THE VALLEY *of the* GIANTS

By PETER B. KYNE

Author of "Cappy Ricks"

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CHAPTER XVIII—Continued.

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"Oh, no, boss! I'm not a big fo. I hadn't dined dreamy of such happiness until today. You were so masterful able the obstacles seem as mere so

"Why, today, Bryce," he interrupted him.

He took her adorable little head in his great hands and fondled her and tweaked it gently. The light began to dawn vaguely on Judge Ballou's mind following an exciting half hour which I put in with his son the mayor. Acting upon impulse only, I told Pomeroy I was prepared to send him — the price if he didn't behave. If in charge of the C. M. & St. P. permanently, he chose the C. M. & St. P., and the only offer I might now and promised me anything if I wouldn't destroy him. So I guessed I wouldn't do anything until the train-boss met me; he should be definitely settled when I returned to my office to find several fine, fancy cigars on my desk, other than the ordinary brand the Northwestern Pacific. He was a perfectly delightful young fellow, and in addition a proposition to build. It seems the Northwestern Pacific had decided to build up from Willits, and the powwow and polish in my office was about the N. C. O. was in all probability the very thing that caused them to spend. That explains the C. M. & St. P. hostility to the N. C. O.

"But it was not to be. Pomeroy's chain of coast roads is to be merged ultimately with the holdings of the C. M. & St. P. on Grant's Harbor, Washington. And if the N. C. O. should be built it meant that a rival road would get the edge on them in the matter of every stick of timber and Del Norte redwood and it had me adding the sum."

"Why did they drop you?"

"The minority saw I'd be richly rewarded to be a C. M. & St. P. man, and thought this reward should be theirs, too. Perhaps Buck is right. Anyway, any rate, the stockholders were mighty anxious to have the charter for the N. C. O. held up. Word from the Cardigan Redwood Lumber company came in spite of me, and the Northwestern Pacific control all the desirable frontage on the bank, and when I told him the deal had not yet been closed, he started to close on with me.

"Did you close?"

"My dear child, I'm in a position of some interest. I could have quintuples of all we had, for three quarters of a million dollars, and an hour ago I received a wire from my attorneys in San Francisco informing me that the money had been deposited in escrow there awaiting formal delivery of the deeds. The money puts the Cardigan Redwood Lumber company in the clear—no receivership for us now, my dear one. And I'm going right ahead with the building of the N. C. O., while our holdings down on the South Eel have doubled in value for the reason that within three years there will be necessible and can be logged over the rails of the Northwestern Pacific."

"Bryce," Shirley demanded, "then I always told you I'd never permit you to build the S. C. O."

"Of course," he replied, "but surely you're going to withdraw your objections now."

"I am not. You must choose between the S. C. O. and me. And she met his surprised gaze unflinchingly.

"Shirley! You don't mean it?"

"I do mean it. I have always meant it. I love you, dear, but for all that you must not build that road."

He stood up and towered above her sternly. "I must build it, Shirley. I've started to do it, and I must keep faith with Gregory of the Trinidad

"I'm the Laguna Grande Lumber Company."

Timber company. He's putting up the money, and I'm to do the work and operate the line. I can't go back on him now."

"Not for my sake?" she pleaded. He shook his head. "I must go on," he reiterated.

"Do you realize what that resolution means to us?" The girl's tones were grave, her glance graver.

"I realize what it means to me."

She came closer to him. Suddenly the blaze in her violet eyes gave way to one of infirth. "Oh, you dear big spoky," she cried. "I was just testing you." And she clung to him, laughing. "You always beat me down—you always win. Bryce, dear, I'm the Laguna Grande Lumber company—at least I will be tomorrow, and I repeat for the last time that you shall not build the N. C. O. because I'm going to work there. I shall be laughing at you because I'm going to merge with the Cardigan Redwood Lumber company and then my railroad shall be built up from Willits—and you'll help me. And you didn't tell me you could never build the N. C. O."

"God bless my unbiased soul!" he murmured, and drew her close.

In the gathering dusk they walked down the trail. Beside the mud-hole in Willits Cabin they ordered jubilantly. Well, he queried, when they heard him, and on the morrow he called for me.

"I didn't tell Shirley I'd sold out John Cardigan," Bryce avowed, "but I did tell her that I'd sold out the permanent interest in the N. C. O., and the only objection she made was and promised me anything if I wouldn't destroy him. So I guessed I wouldn't do anything until the train-boss met me; he should be definitely settled when I returned to my office to find several fine, fancy cigars on my desk, other than the ordinary brand the Northwestern Pacific. He was a perfectly delightful young fellow, and in addition a proposition to build. It seems the Northwestern Pacific had decided to build up from Willits—and the powwow and polish in my office was about the N. C. O. was in all probability the very thing that caused them to spend. That explains the C. M. & St. P. hostility to the N. C. O.

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CHAPTER XIX.

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"I didn't tell Shirley I'd sold out John Cardigan," Bryce avowed, "but I did tell her that I'd sold out the permanent interest in the N. C. O., and that is a perfectly wonderful daughter-in-law you've got."

John Cardigan stared at him for a moment, then he rose and held out his hand.

"Bryce," he said, "I'm glad. I think you deserve her. I think I can enjoy the secrets of victory. I am content."

"And what a run you did give that boy Bryce!"

She laughed softly. "I waited him to flatter. I hadn't a great opportunity to say how much that was to him." she explained.

Next day Bryce Cardigan rolled the log log on the end block of a long train just in from Cardigan's woods in Township Nine dropped from the end of the log as the train crawled over the trestle and on its way to the log dump. He hailed Bob Ogilvie, who was the latter stood in the shade of the cook house.

"Big doings up on Little Lagoon creek this morning, Bob."

"I'm tellin'," Mr. Ogilvie answered morosely.

"He was great," Bryce continued. "I wouldn't be that big Cardigan Rondeau quit for a farm. Some woods boss, that; and his first job with the company was the hardest you could find. Cleaning grease on the skid at head of Little Lagoon and I reckon I fooled a few people when I picked him for the job. I don't know what his record at the front was, but he came to Cardigan's and he's been boss of woods ever since."

"He's always been lucky," Ogilvie grunted