



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 Damory court, 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.

CHAPTER V.—Continued.

The girl walked on up the highway with a lilted stride, now and then laughing to herself, or running a few steps, occasionally stopping by some hedge to pull a leaf which she rubbed against her cheek, smelling its keen new scent, or stopping to gaze out across the orange-green belts of sunny wind-dimpled fields, one hand pushing back her nuttinous hair from her brow, the other shielding her eyes. Farther on the highway looped around a strip of young forest, and she struck into this for a short cut. In the depth she sat down to rest on the sun-splashed roots of a tree. Leaning back against the seamed trunk, her feet had fallen to the ground, she looked like some sea-woman emerging from an earth-hued pool to comb her hair against a dappled rock.

She drew back against the tree and caught her breath as a bulldog frisked over a mossy boulder just in front of her.

A moment more and she had thrown herself on her knees with both arms outstretched. "Oh, you splendid creature!" she cried, "you big, lovely white darling!"

The dog seemed in no way averse to this sensational proceeding. He responded instantly not merely with tail-wagging, but with ecstatic grunts and growls. "Where did you come from?" she questioned, as his pink tongue struggled desperately to find a cheek through the wheel of copper hair. "Why, you must be the one I was told not to be afraid of."

She petted and fondled the smooth intelligent muzzle. "As if any one could be afraid of you! We'll set your master right on that point." Smiling to herself, she pulled one of the roses from her belt, and twisting a wisp of long grass, wound it round and round the dog's neck and thrust the ragged rose-stem firmly through it. "Now," she said, and pushed him gently from her, "go back, sir!"

He whined and licked her hand, but when she repeated the command, he turned obediently and left her. A little way from her he halted, with a sudden perception of mysterious punishment, shrugged, sat down, and tried to reach the lankome grass-wisp with his teeth. This failing, he rolled laboriously in the dirt.

CHAPTER VI.

Mad Anthony.

Beyond the selva of the sleepy leaf-sheltered village a cherry bordered lane met the Red Road. On its one side was a clovered pasture and beyond this an orchard, bounded by a tall hedge of close-clipped box which separated it from a broad yard where the gray-weathered roof of Rosewood showed above a group of tulip and catalpa trees. On the sunny steps a lop-eared puppy was playing with a mottled cat.

The front door was open, showing a hall where stood a grandfather's clock and a spindle-legged table holding a bowl of potpourri. The timepiece had landed from a sailing vessel at Jamestown wharf with the household goods of that English Garland who had adopted the old Middle Plantation when Dunmore was royal governor under George III. Framed portraits and engravings lent tints of tarnished silver, old-rose and sunset-golds—colors time-toned and reminiscent, carrying a charming sense of peaceful content, of gentleness and long tradition. The dark polished stairway had at its turn a square dormer-window which looked out upon one of the rose-arbors.

Down this stair, somewhat later that afternoon, came Shirley Dandridge, booted and spurred, the rebellious whorls of her russet hair now as closely flitted as a Greek boy's, in a short divided skirt of yew-green and a cool white blouse and swinging by its ribbon a green hat whose rolling brim was caught up at one side by a crisp blue-black hawk's feather. She stopped to peer out of the dormer-window to where, under the latticed weave of bloom beside a round iron table holding a hoop of embroidery and a book or two a lady sat reading.

The lady's hair was silver, but not with age. It had been so for many years, refuted by the transparent skin and a color as soft as the cheek of an apricot. It was solely in her dark eyes, deep and strangely luminous, that one might see lurking the somber spirit of passion and of pain. But they were eager and brilliant withal, giving the lie to the cane whose crook one pale delicate hand held with a clasp that somehow conveyed a sense of exasperate if semi-humorous rebellion.

She looked up at Shirley's voice, and smiled brightly. "Oh for your ride, dear?"

"Yes, I'm going with the Chalmers."

"Oh, of course. Betty Page is visiting them, isn't she?"

Shirley nodded. "She came yesterday. I'll have to hurry, for I saw them from my window turning into the Red Road." She waved her hand and ran lightly down the stair and across the lawn to the orchard.

She pulled a green apple from a bough that hung over a stone wall and with this in her hand she came close to the pasture fence and whistled a peculiar call. It was answered by a low whiny and a soft thud of hoofs, and a golden-chestnut hunter thrust a long nose over the bars, flaring flame-lined nostrils to the touch of her hand. She laid her cheek against the white thoroughbred and held the apple to the larger reaching lip, with several teasing withdrawals before she gave it to its juicy crunching.

She let down the top bar of the fence and vaulting over, ran to a stable and presently emerging with a saddle on her arm, whistled the horse to her and saddled him. Then opening the gate, she mounted and cantered down the lane to meet the oncoming riders—a kindly-faced, middle-aged man, a younger one with dark features and coal-black hair, and two girls.

Chisholm Lusk spurred in advance and lifted his hat. "I held up the Judge, Shirley," he said, "and made him bring me along. He tells me there's a fox hunt on tomorrow; may I come?"

"Pshaw! Chilly," said the Judge. "I don't believe you ever got up at five o'clock in your born days. You've learned bad habits abroad."

"You'll see," he answered. "If my man Friday doesn't rout me out tomorrow, I'll be up for murder."

They rode an hour, along stretches of sunny highways or on shaded bridle-paths where the horses' hoofs felt muffled in brown pine-needles and drooping branches flicked their faces. Then, by a murky way gouged with brush and gullies, across shelving fields and "turn-rows" in a long detour around Powhatan Mountain, a rough spur in the shape of an Indian's head that wedged itself forbiddingly between the fields of spring corn and tobacco.

"Do let us get a drink!" said Chilly Lusk. "I'm as thirsty as a cotton-battening camel."

"All right, we'll stop," agreed the Judge, "and you'll have a chance to see a local lion, Betty. This is where Mad Anthony lives. You must have heard of him when you were here before. He's almost as celebrated as the Reverend John Jasper of Richmond."

Betty tapped her temple. "Where have Ah heard of John Jasper?"

"He was the author of the famous sermon on 'The Sun do Move.' He used to prove it by a bucket of water that he set beside his pulpit Saturday night. As it hadn't spilled in the morning he knew it was the earth that stood still."

Betty nodded laughingly. "Ah remember now, Is Mad Anthony really mad?"

"Only harmlessly," said Shirley. "He's stone blind. The negroes all believe he conjures—that's voodoo, you know. They put a lot of stock

in his prophecies. He tells fortunes, too. S-sh!" she warned. "He's sitting on the door-step. He's heard us."

The old negro had the torso of a black patriarch. He sat bolt upright with long straight arms resting on his knees, and his face had that peculiar expressionless immobility seen in Egyptian carvings. His age might have been anything, judging from his face which was so seamed and creviced with innumerable tiny wrinkles that it most resembled the tortured glaze of some ancient bitumen pottery unearthed from a tomb of Kor.

The judge dismounted, and tossing his bridle over a fence-picket, took from his pocket a collapsible drinking cup. "Howdy do, Anthony," he said. "We just stopped for a drink of your good water."

The old negro nodded his head. "Good watah," he said in the gentle

quavering tones of extreme age. "Yas, Mars. He'p yo'se! Come fom he centah ob de yert, dat watah. En dah's folks say de centah ob de yert is all flah. Yo' reck'n dey's right, Mars' Chahmahs?"

"Now, how the devil do you know who I am, Anthony?" The judge set down his cup on the well-curb. "I haven't been by here for a year."

The ebony head moved slowly from side to side. "Ol' Antny don' need no eyes," he said, touching his hand to his brow. "He see ev'rythin' heah." The judge beckoned to the others and they trooped inside the paling. "I've brought some other folks with me, Anthony; can you tell who they are?"

The sightless look wavered over them and the white head shook slowly. "Don' know young mars," said the gentle voice. "How many yuddahs wid yo'? One, two? No, I don' know young mistis, eidah."

"I reckon you don't need any eyes," Judge Chalmers laughed, as he passed the sweet cold water to the rest. "One of these young ladies wants you to tell her fortune."

The old negro dropped his head, waving his gaunt hands restlessly. The judge beckoned to Betty Page, but she shook her head with a little grimace and drew back.

"You go, Shirley," she whispered, and with a laughing glance at the others, Shirley came and sat down on the lowest step.

Mad Anthony put out a wavering hand and touched the young body. His fingers strayed over the habit and went up to the curling bronze under the hat-brim. "Dis de lil' mistis," he muttered, "ain' ahead ob ol' Antny. Dah's flah en she ain' ahead, en dah's watah en she ain' ahead. Wondah whut Ah gwine tell huh? Whut de coloh ob yo' hair, honey?"

"Black," put in Chilly Lusk, with a wink at the others. "Black as a crow."

Old Anthony's hand fell back to his knee. "Young mars' laugh at de ol' man," he said, "but he don' know. Dat de coloh dat bunn mah han's—de coloh ob ol' eyes, en eyes blue like er cat-bird's eye. Dah's er man gwine look in dem eyes, honey, en gwine make 'em cry en cry." He raised his head sharply, his lids shut tight, and swung his arm toward the North. "Dah's whah he come fom," he said, "en heah—his arm veered and he pointed straight toward the ragged hill behind them—'he stay.'"

Lusk laughed noiselessly. "He's pointing to Damory Court," he whispered to Nancy Chalmers, "the only uninhabited place within ten miles. That's as near as he often hits it, I fancy."

"Heah's whah he stay," repeated the old man. "Heap ob trouble wait heah fo' him, too, honey—heap ob trouble, heah whil' lil' mistis fu' him."

"Come, Anthony," said Judge Chalmers, laying his hand on the old man's shoulder. "That's much too mournful! Give her something nice to top off with, at least!"

But Anthony paid no heed. "Gret trouble, Dah's flah en she ain' ahead, en dah's watah en she ain' ahead. En Ah sees yo' gwine ter him, honey. Ah heah's de co'ot-house clock a-strikin' in de night—en yo' gwine. Don' wait, don' wait, lil' mistis, er de trouble-cloud gwine kyah him erway fom yo' * * * When de clock strike thuh-teen—when de clock strike thuh-teen—"

The droning voice ceased. The gaunt form became rigid. Then he started and turned his eyes slowly about him, a vague look of anxiety on his face. For a moment no one moved. When he spoke again it was once more in his gentle quavering voice:

"Watah? Yas, Mars', good watah. He'p yo'se! The judge set a dollar bill on the step and weighted it with a stone, as the rest remounted. "Well, good-by, Anthony," he said. "We're mightily obliged."

He sprang into the saddle and the quartette cantered away. "My experiment wasn't a great success, I'm afraid, Shirley," he said ruefully.

"Oh, I think it was splendid!" cried Nancy. "Do you suppose he really believes those spooky things? I declare, at the time I almost did myself. What an odd idea—when the clock strikes thirteen," which, of course, it never does."

"Don't mind, Shirley," bantered Lusk. "When you see all 'dem troubles' coming, sound the alarm and we'll fly in a body to your rescue."

They let their horses out for a pounding gallop which pulled down suddenly at a muffled shriek from Betty Page, as her horse went into the air at sight of an automobile by the roadside.

"Now, whose under the canopy is that?" exclaimed Lusk. "It's stalled," said Shirley. "I passed here this afternoon when the owner was trying to start it, and I sent Uncle Jefferson as first aid to the injured."

"I wonder who he can be," said Nancy. "I've never seen that car before."

"Why," said Betty gaily, "Ah know! It's Mad Anthony's trouble-man, of course, come for Shirley."

CHAPTER VII.

Uncle Jefferson.

A red rose, while ever a thing of beauty, is not invariably a joy forever. The white bulldog, as he plodded along the sunny highway, was sunk in depression. Being trammelled by the limitations of a canine horizon, he could not understand the whims of Adorable Ones met by the way, who seemed so glad to see him that they threw both arms about him, and then tied to his neck lankome colored weeds that pricked and scratched and would not be dislodged. So it was a chastened and shamed Chum who at length wriggled stealthily into the seat of the stranded automobile beside his master and thrust a dirty pink nose into his palm.

John Vallant lifted his hand to stroke the shapely head, then drew it back with an exclamation. A thorn had pricked his thumb. He looked down and saw the dragged flower thrust through the twist of grass. "Oh, pup of wonders!" he exclaimed. "Where did you get that rose?"

Chum sat up and wagged his tail, for his master's tone, instead of ridicule, held a dawning delight. Perhaps the thing had not been intended as a disgrace, after all!

With the first sight of the decoration Vallant had had a sudden memory of a splash of vivid red against the belted gray-blue of a gown. He grinned appreciatively. "And I warned her," he chuckled. "Told her not to be afraid!" He dusted the blossom painstakingly with his handkerchief and held it to his face—a live brilliant thing, breathing musk-odors of the mid-moon of paradise.

A long time he sat, while the dog dozed and yawned on the shiny cushion beside him. Of a sudden 'thum sat up and barked in earnest.

Turning his head, his master saw approaching a dilapidated hack with side lanterns like great goggles and decrepit and palsied curtains. It was drawn by a lean mustard-tinted mule, and on its front sat a colored man of uncertain age, whose hunched vertebrae and outward-crooked arms gave him a curious expression of replete and bulbous inquiry. Abreast of the car he removed a moth-eaten cap.

"Evenin', suh," he said, "evenin', evenin'."

"Howdy do," returned the other amiably.

"Ah reckon yo'll done had er break-down wid dat machine-thing dar. Yo' been hyuh 'bout er hour, ain' yo'?"

"Nearer three," said Vallant cheerfully, "but the view's worth it."

A hoarse rattle came from the conveyance, which gave forth sundry creakings of leather. "Hyuh! Hyuh! Dat's so, suh. Dat's so! Him-m. Reck'n Ah'll be gittin' erlong back." He clucked to the mule and proceeded to turn the vehicle round.

"Hold on," cried John Vallant. "I thought you were bound in the other direction."

"No, suh. Ah'm gwine back whah I come fom. Ah jus' drove out hyuh 'case Miss Shirley done met me, en she say, 'Unc' Jefferson, yo' go 'treckly out de Red Road, 'case er gemman done got stalled-ed.'"

"Oh—Miss Shirley. She told you, did she? What did you say her first name was?"

"Dat's huh fust name, Miss Shirley. Yas, suh! Miss Shirley done said f me ter come en git de gemman whut—whut kinder dawg is yo' got dar?"

"It's a bulldog. Can you give me a lift? I've got that small trunk and—"

"Dat's a right fine dawg, Miss Shirley she mighty fond ob dawgs, too."

"Fond of dogs, is she?" said Vallant. "I might have known it. It was nice of her to send you here, Uncle Jefferson. You can take me and my traps, I suppose?"



VERY MUCH WRONG NUMBER

Experience Probably Taught Testy Old Gentleman to Be More Careful Whom He Rang Up.

A gentleman was staying in an English provincial town, when he heard that Mr. Moneyboy, his partner in business, was at another town close by, so he rang up his hotel on the telephone.

"Is Mr. Moneyboy there?" he inquired.

"No, he is not," came the response. "Well, has he engaged rooms?"

"No. We don't reserve rooms here; first come, first served is our rule," came the sharp and somewhat airy reply.

He was rather taken back at the lofty independence they seemed to reveal in that town.

"Can you tell me," he asked, "if he will stay with you when he reaches the town?"

"It's possible he may. But we can't say."

"Look here," roared the irate gentleman, "you're the most impudent

"Pens on whah yo' gwine ter," answered Uncle Jefferson saptly. "I'm going to Damory Court."

A kind of shocked surprise that was almost stupefaction spread over the other's face, like oil over a pool. "Dam'ry Co'ot! Dat's de old Vallant place. Ain' nobody lives dar. Ah reck'n ain' nobody live dar fer mos' er hund'rd years!"

"The old house has a great surprise coming to it," said Vallant gravely. "Henceforth some one is going to occupy it. How is it anyway?"

"Measurin' by de conskin en th'owin' in de tall, et's erbout two mile. Ain' gwine ter live dar yo'se, suh, is yo'?"

"I am for the present," was the crisp answer.

Uncle Jefferson stared at him a moment with his mouth open. Then ejaculating under his breath, "Fo' de Lawd! Whut folks gwine ter say ter dat!" he shambled to the rear of the motor and began to unshlep the steam-trunk. "Whut yo' gwine ter wid dat-er?" he asked, pointing to the car. "Ah kin come wid ole Sukey—dat's mah mule—en fetch it in de mawnin'. Ain't gwine ter rain ter-night no-how."

This matter having been arranged, they started jogging down the green-bordered road, the bulldog prospecting alongside.

"'Spose'n de Co'ot done ben sold en yo' gwine ter fix it up fo' de new ownah," hazarded Uncle Jefferson presently.

Vallant did not answer directly. "You say the place hasn't been occupied for many years," he observed. "Did you ever hear why, Uncle Jefferson?"

"Ah done heerd," said the other vaguely, "but Ah disremember. Sump'in dat happened befo' Ah come heah fom ol' Post-Oak Plantation. Reck'n Majah Bristow he know erbout it, er Miss Judith—dat's Miss Shirley's mothah. Her fathah was Gen'l Tawn Dandridge, en he died fo' she was bawn."

Shirley Dandridge! A high-sounding name, with something of long-linked culture, of arrogant heritage. In some subtle way it seemed to clothe the personality of which Vallant had had that fleeting roadside glimpse.

"Reck'n yo'll come fom New York?" inquired Uncle Jefferson, after a little silence. "So! Dey say dat's er pow'ful big place. But Ah reckon ol' Richmon's big eruff to me." He clucked to the leisurely mule and added, "Ah bin ter Richmon' onct. Yas, suh! Ah nevah see sech houses—mos' all bigger'n de county co'ot-house."

John Vallant expressed a somewhat absent interest. He was looking thoughtfully at the blossom in his hand, in an absorption through which Uncle Jefferson's reminiscences oozed on.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Diagnosis by Electricity.

For the benefit of the nervous cases that come to the doctor, it has been asserted by Scripture that it is just as necessary to know how emotional they are as it is to know how high the temperature is in a case of fever. Moreover, in many cases it is necessary to find out what experiences in the past or present life of the patient produce emotions. For this purpose the patient sits at ease with hands on the electrodes, which may be so concealed in the arms of his chair that he is unaware that they are being registered as various topics are spoken or various topics of conversation are discussed, the galvanometer showing when a sensitive subject has been touched.—Fred W. Eastman, in Harper's Magazine.

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