

# The VALIANTS of VIRGINIA

By FALIE ERMINIE RIVES (MRS. POST WHEELER)  
ILLUSTRATED BY LAUREN STOUT

"But if you think that even he could be so crassly stupid, so monumentally blind to all that is really fine and beautiful—"

"Oh!" she cried with flashing com-



The Next Moment, With Clenched Teeth, He Was Viciously Stamping His Heel Again and Again.

prehension. "Oh, how could you! You—"

He nodded curtly. "Yes," he said. "I am that haphazard harlequin, John Valiant, himself."

## CHAPTER XIV.

On the Edge of the World. There was a pause not to be reckoned by minutes but suffocatingly long. She had grown as pale as he. "That was ungenerous of you," she said then with icy slowness. "Though no doubt you—found it entertaining. It must have still further amused you to be taken for an architect?"

"I am flattered," he replied, with a trace of bitterness, "to have suggested even for a moment, so worthy a calling."

At his answer she put out her hand with sudden gesture, as if bluntly thrusting the matter from her concern, and turning went back along the tree-shadowed path.

He followed glumly, gnawing his lip, wanting to say he knew not what, but wretchedly tongue-tied, noting that the great white moth was still waving its creamy wings on the dead stump and wondering if she would take the cape jessamines. He felt an embarrassed relief when, passing the roots where they lay, she stooped to raise them.

Then all at once the blood seemed to shrink from his heart. With a hoarse cry he leaped toward her, seized her wrist and roughly dragged her back, feeling as he did so, a sharp fiery sting on his instep. The next moment, with clenched teeth, he was viciously stamping his heel again and again, driving into the soft earth a twisting root-like something that slapped the brown wintered leaves into a hissing turmoil.

He had flung her from him with such violence that she had fallen sideways. Now she raised herself, kneeling in the feathery light, both hands clasped close to her breast, trembling excessively with loathing and feeling the den earth-floor billow like a canvas sea in a theater. Little puffs of dust from the protesting ground were wreathing about her set face, and she pressed one hand against her shoulder to repress her shivers.

"The horrible—horrible—thing!" she said whisperingly. "It would have bitten me!"

He came toward her, panting, and grasping her hand, lifted her to her feet. He staggered slightly as he did so, and she saw his lips twist together oddly. "Ah," she gasped, "it bit you! It bit you!"

"No," he said, "I think not."

"Look! There on your ankle—that spot!"

"I did feel something, just that first moment." He laughed uncertainly. "It's queer. My foot's gone fast asleep."

Every remnant of color left her face. She had known a negro child who had died of a water-moccasin's bite some years before—the child of a house-servant. It had been wading in the creek in the gorge. The doctor had said then that if one of the other children.

She grasped his arm. "Sit down," she commanded, "here, on this log, and see."

Her pale fright caught him. He obeyed, dragged off the low shoe and bared the tingling spot. The firm white flesh was puffing up around two tiny blue-rimmed punctures. He reached into his pocket, then remembered that he had no knife. As the next best thing he knotted his handkerchief quickly above the ankle, thrust a stick through the loop and twisted it till the ligature cut deeply, while she knelt beside him, her lips moving soundlessly, saying over and over to herself words like these: "I must not be frightened. He doesn't realize the danger, but I do! I must be quite collected. It is a mile to the doctor's. I might run to the house and send Uncle Jefferson, but it would take too long. Besides, the doctor

might not be there. There is no one to do anything but me."

She crouched beside him, putting her hands by his on the stick and wrenching it over with all her strength. "Tighter, tighter," she said. "It must be tighter." But, to her dismay, at the last turn the improvised cord snapped, and the released stick flew a dozen feet away.

Her heart leaped chokingly, then dropped into hammer-like thudding. He leaned back on one arm, trying to laugh, but she noted that his breath came shortly as if he had been running. "Absurd!" he said, frowning. "How such—a fool thing—can hurt!"

Suddenly she threw herself on the ground and grasped the foot with both hands. He could see her face twitch with shuddering, and her eyes dilating with some determined purpose.

"What are you going to do?"

"This," she said, and he felt her shrinking lips, warm and tremulous, pressed hard against his instep.

He drew away sharply, with savage denial. "No—no! Not that! You shan't! My lord—you shan't!" He dragged his numbing foot from her desperate grasp, lifting himself, pushing her from him; but she fought with him, clinging, panting broken sentences:

"You must! It's the only way. It was—a moccasin, and it's deadly. Every minute counts!"

"I won't. No, stop! How do you know? It's not going to—here, listen! Take your hands away. Listen!—Listen! I can go to the house and send Uncle Jefferson for the doctor and he—No! stop, I say! Oh—I'm sorry if I hurt you. How strong you are!"

"Let me!"

"No! Your lips are not for that—good God, that damnable thing! You yourself might be—"

"Let me! Oh, how cruel you are! It was my fault. But for me it would never have—"

"No! I would rather—"

"Let me! Oh, if you died!"

With all the force of her strong young body she wrenched away his protesting hands. A thirst and a sickish feeling were upon him, a curious irresponsible giddiness, and her hair which that struggle had brought in tumbled masses about her shoulders, seemed to have little flames running all over it. His foot had entirely lost its feeling. There was a strange weakness in his limbs.

Moments of half-consciousness, or consciousness jumbled with strange imaginings, followed. At times he felt the pressure upon the wounded foot, was sensible of the suction of the young mouth striving desperately to draw the poison from the wound. From time to time he was conscious of a white desperate face haloed with hair that was a mist of woven sparkles. At times he thought himself a recumbent stone statue in a wood, and her a great tall golden-headed flower lying broken at his feet. Again he was a granite boulder and she a vine with yellow leaves winding and clinging about him. Then a blank—a sense of movement and of troublous disturbance, of insistent voices that called to him and inquisitive hands that plucked at him, and then voices growing distant again, and hands falling away, and at last—silence.

Inky clouds were gathering over the sunlight when Shirley came from Damory Court, along the narrow wood-path under the hemlocks, and the way was striped with blue-black shadows and filled with sighing noises. She walked warily, halting often at some leafy rustle to catch a quick breath of dread. As she approached the tree-roots where the cape jessamines lay, she had to force her feet forward by sheer effort of will. At a little distance from them she broke a stick and with it managed to drag the bunch to her, turning her eyes with a shiver from the trampled spot near by. She picked up the flowers, and treading with caution, retraced her steps to the wider path.

She stepped into the Red Road at length in the teeth of a thunder-storm, which had arisen almost without warning to break with the passionate intensity of electric storms in the South.

There was no shelter, but even had there been, she would not have sought it. The turbulence of nature around her matched, in a way, her overstrained feeling, and she welcomed the fierce bulge of the wind in the up-blowing whorls of her hair and the drenching wetness of the rain. She tried to fix her mind on near things, the bending grasses, the scurrying red sunshades and flapping shrubbery, but her thoughts willfully escaped the tether, turning again and again to the events of the last two hours. She pictured Uncle Jefferson's eyes rolling up in ridiculous alarm, his winnowing arm lashing his indignant mule in his flight for the doctor.

At the mental picture she choked with hysterical laughter, then cried suddenly against the sopping bark. She saw again the doctor's gaze lit from his first examination of the tiny punctures to send a swift penetrant glance at her, before he bent his great body to carry the unconscious mule in his flight for the doctor.

swept over her. Then, all at once, tears came, strangling sobs that bent and swayed her. It was the discharge of the Leyden jar, the loosing of the tense bow-string and it brought relief. After a time she grew quieter. He would get well! The thought that perhaps she had saved his life gave her a thrill that ran over her whole body. And until yesterday she had never seen him! She kneeled in the blurred half-light, pushing her wet hair back from her forehead and smiling up in the rain that still fell fast. In a few moments she rose and went on. At the gate of the Rosewood lane stood a mail-box on a cedar post and she paused to fish out a draggled Richmond newspaper. As she thrust it under her arm her eye caught a word of a head-line. With a flush she tore it from its soggy wrapper, the wetted fiber parting in her eager fingers, and resting her foot on the lower rail of the gate, spread it open on her knee.

She stood stock-still until she had read the whole. It was the story of John Valiant's sacrifice of his private fortune to save the ruin of the involved corporation.

Its effect upon her was a shock. She felt her throat swell as she read; then she was chilled by the memory of what she had said to him: "What has he ever done except play polo and furnish spicy paragraphs for the society columns?"

"What a beast I was!" she said, addressing the wet hedge. "He had just done that splendid thing. It was because of that that he was little better than a beggar, and I said those horrible things!" Again she bent her eyes, rereading the sentences: "Took his detractors by surprise . . . had just sustained a grilling at the hands of the state's examiner which might well have dried at their fount the springs of sympathy."

She crushed up the paper in her hand and rested her forehead on the wet rail. Idiotically rich—a vandal—a useless, purse-proud flaneur. She had called him all that! She could still see the paleness of his look as she had said it.

Shirley, overexcited as she still was, felt the sobs returning. These, however, did not last long and in a moment she found herself smiling again. Though she had hurt him, she had saved him, too! When she whispered this over to herself it still thrilled and startled her. She folded the paper and hastened on under the cherry-trees.

Emmaline, the negro maid was waiting anxiously on the porch. She was thin to spareness, with a face as brown as a tobacco leaf, restless black eyes and wool neatly pinned and set off by an amber comb.

"Honey," called Emmaline, "I've been fearin' fo' yo' wid all that lightnin' rarin' aroun'. Yo' got th' jessamine? Give 'em to Emmaline. She'll fix 'em all nice, jes' how Mis' Judith like."

"All right, Emmaline," replied Shirley. "And I'll go and dress. Has mother missed me?"

"No'm. She ain' lef' huh room this whole blessed day. Now yo' barth's all ready—all 'cep'n th' hot watah, en I sen' Ranston with that th' fust thing. Yo' hurry en peel them wet close off yo'self, or yo' have one o' them digested chills."

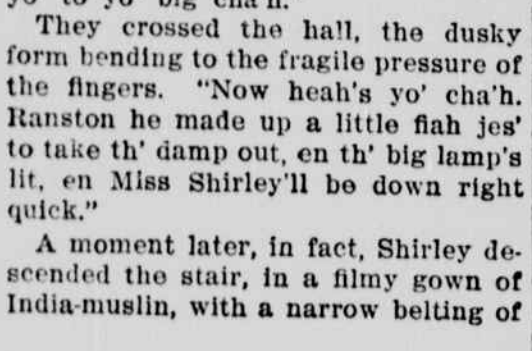
Her young mistress frown and the hot water despatched, the negro woman spread a cloth on the floor and began to cut and dress the long stalks of the flowers. This done she fetched bowls and vases, and set the pearly-white clumps here and there—on the dining-room sideboard, the hall mantel and the desk of the living-room—till the delicate fragrance filled the house, quite vanquishing the rose-scent from the arbor.

As the trim colored woman moved lightly about in the growing dusk, with the low click of glass and muffled clash of silver, the light t-tat of a cane sounded, and she ran to the hall, where Mrs. Dandridge was descending the stairway, one slim white hand holding the banister, under the edge of a white silk shawl which drooped its heavy fringes to her daintily-shod feet. On the lower step she halted, looking smilingly about at the blossoming bowls.

"Don't they smell up th' whole house?" said Emmaline. "I know'd yo' be pleas', Mis' Judith. Now put yo' han' on mah shouldah en I'll take yo' to yo' big cha'h."

They crossed the hall, the dusky form bending to the fragile pressure of the fingers. "Now heah's yo' cha'h. Ranston he made up a little fish jes' to take th' damp out, en th' big lamp's lit, en Miss Shirley'll be down right quick."

A moment later, in fact, Shirley descended the stair, in a filmy gown of India-muslin, with a narrow belting of



But More Than Once Shirley Saw Her Hands Clasp Themselves Together.

gold, against whose flowing sleeves her bare arms showed with a flushed pinkness the hue of the pale coral

beads about her neck. The camp newspaper was in her hand.

At her step her mother turned her head: she was listening intently to voices that came from the garden—a child's shrill treble opposing Ranston's stentorian grumble.

"Listen, Shirley. What's that Rickey is telling Ranston?"

"Don't yo' come heah wid yo' no-count play-act'n. Cyan' fool Ranston wid no sich snek-story, neidah. Ain' no moe'sin' at Dam'ry Co'ot, en nebah was!"

"There was, too!" insisted Rickey. "One bit him and Miss Shirley found him and sent Uncle Jefferson for Doctor Southall and it saved his life! So there! Doctor Southall told Mrs. Ma-

son. And he isn't a man who's just come to fix it up, either; he's the really truly man that owns it!"

"Who on earth is that child talking about?"

Shirley put her arm around her mother and kissed her. Her heart was beating quickly. "The owner has come to Damory Court. He—"

The small book Mrs. Dandridge held fell to the floor. "The owner! What owner?"

"Mr. Valiant—Mr. John Valiant. The son of the man who abandoned it so long ago." As she picked up the fallen volume and put it into her mother's hands, Shirley was startled by the whiteness of her face.

"Dearest!" she cried. "You are ill. You shouldn't have come down."

"No. It's nothing. I've been shut up all day. Go and open the other window."

Shirley threw it wide. "Can I get your salts?" she asked anxiously.

Her mother shook her head. "No," she said, almost sharply. "There's nothing whatever the matter with me. Only my nerves aren't what they used to be, I suppose—and snakes always did get on them. Now, give me the gist of it first. I can wait for the rest. There's a tenant at Damory Court. And his name's John—Valiant. And he was bitten by a moccasin. When?"

"This afternoon."

Mrs. Dandridge's voice shook. "Will he—will he recover?"

"Oh, yes."

"Beyond any question?"

"The doctor says so."

"And you found him, Shirley—"

"I was there when it happened." She had crouched down on the rug in her favorite posture, her coppery hair against her mother's knee, catching strange reddish over-tones like molten metal, from the shaded lamp. Mrs. Dandridge fingered her cane nervously. Then she dropped her hand on the girl's head.

"Now," she said, "tell me all about it."

## CHAPTER XV.

### The Anniversary.

The story was not a long one, though it omitted nothing: the morning fox-hunt and the identification of the new arrival at Damory Court as the owner of yesterday's stalled motor; the afternoon raid on the jessamine, the conversation with John Valiant in the woods.

Mrs. Dandridge, gazing into the fire, listened without comment, but more than once Shirley saw her hands clasp themselves together and thought, too, that she seemed strangely pale. The swift and tragic sequel to that meeting was the hardest to tell, and as she ended she put her hand to her shoulder, holding it hard. "It was horrible!" she said. Yet now she did not shudder. Strangely enough, the sense of loathing which had been surging over her at recurrent intervals ever since that hour in the wood, had vanished utterly!

She read the newspaper article aloud and her mother listened with an expression that puzzled her. When she finished, both were silent for a moment, then she asked, "You must have known his father, dearest; didn't you?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Dandridge after a pause. "I—knew his father."

Shirley said no more, and facing each other in the candle-glow, across the spotless damask, they talked, as with common consent, of other things. She thought she had never seen her mother more brilliant. An odd excitement was flooding her cheek with red and she chatted and laughed as she had not done for years.

But after dinner the gaiety and effervescence faded quickly and Mrs. Dandridge went early to her room. She mounted the stair with her arm thrown about Shirley's plant waist. At her door she kissed her, looking at her with a strange smile. "How curious," she said, as if to herself, "that it should have happened today!"

The reading-lamp had been lighted on her table. She drew a slim gold chain from the bosom of her dress and held to the light a little locket-brooch it carried. It was of black enamel, with a tiny laurel-wreath of pearls on one side encircling a single diamond. The other side was of crystal and covered a baby's russet-colored curl. In her fingers it opened and disclosed a miniature at which she looked closely for a moment.

Her eyes turned restlessly about the room. It had been hers as a girl, for Rosewood had been the old Garland homestead. It seemed now all at once to be full of calling memories of her youth.

"How strange that it should have been today!" It had been on Shirley's lips to question, but the door had closed, and she went slowly downstairs. She sat a while thinking, but at length grew restless and began to walk to and fro across the floor, her hands clasped behind her head so that the cool air filled her flowing sleeves,

In the hall she could hear the leisurely kon-kon—kon-kon of the tall clock. The evening outside was exquisitely still and the metallic monotone was threaded with the airy fiddle-fiddle of crickets in the grass and punctuated with the rain-glad clop of a frog.

Shirley stepped lightly down to the wet grass. Looking back, she could see her mother's lighted blind. All around the ground was splashed with rose-petals, looking in the squares of light like bloody rain. She skimmed the lawn and ran a little way down the lane. A shuffling sound presently fell on her ear.

"Is that you, Unc' Jefferson?" she called softly.

"Yas'm!" The footsteps came nearer. "Et's me, Miss Shirley." He ut-

tered noiselessly, and she could see his bent form vibrating in the gloom. "Yo' reck'n Ah done fertit?"

"No, indeed. I knew you wouldn't do that. How is he?"

"He right much bettah," he replied in the same guarded tone. "Doctah he say he be all right in er few days, on'y he gotter lay up er while. Dat was er ugly nip he got fom dat 'spiable reptyle."

"Do you think there can be any others about the grounds?"

"No'm. Dey mos'ly keeps ter de ma'sh-lan en on'y runs whah de undah-bresh ez thick. I gwine ter fix dat ter-morrow. Mars' Vallant he tell me ter grub et all out en make er bon-fiah ob it."

"That's right, Unc' Jefferson. Good night, and thank you for coming."

She started back to the house, when his voice stopped her.

"Mis' Shirley, yo' don' keer ef de ole man geddahs two er three ob dem roses? Seems lak young mars' moughty fon' ob dem. He got one in er glass but et's mos' daid now."

"Wait a minute," she said, and disappeared in the darkness, returning



"I'm Tempted to Stay Sick and Do Nothing but Eat."

quickly with a handful which she put in his grasp.

"There!" she whispered, and slipped back through the perfumed dark.

An hour later she stood in the cozy stillness of her bedroom. She threw off her gown, slipped into a soft loose robe of maize-colored silk and stood before the small glass. She pulled out the amber pins and drew her wonderful hair on either side of her face, looking out at her reflection like a mermaid from between the rippling waves of a moon-golden sea.

At last she turned, and seating herself at the desk, took from it a diary. She scanned the pages at random, her eyes catching lines here and there. "A good run today. Betty and Judge Chalmers and the Pendleton boys. My fourth brush this season." A frown drew itself across her brows, and she turned the page. "One of the hounds broke his leg, and I gave him to Rickey." \* \* \* "Chilly Lusk to dinner today, after swimming the Loring Rapid."

She bit her lip, turned abruptly to the new page and took up her pen. "This morning a twelve-mile run to Damory Court," she wrote. "This afternoon went for cape jessamines." There she paused. The happenings and sensations of that day would not be recorded. They were unwritable.

She laid down her pen and put her forehead on her clasped hands. How empty and inane these entries seemed beside this rich and eventful twenty-four hours just passed! What had she been doing a year ago today? she wondered. The lower drawer of the desk held a number of slim diaries like the one before her. She pulled it out, took up the last-year's volume and opened it.

(To be Continued.)

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The members of Post G. T. P. A. are requested to keep in mind the meeting at the Chamber of Commerce rooms on next Saturday night at 8.30 o'clock, when Mr. W. A. Watkins, of Greenville, state president of the association will be present to make an address.

### A Word of Caution.

One should be exceptionally careful just now about taking cold, and when a cold is contracted get rid of it as quickly as possible. To accomplish this you will find Chamberlain's Cough Remedy excellent. It is not only prompt and effectual but is pleasant and safe to take, and has a reputation of forty years back of it. For sale by all dealers.—Advt.

## HUERTA TO THE RESCUE.

DICTATOR WILL TAKE FIELD AGAINST VILLA AT TORREON.

Mexico City Has No Definite News From the Battle But Still Claims a Victory—Rumors that Gen. Velasco's Army Has Been Depleted by Desertions to the Rebels.

Mexico City, March 30.—Gen. Huerta is reported to be about to take the field against the rebels at Torreon. The government maintains that the federals have defeated Gen. Villa at Torreon, but they have no details concerning the fighting and it is generally believed that the stronghold is tottering.

Rumors are current that a large part of Gen. Velasco's army fled when Villa attacked Torreon and that many others deserted to the rebels at the first opportunity.

### Loss Estimated at 5,000.

Juarez, March 30.—The battle at Torreon is still raging today, but the constitutionalists say that no late news of the situation has been received.

The strict military censorship over dispatches gave rise to rumors that the rebels have received a setback in the main Plaza of the town. It is roughly estimated that five thousand have been killed and wounded since the battle started a week ago. With great enthusiasm Gen. Carranza made his entry into Juarez last night which is now the provisional capital.

### Zapata Reported Killed.

Mexico City, March 30.—Emiliano Zapata, the "rebel butcher," leader of the revolutionists in Southern Mexico has been killed by federals in the State of Guerrero, according to official announcement made today. No details are given.

### FIGHT ON TOLLS REPEAL.

Congressman Lendien Attacks England in Opposing Repeal.

Washington, March 30.—Sitting in an invalid's seat Congressman Lendien, of Florida, today opened the third day's debate in the house on the bill to repeal free tolls of the Panama canal. Opposing repeal he characterized Great Britain as "the greatest bulldozer of history," tramping around the world seeking whom it can scare" and said: "We called the world bully down in 1776." The heaviest guns of both sides of the debate will be fired this afternoon and tomorrow.

### Chamberlain's Tablets.

These tablets are intended especially for disorders of the stomach, liver and bowels. If you are troubled with heartburn, indigestion or constipation they will do you good. Try them. For sale by all dealers.—Advt.

Ghent, Belgium, furnishes practically all of the potted specimens of the the symmetrical Araucaria, or Norfolk island pine, used as an ornamental foliage house plant, in Europe and America. The United States imports at least 250,000 of these plants in 5 or 6 inch pots each year.

### Muddy Complexion.

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