

# The VALLEY of the GIANTS

By PETER B. KYNE

Author of "Cappy Ricks"

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## BRYCE AND JULES.

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-day-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.

## CHAPTER VI—Continued.

"I'm afraid I do, my dear," the Colonel admitted with his best air of heavy expensiveness. "I'm afraid I do. However, Mr. Cardigan, now that you have—at least, I have been so informed—taken over your father's business, I am hoping you will be enabled to get together on many little details and work them out on a common basis to our mutual advantage. We lumbermen should stand together and not make it hard for each other. However," he concluded, "let's not talk shop. I imagine you have enough of that during the day. Besides, here are the cocktails."

With the disposal of the cocktails, the conversation drifted into a discussion of Shirley's adventures with a salmon in Big Ingon. The Colonel discoursed learnedly on the superior sport of muskellunge-fishing, which prompted Bryce to enter into a description of going after swordfish among the islands of the Santa Barbara channel. "Once I was fishing at San—"

The butler appeared in the doorway and bowed to Shirley, announcing that dinner was served. The girl rose and gave her arm to Bryce; with her other arm linked through her uncle's she turned toward the dining room.

Just inside the entrance Bryce paused. The soft glow of the candles in the old-fashioned silver candlesticks upon the table was reflected in the polished walls of the room—walls formed of panels of the most exquisitely patterned redwood burl Bryce Cardigan had ever seen. Also the panels were unusually large.

Shirley Sumner's alert glance followed Bryce's as it swept around the room. "This dining room is Uncle Seth's particular delight, Mr. Cardigan," she explained.

"It is very beautiful, Miss Sumner. And your uncle has worked wonders in the matter of having it polished. Those panels are positively the largest and most beautiful specimens of redwood burl ever turned out in this country. The grain is not merely wavy; it is not merely curly; it is actually so contrary that you have here, Colonel Pennington, a room absolutely unique, in that it is formed of bird's-eye burl. Mark the deep shadows in it. And how it does reflect those candles!"

"It is beautiful," the Colonel declared. "And I must confess to a pardonable pride in it, although the task of keeping these walls from being marred by the furniture knocking against them requires the utmost care."

Bryce turned and his brown eyes blazed into the Colonel's. "Where did you succeed in finding such a marvelous tree?" he queried pointedly. "I know of but one tree in Humboldt county that could have produced such beautiful burl."

For about a second Colonel Pennington met Bryce's glance unwaveringly; then he read something in his guest's eyes, and his glance shifted, while over his benign countenance a flush spread quickly. Bryce noted it, and his quickly roused suspicions were as quickly lulled into certainty. "Where did you find that tree?" he repeated innocently.

"Rondeau, my woods-boss, knew I was on the lookout for something special—something nobody else could get: so he kept his eyes open."

"Indeed!" There was just a trace of irony in Bryce's tones as he drew Shirley's chair and held it for her. "You are fortunate to have such a woods-boss in your employ. Such loyal fellows are usually too good to be true, and quite frequently they put their blankets on their backs and get out of the country when you least expect it. I dare say it would be a shock to you if Rondeau did that."

There was no mistaking the veiled threat behind that apparently innocent observation, and the Colonel, being a man of more than ordinary astute-

ness, realized that at last he must place his cards on the table. "Yes," he said, "I would be rather disappointed. However, I pay Rondeau rather more than it is customary to pay woods-bosses; so I imagine he'll stay—unless, of course, somebody takes a notion to run him out of the country. And when that happens I want to be on hand to view the spectacle."

Bryce sprinkled a modicum of salt in his soup. "I'm going up into Township nine to-morrow afternoon," he remarked casually. "I think I shall go over to your camp and pay the incomparable Jules a brief visit."

Again the Colonel assimilated the hint, but preferred to dissemble. "Oh, you can't steal him from me, Cardigan," he laughed. "I warn you in advance—so spare yourself the effort."

"I'll try anything once," Bryce retorted with equal good nature. "However, I don't want to steal him from you. I want to ascertain from him where he procured this burl."

"He wouldn't tell you."

"He might. I'm a persuasive little cuss when I choose to exert myself."

"Rondeau is not communicative. He requires lots of persuading."

"What delicious soup!" Bryce murmured blandly. "Miss Sumner, may I have a cracker?"

The dinner passed pleasantly; the challenge and defiance between guest and host had been so skillfully and gracefully exchanged that Shirley hadn't the slightest suspicion that these two well-groomed men had, under her very nose, as it were, agreed to be enemies and then, for the time being, turned their attention to other and more trifling matters. A sprightly three-cornered conversation continued for an hour. Then the Colonel, secretly enraged at the calm, mocking, contemplative glances which Bryce ever and anon bestowed upon him, and unable longer to convince himself that he was too apprehensive—that this cool young man knew nothing and would do nothing even if he knew something—rose, pleaded the necessity for looking over some papers, and bade Bryce good-night. Foolishly he proffered Bryce a limp hand; and a demon of devilry taking possession of the latter, he squeezed it with a simple, hearty earnestness, the while he said:

"Colonel Pennington, I hope I do not have to assure you that my visit here this evening has not only been delightful but—er—instructive. Good-night, sir, and pleasant dreams."

With difficulty the Colonel suppressed a groan. However, he was not the sort of man who suffers in silence; for a minute later the butler, leaning over the banisters as his master climbed the stairs to his library, heard the latter curse with an eloquence that was singularly appealing.

## CHAPTER VII.

Colonel Seth Pennington looked up sourly as a clerk entered his private office. "Well?" he demanded brusquely. When addressing his employees, the Colonel seldom bothered to assume his pontifical manner.

"Mr. Bryce Cardigan is waiting to see you, sir."

"Very well. Show him in."

Bryce entered. "Good morning, Colonel," he said pleasantly, and brazenly thrust out his hand.

"Not for me, my boy," the Colonel assured him. "I had enough of that last night. We'll just consider the hand-shaking all attended to, if you please. Have a chair; sit down and tell me what I can do to make you happy."

"I'm delighted to find you in such a generous frame of mind, Colonel. You can make me genuinely happy by renewing, for ten years on the same terms as the original contract, your arrangement to freight the logs of the Cardigan Redwood Lumber company from the woods to tidewater."

Colonel Pennington cleared his throat with a propitiatory "Ahem-m!" Then he removed his gold spectacles and carefully wiped them with a silk handkerchief, as carefully replaced them upon his aristocratic nose, and then gazed curiously at Bryce.

"My dear young friend! My very dear young friend! I must protest at being asked to discuss this matter. Your father and I have been over it in detail; we failed to agree, and that settles it."

"I did not expect you to agree to my request, I am not quite that optimistic," Bryce replied evenly. "I thought that possibly, if I reopened negotiations you might have a reasonable counter-proposition to suggest."

"I haven't thought of any."

"I suppose if I agreed to sell you that quarter-section of timber in the little valley over yonder" (he pointed to the east) "and the natural outlet for your Squaw creek timber, you'd quickly think of one," Bryce suggested pointedly.

"Do you expect me to offer it to you as a bonus for renewing our hauling contract?"

The Colonel snapped his fingers. "By George," he declared, "that's a bright idea, and a few months ago I would have been inclined to consider it very seriously. But now—"

"You figure you've got us wiring, eh?" Bryce was smiling pleasantly.

"I am making no admissions," Pennington responded enigmatically. "—nor any hauling contracts for my neighbor's logs," he added.

"I suppose I'll have to abandon logging in Township nine and go back to the San Hedrin," Bryce sighed resignedly.

"If you do, you'll go broke. You can't afford it. You're on the verge of insolvency this minute."

"I suppose, since you decline to haul our logs, after the expiration of our present contract, and in view of the fact that we are not financially able to build our own logging railroad, that the wisest course my father and I could pursue would be to sell our timber in Township nine to you. It adjoins your holdings in the same township."

"I had a notion the situation would begin to dawn upon you." The Colonel was smiling now; his handsome face was gradually assuming the expression of a thousand feet stumpage for it.

"I'm afraid I can't accept that offer. We paid a dollar and a half for it, you know, and if we sold it to you at a dollar, the sale would not bring us sufficient money to take up our bonded indebtedness; we'd only have the San Hedrin timber and the Valley of the Giants left, and since we cannot log either of these at present, naturally we'd be out of business."

"That's the way I figured it, my boy."

"Well—we're not going out of business."

"Pardon me for disagreeing with you. I think you are."

"Not much! We can't afford it."

"My dear boy, my very dear young friend, listen to me. Your paternal ancestor is the only human being who has ever succeeded in making a perfect monkey of me. When I wanted to purchase from him a right of way through his absurd Valley of the Giants, in order that I might log my Squaw creek timber, he refused me. And to add insult to injury, he spouted a lot of rot about his big trees, how much they meant to him, and the utter artistic horror of running a logging-train through the grove—particularly since he planned to bequeath it to Sequoia as a public park."

"I will not renew your logging contract. That is final, young man. No man can ride me with spurs and get away with it."

"Oh, I know that yesterday."

"Then why have you called on me today, taking up my time on a dead issue?"

"I wanted to give you one final chance to repent. I know your plan. You have it in your power to smash the Cardigan Redwood Lumber company, acquire it at fifty per cent of its value and merge its assets with your

Laguna Grande Lumber company. You are an ambitious man. You want to be the greatest redwood manufacturer in California, and in order to achieve your ambitions, you are willing to ruin a competitor; you decline to play the game like a thoroughbred."

"I play the game of business according to the rules of the game; I do nothing illegal, sir."

"And nothing generous or chivalrous. Colonel, you know your plea of a shortage of rolling-stock is that the contract for hauling our logs has been very profitable and will be more profitable in the future if you will accept

a fifty-cent-per-thousand increase on the freight rate and renew the contract for ten years."

"Nothing doing, young man. Remember, you are not in a position to ask favors."

"Then I suppose we'll have to go down fighting?"

"I do not anticipate much of a fight."

"And I'll begin by running your woods-boss out of the country."

"Ah-h!"

"You know why, of course—those burl panels in your dining room. Rondeau felled a tree in our Valley of the Giants to get that burl for you, Colonel Pennington."

Pennington flushed. "I defy you to prove that," he almost shouted.

"Very well. I'll make Rondeau confess; perhaps he'll even tell me who sent him after the burl. Upon my word, I think you inspired that dastardly raid. At any rate, I know Rondeau is guilty, and you, as his employer and the beneficiary of his crime, must accept the odium."

The Colonel's face went white. "I do not admit anything except that you appear to have lost your head, young man. However, for the sake of argument: granting that Rondeau felled that tree, he did it under the apprehension that your Valley of the Giants is a part of my Squaw creek timber adjoining."

"I do not believe that. There was malice in the act—brutality, even; for my mother's grave identified the land as ours, and Rondeau felled the tree on her tombstone."

"If that is so, and Rondeau felled that tree—I do not believe he did—I am sincerely sorry, Cardigan. Name your price and I will pay you for the tree."

"You can't pay for that tree," Bryce burst forth. "No pitiful human being can pay in dollars and cents for the wanton destruction of God's handiwork. You wanted that burl, and when my father was blind and could no longer make his Sunday pilgrimage up to that grove, your woods-boss went up and stole that which you knew you could not buy."

"That will be about all from you, young man. Get out of my office. And, by the way, forget that you have met my niece."

"It's your office—so I'll get out. As for your second command"—he snapped his fingers in Pennington's face—"foxy!"

When Bryce had gone, the Colonel hurriedly called his logging-camp on the telephone and asked for Jules Rondeau, only to be informed by the timekeeper who answered the telephone, that Rondeau was up in the green timber with the choppers and could not be gotten to the telephone in less than two hours.

"Do not send for him, then," Pennington commanded. "I'm coming up on the eleven-fifteen train and will talk to him when he comes in for his lunch."

At eleven o'clock, and just as the Colonel was leaving to board the eleven-fifteen logging-train bound empty for the woods, Shirley Sumner made her appearance in his office.

"Uncle Seth," she complained, "I'm lonesome. The bookkeeper tells me you're going up to the logging-camp. May I go with you?"

"By all means. Usually I ride in the cab with the engineer and fireman; but if you're coming, I'll have them hook on the caboose. Step lively, my dear, or they'll be holding the train for us and upsetting our schedule."

By virtue of their logging-contract with Pennington, the Cardigans and their employees were transported free over Pennington's logging railroad; hence, when Bryce Cardigan resolved to wait upon Jules Rondeau in the matter of that murdered Giant, it was characteristic of him to choose the shortest and most direct route to his quarry, and as the long string of empty logging-trucks came crawling off the Laguna Grande Lumber company's log-dump, he swung over the side, quite ignorant of the fact that Shirley and her precocious relative were riding in the little caboose in the rear.

At twelve-ten the train slid in on the log landing.

"Where's Rondeau?" Bryce asked. The engineer pointed to a huge, swarthy man approaching across the clearing in which the camp was situated. "That's him," he replied. And without further ado, Bryce strode to meet his man.

"Are you Jules Rondeau?" he demanded as he came up to the woods-boss. The latter nodded. "I'm Bryce Cardigan," his interrogator announced, "and I'm here to thrash you for chopping that big redwood tree over in that little valley where my mother is buried."

"Oh!" Rondeau smiled. "Wiz pleasure, M'sieur. And without a moment's hesitation he rushed. Bryce backed away from him warily, and they circled.

"When I get through with you, Rondeau," Bryce said distinctly, "it'll take a good man to lead you to your meals. This country isn't big enough for both of us, and since you came here last, you've got to go first."

Bryce stepped in, fainted for Rondeau's jaw with his right, and when the woods-boss quickly recovered, ripped a sizzling left into the latter's midriff. Rondeau grunted and dropped his guard, with the result that Bryce's great fists played a devil's tattoo, on his countenance before he could crouch and cover.

still came on unflinching, and Bryce was forced to give way before him; to save his hands, he avoided the risk of battering Rondeau's hard head and sinewy arms.

Already word that the woods-boss was battling with a stranger had been shouted into the camp dining room and the entire crew of that camp abandoning their half-finished meal came pouring forth to view the contest.

Out of the fall of his eye Bryce saw them coming, but he was not apprehensive, for he knew the code of the woodsman: "Let every man roll his own hoop." It would be a fight to a finish, for no man would interfere: striking, kicking, gouging, biting, or choking would not be looked upon as unsportsmanlike; and as Bryce backed cautiously away from the huge, lithe active, and powerful man before him he realized that Jules Rondeau was as his father had stated, "top dog among the lumberjacks."

Rondeau, it was apparent, had no stomach for Bryce's style of combat



"Rondeau Will Take Care of Him Now."

He wanted a rough-and-tumble fight and kept rushing, hoping to clinch; if he could but get his great hands on Bryce, he would wrestle him down, climb him, and finish the fight in jig-time. But a rough-and-tumble was exactly what Bryce was striving to avoid; hence when Rondeau rushed, Bryce side-stepped and peppered the woodsman's ribs.

Suddenly two powerful hands were placed between Bryce's shoulders, effectually halting his backward progress; then he was propelled violently forward until he collided with Rondeau. With a bellow of triumph, the woods-boss's arms were around Bryce, swinging him until he faced the man who had forced him into that terrible grip. This was no less a personage than Colonel Seth Pennington, and it was obvious he had taken charge of what he considered the obsequies.

"Stand back, you men, and give them room," he shouted. "Rondeau will take care of him now. Stand back, I say. I'll discharge the man that interferes."

With a heave and a grunt Rondeau lifted his antagonist, the pair went crashing to the earth together, Bryce underneath. And then something happened. With a howl of pain, Rondeau rolled over on his back and lay clasping his left wrist in his right hand, while Bryce scrambled to his feet.

"The good old wrist-lock does the trick," he announced; and stooping, he grasped the woods-boss by the collar with his left hand, lifted him, and struck him a terrible blow in the face with his right. But for the arm that upheld him, Rondeau would have fallen. To have him fall, however, was not part of Bryce's plan. Jerking the fellow toward him, he passed his arm around Rondeau's neck, holding the latter's head as in a vise with the crook of his elbow. And then the battering started. When it was finished, Bryce let his man go, and Rondeau, bloody, sobbing, and semi-conscious, sprawled on the ground.

Bryce bent over him. "Now, damn you," he roared, "who felled that tree in Cardigan's redwoods?"

"I did, M'sieur. Enough—I confess!" The words were a whisper.

"Did Colonel Pennington suggest it to you?"

"He want ze burl. By gar, I do not want to fell zat tree—"

"That's all I want to know." Stooping, Bryce seized Rondeau by the nape of the neck and the slack of his overalls, lifted him shoulder-high and threw him, as one throws a sack of meal, full at Colonel Pennington.

"You threw me at him. Now I throw him at you. You damned, thieving, greedy, hypocritical scoundrel, if it weren't for your years and your gray hair, I'd kill you."

"You coward! To hurt my uncle!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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