

The VALIANTS OF VIRGINIA

By HALLIE ERMINE RIVES

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LAUREN STOUT

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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 reluctantly turns over his private fortune to the receiver for the corporation.

CHAPTER III—Continued.

To be outside! All that light and color and comfort and pleasure would hum and sparkle on just the same, though he was no longer within the circle of its effulgence—alarming perhaps, he thought with a twisted smile, at some tawdry occupation that called for no experience, to pay for a meal in some second-rate restaurant and a pallet in some shabby-genteel, hall bedroom, till his clothes were replaced by ill-fitting "hand-me-downs"—till by wretched gradations he arrived finally at the status of the dime seat in the gallery and five-cent cigars!

There was one way back. It lay through the hackneyed gateway of marriage. Youth, comeliness and fine linen, in the world he knew, were a fair exchange for wealth any day. "Cutlet for cutlet"—the satiric phrase ran through his mind. Why not? Others did so. And as for himself, it perhaps need be no question of plain and spindled millions—there was Katharine Fargo!

In his heart John Vallant was aware, by those subtle signs which men and women alike distinguish, that while Katharine Fargo loved first and foremost her own wonderful person, he had been an easy second in her regard.

John Vallant looked down at the bulldog squatted on the floor, his eyes shining in the dimness. A little hot ripple had run over him. "Not on your life, Chum!" he said. "Shameless hater! There must be other things besides money and social position in this doddering old world, after all! We're going to begin something for ourselves, if it's only raising cabages! And we're going to stand it without any baby-aching—the nurse never held our noses when we took our castor-oil!"

It was folded down, that old bright page. Flims had been written to the receiver of the property. And even as he told himself he was conscious of a new rugged something that had been slowly dawning within him, a sense of courage, even of zest, and a furious hatred of the self-pity that had wrung him even for a moment.

He turned from the window, picked up his letters, and followed by the dog, went slowly up another flight to his room.

He tore open the letters abstractedly: the usual dinner-card or two, a tailor's spring announcement, a chronic serial from an exclamatory marble-quarrying company, a quarterly statement of a club house-committee. The last two missives bore a nondescript look.

One was small, with the name of a legal firm in its corner. The other was largest, corpulent and heavy, of stout Manila paper, and bore, down one side, a gaudy procession of postage stamps proclaiming that it had been registered.

"What's in that, I wonder?" he said to himself, and then, with a smile at the unmasculine speculation, opened the smaller envelope.

"Dear Sir," began the letter, in the most uncompromisingly conventional of typewriting:

"Enclosed please find, with title-deed, a memorandum opened in your name by the late John Vallant some years before his death. It was his desire that the services indicated in connection with this estate should continue till this date. We hand you herewith our check for \$236.20 (two hundred and thirty-six dollars and twenty cents), the balance in your favor, for which please send receipt, and oblige.

"Yours very truly,
"Emerson and Ball."

He turned to the memorandum. It showed a stable initial deposit against which was entered a series of annual tax payments with minor disbursements credited to "inspection and care." The tax receipts were pinned to the account.

The larger wrapper contained an unsealed envelope, across which was written in faded ink and in an unfamiliar dashing, slanting handwriting, his own name. The envelope contained a creased yellow parchment, from between whose folds there clumped and fluttered down upon the floor a long flatish object wrapped

in a paper, a newspaper clipping and a letter.

Puzzled he unfolded the cracking thing in his hands. "Why," he said half aloud, "it's—it's a deed made over to me." He scanned it swiftly. "Part of an old Colony grant . . . a plantation in Virginia, twelve hundred odd acres, given under the hand of a vice-regal governor in the sixteenth century. I had no idea titles in the United States went back so far as that!" His eye fled to the end. "It was my father's! What could he have wanted of an estate in Virginia? It must have come into his hands in the course of business."

He picked up the newspaper clipping. It was worn and broken in the folds as if it had been carried for months in a pocketbook.

"It will interest readers of this section of Virginia (the paragraph began) to learn, from a recent transfer received for record at the County Clerk's office, that Damory Court has passed to Mr. John Vallant, minor—"

He turned the paper over and found a date; it had been printed in the year of the transfer to himself, when he was six years old—the year his father had died.

—John Vallant, minor, the son of the former owner.

"There are few indeed who do not recall the tragedy with which in the public mind the estate is connected. The fact, moreover, that this old homestead has been left in its present state (for, as is well known, the house has remained with all its contents and furnishings untouched) to rest during so long a term of years unoccupied, could not, of course, fail to be commented on, and this circumstance alone has perhaps tended to keep alive a melancholy story which may well be forgotten."

He read the elaborate, rather stilted phraseology in the twenty-year-old paper with a wondering interest. "An old house," he mused, "with a bad name. Probably he couldn't sell it, and maybe nobody would ever live in it. That would explain why it remained so long unoccupied—why there are no records of rentals. Probably the land was starved and run down."

"It's an off-set to the hall-bedroom here, at any rate," he said to himself humbly. "It holds out an escape from the noble army of rent-payers. When my twenty-eight hundred is gone, I could live down there a landed proprietor, and by the same mark an honorary colonel, and raise the cabages I was talking about—eh, Chum?—while you stalk rabbits. How does that strike you?"

He laughed whimsically. He, John Vallant, of New York, first-nighter at its theaters, half-fellow-well-met in its club corridors and welcome diner at any one of a hundred brilliant glass and silver-twinkling supper tables, embarked upon a life of a tenant farmer!

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bled on a lichened and sunken tombstone.

"When you read this, my son, you will have come to man's estate. It is curious to think that this black, black ink may be faded to gray and this white, white paper yellowed, just from lying waiting so long. But yourself of all is to think that you yourself whose brown head hardly tops this desk, will be as hard (I hope) as I! How I wonder what you will look like when I shall I—the real, real I, I then! And shall I—the real, real I, I then!—be peering over your strong broad shoulder as you read? Who knows? Wise men have dreamed such a thing possible—and I am not a bit wise."

"John, you will not have forgotten that you are a Vallant. But you are also a Virginian. Will you have discovered this for yourself? Here is the deed to the land where I and my father, and his father, and many, many more Vallants before the County Clerk's office, that Damory Court has passed to Mr. John Vallant, minor—"

He turned the paper over and found a date; it had been printed in the year of the transfer to himself, when he was six years old—the year his father had died.

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lively have been the very day on which he had elected poverty? Here was a foreordination as pointed as the index-finger of a guide-post. "Every man carries his fate," he repeated, "on a riband about his neck." Chum, do you believe in fate?

For answer the bulldog, cocking an alert eye on his master, discontinued his occupation—a conscientious if unsuccessful mastication of the flatfish packet that had fallen from the folded deed—and with much solidities talking, brought the sudden thing in his mouth and put it into the outstretched hand.

His master unrolled the pulpywad and extricated the object it had enclosed—an old-fashioned iron door-key.

After a time Vallant thrust the key into his pocket, and rising, went to a trunk that lay against the wall. Searching in a portfolio, he took out a small, old-fashioned photograph, much battered and soiled. It had been taken from a larger group and the name of the photographer had been erased from the back. He set it upright on the desk, and bending forward, looked long at the face it disclosed. It was the only picture he had ever possessed of his father.

He turned and looked into the glass above the dresser. The features were the same, eyes, brow, lips, and strong waving hair. But for its time-stains and a photograph might have been one of himself, taken yesterday.

CHAPTER V.
On the Red Road.

The green, mid-May Virginian afternoon was arched with a sky as blue as the tiles of the Temple of Heaven and steeped in a wash of sunlight as yellow as gold. Nothing in all the spring landscape but looked that warm and opalescent and inviting—except a tawny bull that from across a barred fence-corner switched a truculent tail in silence and glowered sullenly at the big motor halted motionless at the side of the twisting road.

Curled worm-like in the driver's seat, with his chin on his knees, John Vallant sat with his eyes upon the distance. For an hour he had whirled through that wondrous shimmer of color with a flippant loitering breeze in his face, sweet from the crimson clover that poured and rooted over the roadside.

"Chum, old man," said Vallant, with his arm about the bulldog's neck, "if those color-photograph chaps had shown us this, we simply wouldn't have believed it, would we? Such scenery beats the roads we're used to, what?" He would his strong fingers in a choking grip in the scruff of the white neck, as a chipmunk mattered by against his boot-heel. "I hate to start," he confessed, half to the dog and half to himself. "To leave anything so sheerly beautiful as this! However, on with the dance! By the road map the village can't be far now. So long, Mr. Bull!"

He clutched the self-starter. But there was only a protestant wheeze; the car declined to budge. Climbing down, he cranked vigorously. The place, some "melancholy story," as the clipping put it.

He bent over the deed spread out upon the table, following with his finger the long line of transfers: "To John Vallant," he muttered; "what odd spelling! Robert Vallant—without the 'e.' Here, in 1730, the 'y' begins to be 'i.' There was something strenuous and appealing in the long line of dates. "Vallant. Always a Vallant. How they held on to it! There's never a break."

A curious pride, new-born and self-conscious, was dawning in him. He was descended from ancestors who had been no weaklings. A Vallant had settled on those acres under a royal governor, before the old frontier fighting was over and the Indians had sullenly retired to the westward. The sons of those who had braved sea and savages had bowed their strong bodies and their stronger hearts to raise the forests and turn the primeval jungles into golden plantations.

There stole into his mood an eerie suggestion of intention. Why should the date assigned for that deed's de-

struction, the nations are bankrupt and without resources for the future; for the next hundred years taxes will be of abnormal proportions; worst of all, there are no young men left to breed a future race. It has all caused many to ask if there was accomplished anything in the long run that could not much better be gained by judicial and peaceful methods. I have a lurking suspicion, from what I heard in Italy last year, that many Italians feel the same way after the war in Tripoli. Everywhere, in England and America, as well as in Germany, many have been asking: "Who starts war scares? Who advocates increase of armaments and big navies?" Yes, "Who originates wars themselves?"

Postage Stamps.
The postage stamp first made its appearance in 1839. Its inventor was James Chalmer, a printer of Dunfermline, who died in 1858. England adopted the adhesive stamp in 1839, and issued the first stamps for the use of the public in 1840. A year later stamps were introduced into the United States and Switzerland, and soon afterward made their appearance in France, Belgium and Bavaria.

GET THE PUBLIC INTERESTED
Salesman Who Can Do That, and Has the Right Goods, May Be Sure of Success.

"Attract the attention of the public," is the secret of salesmanship in virtually every line. Next comes the merit of the goods. Upon the latter depends whether the dealer holds his trade. Many ingenious methods are employed in salesmanship. The art becomes closely related to human nature.

An Albany cigar dealer has demonstrated explicitly just how far the eye enters into the question. He discovered he was stocked with a brand of cigarettes that were proving "stickers." Instead of reducing the price and consequently losing money, or barely clearing at cost, he devised a new method. He ranged a half dozen boxes along the top of his show case. Each was inclosed in a glass case of its own. Naturally the attention of the customer was attracted by their individuality.

Those cigarettes were disposed of at a profit. That Albany cigar dealer discovered something that is making money for him. That little idea of individuality he is applying to every line of his goods that incline to "go slow."

Diplomacy Needed.
Women were holding a market in a Columbus store when the supply of cottage cheese began to run low. The demand for the cheese was so great that the women worried because they had not brought in a larger supply. Finally one of them declared she could present a solution for the trouble. She seized a real egg and broke it. She beat the egg to a frothy mass. Then she worked the beaten egg into the rapidly diminishing supply of cottage cheese and, behold, one quart had grown to three quarts. A merchant bought the whole supply.

"Just leave it here until noon and I will take it home," he said.

When he returned the beaten egg had collapsed and there was only the original amount of cottage cheese in the can. The explanation required diplomacy.—Indianapolis News

She was the first to recover. "You did look so funny!" he gasped.

"I can believe it," he agreed, making a vicious dash at his smugged elbow. "The possibilities of a motor for comedy are simply stupendous!"

She came closer and looked curiously at the quiescent monster—at the steamer-trunk port on the carrier and the bulging strappante peeping over the side of the tonneau. "Is it broken?"

"Merely on strike, I imagine. Are we far from the village?"

"About a mile and a half."

"I'll have to have it towed after me. The immediate point is my traps. I wonder if there is likely to be a team passing."

"I'm afraid it's not too certain," answered the girl, and now he noted the liquid modulation, with its slightly questioning accent, charmingly Southern. "There is no livery, but there is a negro who meets the train some times. I can send him if you like."

"You're very good," said Vallant, as she turned away, "and I'll be enormously obliged. Oh—and if you see a white dog, don't be frightened if he tries to follow you. He's perfectly kind."

She looked back momentarily.

"He always follows people he likes, you see."

"Thank you," she said. The tone had now a hint—small, yet perceptible—of aloofness. "I'm not in the least afraid of dogs." And with a little nod, she swung briskly on up the Red Road.

John Vallant stood staring after her till she had passed from view around a curve. "Oh, glory!" he muttered. "To begin by shaking your fist at her and end by making her wonder if you aren't trying to be fresh! You poor, profane, floundering dolt!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

No, Cordelia, you can't settle a doctor's bill by returning his calls.

his eyes puckered shut with the wretched pang, John Vallant sat up and shook his grimy flat in the air. "You silly leading idiot!" he cried. "Thump your own crazy-bone and see how you like it! You—oh, lord!"

His arm dropped, and a flush spread over his face to the brow. For his eyes had opened. He was gesturing not at the bull but at a girl, who fronted him beside the road, haughtiness in the very hue of her gray-blue linen walking suit and, in the clear-cut cameo face under her felt cavalry hat, myrtle-blue eyes that held a smolder of mingled astonishment and indignation. An instant he gazed, and the muscles of his face tightened with chagrin.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered. "I didn't see you. I really didn't. I was—I was talking to the bull."

The girl had been glancing from the flushed face to the thistle-face-corner, while the startled dignity of her features warred with an unmistakable tendency to mirth. He had struggled to his feet, nursing his bruised elbow, irritably conscious of his resemblance to an emerging chimney-sweep. "I don't habitually swear," he said, "but I'd go to the point when something had to explode."

"Oh," she said, "don't mind me!" Then mirth conquered and she broke forth suddenly into a laugh that seemed to set the whole place quivering with a musical contagion. They both laughed in concert, while the bull pawed the ground and sent forth a rumbling bellow of affront and challenge.

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