

The VALIANTS of VIRGINIA

HALLIE ERMINE RIVES

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 father, Mrs. Dandridge, and Major Bristow exchange reminiscences during which it is revealed that the major, Valiant's father, and a man named Basson were rivals for the hand of Mrs. Dandridge in her youth. Basson and Valiant fought a duel on her account in which the former was killed. Valiant finds Damory court overgrown with weeds and creeps and the building is 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. Valiant tells her mother of the incident and the latter is strangely moved at hearing that a Valiant is again living at Damory court. Valiant leaves for the first time that his father left Virginia on account of a duel in which Doctor Southall and Major Bristow acted on his father's second. Valiant and Shirley become good friends. Mrs. Dandridge faints when she first meets Valiant.

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 Valiant. "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."

"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 Valiant. "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 finching. 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 Peazetree 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 peazetree." Valiant'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 to' yo' kyahin' on like er w'il gyraf we'n you got comp'ny, 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 Uno' Jefferson," he proposed, "while you two potter over these roses." So Valiant 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—Valiant much of the time on his knees, his hands plunging deep into the black spongy earth, and Shirley with broad flat fung 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 Valiant'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. Some such thought was in the major's mind, too, as he came slowly up the terrace below. He paused to take off his hat and wipe his brow. "With the place all fixed up this way," he sighed to himself, "I could believe it was only last week that Beauty Valiant and Southall and I were boys, loafing around this garden. And to think that now it's Valiant's son (and Judith's daughter)! Why, it seems like yesterday that Shirley there was only knee-high to a grasshopper—and I used to tell her her hair was that color because she 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. Valiant 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. "Don't!" "Ah, let me speak! I want to tell you that I shall carry the memory of that afternoon, and of your brave kindness, always, 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 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 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 tiara!" 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 mooning 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 squallid 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 floor-sacking. Fences and outhouses there was none. Littered paths rambled aimlessly hither and thither from chip-strewn yards to starved patches of corn, under-cultivated and blighted. Over the whole place hung an indescribable atmosphere of disconsolate silt, of unredeemed squalor and villainy.

"Contrast again?" she asked interestedly. "Yes and no. Yes, because no one who has ever known that blazing clanging 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

At midday vehicles resolved themselves into luncheon-booths—hamper stowed away beneath the seats, disclosing all manner of picnic edibles—grass-spread table-cloths, and an air of plenty reigned. Within Mrs. Merryweather Mason's brown house hospitality sat enthroned and the generous dining-room was held by a regiment of feminine out-of-town acquaintances. The yard, an hour later, was an active encampment of rocking-chairs, and a din of conversation floated over the pink oleanders whose tubs had achieved a fresh coat of bright green paint for the occasion. Mrs. Poly Gifford—a guest of the day—here shone resplendent. "The young folks are counting merrily on the dance tonight," observed Mrs. Livy Stowe of Seven Oaks. "Even the Buckner girls have got new ball dresses."

"Improvident, I call it," said Mrs. Gifford. "They can't afford such things, with Park Hill mortgaged up to the roof the way it is." Mrs. Mason's soft apologetic alto interposed. "They're sweet girls, and we're never young but once. I think it was so fine of Mr. Valiant to offer to give the ball. I hear he's motored to Charlottesville three or four times for fixings, though I understand he's poor enough since he gave up his money as he did. What a princely act that was!" "Y-e-e-s," agreed Mrs. Gifford, "but a little—what shall I call it?—precipitous! If I were married to a man like that I should always be in terror of his adopting an orphan asylum or turning Republican or something equally impossible."

Belgium's national wealth a year ago was estimated to be \$9,000,000,000.

St. Louis Lady Cured of Eczema. 539 Vernon St., St. Louis, Mo. I have had Eczema for four years and have tried everything possible to cure it, without success, until I tried Tetterine. Your medicine has cured me after six months' trial. Miss A. B. King. Tetterine cures Eczema, Itching Piles, Ring Worm, Dandruff and every form of Scalp and Skin Disease. Tetterine 50c; Tetterine Soap 25c. At druggists or by mail direct from The Shuprine Co., Savannah, Ga. With every mail order for Tetterine we give a box of Shuprine's 10c Liver Pills free. Adv.

Madagascar last year exported 7,539 metric tons of lima beans.

With one hand on the dog's collar, hushing him to silence, Valiant, 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.

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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 darkeys 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." "Poor youngsters!" he said. "It's a shame to fool them. But I've had all the circus I want getting the live stock installed."

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Tournament Day.

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IN STERLING LIVES A GIRL

Who Suffered As Many Girls Do—Tells How She Found Relief.

Sterling, Conn.—"I am a girl of 22 years and I used to faint away every month and was very weak. I was also bothered a lot with female weakness. I read your little book 'Wisdom for Women,' and I saw how others had been helped by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and decided to try it, and it has made me feel like a new girl and I am now relieved of all these troubles. I hope all young girls will get relief as I have. I never felt better in my life."—Miss BERTHA A. PELOQUIN, Box 116, Sterling, Conn.



Massena, N. Y.—"I have taken Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and I highly recommend it. If anyone wants to write to me I will gladly tell her about my case. I was certainly in a bad condition as my blood was all turning to water. I had pimples on my face and a bad color, and for five years I had been troubled with suppression. The doctors called it 'Anemia and Exhaustion,' and said I was all run down, but Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound brought me all right."—Miss LAVISA MYRES, Box 74, Massena, N. Y.

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