



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. 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 Sassoon were rivals for the hand of Mrs. Dandridge in her youth. Sassoon and Vallant fought a duel on her account in which the former was killed. Vallant finds Damory court overgrown with weeds and creepers and decides to rehabilitate the place. 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. 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 meets Vallant for the first time. Vallant discovers that he has a fortune in old walnut trees. The yearly tournament, a survival of the jousting of feudal times, is held at Damory court. At the last moment Vallant takes the place of one of the knights, who is sick, and enters the lists.

CHAPTER XXIII.—Continued.

The twelve horsemen were now sitting their restive mounts in a group at one end of the lists. Two mounted monitors had stationed themselves on either side of the rope-barrier; a third stood behind the upright from whose arm was suspended the silver ring. The herald blew a blast, calling the title of the first of the knights. Instantly, with lance at rest, the latter galloped at full speed down the lists. There was a sharp musical clash, and as he dashed on, the ring flew the full length of its tether and swung back, whirling swiftly. It had been a close thrust, for the iron pike-point had smitten its rim. A cheer went up, under cover of which the rider looped back outside the lists to his former position.

In an upper tier of the stand a spectator made a cup of his hands. "The Knight of the Golden Spur against the field," he called. "What odds?"

"Five to one Spotteswood," a voice answered.

"Ten dollars," announced the first. "Good." And both made memorandum on their cuffs.

A second time the trumpet sounded, and the Knight of Castlewood flashed ingloriously down the roped aisle—a miss.

Again and again the clear note rang out and a mounted figure plunged by, and presently, in a burst of cheering, the herald proclaimed "The Knight of the Black Eagle—one!" and Chilly Lusk, in old-rose doublet and ink plume cantered back with a silver ring upon his pike.

No simple thing, approaching leisurely and aloof, to send that tapering point straight to the tiny mark. But at headlong gallop, astride a blooded horse straining to take the bit, a deed requiring a nice eye, a perfect seat and an unwavering arm and hand! Those knights who looped back with their pikes thus braced had spent long hours in practice and each rode as naturally as he breathed; yet more than once a horse shied in mid-course and at the too-eager thrust of the spur bolted through the ropes. Vallant made his first essay—and missed—with the blood singing in his ears. The ring flew from his pike, catching him a swinging blow on the temple in

Where Had John Vallant Learned That Trick of the Loose Wrist and Inflexible Thrust.

its rebound, but he scarcely felt it. As he cantered back he heard the major's bass pitting him against the field.

And then, suddenly, stand and field all vanished. He saw only the long level rope-lined lane with its twinkling mid-air point. An exhilaration caught him at the feel of the splendid horse-flesh beneath him—that sense of oneness with the creature he bestrode which the instinctive horseman knows. He lifted his lance and hefted it, seeking its absolute balance, feeling its point as a fencer with his rapier. When again the blood-red saffron streamed away the herald's cry, "Knight of the Crimson Rose—one!" set the field hand-clapping. From the next joust also, Vallant returned with the gaze upon his lance. Two had gone to the Champion of Castlewood and two to scattering riders. When Vallant won his fourth the grand stand thundered with applause.

The trumpet again pealed its silvery proclamation. Judge Chalmers was on his feet. "Fifty to ten on the Crimson Rose," he cried. This time, however, there were no takers. He called again, but none heard him; the last tilts were too absorbing.

Where had John Vallant learned that trick of the loose wrist and inflexible thrust, but at the fencing club? Where that subconscious management of the rein, that nice gauge of speed and distance, but on the polo field? The old sports stood him now in good stead. "Why, he has a seat like a centaur!" exclaimed the judge—praise indeed in a community where riding was a passion and horseflesh a fetish! "Oh, dear!" mourned Nancy Chalmers. "I've bet six pairs of gloves on Quint Carter. Never mind; if it has to be anybody else, I'd rather it were Mr. Vallant. It's about time Damory Court got something after Rip-Van-Winkle for thirty years. Besides, he's giving us the dance, and I love him for that! Quint still has a chance, though. If he takes the next two, and Mr. Vallant misses—"

Katharine looked at her with a little smile. "He won't miss," she said. She had seen that look on his face before and read it aright. John Vallant had striven in many contests, not only of skill but of strength and daring, before crowded grand stands. But never in all his life had he so desired to pluck the prize. His grip was tense on the lance as the yellow doublet and olive plume of Castlewood shot away for a last time—and failed. An instant later the Knight of the Crimson Rose flashed down the lists with the last ring on his pike.

And the tourney was won. In the shouting and hand-clapping Vallant took the rose from his hand and bound it with a shred of his sash to his lance-point. As he rode slowly toward the massed stand, the whole field was so still that he could hear the hoofs of the file of knights behind him. The people were on their feet.

The mounted herald blew his blast. "By the Majesties of St. Michael and St. George," he proclaimed, "I declare the Knight of the Crimson Rose the victor of this our tourney, and do charge him now to choose his Queen of Beauty, that all may do her homage!"

Shirley saw the horse coming down the line, its rider bareheaded now, and her heart began to race wildly. Beyond wanting him to take part, she had not thought. She looked about her, suddenly dismayed. People were smiling at her and clapping their hands. From the other end of the stand she saw Nancy Chalmers throwing her a kiss, and beside her a tall pale girl in champagne-color staring through a jeweled lorgnette.

She was conscious all at once that the flanneled rider was very close . . . that his pike-point, with its big red blossom, was stretching up to her. With the rose in her hand she curtsied to him, while the blurred throng cheered itself hoarse, and the band struck up "You Great Big Beautiful Doll," with extraordinary rapture, to the tune of which the noise finally subsided to a battery of hilarious congratulations which left her flushed and a little breathless. Nancy Chalmers and Betty Page had burst upon her like petticoated whirlwinds and presently, when the crowd had lessened, the judge came to introduce his visitor.

"Mr. Fargo and his daughter are our guests at Gladden Hall," he told her. "They are old friends of Vallant's; by the way; they knew him in New York."

"Katharine's lighting her incense now, I guess," observed Silas Fargo. "See there!" He pointed across the stand, where stood a willow tan figure, one hand beckoning to the concourse below, where Vallant stood, the center of a shifting group, round which the white bulldog, mad with recovered liberty, tore in eccentric circles.

As they looked, she called softly, "John! John!"

Shirley saw him start and face about, then come quickly toward her, amazement and welcome in his eyes. As Shirley turned away a little later with the major, that whispering voice seemed to sound in her ears—"John! John!" There smote her suddenly the thought that when he had chosen her his Queen of Beauty, he had not seen the other—had not known she was there.

A few moments before the day had been golden; she went home through a landscape that somehow seemed to have lost its brightest glow.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Katharine Decides.

Katharine left the field of Runnymede with John Vallant in the dun-colored motor. She sat in the driver's seat beside him, while the bulldog capered, ecstatically barking, from side to side of the rear cushions. Her father had declined the honor, remarking that he considered a professional chauffeur a sufficient risk of his valuable life and that the Chalmers' grays were good enough for him—a decision which did not wholly displease Katharine.

The car was not the smart Panhard in which she had so often spun down the avenue or along the shell-roads of the north shore. It lacked those fin-de-siècle appurtenances which marked the ne plus ultra of its kind, as her observant eye recognized; but it ran staunch and true. The powerful hands that gripped the steering-wheel were brown with sun and wind, and the handsome face above it had a look of keenness and energy she had never surprised before. They passed many occupants did not greet him. In fact, as he presently remarked, it was a saving of energy to keep his hat off; and he tossed the Panama into the rear seat. On the rim of the village a group raised a cheer to which he nodded laughingly, and further on a little old lady on a timid vine-colored porch beside a church, waved a black-

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The Tournament Ball at Damory Court That Night Was More Than an Event.

mitt hand to him with a sweet old-time gesture. Katharine noted that he bowed to her with extra care.

"That's Miss Mattie Sue Mabry," he said, "the quaintest, dearest thing you ever saw. She taught my father his letters."

Where the Red Road stretched level before them, he threw the throttle open for a long rush through the thymy-scented air. The light, late afternoon breeze drew by them, sweeping back Katharine's graceful sinuous veil and spraying them with odors of clover and sunny fruit. They passed orchard clumps bending with young apples, boundless aisles of green, young-tasseled corn, and shadowy groves that smelled of fern and sassafras, opening out into more sunlit vistas overarched by the intense pene- trable of the June sky.

John Vallant had never seemed to her so wholly good to see, with his waving hair ruffling in their flight and the westerling sun shining redly on his face. Midway of this spurt he looked at her to say: "Did you ever know a more beautiful countryside? See how the pink-and-yellow of those grain fields fades into the purple of the hills. Very few painters have ever captured a tint like that. It's like raspberries crushed in curdled milk."

"I've quite lost my heart to it all," she said, her voice jolting with the speed of their course. "It's a perfect pastoral . . . so different from our terrific city pace . . . Of course it must be a trifle dull at times . . . seeing the same people all ways . . . and without the theater and the opera and the whirl about one—but . . . the kind of life one reads about . . . in the novels of the South, you know . . . I suppose one doesn't realize that it actually exists until one comes to a Southern place like this. And the negro servants! How odd it must be to have a white-haired old dandy in a brass-buttoned swallow-tail for a butler! So picturesque! At Judge Chalmers' I have a feeling all the time that I'm walking through a stage rehearsal."

The car slackened speed as it slid by a white-washed cabin at whose entrance sat a dusky gray-bearded figure. Vallant pointed. "Do you see him?" he asked.

"I see a very ordinary old colored man sitting on the door-step," Katharine replied.

"That's Mad Anthony, our local Mother Shipton. He's a prophet and soothsayer. Uncle Jefferson—that's my body-servant—insists that he foretold my coming to Damory Court. If we had more time you could have your fortune told."

"How thrilling!" she commented with half-humorous irony.

He looked at her, oddly she thought. "Why should I go back?"

"Why? Because it's your natural habitat. Isn't it?"

"That's the word," he said smiling. "It was my habitat. This is my home."

She was silent a moment in sheer surprise. She had thought of this Southern essay as a quickly passing incident, a colorful chapter whose page might any day be turned. But it was impossible to mistake his meaning. Clearly, he was deeply infatuated with this Arcadian experience and had no thought at present but to continue it indefinitely.

They were passing the entrance of a cherry-bordered lane, and without taking his hands from the gear, he nodded toward the low broad-eaved dwelling with its flowering arbors that showed in flashing glimpses of brown and red between the intervening trees. "The palace of the queen!" he said—"Rosewood, by name."

She looked in some curiosity. Clearly, if not a refuge of genteel poverty, neither was it the abode of wealth; so, from her assured rampart of the Fargo millions, Katharine reflected complacently. The girl was a local favorite, of course—he had been tactful as to that. It was fortunate, in a way, that he had not seen her, Katharine, in the grand stand until afterward. Feeling toward her as she believed he did, with his absurd directness, he would have been likely to drop the rose in her lap, never reflecting that the tourney being a local function, the choice should not fall up on an outsider.

The slowing of the car brought her back to the present, and she looked up to see before them the great gate of Gladden Hall. She did not speak till they had quite stopped.

Then, as her hand lay in his for farewell, "You are right in your decision," she said softly. "This is your place. You are a Vallant of Virginia. I didn't realize it before, but I am beginning to see all it means to you."

Her voice held a lingering indefinable quality that was almost sadness, and for that one slender instant, she opened on him the unmasked batteries of her glorious gray eyes.

The tournament ball at Damory Court that night was more than an event. The old mansion was an irresistible magnet. The floor of its irrefragable parlor was known to be of delectable hugeness. Its gardens were a legend. The whole place, moreover, was steeped in the very odor of old mystery and new romance. Small wonder that to this particular affair the elect—the major was the high custodian of the rolls, his decisions being as the laws of the Medes and Persians—came gaily from the farthest county line, and the big houses of the neighborhood were crammed with overnight guests.

By half past nine o'clock the phalanx of chaperons decreed by old custom had begun to arrive, and the great iron gate at the front of the drive—erect and rustless now—saw an imposing processional of carriages. These passed up a slope as radiant with the fairy light of paper lanterns as a Japanese thoroughfare in festival season. The colored bulbs swung moon-like

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



ADDITION TO HIS EFFICIENCY

Business Manager Would Do Well to Remember That His Personality Counts for Much.

"He's really very agreeable outside of business hours." How often we hear this remark about a certain type of man at the head of a large enterprise. He is the man whose office demeanor is characterized by the coldness of a snowball and the indifference of a stone.

In his desire to become efficient and make every one about him the same he squeezes every bit of human feeling out of his relations with his subordinates and becomes a part of a working system, as dehumanized as his filing system or his adding machine or the typewriter which his stenographer manipulates. During of- fice hours he is a machine which dic- tates letters, looks over reports and develops efficiency. But—"he's really very agreeable outside of business hours."

This man needs to know that, his ability being efficient, he becomes more efficient as he becomes more hu- man, just as a machine is more effi- cient the more machine-like it be- comes. He needs to learn that the man at the head of a big concern

from tree and shrub, painting their rainbow lusters on grass and drive- way. Under the high gray columns of the porch and into the wide door, framed in its small leaded panes that glowed with the merry light within, poured a stream of loveliness: in car- riage-wraps of light tints, collared and edged with fur or elder, or wide- sleeved mandarin coats falling back from dazzling throats and arms, hair swathed with chiffon against the night dews, and gallantly cavaliereed by masculine black and white.

These from their tring-rooms over- flowed presently, garbed like dreams, to make obeisance to the dowagers and then to drift through flower-lined corridors, the foam on recurrent waves of discovery. Behind the rose-bower in the hall, which shielded a dozen colored musicians—violins, cello, guitars and mandolins—came premonitory chirps and shivers, which presently wove into the low and dreamy melody of "Carry Me Back to Old Virginia."

Promptly as the clock in the hall chimed ten, the music merged into a march. Doors on opposite sides of the upper hall swung wide and down the broad staircase came, with slow step, a stately procession: two heralds in fawn-colored doublets with scroll and trumpets wound with flowers, behind them the Queen of Beauty, her finger- tips resting lightly in the hand of the Knight of the Crimson Rose, and these followed by as brave a concourse of lords and ladies as ever graced castle- hall in the gallant days "when knight- hood was in flower."

Shirley's gown was of pure white: her arms were swathed in tulle, crossed with straps of seed-pearl, over which hung long semi-flowing sleeves of satin, and from her shoulders rose a stiff pointed medieval collar of Venetian lace, against whose pale traceries her bronze hair glowed with rosy lights. The edge of the square-cut cor- sage was powdered with the pearls and against their sheen her breast and neck had the soft creamy ivory of magnolia buds. Her straight plain train of satin, knotted with fresh white rose-buds (Nancy Chalmers had labored for a frantic half-hour in the dressing-room for this effect) was held by the seven-year-old Byioe twins, beribboned knickerbockers, duly impressed with the grandeur of their privilege and grimly intent on acquit- ting themselves with glory.

Shirley's face was still touched with the surprise that had swept it as Vallant had stepped to her side. She had looked to see him in the conven- tional panoply a sober-sided masculine mode decrees. What she had beheld was a figure that might have stepped out of an Elizabethan picture-frame. He was in deep purple slashed with gold. A cloak of thin crimson velvet narrowly edged with ermine hung from his shoulders, lined with tissue- like cloth-of-gold. From the rolling brim of his hat swept a curling purple plume. He wore a slender dress-sword, and an order set with brilliants sparkled on his breast.

The costume had been one he had worn at a fancy ball of the winter be- fore. It had been made from a painting at Windsor of one of the dukes of Buckingham, and it made a perfect foil for Shirley's white.

The eleven knights of the tourney, each with his chosen lady, if less splendid, were tricked out in sufficient- ly gorgeous attire. Many an ancient brocade had been awakened for the nonce from its lavender bed, and ruffs and gold-braid were at no premium.

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