# The VALLEY *of the* GIANTS

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CHAPTER XVI—Continued.

—18—

"Has Poundstone returned your car?" he queried:

"Why, yes. What makes you ask?"

"Oh, I had a suspicion he might. You see, I called him up and suggested it; somehow his home is peculiarly susceptible to suggestions from me, and—"

"Bryce Cardigan," she declared, "you're a sly rascal—that's what you are. I shan't tell you another thing."

"I hope you had a stenographer at the dictograph when the mayor and your uncle cooked up their little deal. That was thoughtful of you, Shirley. It was a bully club to have up your sleeve at the final showdown, for with it you can make Pattedunk behave himself and force that compromise you spoke of. Seriously, however, I don't want you to use it, Shirley. We must avoid a scandal by all means and praise be, I don't need your club to beat your uncle's brains out. I'm taking his job away from him to use for that purpose."

"Really, I believe you're happy today."

"Happy? I should tell a man! If the streets of Sequoia were paved with eggs I could walk down them all day without making an omelette."

"It must be nice to feel so happy, after so many months of the blues."

"Indeed it is, Shirley. You see, until very recently I was very much worried as to your attitude toward me. I couldn't believe you'd so far forget yourself as to love me in spite of everything. So I never had the trouble to ask you. And now I don't have to ask you. I know." And I'll be astounded to see you after I get that car using that!

"You're perfectly ridiculous, she blazed, and hung up without the formality of saying good by.

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Shortly after Shirley's departure from his office, Bryce had a visit from Buck Ogilvy. The latter wore a neatly pressed suit of shepherd plaid, with a white carnation in his lapel, and he was apparently the most light-hearted young man in Humboldt county. He struck an attitude and demanded:

"Boss, what do you think of my new suit?"

"You lunatic! Don't you know red bloods should never wear light shades? You're dressed like a mazo minstrel."

"Well, I feel as happy as an end man. And by the way, you're all chirked up yourself. Who's been helping you to the elixir of life? When we parted last night, you were forty fathoms deep in the sloph of despond."

"No, she's a dummy, that Miss Shirley Sumner." She called this morning to explain that last night's fiasco was none of her making and were I not gently she imparted the information that old Pennington had left for San Francisco at one o'clock this morning. Wherewith I lunch. To-Ee-Ha-hah!"

"Three long, loud, raucous cheers for Uncle. He's gone to rush a restraining order through the United States district court. Wonder he didn't wire his attorney to attend to the matter for him."

"He has the crossing blocked, and inasmuch as the mayor feeds out of Pennington's hand, the Colonel is quite confident that said crossing will be main blocked. As for the restraining order—well, if one wants a thing well done, one should do it oneself."

"All that doesn't explain your cheerful attitude, though."

"Oh, but it does. I've told you about old Duncan McTavish, Moira's father, haven't I?" Ogilvy nodded, and Bryce continued: "When I fired the old scoundrel for boozing, it almost broke his heart; he had to leave Humboldt, where everybody knew him, so he wandered down into Mendocino county and got a job sticking lumber in the drying yard of the Willits Lumber company. He's been there two months now, and I am informed by his employer that old Mac hasn't taken a drink in all that time. And what's more, he isn't going to take one again."

"How do you know?"

"Because I make it my business to find out. Mac was the finest woodsboss this county ever knew; hence you do not assume that I would lose the old scoundrel without making a fight for him, do you? Why, Buck, he's been on the Cardigan pay roll thirty years, and I only fired him in order to reform him. Well, last week I sent one of Mac's old friends down to Willits purposely to call on him and invite him out 'for a time;' but Mac wouldn't drink with him. No, sir, he couldn't be tempted. On the contrary, he told the tempter that I had promised to give him back his job if he promised on the water wagon for one year; he was resolved to win back his job and his self respect."

"I know what your plan is," Ogilvy interrupted. "Listen, now, to father's words of wisdom. Didn't you hear me tell that girl and her villainous nvinicular relative last night that I had an other ace up my kimono?"

Bryce nodded.

"That was not brag, old dear. I had the ace, and this morning I played it

where fore in my heart there is that peace that passeth understanding—particularly since I have just had a telegram informing me that my ace took the odd trick.

"You will recall that from the very moment we decided to go to court to fight our case, we were at pains to plant—at least interference by Pennington; in consequence we kept, or tried to keep, our decision a secret. However, there exist that all times the possibility that Pennington might discover our intention and anticipate us by securing a restraining order issued by the United States district court.

"Now, one of the cute little things I know about a court is that it is equal to all such emergencies—if a case is properly presented. Yesterday morning I sent a wire to the effect that Pennington was going to fight our case, and that he would be down to