents joined the crowd assembled to witness evening parade, a most imposing spectacle. The march past aroused the father of the cadet to a high pitch of enthusiasm.

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"Some of it is liable to be pretty bad."

"I am afraid so. But I want to do my best. Do you think I ought to stop studying political economy and take music lessons?"

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