



The VALIANTS of VIRGINIA

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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 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, Vallant's father, and a man named Saxon fought a duel on her account in which the former was killed. Vallant 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. 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. Shirley tells her mother of the incident and the latter strangely moved at hearing that a Vallant is again living at Damory court. 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 faints when she first meets Vallant.

CHAPTER XIX—Continued.

He sat down on a mossed boulder, breathless, his eyes sparkling. He had thought himself almost a beggar, and here in his hand was a small fortune! "Talk about engagement rings!" he muttered. "Why, a dozen of these ought to buy a whole lot!"

At length he rose and climbed on, presently turning at a right-angle to bisect the strip to its boundary before he paused to rest. "I'm no timber-cruiser," he said to himself as he wiped his brow, "but I calculate there are all of three hundred trees big enough to cut. Why, suppose they are worth on an average only a hundred apiece. That would make—Good lord!" he muttered, "and I've been moaning about poverty!"

The growth was smaller and sparser now and before long he came, on the hill's very crest, to the edge of a ragged clearing. It held a squalid settlement, perhaps a score of dirt-daubed cabins little better than hovels, some of them mere mud-walled lean-tos, with sod roofs and window-panes of flour-sacking. Fences and outhouses there was none. Littered paths rambled aimlessly hither and thither from chip-strown yards to starved patches of corn, under-cultivated and blighted. Over the whole place hung an indescribable atmosphere of disconsolate filth, of unredeemed squalor and villainy.

With one hand on the dog's collar, hushing him to silence, Vallant, unseen, looked at the wretched place with a shiver. He had glimpsed many wretched purlieus in the slums of great cities, but this, in the open sunlight, with the clean woods about it and the sweet clear blue above, stood out with an unrelieved boldness and contrast that was doubly sinister and forbidding. He knew instantly that the tawdry corner was the community known as Hell's-Half-Acre, the place to which Shirley had made her night ride to rescue Rickey Snyder.

A quick glad realization of her courage rushed through him. On its heels came a feeling of shame that a spot like this could exist, a foul blot on such a landscape. It was on his own land! Its denizens held place by squatter sovereignty, but he was, nevertheless, their landlord. The thought bred a new sense of responsibility. Something should be done for them, too.

As he gazed, an uproar in a cabin reached a climax. A red-bearded figure in nondescript garments shot from the door and collapsed in a heap in the dirt. He got up with a dreadful oath—a jug thrown at him grazing his temple as he did so—and shaking his fist behind him, staggered into a near-by lean-to.

Vallant turned away with a feeling almost of nausea, and plunged back down the forest hillside.

CHAPTER XX.

The Gardeners. He saw them coming through the gate on the Red Road—the major and Shirley in a lilac muslin by his side—and strode to meet them. Behind them Ranston propelled a hand-cart filled with paper bundles from each of which protruded a bunch of flowering stems. There was a flush in Shirley's cheek as her hand lay in Vallant's. As for him, his eyes, like a willful drunkard, returned again and again, between the major's compliments, to her face.

"You have accomplished wonders, sah! I had no idea so much could be done in such a limited time. You have certainly primped the old place up. I could almost think I was looking at Damory Court in the sixties, sah!"

"That's quite the nicest thing you could have said, Major," responded Vallant. "But it needs the flowers." He looked at Shirley with sparkling eyes. "How splendid of you to bring them! I feel like a robber."

"With our bushels of them? We shall never miss them at all. Have you set out the others?"

"I have, indeed. Every one has rooted, too. You shall see them." He

led the way up the drive till they stood before the porch. "Gad!" chuckled the major. "Who would think it had been unoccupied for three decades? At this rate, you'll soon be giving dances, sah."

"Ah," said Vallant. "That's the very thing I want to suggest. The tournament comes off next week, I understand, and it's been the custom to have a ball that night. The tourney ground is on this estate, and Damory Court is handier than the Country Club. Why wouldn't it be appropriate to hold the dance here? The ground-floor rooms are in order, and if the young people would put up with it, it would be a great pleasure to me, I assure you."

"Oh!" breathed Shirley. "That would be too wonderful!"

The major seized his hand and shook it heartily. "I can answer for the committee," he said. "They'll jump at it. Why, sah, the new generation has never set eyes inside the house. It's a golden legend to them."

"Then I'll go ahead with arrangements." He led them around the house and down the terraces of the formal garden, and here the major's encomiums broke forth again. "You are going to take us old folks back, sah," he said with real feeling. "This garden in its original lines was unique. It had a piquancy and a picturesqueness that, thank God, are to be restored! One can understand the owner of an estate like this having no desire to spend his life philandering abroad. We all hope, sah, that you will recur to the habit of your ancestors and count Damory Court home."

Vallant smiled slowly. "I don't dream of anything else," he said. "My life, as I map it out, seems to begin here. The rest doesn't count—only the years when I was little and had my father."

The major carefully adjusted his eye-glasses. His head was turned away. "Ah, yes," he said. "The last twenty years," continued the other, "from my present viewpoint, are valuable mainly for contrast."

"As a consistent regimen of pate de foie gras," said Shirley quizzically, "makes one value bread and butter?" He shook his head at her. "As starvation makes one appreciate plenty. The next twenty years are to be here. But they hold side-trips, too. Now and then there's a jaunt back to the city."

"Contrast again?" she asked interestedly.

"Yes and no. Yes, because no one who has ever known that blazing changing life can really understand the peace and blessedness of a place like this. No, because there are some things which are to be found only there. There are the galleries and the opera. I need a breath of them both."

"And semi-occasional longer flights, too," the major reflected. "A look-see abroad once in a blue moon. Why not?"

"Yes. For mental photographs—impressions one can't get from between book-covers. There's an old cloister garden I know in Italy and a particular river-bank in Japan in the cherry-blossom season, and a tiny island with

He Leaned Slightly Toward Her, One Hand on the Dial's Time-Notched Rim.

a Greek castle on it in the Aegean. Little colored memories for me to bring away to dream over. But always I come back here to Damory Court. For this is—home!"

They walked beneath the pergola to the lake, where Shirley gave a cry of delight at sight of its feathered population. "Where did you get them from?" she asked.

"Washington. In crates."

"That explains it," she exclaimed. "One day last week the little darkies in the village all insisted a circus was coming. They must have seen these being hauled here. They watched the whole afternoon for the elephants."

"Yes. I take my dip here every morning."

"We used to have a diving-board when we were little shavers," pursued the major. "I remember once, your father—"

He cleared his throat and stopped dead.

"Please," said John Vallant. "I—I like to hear about him."

"It was only that I struck my head on a rock on the bottom—and stayed down. The others were frightened, but he—he dove down again and again till he brought me out. It was a narrow squeak, I reckon."

A silence fell. Looking at the tall muscular form beside her, Shirley had a sudden vision of a determined little body cleaving the dark water, over and over, now rising panting for breath, now plunging again, never giving up. And she told herself that the son was the same sort. That hard set of the jaw, those firm lips, would know no flinching. He might suffer, but he would be strong.

Half unconsciously she spoke her thought aloud: "You look like your father, do you not?"

"Yes," he replied, "there's a strong likeness. I have a photograph which I'll show you sometime. But how did you know?"

"Perhaps I only guessed," she said in some confusion. To cover this she stooped by the pebbly marge and held out her hand to the bronze ducks that pushed and gobbled about her fingers. "What have you named them?" she asked.

"Nothing. You christen them."

"Very well. The light one shall be Pezzletree and the dark one Pilgrimage. I got the names from John Jasper—he was Virginia's famous negro preacher. I once heard him hold forth when he read from one of the Psalms—the one about the harp and the psalter—and he called it pezzletree."

Vallant's laugh rang out over the lake—to be answered by a sudden sharp screech from the terrace, where the peacock strutted, a blaze of spangled purple and gold. They turned to see Aunt Daphne issue from the kitchen, twig-broom in hand.

"Heah!" she exclaimed. "What fo' yo' kyahin' on like er' will' gyaff we'n we got comp'n'y, yo' triffin' ol' fantail, yo'! Git outen heah!" She waved her weapon and the bird, with a raucous shriek of defiance, retired in ruffled disorder. The master of Damory Court looked at Shirley.

"What shall we name him?"

"I'd call him Fire-Cracker if he goes off like that," she said. And Fire-Cracker the bird was christened forthwith.

"And now," said Shirley, "let's set out the ramblers."

The major had brought a rough plan, sketched from memory, of the old arrangement of the formal garden. "I'll just go over the lines of the beds with Uncle Jefferson," he proposed, "while you two potter over these roses." So Vallant and Shirley walked back up the slope beneath the pergola together.

With Ranston, puffing and blowing like a black porpoise over his creaking go-cart, they planted the ramblers—crimson and pink and white—Vallant much of the time on his knees, his hands plunging deep into the black spongy earth, and Shirley with broad hat flung on the grass, her fingers separating the clinging thread-like roots and her small arched foot tamping down the soil about them. Her hair—the color of wet raw wood in the sunlight—was very near the brown head and sometimes their fingers touched over the work. Once, as they stood up, flushed with the exercise, a great black and orange butterfly, dazed with the sun-glow, alighted on Vallant's rolled-up sleeve. He held his arm perfectly still and blew gently on the wavering pinions till it swam away. When a redbird flirted by, to his delight she whistled its call so perfectly that it wheeled in mid-flight and tilted inquiringly back toward them.

As they descended the terrace again to the pergola, he said, "There's only one thing lacking at Damory Court—a sun-dial."

"Then you haven't found it?" she cried delightedly. "Come and let me show you."

She led the way through the maze of beds at one side till they reached a hedge laced thickly with Virginia creeper. He parted this leafy screen, bending back the springing fronds that thrust against the flimsy muslin of her gown and threatened to spear the pink-rosed hat that cast an adorable warm tint over her creamy face, thinking that never had the old place seen such a picture as she made framed in the deep green.

ran through hell bareheaded. I'm about a thousand years old, I reckon!"

Meanwhile the two figures above had pushed through the tangle into a circular sunny space where stood a short round pillar of red onyx. It was a sun-dial, its vine-clad disk cut of gray polished stone in which its metal tongue was socketed. Round the outer edge of the disk ran an inscription in archaic lettering. Vallant pulled away the clustering ivy leaves and read: "I count no hours but the happy ones."

"If that had only been true!" he said.

"It is true. See how the vines hid the sun from it. It ceased to mark the time after the Court was deserted."

"I'll put moonflowers at its base and where you are standing, Madonna lilies. The outer part of the circle shall have bridal-wreath and white irises, and they shall shade out into pastel colors—mauves and grays and heliotropes. Oh, I shall love this spot!—perhaps sometime the best of all."

"Which do you love the most now?" He leaned slightly toward her, one hand on the dial's time-notched rim. "Don't you know?" he said in a lower voice. "Could any other spot mean to me what that acre under the hemlocks means?"

Her face was turned from him, her fingers pulling at the drifting vine, and a splinter of sunlight tangled in her hair like a lace of fireflies.

"I could never forget it," he continued. "The thing that spoiled my father's life happened there, yet there we two first talked, and there you—"

"Don't!" she said, facing him. "Do!"

"Ah, let me speak! I want to tell you that I shall carry the memory of that afternoon, and of your brave kindness, always! If I were never to see you again in this life, I should always treasure it. If I died of thirst in some Sahara, it would be the last thing I should remember—your face would be the last thing I should see! If—"

In the silence there was the sound of a slow foot-fall on the gravel walk, and at the same moment he saw a magical change. Shirley drew back. The soft gentian blue of her eyes darkened. The lips that at an instant before had been tremulous, parted in a low delicious laugh. She swept him a deep curtsy.

"I am beholden to you, sir," she said gaily, "for a most knightly compliment. There's the major. Come and let us show him where we've planted the ramblers."

CHAPTER XXI.

Tournament Day. The noon sun of tournament day shone brilliantly over the village, drowny no longer, for many vehicles were hitched at the curb, or moved leisurely along the leafy street; big, canvas-topped country wagons drawn by shaggy-hoofed horses and set with chairs that bumped and jostled their holiday loads from outlying tobacco plantation and stud-farm; sober, black-covered buggies, long narrow, springless buckboards, frivolous side-bar runabouts and antique aha's resurrected from the primeval depths of cobwebbed stables, relics of tarnished grandeur and faded fortune.

At midday vehicles resolved them-



FINANCIAL PANIC OF 1837

Year That Many Banks Failed and Specie Payments Were Practically Entirely Suspended.

Political rancor was at its height when Andrew Jackson vetoed the bill renewing the charter of the United States bank and removed the treasury deposits, under which opposition the bank collapsed and a vast number of state banks competed for the business, which included the issue of bank notes. In 1837 there were 634 banks, with an aggregate capital of \$231,000,000.

In the history of banking the year of 1837 is prominent for one of the worst panics that was ever known in America, which resulted in the failure of many banks and a universal suspension of specie payments throughout the country, which were not renewed until over a year and a half later, says the National Magazine. During this trying period, when banking operations were practically wiped out of existence, all the banks but three continued doing business in Boston. There were temporary suspensions of specie payments in 1857, known as the panic of '57; also in '61, when Boston followed the lead of New York, since it was evident that further attempt

to tide the popular panic would mean ruin to all the interests involved. There are men still living today who remember with a shudder the trying times of '57, when the merchants met in the Boston merchant's exchange day after day, insisting that the banks must be sustained; until finally Amasa Walker rose up and said: "Gentlemen, the banks must suspend specie payments. There is no other course to be followed." There were murmurs of discontent and they were almost ready to lynch the ex-governor of the commonwealth for the bold position he had taken, but he faced them courageously, and next came the news of the suspension of the New York banks.

Difference. Said a Russian dancer to a Philadelphia reporter: "We can learn much from the dancing of animals, but why did we go, of all things, to the turkey? There is something a little too vulgar in the turkey's dancing, and they who imitate it get talked about."

She shrugged her slender shoulders. "That won't do for women," she resumed. "To say, 'Everybody is talking about him'—that is an eulogy. But to say, 'Everybody is talking about her'—that's an elegy."

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