THE VALLEY of the GIANTS

By PETER B. KYNE

Author of "Cappy Ricks"

Copyright by Peter B. Kyne

CHAPTER XVIII—Continued.

"I suppose so," she answered, "although I think I shall carry enough to thin it was those sixteen two-bolt of red cedar—that stores grand Britich Columbia in which you induced me to invest four hundred thousand dollars. You will remember that you purchased that timber for me to the Cariboo Timber company. Limited. You said it was an unqualified investment. Quite recently I learned—no matter how—that you were the principal owner of the Cariboo Timber company. Limited! Frauds as you are, somebody swindled you with that red cedar. It was a wonderful stroke of timber—as read the cruiser's report—but fifty per cent of it, despite the green and flourishing appearance, is hollow-hearted. And the remaining fifty per cent of sound timber cannot be logged unless the entire timber is logged also and gotten out of the way. And I am informed that logging is quite bankruptcy."

She paused at him steadily, but without malice; his face crimsoned and then paled; presently his glance sought the carpet. While he struggled to formulate a suitable defense against her accusation Shirley continued:

"You had erected a huge sawmill and built and equipped a logging road before you learned that the timber was swindled. So, in order to save as much as possible from the wreck, you decided to unload your white elephant on somebody else. I was the readiest victim. You were the executor of my father's estate—you were my guardian and financial adviser, and so you fooled it very, very easily at my expense."

"I had my back to the wall," he interrupted. "I was overwhelmed. I wasn't at all the bad person you seem to have imagined. I had the money to save the timber; then you knew what to do with—and with the proceeds of the sale of those cedar logs, I knew I could make an investment in California redwood and more than recover my fortune—make big money for both of us."

"You might have borrowed the money from me. Since I have never forgotten to join in your enterprise."

"That was too big a risk for you, Shirley. I had vision. I could see in calculable values in the redwood enterprise, but it was a tremendous gamble and required twenty millions to swing it at the very start. I dreamed of the control of California redwood; I still see it and by me, Shirley, I shall yet make that same true—and half of it shall be yours. It has always been my intention to buy back from you secretly and at a nice profit to you that Cariboo red cedar, and with the acquisition of the Cardigan properties I would have been able to do it. You see. Why, that Cardigan tract in the San Benito district we will buy with in a year for half a million, is worth five million on hoof. And by that time, I feel certain—in fact, I know—that the Cariboo will commence building in from the south, from Williams.

"I shall—" he began, but he paused abruptly, as if he had suddenly remembered that fact and not pregnancy was the requirement for the building of this British structure.

She silenced him with a disdainful gesture. "You shall not smash the Cardigans," she declared firmly. "They are devoid of every, of a sense of sentimentality. Now, then. I have forth, listen to me. You have twenty-four hours in which to make up your mind whether to accept my proposition or refuse it. If you refuse, I shall prosecute you for fraud and a betrayal of trust as my fiduciary executor on that red cedar timber deal."

He brightened a trifle. This thread that would be long, hard row to hoe was not dead, and of course, I shall have to do my prosecuting.

In addition," the girl went on, "I shall expect grand jury shall be furnished with a stenographic report of your conversation of Thursday night with Mayor Jordan. Which you will not be a long, hard row to hoe. Uncle Sam, in addition, has a stenographer. I have another reliable stenographer. Judge Kelsey will—no, I—I decided the Giants would be more suitable. Now, then, I'll be returned across the little saddle-bridge to my horse. Will you kindly help me?"

"Who is it?"

From an old barrel. John Cardigan was his eighteen gum boot upon her. Who is it?" she demanded.

"Shirley Sumner," she answered. "Now do not know me, Mr. Cardigan."

"Na," replied he, "I do not. That you are Shirley Sumner I know well, but are both Pennington's niece. Is somewith you?"

"I am quite alone, Mr. Cardigan." "And why did you come here alone?" he queried.

"I wanted to think."

"You needs you wanted to think about? Why, then, yes, this is the place you go for thinking." He was sitting with his rear recapitulation and president of the Logging Cardigan Lumber company."

The Colonel raised his glance and fixed it upon her in cold appraisal. Then he said: "Shirley Sumner, and I thought came to him: "She is a Pennington!" And how glad and in his heart. He began pleading in monotone fashion for money, for compliments, but the girl was obliterger.

"I am through with you utterly more than you deserve—you to whom money was never a sign of veneration, of satisfaction. There is a gulf between us. Uncle Sam—a gulf which for a long time I have dimly sensed and which, because of my recent discoveries, has widened until it can no longer be bridged."

He swung his hands to desperation and slid to his knees before her; with hysterical endearments he strove to take her hand, but she drew away from him. "Don't touch me," she cried sharply and with a breaking note in her voice. "You planned to kill Bryce Hamilton. You—you—and that man, alone—I shall never forgive you."

She fled from the office, leaving him cringing and grovelling on the floor. "There will be no directors' meeting, Mr. Sexton," she informed the manager as she passed through the general office. "It is postponed."

Her trying interview had wrenched Shirley's soul to a degree that left her faint and weak. She sat at once set out on a long drive, in the hope that being much in the pleasant homeward sights she might regain something of her composure.

Presently the asphaltum paved road gave way to a dirt road that terminated abruptly at the boundaries of a field studded with huge black redwood stumps showing distinctly through remnants of young redwoods and firs that had sprung up since the fall of the departed forest trees from the axes of the lumbermen. Shirley knew the location of the field—it had once formed part of a splendid, freshly pastured dairy ranch, and she knew that it would make an investment in redwood timber redeemed and more than redeemed the fortune—make big money for both of us."

"You might have borrowed the money from me. Since I have never forgotten to join in your enterprise."

"That was too big a risk for you, Shirley. I had vision. I could see in calculable values in the redwood enterprise, but it was a tremendous gamble and required twenty millions to swing it at the very start. I dreamed of the control of California redwood; I still see it and by me, Shirley, I shall yet make that same true—and half of it shall be yours. It has always been my intention to buy back from you secretly and at a nice profit to you that Cariboo red cedar, and with the acquisition of the Cardigan properties I would have been able to do it. You see. Why, that Cardigan tract in the San Benito district we will buy with in a year for half a million, is worth five million on hoof. And by that time, I feel certain—in fact, I know—that the Cariboo will commence building in from the south, from Williams.

"I shall—" he began, but he paused abruptly, as if he had suddenly remembered that fact and not pregnancy was the requirement for the building of this British structure.

She silenced him with a disdainful gesture. "You shall not smash the Cardigans," she declared firmly. "They are devoid of every, of a sense of sentimentality. Now, then. I have forth, listen to me. You have twenty-four hours in which to make up your mind whether to accept my proposition or refuse it. If you refuse, I shall prosecute you for fraud and a betrayal of trust as my fiduciary executor on that red cedar timber deal."

He brightened a trifle. This thread that would be long, hard row to hoe was not dead, and of course, I shall have to do my prosecuting.

In addition," the girl went on, "I shall expect grand jury shall be furnished with a stenographic report of your conversation of Thursday night with Mayor Jordan. Which you will not be a long, hard row to hoe. Uncle Sam, in addition, has a stenographer. I have another reliable stenographer. Judge Kelsey will—no, I—I decided the Giants would be more suitable. Now, then, I'll be returned across the little saddle-bridge to my horse. Will you kindly help me?"

"Who is it?"

From an old barrel. John Cardigan was his eighteen gum boot upon her. Who is it?" she demanded.

"Shirley Sumner," she answered. "Now do not know me, Mr. Cardigan."

"Na," replied he, "I do not. That you are Shirley Sumner I know well, but are both Pennington's niece. Is somewith you?"

"I am quite alone, Mr. Cardigan."

"