

# The VALIANTS of VIRGINIA

## By HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES

ILLUSTRATIONS by LAUREN STOUT

### SYNOPSIS.

John Vallant, a rich society favorite, suddenly discovers that the Vallant corporation, which his father founded and which was the principal source of his wealth, has failed. He voluntarily turns over his private fortune to the receiver for the corporation. His entire remaining possessions consist of an old motor car, a white bull dog and a hammy coat, a neglected estate in Virginia. On the way to Damory court he meets Shirley Dandridge, an auburn-haired beauty, and decides that he is going to like Virginia immensely. Shirley and Major Bristow exchange reminiscences during which it is revealed that the major, Vallant's father, and a man named Sassoon were rivals for the hand of Mrs. Dandridge. In her youth, Sassoon and Vallant fought a duel on her account in which the former was killed. Vallant finds Damory court overgrown with weeds and croppers and decides to rehabilitate the place. Vallant saves Shirley from the bite of a snake, which bites him, knowing the deadliness of the bite. Shirley sucks the poison from the wound and saves his life. Vallant learns for the first time that his father left Virginia on account of a duel in which Doctor Southall and Major Bristow acted as his father's seconds. Vallant and Shirley become good friends. Mrs. Dandridge tells when she meets Vallant for the first time. Vallant discovers that he has a fortune in old walnut trees. The yearly tournament, a survival of the Jousting of feudal times, is held at Damory court. At the last moment Vallant takes the place of one of the knights, who is sick, and enters the lists. He wins and chooses Shirley Dandridge as queen of beauty to the dismay of Katharine Fargo, a former sweetheart, who is visiting in Virginia. The tournament ball at Damory court draws the elite of the countryside. Shirley is crowned by Vallant as queen of beauty. Vallant tells Shirley of his love and they become engaged.

### CHAPTER XXVI.—Continued.

"Bristow, Shirley's a magnificent girl."

"Finest in seven counties," agreed the major's bass.

"Whom do you reckon she'll choose to marry?"

"Chilly Lusk, of course. The boy's been in love with her since they were in bibs. And he comes as near being fit for her as anybody."

"Hump!" said the other sardonically. "No man I ever saw was half good enough for a good woman. But good women marry just the same. It isn't Lusk. I used to think it would be, but I've got a pair of eyes in my head, if you haven't. It's young Vallant."

The pearl fan twisted in Katharine's fingers. What she had guessed was an open secret, then!

The major made an exclamation that had the effect of coming after a jaw-dropped silence. "I—I never thought of that!"

The other resumed slowly, somewhat bitterly, it seemed to the girl listening. "If her mother was in love with Sassoon—"

Katharine's heart beat fast and then stood still. Sassoon! That was the name of the man Vallant's father had killed in that old duel of which Judge Chalmers had told! "If her mother—"

Shirley Dandridge's mother—"was in love with Sassoon!" Why—

"Was she?"

The major's query held a sharpness that seemed almost appeal. She was conscious that the other had faced about abruptly.

"I've always believed so, certainly. If she had loved Vallant, would she have thrown him over merely because he broke his promise not to be a party to a quarrel?"

"You think not?" said the major huskily.

"Not under the circumstances. Vallant was forced into it. No gentleman, at that day, could have declined the meeting. He could have explained it to Judith's satisfaction—a woman doesn't need much evidence to justify the man she's in love with. He must have written her—he couldn't have gone away without that—and if she had loved him, she would have called him back."

The major made no answer. Katharine saw a cigar fall unheeded upon the grass, where it lay glowing like a panther's eye.

The other had risen now, his stooped figure bulking in the moonlight. His voice sounded harsh and strained. "I loved Beauty Vallant," he said, "and his son is his son to me—but I have to think of Judith, too. She faints, Bristow, when she saw him—Shirley told me about it. Her mother has made her think it was the scent of the roses! He's his father's living image, and he's brought the past back with him. Every sound of his voice, every sight of his face, will be a separate stab! Oh, his mere presence will be enough for Judith to bear. But with her heart in the grave with Sassoon, what would love between Shirley and young Vallant mean to her? Think of it!"

He broke off, and there was a blank of silence, in which he turned with almost a sigh. Then Katharine saw him reach the bench with a single

stride and drop his hand on the bowed shoulder.

"Bristow!" he said brusquely. "You're ill! This confounded philandering at your time of life—"

The major's face looked ashy pale, but he got up with a laugh. "Not I," he said; "I was never better in my life! We've had our mouthful of air. 'Come on back to the house.'"

"Not much!" granted the other. "I'm going where we both ought to have been hours ago." He threw away his cigar and stalked down the path into the darkness.

The major stood looking after him till he had disappeared, then suddenly dropped on the bench and covered his face. Something like a groan burst from him.

"My God!" he said, and his voice came to Katharine with a quaver of age and suffering—very different from the jovial accents of the ballroom—"if I were only sure it was Sassoon!"

Presently he rose, and went slowly toward the lighted doorway.

### CHAPTER XXVII.

#### The Ambush.

Not long after, the musicians bower the sound of "Home, Sweet Home," drifted over the poignant rose-scent, and presently the driveway resounded to rolling wheels and the voices of negro drivers, and the house-entrance jostled with groups, muffled in loose carriage-wraps, silken cloaks and light overcoats, calling tired but laughing farewells.

Katharine, on the step, found herself looking into Vallant's eyes. "How can I tell you how much I have enjoyed it all!" she said. "I've stayed till the very last minute—which is something for one's fourth season! And now, goodbye, for we are off tomorrow for Hot Springs."

Her father had long ago betaken himself homeward, and the big three-seated surrey—holding "six comfortable and nine fumillah," in the phrase of Lige the coachman—had returned for the rest: Judge Chalmers, the two younger girls and Shirley. Katharine greeted the latter with a charming smile. What more natural than that she should find herself straightway on the rear seat with royalty? The two girls safely disposed in the middle, the judge climbed up beside the driver, who cracked his whip and they were off.

The way was not long, and Katharine had need of dispatch if that revengeful weapon were to be used which fate had put into her hands. She wasted little time.

"It seems so strange," she said, "to find our host in such surroundings. I can scarcely believe him the same John Vallant I've danced with a hundred times in New York. He's been here such a short while and yet he

Shirley started violently. Her hands, as they drew her cloak uncertainly about her, began to tremble, as if with cold. Something fell from them to the bottom of the surrey.

Through her chiffon veil Katharine noted this with a slow smile. It had been easier than she had thought. She said no more, and the carriage rolled on to the accompaniment of giggles over the judge's perforation. As it neared the Rosewood lane she leaned toward Shirley.

"You have dropped your fan," said she—and your gloves, too. I might have reached them for you. Why, we are there already. How short the drive has seemed!"

"Don't drive up the lane, Lige," said Shirley, and her voice seemed sharp and strange even to herself. "The wheels would make mother."

Katharine bade her goodbye with careful sweetness, as the judge bundled her down in his strong friendly arms. "No," she told him, "don't come with me. It's not a bit necessary. Emmaline will be waiting for me."

He climbed into her vacant place as the girls called their good nights. "We'll all sleep late enough in the morning, I reckon," he said with a laugh, "but it's been a great success!"

Emmaline was crouched in a chair in the hall, a rug thrown over her knees, in open-mouthed slumber. She started up at the touch of Shirley's hand, yawning widely.

"I declare to goodness," she muttered, "I was jes' fixin' 't go 't sleep!"

"I—I'm so tired, Emmaline. Take the crown. It's heavy."

The negro woman untangled the glittering points from the meshing hair with careful fingers. "Po' 't chicky-dee-dee!" she said lovingly. "Reck'n she flop all th' feddans outer

couldn't possibly be more at home if he'd lived in Virginia always. And you all treat him as if he were quite one of yourselves."

Shirley smiled enchantingly. "Why, yes," she said, "maybe it seems odd to outsiders. But you see, with us a Vallant is always a Vallant. No matter where he has lived, he's the son of his father and the master of Damory court."

"That's the wonderful part of it. It's so—so English, somehow."

"Is it?" said Shirley. "I never thought of it. But perhaps it seems so. We have the old houses and the old names and think of them, no doubt, in the same way."

"What a sad life his father had!"

her wings. Gimme that o' tin crown—I like ter lam' it out th' winder! Come on, now; we go upstairs soft so's not ter 'sturb Mis' Judith."

In the silver-blue bedroom, she deftly unfastened the hooks of the heavy satin gown and coaxed her mistress to lie on the sofa while she unpinned the masses of wavy hair till they lay in a rich surge over the cushion. Then she brought a brush and crouching down beside her, began with long gentle strokes to smooth out the silken threads, talking to her the while in a soft crooning monotone.

Under these ministrations Shirley lay languid and speechless, her eyes closed. The fear that had stricken her heart by turns seemed a cold hand pressing upon its beating and an algid vapor rising stealthily over it. But her hands were hot and her eyelids burned. Finally she roused herself.

"Thank you, Emmaline," she said in a tired voice, "good night now; I'm going to sleep, and you must go to bed, too."

But alone in the warm wad dark, Shirley lay staring open-eyed at the ceiling. Slowly the terror was seeping upon her, the dread, noiseless and intangible, folding her in the shadow of its numbing wings. Was her mother the one over whom that old duel had been fought? She remembered the cape jessamines. Was the date of that duel—the death of Sassoon—the anniversary her mother kept?

She sat up in bed, trembling. Then she rose, and opening the door with caution, crept down the stair, sliding her hot hand before her along the cool polished banister. As she passed through the lower hall, a bound on the porch, scenting her, stirred, thumped his tail on the flooring, and whined. Groping her way to the dining-room, she lighted a candle and passed through a corridor into a low-ceilinged chamber employed as a general receptacle—a glorified garret, as Mrs. Dandridge dubbed it.

It showed a strange assemblage! A row of chests, stored with winter clothing, gave forth a clean pungent smell of cedar, and at one side stood an antique spinnet and a worn set of horsehair furniture.

Shirley had turned her miserable eyes on a book-shelf along one wall. The volumes it contained had been her father's, and among them stood a row of tomes taller than their fellows—the bound numbers of a county newspaper, beginning before the war. The back of each was stamped with the year. She was deciphering these faded imprints. "Thirty years ago," she whispered; "yes, here it is!"

She set down the candle and dragged out one of the huge leather backs. Staggering under the weight, she rested its edge on the table and began feverishly to turn the pages, her eyes on the date line. She stopped presently with a quick breath—she had reached May 15th. The year was that of the duel; the date was the day following the jessamine anniversary. Fearfully her eye overran the columns.

Then suddenly she put her open hand on the page as though to blot out the words, every trace of color stricken from cheek and brow. But the line seemed to glow up through the very flesh: "Died, May 14th; Edward Sassoon, in his twenty-sixth year."

The book slipped to the floor with a crash that echoed through the room. It was true, then! It was Sassoon's death that her mother mourned. The man in whose arms she had stood such a little while ago by the old dial of Damory Court was the son of the man who had killed him!

"Oh, God," she whispered, "just when I was so happy! Oh, mother, mother! You loved him, and your heart broke when he died. It was Vallant who broke it—Vallant—Vallant. His father!"

She slipped down upon the bare floor and crouched there shuddering and agonized, her disheveled hair wet with tears. Was her love to be but the thing of an hour, a single clasp—and then, forever, nothing? His father's deed was not his fault. Yet how could she love a man whose every feature brought a pang to that mother she loved more than herself? So, over and over, the wheel of her thought turned in the same desolate groove, and over and over the paroxysms of grief and longing submerged her.

Noislessly as she had descended, she crept again up the stair. As she passed her mother's door, she paused a moment, and laying her arms out across it, pressed her lips to the dark grain of the wood.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Awakening.

The sun had passed the meridian next day when Vallant awoke, from a sleep as deep as Abou ben Adhem's, yet one crowded with flying tippoe dreams. The one great fact of Shirley's love had lain at the core of all these honied images, and his mind was full of it as his eyes opened, wide all at once, to the new day.

He looked at his watch and rolled from the bed with a laugh. "Past twelve!" he exclaimed. "Good heavens! What about all the work I had laid out for today?"

Presently he was refreshing in the lake, shooting under his curved hand unerring jets of water at Chum, who danced about the rim barking, now venturing to wet a valourous paw, now scrambling up the bank to escape the watery javelins.

Vallant came up the terraces with his blood bounding to a new rapture. Crossing the garden, he ran quickly to the little close which held the sundial and pulled a single great passion-flower. He stood a moment holding it to his face, his nostrils catching its faint elusive perfume. Only last night, under the moon, he had stood there with Shirley in his arms. A gush of the unbelievable sweetness of that moment poured over him. His face softened.

Standing with his sandaled feet deep in the white blossoms, the sun on his damp hair and the loose robe clinging to his moist limbs, he gave himself to a sudden day-dream. A wonderful waking dream of joy over-flooding years of ambitionless ease; of the Damory Court that should be in days to come.

When he came from the little close there was a new mystery in the sunshine, a fresh and joyous meaning in the intense blue overarching of the imponderable sky. Every bird-note held its own love-secret. A wood-thrush sang it from a silver birch beside the summer-house, and a bobwhite whistled it in the little valley beyond. Even the long trip-hammer of a far-away woodpecker beat a radiant tattoo.

He paused to greet the flaming peacock that sent out a curdling screech, in which the tentative pouter-neck of a guinea-fowl tangled itself softly. "Go on," he invited. "Explosive all you want to, old Fire-Cracker. Hang your purple-and-gold pessimism! You only make the birds sound sweeter. Perhaps that's what you're for—who knows?"

He tried to work, but work was not for that marvelous afternoon. He wandered about the gardens, planning this or that addition: a little longer sweep to the pansy-bed—a clump of bull-rushes at the farther end of the lake. He peered into the stable: a

The Year Was That of the Duel: the Date Was the Day Following the Jessamine Anniversary.

saddle horse stood there now, but there should be more steeds stamping in those stable one day, good horse-flesh bought with sound walnut timber from the hillside. How he and Shirley would go galloping over those gleaming roads, in that roscaceous future when she belonged to him!

Uncle Jefferson, from the door of the kitchen, watched him swinging about in the sunshine, whistling the "Indian Serenade."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

To Remove Spots From Varnish.

One of the best substances to use in removing spots from varnished surfaces is butter. The stronger the better.

GERMANY GROWS IN WEALTH

Remarkable Showing Made in a Report Recently Ordered From Leading Financier.

Karl Helfferich, director of the Deutsche bank, has completed his report to the Kaiser of the wealth of the German nation. It will be published a few weeks hence and will be sold for \$30.

From the proof sheets, says the New York Sun, it appears that Doctor Helfferich estimates the aggregate total wealth of Germany at from \$75,000,000,000 to \$78,000,000,000. The wealth of France is placed at \$60,000,000,000, that of England from \$57,000,000,000 to \$65,000,000,000 and that of the United States at \$124,000,000,000. The German per capita wealth is placed at from \$1,100 to \$1,300, that of France, \$1,425; England from \$1,250 to \$1,325, and the United States \$1,200.

The annual income of the German people is placed at, between \$5,000,000,000 and \$10,000,000,000, of which about one-third is used for public purposes. The amount used for private

purposes could not be ascertained definitely, but is estimated approximately at \$6,000,000,000.

From the deposits in German commercial and savings banks it is deduced that the Germans save \$1,000,000,000 a year. Adding the automatic increase in values to the estimates the annual increase in the aggregate wealth is \$2,500,000,000.

The government has issued a map in colors which shows where aviators may and where they may not fly. They must not go within 12 to 15 miles of Metz or the surrounding fortresses. A similar prohibition, which varies in distance, applies to all fortified places.

Easy to Make Happiness.

A philosopher says that the true secret of earthly happiness is to enjoy pleasures as they arise, for that man who can keep his eye on the bright present, while it is bright, tastes the cup of sweetness prepared for him, but we are prone to look forward to dark objects, while we should be enjoying those that are more agreeable.

### HE FELT THEY HAD BEEN ROBBED

"Crooked" Conduct of Boss Game as a Shock to Even His Hardened Heelers.

These tales of bognien that District Attorney Whitman of New York is bringing out recalled to a veteran politician the experience of the boss of a western city, who was something in the way of a political collector himself.

One day near the close of a hot campaign he managed to round up some five thousand dollars. With a couple of his pals he had a bibulous celebration. About 2 in the morning he was clinging to a lampost and trying to call a cab when two of his heelers hove in sight. He knew they would rob him if they suspected he had money. Bracing himself he greeted them with:

"Hello, fellows; lucky you happened along. I'm dead broke and want a cab. Get on and take me to my hotel and I'll make good."

When they reached the hotel the drunken boss abruptly asked the clerk to give each of his companions a five

dollar bill. At the same time he drew from his trousers pocket a huge roll of bills and throwing it at the clerk told him to "keep that wad of stuff in a safe place until morning."

Disgustedly the heelers watched the safe door close on the young fortune, but they did escape them, while the boss sank into a chair.

"Oh, you thief!" angrily shouted one of the heelers, as he shook his fist under the nose of the boss. "That's the meanest double cross you ever gave a friend in your whole crooked career. You said you was broke and you had thousands in the wad. Confound you, there's no one a fellow can trust these days. That money belongs to us by rights and you've robbed us of it."

Further Use for Radium.

According to recent experiments in Europe radium is instrumental in preventing diseases of plants. For several years workers in agronomic science have been experimenting upon the effect of radium on vegetation by mixing radio-active substances with the usual fertilizers. The numer-

ous results obtained in this work show that most plants, either grain or flower, are remarkably stimulated and give a better yield both in size and quality, this being often seen in the fine and healthy color of the green plants or leaves. The same plants are, in better condition to resist attacks from various sources of disease, especially diseases known as cryptogamic, which arise from spores or mold. It seems that radium is to act as a preventive for such diseases as wheat rust, rotting of potatoes, grapevine mildew and many others which cause detriment to agriculture.

Now a High Cost of War.

Colonel E. Picard finds that the firing of one shell of the French 13-inch naval gun costs 4,350 francs, or about \$870. This amount is divided as follows: The cost of the projectile which weighs about 970 pounds, is \$800. The charge weighs about 297 pounds and costs about \$200. The gun costs about \$71,000. Taking the life of the gun at two hundred shots, each shot would cost about \$350.—Army and Navy Journal.

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