

THE VALLEY of the GIANTS

By PETER B. KYNE
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CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

"Two of the five councilmen are for sale; two are honest men—and one is an uncertain quantity. The mayor is a politician. I've known them all since boyhood, and if I dared come out in the open, I think that even the crooks have sentiment enough for what the Cardigans stand for in this county to decline to hold me up."

"Then why not come out in the open and save trouble and expense?"

"I am not ready to have a lot of notes called on me," Bryce replied dryly. "Neither am I desirous of having the Laguna Grande Lumber company start a riot in the redwood lum-



"Two of the Five Councilmen Are for Sale."

ber market by cutting prices to a point where I would have to sell my lumber at a loss in order to get hold of a little ready money. I tell you, the man has me under his thumb, and the only way I can escape is to slip out when he isn't looking."

"Hum-m-m! Slimy old beggar, isn't he? I dare say he wouldn't hesitate to buy the city council to block you, would he?"

"I know he'll lie and steal. I dare say he'd corrupt a public official."

Buck Ogilvy rose and stretched himself. "I've got my work cut out for me, haven't I?" he declared with a yawn. "However, it'll be a fight worth while, and that at least will make it interesting. Well?"

Bryce pressed the buzzer on his desk, and a moment later Moira entered. "Permit me, Moira, to present Mr. Ogilvy. Mr. Ogilvy, Miss McTavish. The introduction having been acknowledged by both parties, Bryce continued: "Mr. Ogilvy will have frequent need to interview me at this office, Moira, but it is our joint desire that his visits here shall remain a profound secret to everybody with the exception of ourselves. To that end he will hereafter call at night, when this portion of the town is absolutely deserted. You have an extra key to the office, Moira. I wish you would give it to Mr. Ogilvy."

Moira inclined her dark head and withdrew. Mr. Buck Ogilvy groaned. "God speed the day when you can come out from under and I'll be permitted to call during office hours," he murmured. He picked up his hat and withdrew, via the general office. Half an hour later, Bryce looked out and saw him draped over the counter, engaged in animated conversation with Moira McTavish. Before Ogilvy left, he had managed to impress Moira with a sense of the unmitigated horror of being a stranger in a strange town, forced to sit around hotel lobbies with drummers and other lost souls, and drew from Moira the assurance that it wasn't more distressing than to have to sit around a boarding-house night after night watching old women tat and tattle.

This was the opening Buck Ogilvy had sparred for. Fixing Moira with his bright blue eyes, he grinned boldly and said: "Suppose, Miss McTavish, we start a league for the dispersion of gloom. You be the president, and I'll be the financial secretary."

"How would the league operate?" Moira demanded cautiously.

"Well, it might begin by giving a dinner to all the members, followed by a little motor-trip into the country next Saturday afternoon," Buck suggested.

Moira's Madonna glance appraised him steadily. "I haven't known you very long, Mr. Ogilvy," she reminded him.

"Oh, I'm easy to get acquainted with," he retorted lightly. "Besides, don't I come well recommended?" He pondered for a moment. Then: "I'll you what, Miss McTavish. Suppose we put it up to Bryce Cardigan. If he says it's all right we'll pull off the party. If he says it's all wrong, I'll go out and drown myself—and fairer words than these has no man spoke."

"I'll think it over," said Moira. "By all means. Never decide such an important matter in a hurry. Just tell me your home telephone number, and I'll ring up at seven this evening for your decision."

Reluctantly Moira gave him the number. She was not at all prejudiced against this carroty stranger—in fact, she had a vague suspicion that he was a sure cure for the blues, an ailment which she suffered from all too frequently; and, moreover, his voice, his respectful manner, his alert eyes, and his wonderful clothing were all rather alluring. The flutter of a great adventure was in Moira's heart and the flush of a thousand roses in her cheeks when, Buck Ogilvy having at length departed, she went into Bryce's private office to get his opinion as to the propriety of accepting the invitation.

Bryce listened to her gravely as with all the sweet innocence of her years and unworthiness she laid the Ogilvy proposition before him.

"By all means accept," he counseled her. "Buck Ogilvy is one of the finest gentlemen you'll ever meet. I'll stake my reputation on him. You'll find him vastly amusing, Moira. He'd make Niobe forget her troubles, and he does know how to order a dinner."

When Moira had left him, Bryce was roused from bitter introspections by the ringing of the telephone. To his amazement Shirley Sumner was calling him!

"You're a wee bit surprised, aren't you, Mr. Cardigan?" she said teasingly. "You're wondering why I have telephoned to you?"

"No, I haven't had time. The suddenness of it has left me more or less dumb. Why did you ring up?"

"I wanted some advice. Suppose you wanted very, very much to know what two people were talking about, but found yourself in a position where you couldn't eavesdrop. What would you do?"

"I wouldn't eavesdrop," he told her severely. "That isn't a nice thing to do, and I didn't think you would contemplate anything that isn't nice."

"But I have every moral, ethical, and financial right to be a party to that conversation, only—well—"

"With you present there would be no conversation—is that it?"

"Exactly, Mr. Cardigan."

"And it is of the utmost importance that you should know what is said?"

"Yes."

"And you do not intend to use your knowledge of the conversation, when gained, for an illegal or unethical purpose?"

"I do not. On the contrary, if I am aware of what is being planned, I can prevent others from doing something illegal and unethical."

"In that event, Shirley, I should say you are quite justified in eavesdropping."

"But how can I do it? I can't hide in a closet and listen."

"Buy a dictograph and have it hidden in the room where the conversation takes place. It will record every word of it."

"Where can I buy one?"

"In San Francisco."

"Will you telephone to your San Francisco office and have them buy



"Just Tell Me Your Home Telephone Number."

one for me and ship it to you, together with directions for using?"

"Shirley, this is most extraordinary. I quite realize that. May I depend upon you to oblige me in this matter?"

"Certainly. But why pick on me, of all persons, to perform such a mission for you?"

"I can trust you to forget that you have performed it."

"Thank you. I think you may safely trust me. And I shall attend to the matter immediately."

"You are very kind, Mr. Cardigan. How is your dear old father? Moira told me some time ago that he was ill."

"He's quite well again, thank you. It's too bad the circumstances are such that we, who started out to be such agreeable friends, see so little of each other, Shirley."

"Indeed, it is. However, it's all your fault. I have told you once how you can obviate that distressing situation. But you're so stubborn, Mr. Cardigan. I haven't got to the point where I like crawling on my hands and knees," he flared back at her. "Even for your sake, I decline to simulate friendship or tolerance for your uncle; hence I must be content to let matters stand as they are between us."

She laughed lightly. "So you are still uncompromisingly belligerent—still after Uncle Seth's scalp?"

"Yes; and I think I'm going to get it. I'm not fighting for myself alone, but for a thousand dependents—for a principle—for an ancient sentiment that was my father's and is now mine. You do not understand."

"I understand more than you give me credit for, and some day you'll realize it. I understand just enough to make me feel sorry for you. I understand what even my uncle doesn't suspect at present, and that is that you're the directing genius of the Northern California Oregon railroad and hiding behind your friend Ogilvy. Now, listen to me, Bryce Cardigan: You're never going to build that road. Do you understand?"

The suddenness of her attack amazed him to such an extent that he did not take the trouble to contradict her. Instead he blurted out, angrily and defiantly: "I'll build that road if it costs me my life—if it costs me you. Understand! I'm in this fight to win."

"You will not build that road," she reiterated.

"Why?"

"Because I shall not permit you to have some financial interest in the Laguna Grande Lumber company, and it is not to that financial interest that you should build the N. C. O."

"How did you find out that I was behind Ogilvy?"

"Intuition. Then I accused you of it, and you admitted it."

"I suppose you're going to tell your uncle now," he retorted witheringly.

"On the contrary, I am not. If it will comfort you the least bit, you have my word of honor that I shall not reveal to my uncle the identity of the man behind the N. C. O. The fact is, both you and Uncle Seth annoy me exceedingly. How lovely everything would have been if you two hadn't started this feud and forced upon me the task of trying to be fair and impartial to you both. Forgive my slang, but—I'm going to hand you each a poke soon."

"Shirley," he told her earnestly, "listen carefully to what I am about to say: I love you. I've loved you from the day I first met you. I shall always love you; and when I get around to it, I'm going to ask you to marry me. At present, however, that is a right I do not possess. However, the day I acquire the right I shall exercise it."

"And when will that day be?" Very softly, in awesome tones!

"The day I drive the last spike in the N. C. O."

Fell a silence. Then: "I'm glad, Bryce Cardigan, you're not a quitter. Good-bye, good luck—and don't forget my errand." She hung up and sat at the telephone for a moment, dimpled chin in dimpled hand. "How I'd hate you if I could handle you!" she murmured.

Following this exasperating but illuminating conversation with Shirley Sumner over the telephone, Bryce Cardigan was a distressed and badly worried man. For an hour he sat slouched in his chair, chin on breast, while he reviewed every angle of the situation. He found it impossible, however, to dissociate the business from the personal aspects of his relations with Shirley, and he recalled that she had the very best of reasons for placing their relations on a business basis rather a sentimental one. For the present, however, it was all a profound and disturbing mystery, and after an hour of futile concentration there came to Bryce the old childish impulse to go to his father with his troubles.

"He will be able to think without having his thoughts blotted out by a woman's face," Bryce soliloquized. "He's like one of his own big redwood trees; his head is always above the storm."

Straightway Bryce left the office and went home to the old house on the knoll. John Cardigan was sitting on the veranda, and from a stand beside him George Sea Otter entertained him with a phonograph selection—"The Suwanee River," sung by a male quartette. He could not see, but with the intuition of the blind he knew.

"What is it, son?" he demanded gently as Bryce came up the low steps. "George, choke that contraption off."

Bryce took his father's hand. "I'm in trouble, John Cardigan," he said simply, "and I'm not big enough to handle it alone."

The loonlike old man smiled, and his smile had all the sweetness of a benediction. His boy was in trouble and

had come to him. Good! Then he would not fail him. "Sit down, son, and tell the old man all about it. Begin at the beginning and let me have all the angles of the angle."

Bryce obeyed, and for the first time John Cardigan learned of his son's acquaintance with Shirley Sumner and the fact that she had been present in Pennington's woods the day Bryce had gone there to settle the score with Jules Rondeau.

With the patience and gentleness of a confessor John Cardigan heard the story now, and though Bryce gave no hint in words that his affections were involved in the fight for the Cardigan acres yet did his father know it, for he was a parent. And his great heart went out in sympathy for his boy.

"I understand, sonny, I understand. This young lady is only one additional reason why you must win, for of course you understand she is not indifferent to you."

"I do not know that she feels for me anything stronger than a vague sympathy, dad, for while she is eternally feminine, nevertheless she has a masculine way of looking at many things. Her first loyalty is to her uncle; in fact, she owes none to me. And I dare say he has given her some extremely plausible reason why we should be eliminated; while I think she is sorry that it must be done, nevertheless, in a mistaken impulse of self-protection she is likely to let him do it."

"Perhaps, perhaps. Eliminate the girl, my boy. She's trying to play fair



"Sit Down, Son, and Tell the Old Man All About It."

to you and her relative. Let us concentrate on Pennington."

"The entire situation hinges on that jump-crossing of his tracks on Water street."

"He doesn't know you plan to cross them, does he?"

"No."

"Then, lad, your job is to get your crossing in before he finds out, isn't it?"

"Yes, but it's an impossible task, partner. I'm not Aladdin, you know. I have to have a franchise from the city council, and I have to have rails."

"Both are procurable, my son. Induce the city council to grant you a temporary franchise tomorrow, and buy your rails from Pennington. He has a mile of track running up Laurel creek, and Laurel creek was logged out three years ago."

"But he hates me, old pal."

"The Colonel never permits sentiment to interfere with business, my son. He doesn't need the rails, and he does desire your money. Consider the rail problem settled."

"How do you stand with the mayor and the council?"

"I do not stand at all."

"That makes it bad."

"Not at all. The Cardigans are not known to be connected with the N. C. O. Send your bright friend Ogilvy after that franchise. He's the only man who can land it. Give him a free hand and tell him to deliver the goods by any means short of bribery. I know you can procure the rails and have them at the intersection of B and Water streets Thursday night. If Ogilvy can procure the temporary franchise and have it in his pocket by six o'clock Thursday night you should have that crossing in by sunup Friday morning. Then let Pennington rave. He cannot procure an injunction to restrain us from cutting his tracks, thus throwing the matter into the courts and holding us up indefinitely, because by the time he wakes up the tracks will have been cut. The best he can do then will be to fight us before the city council when we apply for our permanent franchise."

"Partner, it looks like a forlorn hope," said Bryce.

"Well, you're the boy to lead it. And it will cost but little to put in the crossing and take a chance. Remember, Bryce, once we have that crossing in it stands like a spite fence between Pennington and the law which he

knows so well how to pervert to suit his ignoble purposes." He turned earnestly to Bryce and waved a trembling admonitory finger. "Your job is to keep out of court. Once Pennington gets the law on the issue will not be settled in our favor for years; and in the meantime—you perish. Run along, now, and hunt up Ogilvy."

It was with a considerably lighter heart that Bryce returned to the mill office, from which he lost no time in summoning Buck Ogilvy by telephone.

"Thanks so much for the invitation," Ogilvy murmured gratefully. "I'll be down in a pig's whisper." And he was "Bryce, you look like the devil," he declared the moment he entered the latter's private office.

"I ought to, Buck. I've just raised the devil and spilled the beans on the N. C. O."

"To whom, when and where?"

"To Pennington's niece, over the telephone about two hours ago."

Buck Ogilvy smote his left palm with his right fist. "How did you let the cat out of the bag?"

"That remarkable girl called me up and accused you of being a mere screed for me and amazed me so I admitted it."

Ogilvy dropped his red head in stimulated agony and moaned. Presently he raised it and said: "Well, it might have been worse. Think of what might have happened had she called in person. She would have picked you pocket for the corporate seal, the combination of the safe and the list of stockholders, and probably ended up by gagging and binding you in your own velvet chair."

"Don't, Buck. Comfort and advice is what I need now."

"All right. Do you want me to do to save the day?"

"Deliver to me by six o'clock Thursday night a temporary franchise from the city council, granting the N. C. O. the right to run a railroad from out drying yard across Water street at its intersection with B street and out Front street."

"Certainly. By all means! Easiest thing I do! All right, old dear! I'm on my way to do my d—dest which angels can't do no more. Nevertheless, for your sins you shall do me a favor before my heart breaks after falling down on this contract you've just given me."

"Granted, Buck. Name it."

"I'm giving a nice little private, specially cooked dinner to Miss McTavish tonight. We're going to pull it off in one of those private screened corrals in that highly decorated Chink restaurant on Third street. Moira—that is, Miss McTavish—is bringing a chaperon, one Miss Shirley Sumner. Your job is to be my chaperon and entertain Miss Sumner, who from all accounts is most brilliant and fascinating."

"Nothing doing!" Bryce almost roared. "Why, she's the girl that bluffed the secret of the N. C. O. out of me!"

"Do you hate her for it?"

"No, I hate myself."

"Then you'll come. You promised in advance, and no excuses go now. The news will be all over town by Friday morning; so why bother to keep up appearances any longer?"

And before Bryce could protest Ogilvy had thrown open the office door and called the glad tidings to Moira, who was working in the next room; whereupon Moira's wonderful eyes shone with that strange, lambent flame. She clasped her hands joyously. "Oh, how wonderful!" she exclaimed. "I've always wanted Miss Shirley to meet Mr. Bryce."

CHAPTER XIII.

Fortunately for the situation which had so suddenly confronted him, Bryce Cardigan had Mr. Buck Ogilvy; and out of the experiences gained in the railroad-building enterprises the said Ogilvy, while startled, was not stunned by the suddenness and immensity of the order so casually given him by his youthful employer, for he had already devoted to the matter of that crossing the better part of the preceding night.

"Got to run a sandy on the mayor," Buck soliloquized as he walked rapidly uptown. "Now how shall I proceed to sneak up on that oily old cuss' blind side?"

Two blocks farther on Mr. Ogilvy paused and snapped his fingers vigorously. "Eureka!" he murmured. "I've got Poundstone by the tail on a downhill haul. Is it a cinch? Well, I just guess I should tell a man!"

He hurried to the telephone building and put in a long-distance call for the San Francisco office of the Cardigan Redwood Lumber company. When the manager came on the line Ogilvy dictated to him a message which he instructed the manager to telegraph back to him at the Hotel Sequoia one hour later; this mysterious detail attended to, he continued on to the mayor's office in the city hall.

Mayor Poundstone's bushy eyebrows arched with interest when his secretary laid upon his desk the card of Mr. Buchanan Ogilvy, vice president and general manager of the Northern California. "Ah-h-h!" he breathed with an unpleasant resemblance to a boue vivante who sees before him his favorite vintage. "I have been expecting Mr. Ogilvy to call for quite a while. Show him in."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Truth.

"I have seen this article scores of times and you brought it to me as original."

"So it was. It must have been original with somebody."

His Position.

"Nelle says she wouldn't marry the best man in the world."

"Well, did you ever see anybody marry the best man at a wedding?"

BRACE UP!

The man or woman with weak kidneys is half crippled. A lame, stiff back, with its constant, dull ache and sharp, shooting twinges, makes the simplest task a burden. Headaches, dizzy spells, urinary disorders and an "all worn out" feeling are daily sources of distress. Don't neglect kidney weakness and risk gravel, dropsy or Bright's disease. Get a box of Doan's Kidney Pills today. They have helped people the world over.

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MAN'S
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Ugly Cut.

Customer—I see that the barber across the street has slashed his prices.

Barber—Yes, and if he'd only confine his slashing to prices his customers wouldn't holler.

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