

# The VALIANTS of VIRGINIA

By HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES  
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, had failed. He voluntarily surrenders 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 crockers 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 wauvet trees. The yearly tournament, a survival of the fittest of the knights, 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. He wins and chooses Shirley Dandridge as queen of beauty to the dismay of Katherine Fargo, a former sweetheart, who is visiting in Virginia. The tournament ball at Damory court draws the elite of the countryside. Shirley is crowned by Vallant as queen of beauty. Vallant tells Shirley of his love and they become engaged. Katherine, determined not to give up Vallant without a struggle, points out to Shirley how terrible it would be for the son-in-law who caused the death of her mother, who looks so much like his father, Shirley, uncertain, but feeling that her mother was in love with the victim of Vallant's pistol, breaks the engagement. Major Bristow is fatally wounded. Katherine King, a liberal friend, who had been sent to prison, but before dying Bristow confesses to Mrs. Dandridge that he had written a letter to Vallant had written to her after the duel. Vallant decides to leave Damory court and writes Shirley that he will love her as long as she will love him. Mrs. Dandridge learns from the thirty-year-old letter that Vallant expected her to answer the note if she wanted him to return. For it was Vallant she loved.

### CHAPTER XXXIV.—Continued.

Shirley's breath stopped. She felt her face tingling and a curious weakness came on her limbs. Why, indeed, unless—and the thought was like a wild prayer in her mind—she had been mistaken in her surmise? Thoughts came thronging in panic haste: the fourteenth of May and the cape jessamines—these might point no less to Vallant than to Sassoon. But her mother's fainting at the sight of the son—the eager interest she had displayed in Shirley's accounts of him, from the episode of the rose and the bulldog to the tournament ball—seemed now to stand out in a new light, throbbing and roseate. Could it be? Had she been stumbling along a blind trail, misled by the cunning dovetailing of circumstance? Her heart was beating stiffly. If she should be mistaken now! She dashed her hand across her eyes as though to compel their clearness, and looked again.

It was Beauty Vallant's face that lay in the locket, and that could mean but one thing: it was he, not Sassoon, whom her mother loved!

The lamplight seemed to grow and spread to an unbearable radiance. Shirley thought she cried out with a sudden sweet wildness, but she had not moved or uttered a sound. The illumination was all about her, like a splendid cloud. The impossible had happened. The miracle for which she hysterically prayed had been wrought!

When she blew out the light, the shining still remained. That glowing knowledge, like a vitalizing and physical presence, passed with her through the hall to her room. As she stood in the elfish light of her one candle, the poignancy of her joy was as sharp as her past pain. Later was to come the wonder how that tragedy had bent Beauty Vallant's life to exile and her mother's to fulfillment, and in time she was to know these things, too. But now the one great knowledge blotted out all else. She need starve her fancy no longer! The hours with her lover might again sweep across her memory unbidden. She felt his arms, his kisses, heard his whispers against her cheek and smelled the perfume of Madonna lilies.

She drew the curtain and opened the window noiselessly to the light. Only a few hours ago she had been singing to her harp in what wretchedness! She laughed softly to herself. The quiet night was full of his voice: "I love you! I want nothing but you!" How her pitiful error had tortured and wrung them both! But tomorrow he, too, would know that all was well.

A clear sound chimed across the distance—the bell of the court-house clock, striking midnight. One! . . . Two! . . . How often lately it had run discordantly across her mood; now it seemed a clamant wacher, tolling joy. Three! . . . Four! . . . Five! . . . Perhaps he was sleepless, listening, too. Was he in the old library, thinking of her? Six! . . . Seven! . . . Eight! . . . Nine! . . . If she could only send her message to him on the bells! Ten! . . . It swelled more loudly now, more deliberate. Eleven! . . . Another day was almost gone. Twelve! . . . "Joy cometh in the morning"—ran the whisper across her thought. It was morning now.

Thirteen!

She caught a sharp breath. Her ear had not deceived her—the vibration still palpitated on the air like a

heart of sound. It had struck thirteen! A little eery touch crept along her nerves and a cool dampness broke on her skin, for she seemed to hear, quivering through the wondering silence, the voice of Mad Anthony, as it had quavered to her ear on the door-step of the negro cabin, with the well-sweep throwing its long curved shadow across the group of laughing faces:

"Ah sees yo' gwine ter him. Ah heahs de co'ot-house clock a-strikin' in de night—en yo' gwine. . . . Don' wait, don' wait, li' mistis, er de trouble-cloud gwine kyah him erway fom yo' . . . When de clock strike thutteen—when de clock strike thutteen—"

She dropped the flowered curtain and drew back. A weird fancy had begun to press on her brain. Had not Mad Anthony foretold truly what had gone before? What if there were some cryptic meaning in this, too? To go to him, at midnight, by a lonely country road—she, a girl? Incredible! Yet her mind had opened to a vague growing fear that was swiftly mounting to a thriving anxiety. That innate superstition, secretly cherished while derided, which is the heritage of the Southron-born bred from centuries of contact with a mystical race, had her in its grip. Yet all the while her sober actual common-sense was crying out upon her—and crying in vain. Unknown appenches that had lain darkling in her blood, come down to her from long generations, were suddenly compelling her. The curtain began to wave in a little wind that whispered in the silk, and somewhere in the yard below she could hear Selim nipping the clover.

She was to go or the "trouble-cloud" would carry him away!

A strange expression of mingled fright and resolve grew on her face. She ran on tiptoe to her wardrobe and with frantic haste dragged out a rough cloak that fell over her soft house-gown, covering it to the feet. It had a peaked hood falling from its collar and into this she thrust the resentful masses of her hair. Every few seconds she caught her breath in a short gasp, and once she paused with an apprehensive glance over her shoulder and shivered. She scarcely knew what she did, nor did she ask herself what might be the outcome of such an absurd adventure. She neither knew nor cared. She was swept off her feet and whirled away into some outlandish limbo of shadowy fear and crying dread.

Slipping off her shoes, she went swiftly and noiselessly down the stair. She let herself out of the door and shoes on again, ran across the clover. A hound clambered about her, whining, but she silenced him with a whispered word. Selim lifted his head and she patted the snuffling inquiring muzzle an instant before, with her hand on his mane, she led him through the hedge to the stable. It was but the work of a moment to throw on a side-saddle and buckle the girth. Then, mounting, she turned him into the lane.

He was thoroughbred, and her tense excitement seemed to communicate itself to him. He blew the breath through his delicate flaring nostrils and flung up his head at her restraining hand on the bridle. Once on the Red Road, she let him have his will. The long vacant highway reeled out behind her to the fierce and lonely hoof-tattoo. She was scarcely conscious of consecutive thought—all was a vague jumble of chaotic impressions threaded by that necessity that called her like an insistent voice.

Copse and hedge flew by, streaks of distemper on the shifting gloom; swarthy farmhouse roofs huddled like giant Indians on the trail, and ponds in pastures glistened back the pale glimmering of stars. The faint mist, tangled in the branches of the trees, made them look like ghosts gathered to see her pass. Was this real or was she dreaming? Was she, Shirley Dandridge, really galloping down an open road at midnight—because of the hare-brained manderings of a half-mad old negro?

The great iron gate of Damory court hung open, and scarcely slackening her pace, she rode through and up the long drive. The glooming house-front was blank and silent and its huge porch columns looked like lonely gray monoliths in the wan light. Not a twinkle showed at chink or craney; the ponderous shutters were closed. There was a sense of desertion, of emptiness about the place that brought her heart into her throat with a sickly horrible feeling of certainty. She jumped down from the blowing horse and hurried around the house. The door of the kitchens was open and a ladder of dim reddish light fell from it across the grass. She ran swiftly and looked in. A huddled figure sat there, rocking to and fro in the lamplight.

"Aunt Daph," she called, "what is the matter?"

The turbaned head turned sharply toward her. "Dat yo', Miss Shirley?" the old woman said huskily. "Is yo' come ter see Mars' John 'fo' he gwine away? Yo' too late, honey, too late! He done gone ter de deopo fo' ter ketch de th'oo traid. En, oh, honey, Ah knows in mah ole head dat Mars'

John ain' nevah gwine come back ter Dam'ry co'ot no mo'!"

### CHAPTER XXXV.

The Song of the Nightingale.

Along the dark turnpike John Vallant rode with his chin sunk on his breast. He was wretchedly glad of the darkness, for it covered a thousand familiar sights he had grown to love. Yet through the dark came drifting sounds that caught at him with clutching hands—the bay of a hound from some far-off kennel, the whirring note of frogs, the impatient high whinny of a horse across pasture-bars—and his nostrils widened to the wild braided fragrance of the fields over which the mist was spinning its fairy carded wool.

The preparations for his going had been quickly made. He was leaving behind him all but a single portmanteau. Uncle Jefferson had already taken this—with Chum—to the station. The old man had now gone sorrowfully afoot to the blockhouse, a half-mile up the track, to bespeak the stopping of the express. He would go back on the horse his master was riding.

The lonely little depot flanked a siding beside a dismal stretch of yellow clay-bank gouged by rains. Its windows were dark and the weather-beaten plank platform was illuminated by a single lantern that hung on a nail beside the locked door, its sickly flame showing bruise-like through smoky streakings of lamp-black. At one side, in the shadow, was his bag, and beside it the tethered buldog—sole spot of white against the melancholy forlornness—lying with one splinted leg, like a swaddled ramrod, sticking straight out before him.

In the saddle, Vallant struck his hand hard against his knee. Surely it was a dream! It could not be that he was leaving Virginia, leaving Damory court, leaving her! But he knew that it was not a dream.

Far away, rounding Powhatan Mountain, he heard the long-drawn hoot of the coming train flinging its sky-warning in a host of scampering echoes. Among them mixed another sound of a horse, galloping fast and hard.

His own fidgeted, flung up wide nostrils and neighed shrilly. Who was coming along that rumbled highway at such an hour in such breakneck fashion?

The train was nearer now; he could hear its low rumbling hum, rising to a roar, and the click and spring of the rails. But though he lifted a foot from the stirrup, he did not dismount. Something in the whirlwind speed of coming caught and held him motionless. He had a sudden curious feeling that all the world beside did not exist; there were only the sweeping rush of the nearing train—impersonal, unhuman—he, sitting his horse in the gloom, and that unknown rider whose anguish of speed outstripped the steam, riding to whom?

The road skirted the track as it neared the station, and all at once a



Once on the Red Road, She Let Him Have His Will.

white glare from the opened fire-box flung itself blindingly across the dark, illuminating like a flare of summer lightning the patch of highway and the rider. Vallant, staring, had an instant's vision of a streaming cloak, of a girl's face, set in a tawny swirl of loosened hair. With a cry that was lost in the shriek of escaping steam, he dragged his plunging horse around and the white blaze swept him also, as the rider plued down at his side.

"You!" he cried. He leaned and caught the slim hands gripped on the bridle, shaking now. "You!"

The dazzling brightness had gone by, and the air was full of the groning of the brakes as the long line of darkened sleepers shuddered to its enforced stop. "John!"—He heard the sweet wild cry pierce through the jumble of noises, and something in it set his blood running molten through his veins. It held an agony of relief, of shame and of appeal. "John . . . John!"

And knowing suddenly, though not how or why, that all barriers were swept away, his arms went out and around her, and in the ab-dout of the

lonely little station, they two, in their saddles, clung and swayed together with clasping hands and broken words, while the train, breathing heavily for a resentful second, shrieked itself away into the night, and left only the fragrance from the misty fields, the crowding silence and the sprinkling stars.

The breeze had risen and was blowing the mist away as they went back along the road. A faint light was lifting, forerunner of the moon. They rode side by side, and to the slow gait of the horses, touching noses in low whinnings of equine comradeship, by the faint glamour they gazed into each other's faces. The adorable tweedy roughness of his shoulder thrilled her cheek.

"And you were going away. Yes, yes, I know. It was my fault. I . . . misunderstood. Forgive me!"

He kissed her hand. "As if there were anything to forgive! Do you remember in the woods, sweetheart, the day it rained? What a brute I was—to fight so! And all the time I wanted to take you in my arms like a little bird child."

She turned toward him. "Oh, I wanted you to fight! Even though it was no use. I had given up, but your strength comforted me. To have you surrender, too—"

"It was your face in the churchyard," he told her. "How pale and worn you looked! It came to me then for the first time how horribly selfish it would be to stay—how much easier going would make it for you."

And to think that it was Mad Anthony—Did the clock really strike thirteen, do you think? Or did I fancy it?"

"Why question it?" he said. "I believe in mysteries. The greatest mystery of all is that you should love me. I doubt no miracle hereafter, Dearest, dearest!"

### THE END.

Kept Out of Politics.

In Austria women are forbidden by law to take an active part in politics or to join any political association. Last spring the chamber of deputies decided to cancel the prohibiting clause, and the political committee of the upper house has now indorsed this vote of the deputies, with the explanation that "the part taken by women in associations with political tendencies is well known, and, under the circumstances, can scarcely be prevented." This bill has been sent back to the deputies for further consideration. The women of Austria have been leading an agitation against the rise of prices which they, as housekeepers, feel most acutely. They have been successful in cheapening coal in Vienna and milk in Brunn. The leaders of the movement have been elected to municipal committees, and for the first time a woman has been put on a committee of a town council, viz. that of Housing.

His Tender Spot.

As a certain young artist of New York sat upon his stool on day in the Adirondacks doing a bit of "mountain stuff" there approached him from the rear a native, evidently with ideas of his own touching art.

"Did you ever try photography?" asked the newcomer.

"No," was the curt response of the young artist, who continued his work.

"It's a good deal quicker," suggested the native.

"I suppose it is," surely assented the painter, with another dab of the brush.

"And," the native added, with a dash of malice, "a good deal more like the place."—Lippincott's.

He Knew.

Charles S. Mellen, at a dinner in Boston, said of a bankrupt:

"His bankruptcy was like that which the parent described.

"Pa, what's a bankruptcy?" a little boy once asked.

"And pa, who had been 'bit' that week, answered joltingly:

"Bankruptcy, my son, is where you put your money in your hip pocket and let your creditors take your wallet and coat."

## THE NEWS TOLD IN PARAGRAPHS

Latest Happenings Gleaned From All Over the State.

### LIVE NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Two Boys Rescued From Water. Horse Kicks Man To Death—Sick Man Shoots Himself—Boy Hit By Ball Dies.

During the height of the recent electrical storm at Shenandoah the electric light wires became so heavily charged that Benjamin Tonofsky, nineteen years old, a merchant with a wife and one child, fearing fire, attempted to chop the electric wires in his store with a hatchet and was shocked to death. Dominick Kuchanski, twenty-five years old, single, and a relative of the victim, ran out in the storm to give assistance to Tonofsky, when he ran into a live wire and was slowly electrocuted, to the horror of many spectators.

The George Jacobs farm of 165 acres, a short distance west of York, was selected by the County Poor Directors as the site for the new almshouse. It was decided to buy the farm at a consideration of \$28,000. Less than two years ago Jacobs bought the farm for \$13,900. The action of the Poor Directors must be approved by the County Commissioners and the Court.

James McCafferty, eighteen, and Thomas Keating, seventeen, both of Norristown, are alleged to have attempted suicide by jumping into deep water at McGinn's quarries, near Bridgeport. A passerby rescued the two young men, but when he pulled Keating out of the water he was unconscious. Keating was rushed to the hospital and a pulmonator saved his life.

The fifty-fifth annual convention of the Grand Chamber of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Order Knights of Friendship, closed at Reading. Reading was selected as the next place of meeting, and nominations to be voted on next year were made. H. H. Haffelinger, of South Bethlehem, was nominated for grand sir knight marshal.

Announcement was made of the wedding, August 16, at Terryville, Conn., of Miss Gladys H. Davis, only daughter of W. H. Davis, of Bethlehem, and Henry K. Mettee, Jr., a baseball pitcher at Bethlehem Preparatory School. The ceremony was performed by the bridegroom's father, Rev. H. K. Mettee, of the German Lutheran Church.

Samuel Hinkle, a Wrightsville farmer, fifty years old, was kicked to death by a runaway horse. Hinkle was driving the animal in a dog cart, when it began kicking and dashed away. After running several miles, the driver was shaken from the cart and died in a few minutes from a fractured skull.

As the result of being hit on the head with a pitched ball while at bat in a baseball game at Reading, fourteen-year-old Herman Babb died suddenly. The boy had apparently felt no ill effects from the blow and attended a band concert and festival at a playground.

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church at Steelton must go without a pastor because of the war. Rectors serving this congregation are sent by the synod of Bulgaria and word has come that until conditions improve the place will have to remain vacant.

In three Pen Argyl slate quarries there was a fatality and two serious accidents. Barnet Sobers, fifty-nine years old, was struck on the head by a stone and killed. Wilbert Dodd, accidentally cut off his right forefinger, and E. Bonney nearly severed his hand in machinery.

Falling on the pavement, Mrs. Jesse Sharpe, of Coatesville, has entered suit to recover \$10,000 damages for injuries sustained. It is alleged that the pavement needed repairing and that the borough was negligent for its condition.

Mike Ross, a prisoner in the Indiana county jail, disembowled Luther Blose, a fellow-prisoner, with an old spoon he had sharpened on the concrete floor of the jail. Blose is in a critical condition in the Indiana Hospital.

In York street paving operations have been suspended because of a strike of thirty laborers. The laborers claim they were promised \$2 a day when they left New York city, but only received \$1.60.

More than five thousand persons attended the Northumberland, Montour and Columbia counties' farmers' picnic at South Danville.

O. L. Reichert, eighteen years old, fell down a forty-foot elevator shaft at the Home Brewery Company plant, Shenandoah, and was fatally injured.

Thieves entered and robbed five houses at Macungie, taking valuable jewelry and some money.

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