The VALIANTS of VIRGINIA

by HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES

ILLUSTRATIONS by LAUREN STOUT

COPYRIGHT BY BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY

11

SYNOPSIS.

John Valiant, a rich society favorite, suddenly discovers that the Valiant 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. Shirley's mother, Mrs. Dandridge, and Major Bristow exchange reminiscences during which it is revealed that the major, Valiant's father, and a man named Sasson were rivals for the hand of Mrs. Dandridge in her youth. Sasson and Valiant fought a duel on her account in which the former was killed. Valiant finds Damory court overgrown with weeds and creepers and the buildings in a very much neglected condition. He decides to rehabilitate the place and make the land produce a living for him. Valiant 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. Shirley tells her mother of the incident and the latter is strangely moved at hearing that a Valiant is again living at Damory court. Valiant 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.

CHAPTER XVIII—Continued.

"You are cold," he said. "Isn't that gown too thin for this night air?"

"No, I often walk here till quite late. Listen!"

The bird song had broken forth again, to be answered this time by a rival's in a distant thicket. "My nightingale is in good voice."

"I never heard a nightingale before I came to Virginia. I wonder why it sings only at night."

"What an odd idea! Why, it sings in the daytime, too."

"Really? But I suppose it escapes notice in the general chorus. Is it a large bird?"

"No; smaller than a thrush. Only a little bigger than a robin. Its nest is over there in that hedge—a tiny loose cup of dried oak-leaves, lined with hair, and the eggs are olive color. How pretty the hedge looks now, all tangled with firefly sparks!"

"Doesn't it! Uncle Jefferson calls them 'lightning-bugs.'"

"The name is much more picturesque. But all the darky sayings are. Do you find him and Aunt Daphne useful?"

"He has been a godsend," he said fervently; "and her cooking has taught me to treat her with passionate respect. He's teaching me now about flowers—it's surprising how many kinds he knows. He's a walking herbarium."

"Come and see mine," she said. "Roses are our specialty—we have to live up to the Rosewood name. But beyond the arbors, are beds and beds of other flowers. See—by this big tree are speed-well and delphinium. The tree is a black-walnut. It's a dreadful thing to have one as big as that. When you want something that costs a lot of money you go and look at it and wonder which you want most, that particular luxury or the tree. I know a girl who had two in her yard only a little bigger than this, and she went to Europe on them. But so far I've always voted for the tree. How does your garden come on?"

"Famously. Uncle Jefferson has shanghaied a half-dozen negro gardeners—from where I can't imagine—and he's having the time of his life hectoring over them. He refers to the upper and lower terraces as 'up-and-down-stairs.' I've got seeds, but it will be a long time before they flower."

"Oh, would you like some slips?" she cried. "Or, better still, I can

Shirley, Who Had Again Seated Herself, Suddenly Laughed, and Pointed to the Book.

give you the roses already rooted—Mad Charles and Marechal Neil and Cloth of Gold and cabbage and ramblers. We have geraniums and fuchsias, too, and the coral honeysuckle. That's different from the wild one, you know."

"You are too good! If you would only advise me where to set them! But I dare say you think me presuming."

She turned her full face to him. "'Presuming!' You're punishing me now for the dreadful way I talked to you about Damory Court—before I knew who you were. Oh, it was unpardonable! And after the splendid thing you had done—I read about it that same evening—with your money, I mean!"

"No, no!" he protested. "There was nothing splendid about it. It was only pride. You see the corporation was my father's great idea—the thing he created and put his soul into—and it was foundering. I know that would have hurt him. One thing I've wanted to say to you, ever since the day we talked together—about the duel. I want to say that whatever lay behind it, my father's whole life was darkened by that event. Now that I can put two and two together, I know that it was the cause of his sadness."

"Ah, I can believe that," she replied.

"I think he had only two interests—myself and the corporation. So you see why I'd rather save that and be a beggar the rest of my natural life. But I'm not a beggar. Damory Court alone is worth—I know it now—a hundred times what I left."

"You are so utterly different from what I imagined you!"

"I could never have imagined you," he said, "never."

"I must be terribly outre."

"You are so many women in one. When I listened to your harp playing I could hardly believe it was the same you I saw galloping across the fields that morning. Now you are a different woman from both of those."

As she looked at him, her lips curled corner-wise, her foot slipped on the sheer edge of the turf. She swayed toward him and he caught her, feeling for a sharp instant the adorable nearness of her body. It ridged all his skin with a creeping delight. She recovered her footing with an exclamation, and turned back somewhat abruptly to the porch where she seated herself on the step, drawing her filmy skirt aside to make a place for him. There was a moment of silence which he broke.

"That exquisite serenade you were playing! You know the words, of course."

"They are more lovely, if possible, than the score. Do you care for poetry?"

"I've always loved it," he said. "I've been reading some lately—a little old-fashioned book I found at Damory Court. It's 'Lucile.' Do you know it?"

"Yes. It's my mother's favorite."

He drew it from his pocket. "See, I've got it here. It's marked, too."

He opened it, to close it instantly—not, however, before she had put out her hand and laid it, palm down, on the page. "That rose! Oh, let me have it!"

"Never!" he protested. "Look here. When I put it between the leaves, I did so at random. I didn't see till now that I had opened it at a marked passage."

"Let us read it," she said.

He leaned and held the leaf to the light from the doorway and the two heads bent together over the text.

A sound fell behind them and both turned. A slight figure, in a soft gray gown with old lace at the throat, stood in the doorway behind them. John Valiant sprang to his feet.

"Ah, Shirley, I thought I heard voices. Is that you, Chilly?"

"It's not Mr. Lusk, mother," said Shirley. "It's our new neighbor, Mr. Valiant."

As he bent over the frail hand, murmuring the conventional words that presentations are believed to require, Mrs. Dandridge sank into a deep cushioned chair. "Won't you sit down?" she said. He noticed that she did not look directly at him, and that her face was as pallid as her hair.

"Thank you," said John Valiant, and resumed his place on the lower step.

Shirley, who had again seated herself, suddenly laughed, and pointed to the book which lay between them. "Imagine what we are doing, dearest! We were reading 'Lucile' together."

She saw the other wince, and the deep dark eyes lifted, as if under compulsion, from the book-cover to Valiant's face. He was startled by Shirley's cry and the sudden limp unconscious settling-back into the cushions of the fragile form.

CHAPTER XIX.

Night.

A quicker breeze was stirring as John Valiant went back along the Red Road. He had waited in the garden at Rosewood till Shirley, aided by Emmaline and with Ranston's anxious face hovering in the background, having performed those gentle offices which a woman's fainting spell requires, had come to reassure him and to say good night.

As he threw off his coat in the bedroom he had chosen for his own, he felt the hard corner of the "Lucile" in the pocket, and drawing it out, laid it on the table by the bedside. He seemed to feel again the tingle of his cheek where a curling strand of her coppery hair had sprung against it when her head had bent beside his own to read the marked lines.

When he had undressed he sat an hour in the candle-blaze, a dressing-gown thrown over his shoulders, striving vainly to recreate that evening call, to remember her every word and look and movement. For a breath her face would flush suddenly before him, like a live thing; then it would mysteriously fade and elude him, though he clenched his hands on the arms of his chair in the fierce mental effort to recall it. Only the intense blue of her eyes, the tawny sweep of her hair—these and the touch of her, the consciousness of her warm and vivid fragrance, remained to wrap all his senses in a mist woven of gold and fire.

* * * * * * * * *

Shirley, meanwhile, had sat some time beside her mother's bed, leaning from a white chintz-covered chair, her anxiety only partially allayed by reassurances, now and then stooping to lay her young cheek against the delicate arm in its lacy sleeve or to pass her hand lovingly up and down its outline, noting with a recurrent passion of tenderness the transparency of the skin with its violet veining and the shadows beneath the closed eyes. Emmaline, moving on soft worsted-shod feet about the dim room, at length had whispered.

"You go tuh baid, honey. I stay with Mis' Judith till she go tuh sleep."

"Yes, go, Shirley," said her mother.

Tried the Numbers Carefully, First Right, Then Left: 17—28—94—0. The Heavy Door Opened.

"Haven't I any privileges at all? Can't I even faint when I feel like it, without calling out the fire-brigade? You'll pamper me to death and heaven knows I don't need it."

"You won't let me telephone for Doctor Southall?"

"Certainly not!"

"And you are sure it was nothing but the roses?"

"Why, what else should it be?" said her mother almost peevishly. "I must really have the arbors thinned out. On heavy nights it's positively overpowering. Go along now, and we'll talk about it tomorrow. I can ring if I want anything."

In her room Shirley undressed thoughtfully. There was between her and her mother a fine tenuous bond of sympathy and feeling as rare, perhaps, as it was lovely. She could not remember when the other had not been a semi-invalid, and her earliest childhood recollections were punctuated with the tap of the little cane. Tonight's sudden indisposition had shocked and disturbed her; to faint at a rush of perfume seemed to suggest a growing weakness that was alarming. Tomorrow, she told herself, she would send Ranston with a wagon-load of the roses to the hospital at Charlottesville.

She slipped on a pink shell-shaded dressing-gown of slinky silk with a riot of azaleas scattered in the weave, and then, dragging her chair before the open window, drew aside the light curtain and began to brush her hair. All at once her gaze fell upon the floor, and she shrank backward from a twisting thread-like thing whose bright saffron-yellow glowed sharply against the dark carpet. She saw in an instant, however, that it was nothing more dangerous than a fragment of love-vine from the garden, which had clung to her skirt. She picked up the tiny mass of tendrils and with a slow smile tossed it over her right shoulder through the window. "If it takes root," she said aloud, "my sweetheart loves me." She leaned from the sill to peer down into the misty garden, but could not follow its fall.

Long ago her visitor would have reached Damory Court. She had a vision of him wandering, candle in hand, through the empty echoing rooms, looking at the voiceless portraits on the walls, thinking perhaps of his father, of the fatal duel of which he had never known. She liked the way he had spoken of his father!

As she leaned, out of the stillness there came to her ear a mellow sound. It was the bell of the courthouse in the village. She counted the strokes falling clearly or faintly as the sluggish breeze ebbed or swelled. It was eleven.

She drew back, dropped the curtain to shut out the wan glimmer, and in the darkness crept into the soft bed as if into a hiding-place.

* * * * * * * * *

A warm sun and an air mildly mellow. A faint gold-shadowed mist over the valley and a soft lilac haze blending the rounded outlines of the hills. Through the shrubbery at Damory Court a cardinal darted like a crimson shuttle, to rock impudently from a fleering limb, and here and there on the bluish-ivory sky, motionless as a pasted wafer, hung a hawk; from time to time one of these wavered and slanted swiftly down, to climb once more in a huge spiral to its high tower of sky.

Perhaps it wondered, as its telescopic eye looked down. That had been its choicest covert, that disheveled tangle where the birds held perpetual carnival, the weasel lurked in the underbrush and the rabbit lined his windfall. Now the wildness was gone. A pergola, glistening white, now upheld the runaway vines, making a sickle-like path from the upper terrace to the lake. In the barn loft the pigeons still quarrelled over their new cotes of fresh pine, and under a clump of locust trees at a little distance from the house, a half-dozen dolls' cabins on stilts stood waiting the honey-storage of the black and gold bees.

There were new denizens, also. These had arrived in a dozen zinc tanks and willow hampers, to the amaze of a sleepy express clerk at the railroad station: two swans now sailed majestically over the lily-ponds of the lake, along its gravel rim and a pair of bronze-colored ducks waddled and preened, and its placid surface rippled and broke to the sluggish backs of goldfish and the flirting fins of red Japanese carp.

The house itself wore another air. Its look of unkemptness had largely vanished. The soft gray tone of age remained, but the bleakness and forlornness were gone; there was about all now a warmth and genial bearing that hinted at mellowed beauty, firelight and cheerful voices within.

Valiant heaved a long sigh of satisfaction as he stood in the sunlight gazing at the results of his labors. He was not now the flippant boulevardier to whom money was the sine qua non of existence. He had learned a sovereign lesson—one gained not through the push and fight of crowds, but in the simple peace of a countryside, unvexed by the clamor of gold and the complex problems of a competitive existence—that he had inherited a need of activity, of achievement that he had been born to do.

"Chum," he said, to the dog rolling on his back in the grass, "what do you think of it all, anyway?" He reached down, seized a hind leg and whirling him around like a teetotum, sent him flying into the bushes, whence Chum launched again upon him, like a catapult. He caught the white shoulders and held him vise-like. "Just about right, eh? But wait till we get those ramblers!"

"And to think," he continued, whimsically releasing him, "that I might have gone on, one of the little-neck-clam crowd I've always trained with, at the same old pace, till the Vermouth-cocktail-Palm-Beach career got a double Nelson on me and the umpire counted me out. At this moment I wouldn't swap this old house and land, and the sunshine and that 'gyarden and Unc' Jefferson and Aunt Daph and the chickens and the birds and all the rest of it, for a mile of Millionaires' Row."

He went into the house and to the library. The breeze through the wide-flung bow-window was fluttering the papers on the desk and the map on the wall was flapping sidewise. He went to straighten it, and then saw what he had not noticed before—that it covered something that had been let into the plaster. He swung it aside and made an exclamation.

He was looking at a square, uncompromising wall-safe, with a round figured disk of white metal on its face. He knelt before it and tried its knob After a moment it turned easily. But the resolute steel door would not open, though he tried every combination that came into his mind. "No use," he said disgustedly. "One must have the right numbers."

Then he lifted his fretted frame and smote his grimy hands together. "Confound it!" he said with a short laugh "Here I am, a bankrupt, with all this outfit—clear to the very finger-bowls—handed to me on a silver tray, and I'm mad as scat because I can't open the first locked thing I find!"

He ran upstairs and donned a rough corduroy jacket and high leather leggings. "We're going to climb the hill today, Chum," he announced, "and no more moccasins need apply."

In the lower hall, however, he suddenly stopped stock-still. "The slip of paper that was in the china dog!" he exclaimed. "What a chump I am not to have thought of it!" He found it in its pigeonhole and, kneeling down before the safe, tried the numbers carefully, first right, then left: 17—28—94—0. The heavy door opened.

"I was right!" he exulted. "It's the plate." He drew it out, piece by piece Each was bagged in dark-red Canton flannel. He broke the tape of one bag and exposed a great silver pitcher tarnished purple-blue like a raven's wing—then a tea-service. Each piece, large and small, was marked with the greyhound rampant and the motto "And to think," he said, "that my great-great-grandfather buried you with his own hands under the stables when Tarleton's raiders swept the valley before the surrender at Yorktown! Only wait till Aunt Daphne gets you polished up, and on the sideboard! You're the one thing the place has needed!"

* * * * * * * * *

With the dog for comrade he traversed the garden and plunged across the valley below, humming as he went

The place was pathless and overgrown with paw-paw bushes and sassafras. Great trees stood so thickly in places as to make a twilight and the sunnier spots were masses of pink laurel, poison-ivy, flaming purple rhododendron and wine-red tendrils of interbraided briers. This was the forest land of whose possibilities he had thought. In the heart of the woods he came upon a great limb that had been wrenched off by storm. The broken wood was of a deep rich brown, shading to black He broke off his song, snapped a twig and smelled it. Its sharp acrid odor was unmistakable. He suddenly remembered the walnut tree at Rosewood and what Shirley had said: "I know a girl who had two in her yard, and she went to Europe on them."

He looked about him; as far as he could see the trees reared, hardy and perfect, untouched for a generation. He selected one of medium size and pulling a creeper, measured its circumference and gaging this measure with his eye, made a penciled calculation on the back of an envelope. "Great Scott!" he said jubilantly to the dog; "that would cut enough to wainscot the Damory Court library and build twenty sideboards!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

MRS. LYON'S ACHES AND PAINS

Have All Gone Since Taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Terre Hill, Pa.—"Kindly permit me to give you my testimonial in favor of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. When I first began taking it I was suffering from female troubles for some time and had almost all kinds of aches—pains in lower part of back and in sides, and pressing down pains. I could not sleep and had no appetite. Since I have taken Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound the aches and pains are all gone and I feel like a new woman. I cannot praise your medicine too highly."—Mrs. AUGUSTUS LYON, Terre Hill, Pa.

It is true that nature and a woman's work has produced the grandest remedy for woman's ills that the world has ever known. From the roots and herbs of the field, Lydia E. Pinkham, forty years ago, gave to womankind a remedy for their peculiar ills which has proved more efficacious than any other combination of drugs ever compounded, and today Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound is recognized from coast to coast as the standard remedy for woman's ills.

In the Pinkham Laboratory at Lynn, Mass., are files containing hundreds of thousands of letters from women seeking health—many of them openly state over their own signatures that they have regained their health by taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound; and in some cases that it has saved them from surgical operations.

Constipation Vanishes Forever

Prompt Relief—Permanent Cure

CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS never fail. Purely vegetable — act surely but gently on the liver. Stop after dinner distress—cure indigestion, improve the complexion, brighten the eyes.

SMALL PILL, SMALL DOSE, SMALL PRICE.

Genuine must bear Signature

Brent Good

Keeps The Skin Fair

You can have a beautiful pink and white complexion if you use

Glenn's Sulphur Soap

Contains 30% Pure Sulphur

Use it daily in bath and toilet. Prevents and removes skin troubles.

Healing and Purifying (Druggists)

Hill's Hair and Whisker Dye, black or Brown, 50c.

Bound to Be Heard.

"Who is that man that always accompanies you to the ball games?"

"He's a Scandinavian. When I want to speak slightingly of the umpire I tell it to him and he translates it into his own tongue. Nobody understands him, so nobody can take offense."

ACHY FEELINGS, PAIN IN LIMBS and all Malarious indications removed by **Elixir Babek,** that well known remedy for all such diseases.

"I have taken up the three bottles of your **'Elixir Babek,'** and have not felt so well and entirely free from pain in limbs for five years."—Mrs. E. Higgins, Jacksonville, Fla.

Elixir Babek 50 cents, all druggists or by Parcels Post prepaid from Kloczewski & Co., Washington, D. C.

Get the Kernel.

Look to the essence of a thing, whether it be a point of doctrine, of practise, or of interpretation.—Marcus Aurelius.

Good Cause for Alarm

Deaths from kidney diseases have increased 72% in twenty years. People overdo nowadays in so many ways that the constant filtering of poisoned blood weakens the kidneys.

Beware of fatal Bright's disease. When backache or urinary ills suggest weak kidneys, use Doan's Kidney Pills, drink water freely and reduce the diet. Avoid coffee, tea and liquor.

Doan's Kidney Pills command confidence, for no other remedy is so widely used or so generally successful.

A Maryland Case

"For two years I suffered dreadfully from kidney trouble," says Oliver F. Connoles, of 2401 Esther Place, Highlandtown, Md. "My health broke down and I had an awfully lame back. I couldn't get much rest and the dizzy spells were fierce. I often staggered and went blind for a few minutes. The kidney secretions were so bad I couldn't get insurance. Doan's Kidney Pills completely cured me and I haven't had a sign of kidney complaint since. I have been able to get insurance since I used Doan's."

Get Doan's at Any Store, 50c a Box

DOAN'S KIDNEY PILLS

FOSTER-MILBURN CO., BUFFALO, N. Y.

DROPSY TREATED, usually gives quick relief, soon removes swelling & short breath, often gives entire relief in 15 to 25 days. Trial treatment sent Free. Dr. THOMAS E. GREEN, Successor to Dr. H. H. Greens Sons, Box O, Atlanta, Ga.

GOT THE RIGHT EXPRESSION

Experiment Was Painful to Tragedian, but He Could Not Hesitate When Art Called Him.

"Thanks," said the tragedian, setting down his glass and absent-mindedly pocketing my change, which lay upon the bar between us. "Many thanks for your good opinion. I always study from Nature—from Nature, sir. In my acting you see reflected Nature herself."

"Try this cigar," said an admirer of Nature, reverently. "Now, where did you study that expression of intense surprise that you assumed in the second act?"

"From Nature, sir; from Nature. To secure that expression I asked an inmate personal friend to lend me five pounds. He refused. This caused me no surprise. I tried several more. Finally, I struck one who was willing to oblige me, and, as he handed me the money, I studied in the glass the expression of my own face. I saw there surprise, but it was not what I wanted. It was alloyed with suspicion that the sovereigns might be bad. I was in despair."

"Well?" said the other, breathlessly.

"Then an idea struck me. I resolved upon a desperate course. I returned the five pounds to my friend the next day, and on his astounded countenance I saw the expression I was in search of. Yes, thank you, a small whisky as before."—London Tit Bits.

Korean Marriages.

Marriages between widows and bachelors are very much in favor in Korea because not nearly so much money is required from the bridegroom as in the case of his marriage with a young girl. The impecunious bridegroom is scorned by the parents of the girl and he is also unable to pay for the elaborate wedding ceremonies which must take place. All of this he escapes by running off with a widow It happens in Korea, as in other countries, that the impecunious bachelor is often more desirable from every point of view but a mercenary one than the well to do member of the community. Consequently, the widow has a way of attaching a handsome young husband to herself that might well be envied by the young girl.

Not There for Experiment.

Edith and Flora were passing their summer vacation in the country.

"Do you know," said Edith, "that young farmer tried to kiss me. He told me that he had never kissed any girl before."

"What did you tell him?" asked Flora.

"Why," replied Edith, "I told him I was no agricultural experiment station."—Harper's Bazaar.