



The VALIANTS of VIRGINIA

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ILLUSTRATIONS by LAUREN STOUT
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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 Sassoon were rivals for the hand of Mrs. Dandridge in her youth. Sassoon and Valiant fought a duel on her account in which the former was killed. Valiant finds Damory court overgrown with weeds and creeper and decides to rehabilitate the place. 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. 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. Valiant and Shirley become good friends. Mrs. Dandridge faints when she meets Valiant for the first time. Valiant discovers that he has a fortune in old walnut trees.

CHAPTER XXI.—Continued.

"I got over it before I was old enough to make myself a butt of hilarity," the doctor retorted. "I see by the papers they've invented a new dance called the grizzly bear. I believe there's another named the yip-koodle. I hope you've got 'em down pat to show the young folk tonight, Bristow."

The major got up with some irritation. "Southall," he said, "sometimes I'm tempted to think your remarks verge upon the personal. You don't have to watch me dance if you don't choose to."

"No, thank God," muttered the doctor. "I prefer to remember you when you still preserved a trace of dignity—twenty odd years ago."

"If dignity," the major's blood was rising now—"consists in your eternal tasteless bickering, I want none of it. What on earth do you do it for? You had some friends once."

"Friends!" snapped the other, "the fewer I have the better!"

The major clapped on his straw hat angrily, strode to the door, and opened it. But on the threshold he stopped, and presently shut it, turned back slowly and resumed his chair. The doctor was relighting his cigar, but an odd furtive look had slipped to his face, and the hand that struck the match was unsteady.

For a time both sat smoking, at first in silence, then talking in a desultory way on indifferent topics. Finally the major rose and tossed his cigar into the empty grate.

"I'll be off now," he said. "I must be on the field before the others."

As he went down the steps a carriage, drawn by a pair of dancing grays, plunged past. "Who are those people with the Chalmers, I wonder," said the doctor. "They're strangers here."

The major peered. "Oh," he said, over his shoulder, "I forgot to tell you. That's Silas Fargo, the railroad president from New York, and his daughter Katharine. His private car's down on the siding. They're at the judge's—he's chief counsel for the road in this state. They'll be at the tournament, I reckon. You'll be there, won't you?"

The doctor was putting some phials and instruments into a worn leather bag. "No," he said, shortly. "I'm going to take a ten-mile drive—to add

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to this county's population, I expect. But I'm coming to the dance. Promised Valiant I would, in a moment of temporary aberration.

CHAPTER XXII.

A Virginian Runnymede. "June in Virginia is something to remember." Today the master of Damory Court deemed this a true saying. For the air was like wine, and the drifting white wings of clouds, piled above the amethystine ramparts of the far Blue Ridge, looked down upon a violet world bound in green and silver.

In his bedroom Valiant stood looking into the depths of an ancient wardrobe. Presently he took from a hook a suit of white flannel in which he arrayed himself. Over his soft shirt he knotted a pale gray scarf. The modish white suit and the rolling Panama threw out in fine contrast the keen sun-tanned face and dark brown eyes.

In the hall below he looked about him with satisfaction. For the last three days he had labored tirelessly to fit the place for the evening's event. The parlor now showed walls rimmed with straight-back chairs and the grand piano—long ago put in order—had been relegated to the library. That instinct for the artistic, which had made him a last resort in the vexing problems of club entertainments, had aided him in the Court's adornment.

Out of the kitchens Cassandra's egg-beating chatted like a watchman's rattle, while Aunt Daphne put the finishing touches to an array of lighter edibles destined to grace the long table on the rear porch, now walled in with snow-white muslin and hung with candle-lusters. Under the trees Uncle Jefferson was even then experimenting with various punch compounds, and a delicious aroma of vanilla came to Valiant's nostrils.

The Red Road, as Valiant's car passed, was dotted with straggling pedestrians, humble country folk who trudged along the grassy foot-path with no sullen regard for the swift cars and comfortable carriage that left them behind; sturdy barefooted children who called shrilly after him, and happy-go-lucky negro youths clad in their best with Sunday shoes dangling over their shoulders, slouching regardlessly in the dust—all bound for the same Mecca, which presently rose before him, a gateway of painted canvas proclaiming the field to which it opened Runnymede.

He halted his car at the end of the field and snapped a leash in the bull-dog's collar. "I hate to do it, old man," he said apologetically to Chum's reproachful look, "but I've got to. There are to be some stunts, and in such occasions you're apt to be convinced you're the main one of the contestants, which might cause a mix-up. Never mind; I'll anchor you where you won't miss anything."

With the excited dog tugging before him, he threaded his way through the press with keen exhilaration. Now and then his gloved hand touched his cap at a salutation. He was conscious of swift bird-like glances from pretty girls. Here was none of the rigid straight-ahead gaze or vacant stare of the city boulevard; the eyes that looked at him, frankly curious and inquiring, were full of easy open comradeship. Some of the girls wore gowns and hats that might that morning have issued from the Rue de la Paix; others were habited in cheap materials. But about the latter hung no numbing self-consciousness. All bore themselves alike. He was beginning to realize that there might really exist straitened circumstances, even actual poverty, which yet created no sort of social difference.

Opposite the canvas-covered grand stand sat twelve small mushroom tents, each with a staff and tiny flag. Midway lines of flaxen ropes stretched between rows of slender peeled saplings from whose tops floated fangled streamers of vivid bunting. A pavilion of purple cloth, open at the sides, awaited for the committee, and near the center, a negro band was disposed on camp-stools, the brass of the waiting instruments winking in the sunlight. The stand was a confused glow of color, of light gauzy dresses, of young girls in pastel muslins with flowers in their belts, picturesque hats and slender articulate hands darting in vivacious gestures like white swallows—the gentry from the "big houses."

The light athletic figure, towed by the white bull-dog, drew many glances. Valiant's eyes, however, as they swept the seats, were looking for but one, and at first vainly. He felt a quick pang of disappointment. Perhaps she would not come? Perhaps her mother was still ill. Perhaps—but then suddenly his heart beat high, for he saw her in the lower tier, with a group of young people. He could not have told what she wore, save that it was of soft Murillo blue with a hat whose down-curved brim was wound with a shaded plume of the same tint. Her mother was not with her. She was not looking his way as he passed—her arms at the moment being held out in an adorable gesture toward a little child in a smiling matron's lap—and but a single glance was vouchsafed to him before the major seized upon him and bore him to the purple pavilion, for he was one of the committee.

But for this distraction, he might have seen, entering the stand with the Chalmers just as the band struck up a delicious whirl of "Dixie," the two strangers whom the doctor had observed an hour before as they whirled by the Merryweather Mason house behind the judge's grays. Silas Fargo might have passed in any gathering for the unobtrusive city man. Katharine was noticeable anywhere, and today her tall willow figure in its champagne-color lingerie gown and hat garnished with bronze and gold thistles, setting in relief her ivory statuesque face, drew a wave of whispering comment which left a sibilant haze behind him. The party made a picturesque group as they now disposed themselves, Katharine's colorless loveliness contrasting with the eager sparkle of pretty Nancy Chalmers and the gipsy-like beauty of Betty Page.

"You call it a tournament, don't you?" asked Katharine of the judge. "Yes," he replied. "It's a kind of contest in which twelve riders compete for the privilege of naming a Queen of Beauty. There's a ball tonight, at which the lucky lady is crowned. Those little tents are where the noble knights don their shining armor. See, there go their caparisoned chargers."

A file of negroes was approaching the tents, each leading a horse whose saddle and bridle were decorated with fringes of various hues. In the center of the roped lists, directly in front of the stand, others were planting upright in the ground a tall pole from whose top projected a horizontal arm like a slender gallows. From this was suspended a cord at whose end swung a tiny object that whirled and glittered in the sun.

The judge explained. "On the end of the cord is a silver ring, at which the knights tilt with lances. Twelve



"Who is That Splendid Old Man Giving Directions? The One Who Looks Like a Lion."

rings are used. The pike-points are made to fit them, and the knight who carries off the greatest number of the twelve is the victor. The whole thing is a custom as ancient as Virginia—a relic, of course, of the old jousting of the feudal ages. The ring is supposed to represent the device on the boss of the shield, at which the lance-thrust was aimed."

"How interesting!" exclaimed Katharine, and turning, swept the stand with her lorgnette. "I suppose all the county's F. F. V.'s are here," she said laughingly to Nancy Chalmers. "I've often wondered, by the way, what became of the Second Families of Virginia."

"Oh, they've mostly emigrated North," answered Nancy. "The ones that are left are all ancient. There are families here that don't admit they ever began at all."

Silas Fargo shook his stooped shoulders with laughter. "Up North," he said genially, "we've got regular factories that turn out ready-made family-trees for anybody who wants to roost in one."

And now over the fluttering stand and the crowd about the barriers, a stir was discernible. Katharine looked again at the field. "Who is that splendid old man giving directions? The one who looks like a lion. He's coming this way, now."

"That's Major Montague Bristow," said the judge. "He's been master of the heralds for years. The tournament could hardly happen without the major."

"I'm sure I'd like him," she answered. "What a lovely girl he is talking to!"

It was Shirley who had beckoned the major from the lists. She was leaning over the railing. "Why has Ridgeley Pendleton left?" she asked in a low voice. "Isn't he one of the twelve?"

"He was. But he's ill. He wasn't feeling up to it when he came, but he didn't give up till half an hour ago. We'll have to get along with eleven knights."

She made an exclamation of dismay. "Poor Ridge! And what a pity! There have never been less than the full number. It will spoil the royal quadrille tonight, too. Why doesn't the committee choose some one in his place? Listen. Why not ask Mr. Valiant? He is our host tonight. I'm sure he'd be glad to help out, even without the costume."

"Egad!" he said, pulling his imperial. "None of us had thought of him. He could ride Pendleton's mount, of course. He reflected a moment. I'll do it. It's exactly the right thing. You're a clever girl, Shirley."

He hastily crossed the field, while she leaned back, her eyes on the fanned figure—long since recognized—under the purple pavilion. She saw the committee put their heads together and hurriedly enter.

In the moment's wait, Shirley's gloved fingers clasped and unclasped somewhat nervously. The riders had been chosen long before John Valiant's coming. If a saddle, however, was perfect to be vacant, what more appropriate than that he should fill it? The thought had come to her instantly, bred of an underlying regret, which she had all along cherished, that he was not to take part. But beneath this was a deeper passionate wish that she did not attempt to analyze to see him

assume his place with others long habituated to that closed circle—a place rightfully his by reason of birth and name—and to lighten the gloomy shadow, that must rest on his thoughts of his father, with warmer sunnier things. She heaved a secret sigh of satisfaction as the white-clad figure rose in acquiescence.

The major returned to the grand stand and held up his hand for silence. "Our gracious Liege," he proclaimed, in his big vibrant voice, "Queen of Beauty yet unknown, Lords, Knights and Esquires, Fair Dames and gentles all! Whereas divers noble persons have enterprized and taken upon them to hold jousts royal and tourney, you are hereby acquainted that the lists of Runnymede are about to open for that achievement of arms and grand and noble tournament for which they have so long been famed. But an hour since one of our noble knights, pricking hither to tilt for his lady, was beset by a grievous malady. However, lest our jousting lack the royal number, a new champion hath at this last hour been found to fill the Table Round, who of his courtesy doth consent to ride without armor."

A buzz ran over the assemblage. "It must be Pendleton who has defaulted," said Judge Chalmers. "I heard this morning he was sick. Who's the substitute knight, I wonder?"

At the moment a single mounted herald before the tents blew a long blast on a silver horn. Their flaps parted and eleven knights issued to mount their steeds and draw into line behind him. They were brilliantly decked in fashions with slashed doublets and plumed chapeaus, and short jeweled cloaks drooped from their shoulders. Pages handed each a long lance which was held perpendicular, the butt resting on the right stirrup.

Under the pavilion, just for the fraction of a second, Valiant hesitated. Then he turned swiftly to the twelfth tent. Its flag-staff bore a long streamer of deep blood-red. He snatched this from its place, flung it about his waist and knotted it sash-wise. He drew the rose from his lapel and thrust it through the band of his Panama, leaped to the saddle of the horse the major had beckoned, and with a quick thrust of his heel, swung to the end of the stamping line.

The field and grand stand had seen the quick decision, with its instant action, and as the hoofs thudded over the turf, a wave of hand-clapping ran across the seats like a silver rain. "Neatly done, upon my word!" said the judge, delighted. "What a daring idea! Who is it? Is it—bless my soul, it is!"

Katharine Fargo had dropped her lorgnette with an exclamation. She stood up, her wide eyes fixed on that figure in pure white, with the blood-red cordon flaunting across his horse's flanks and the single crimson blossom glowing in his hat.

"The White Knight!" she breathed. "Who is he?"

Judge Chalmers looked round in sudden illumination. "I forgot that you would be likely to know him, he said. "That is Mr. John Valiant of Damory Court."

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Knight of the Crimson Rose. The row of horsemen had halted in a curving line before the grand stand, and now in the silence the herald, holding a parchment scroll, spurred



DANCED IN SURINAM JUNGLE

Explorer Tells Part He Took in Festivities With the Daughter of Native Chief.

In Harper's Magazine Charles W. Furlong told of attending a dance of the native tribes in Surinam, South Africa, and dancing with the daughter of a chief.

"The commandant and Mr. Smit were with me opposite the drummers, where a Djoeka presented his daughter, a superb black creature, who, with two other girls, advanced into the ring, with coy step and posture, toward three men, with whom they danced in pairs; the girls, with a shy tilt of the head and constant moving of hands, passed and repassed, turning closely about their partners, but never touching. A girl would follow a man of her fancy as he walked from the ring center, then, as he turned at the edge, whisk away to a hum of laughing approval.

"Suddenly the dusky form of the girl previously presented emerged from the throng with the same coy, mesmeric motions of the hands, almost touched me, turned like a flash, and was gone. A loud murmur rose. Smit nudged my arm. 'She likes you. You have got to dance,' he whispered. Every explorer knows it is sometimes as unwise to accept such a challenge as it is sometimes indiscreet to refuse. She advanced again with an-

other girl; reassured by safety in numbers, my strong susceptibilities to the rhythm of music enabled me to adapt some slight proficiency in 'buck-and-wing' dancing and to become a moment later an integral part of that throbbing throng."

Case of Commotion. Did you ever have a forceful female presiding in your kitchen who kept you constantly in a turmoil for fear she might bring the house down about your ears?

Rose Stahl tells a story of such a treasure belonging to a family who lived in California.

One afternoon the town experienced a slight shock of earthquake.

"Pictures were thrown down, crockery and furniture rattled about. In the midst of the tumult the mistress went to the head of the stairs and called out in a resigned tone: 'Lizzie, what are you doing now?'"

—Youth's Magazine.

Heavy Smoker. Unique among the devotees of "My Lady Nicotine" is a Dutch sailor named Berkin, whose boast it is that for the last 65 years his pipe has consumed a pound of tobacco weekly. It requires no skill in arithmetic to discover that the "Dutch chimney," as he is proud to be known, has dissipated in smoke more than 39 hundredweight of tobacco, which is exactly 24 times his own weight!

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