The VALLEY of the GIANTS

Author of "Cappy Ricks"

By PETER B. KYNE

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CHAPTER XIII.—Continued.

The visitor was accordingly admitted to the great man's presence and greeted with an official handshake of the regulation pattern. "I've been looking forward to the pleasure for quite some time, Mr. Ogilvy," he said, "and am delighted to be disposed of his bat and overcoat on an adjacent chair. The great man's blue eyes opened wide in surprise, but with his genial mouth, to deluge Mayor Poundstone with a smile that was friendly, painless, confidential and altogether delightful. Mr. Ogilvy was a man possessed of tremendous personal magnetism when he chose to exert it; and that smile was ever the opening gun of his magnetic bombardment. For it was a smile that always had the effect of making the observer desire to behold it again—of discerning sunshine and cordiality in its reflection.

"Glad you did—mighty glad," the mayor cried heartily. "I have read your articles of incorporation, Mr. Ogilvy. You will recall that they were published in the Sequoia Sentinel. It strikes me—"

"Then you know exactly what we propose doing, and any further explanation would be superfluous," Buck interrupted smilingly, in the shape of the matter so promptly. Again he favored the mayor with his bright smile, and the latter, now fully convinced that here was a person of sound and vast enterprise whom it behooved him to reverence and to cultivate, smiled and responded in kind, modified vigorous approval.

"Well, then," he said, "I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Ogilvy. Let me welcome you to make your home among us."

"Why, to begin with, Mr. Poundstone," Ogilvy answered, "I must confess that despite the skepticism which you have expressed, I have come prepared to shroud our enterprise in the minds of some people, we have learned from experience, with a certain amount of secrecy. For a very active business career of thirty years had convinced Col. Seth Ellington of the futility of wrecking his enterprises with speculation and mystery. When, therefore, the Northwestern Pacific Oregon railroad project was first broached to the Colonel's time-appreciation for the same, I realized that there was but one way in which to conserve his rest and that was by engaging to fathom the mystery for him, a specialist in the unraveling of mysteries. In times gone by, the Colonel had found a certain national detective agency an extremely efficient aid to well-known commercial agencies, and to these tried and true subordinates he turned now for expiation and satisfying information anent the Northern California railroad.

The information forthcoming from the agency was vague and unsatisfying. Neither of these two commercial agencies could ascertain anything of interest regarding the activities of the N. C. O. For the present the corporation had no office, its directors to date had been formed, organized by a well-known attorney who had declined to make any statement regarding the company but promised one at an early date. The board of directors consisted of this attorney, two new associates, his stenographer and Mr. Buchanan Ogilvy. The company had been incorporated for a million dollars, divided into five million shares of par value of one dollar each, and five shares had been subscribed.

"It looks fishy to me," the Colonel reported to his subordinates, "and I'm more than ever convinced it's a scheme of the Standard Redwood Lumber Company to start a timber boom and then unload. And that is something the N. C. O. ought to be discouraged, if it is a legitimate enterprise. It would be doubted, because the most feasible route for a road of that sort to take from Willits, Mendocino county, north to Eureka, I tell you he's dead set against it."

"Then we won't tell him anything about it, Henry. Well just pull off the special session of the directors and forget to invite the reporters; after which we will have them up here and can come around and howl all he wants. We're not letting a thing about this slip by us without grabbing a handful of it—I tell you, Henry, by Jo, size—but if we know it."

"I'll be there!" said Henry earnestly.

At eleven-thirty Thursday morning, Mayor Henry Poundstone, having worked the greater part of the previous night preparing the deeds, delivered both deeds and franchise to Buck Ogilvy at the latter's office. He did so with difficulty that the latter could control his tremendous amusement when Henry casually handed him the documents. True, he was in no hurry for the franchise and fifty deeds, which he wrote down as a matter of form, but the sight of the smile recorded on Mr. Poundstone's countenance as he parted with the precious papers was enough to know which side his bread is buttered on and who does the buttering.

"If I could guarantee Mr. Ogilvy that temporary franchise mentioned in his telegram, it might help me to get it right with J. P. M. at the start," his hopeful suggested.

"Guarantee it!" his father shouted. "Guarantee it! Well I should smile! Well just show J. P. M. and his crowd in the Sequoia legal representation. I'll call a special meeting of that little old city council of mine and just find temporary franchise through while you'll be saying 'Jack Robinson!'"

He carefully made a copy of the franchise.

"It is!" he growled. "Wants to cross Sequoia street at B and build out Front street. Well, I dare say nobody will kick over the traces at that. Nothing but warehouses and lumber-drying sheds in those parts, anyhow. Still ought to think of it—Pennington will probably have a howl about spurs from the engines of the N. C. O. getting his fire department alive."

"It looks fishy to me," the Colonel repeated in his subordinates, "and I'm more than ever convinced it's a scheme of the Standard Redwood Lumber Company to start a timber boom and then unload. And that is something the N. C. O. ought to be discouraged, if it is a legitimate enterprise. It would be doubted, because the most feasible route for a road of that sort to take from Willits, Mendocino county, north to Eureka, I tell you he's dead set against it."

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