



A GIRL OF GRIT.

BY MAJOR ARTHUR GRIFFITHS.
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CHAPTER IV.

A MILLIONAIRE'S FRIENDS.
Directly I was inside the house, Savory handed me a letter from Lawford.

Dear Captain Wood—When I left you in Providence, I ran up against some friends who are much set upon making your acquaintance. They are the Duke and Duchess of Tierra Sagrada. He is a Spanish don, she an American beauty, Susette Bywater they called her in New York, where she and her family were well acquainted with your father.

I had no engagements that night but a couple of balls, for neither of which, after my disappointment in the park, I was now very keen. Besides, I had no wish to be very late that night. I saw on my table an official "box" straight from the office and knew that it contained the great scheme for the attack on New York, which was referred to me for examination and report. I meant to give it my best attention in the early morning hours next day and so promised myself to get to bed betimes. A little good music would soothe me. I thought, so I wrote a few lines accepting the invitation and proceeded to dress.

It was then, as I stood before the glass in the window that gave upon the street, I caught a glimpse of the same forlorn creature looking up at my house. Was it mere accident? After I had heard that day the smallest matter all still unexplained assumed a certain importance.

When I left the club after dinner, my "shadow" was still there. He sank slowly and, as I thought, reluctantly out of sight when I entered the

Savory handed me a letter from Lawford. Hanson and told the caddy to drive to Covent Garden. Remembering Mr. Snuyzer's communication but a few hours before, this espionage caused me some uneasiness. Yet it was done so clumsily that I half believed the fellow wished rather to attract than escape my notice. Of this I had soon a clear proof.

When I alighted from the cab just short of the colonnade approach of the opera house, I saw him, heard him, just at my elbow, having transferred himself there by the same mysterious process that brings a tout all the way from a railway station to your front door to unload the luggage.

"Don't take no more cabs, guv'nor," he whispered hoarsely in my ear, and next moment he was gone. Who had sent him in such a roundabout way to tell me this? Who, indeed, had set him on to watch me? It must have been a friend, of course, and I gave the credit to Mr. Snuyzer. They were evidently smart people, Messrs. Saraband & Sons, when there was a chance of business coming their way.

The night was not over yet—a night of dark doings and unexplained mysteries, all of which seemed to center in me. I could not quite believe—why should I?—that the scraps of conversation I was now to overhear referred to me. And yet, had I been gifted with second sight—had I, indeed, been more alive to the warnings I had received—I might have been spared much misery. But I am anticipating.

When I reached the opera the act five was down, and I thought to cast a look on the house before I made my way to the box where I was bidden. My hosts were strangers, and I rather wished to see Lawford first, that he might present me to them in due form. As I entered by one of the side ways, the stalls and stood there watching the audience for a time.

In the midst of this I became suddenly aware that a pair of bright eyes were fixed upon me from another direction, and I saw that I was an object of interest—more of a passing interest, perhaps—to a well-dressed, charming woman in a box on the pit tier.

on the back, saying: "Oh, oh! So you are here. Come right along. Let me present you to the duchess. She's mighty set upon seeing you," and he led me way along the corridor to the box No. 27A.

As we got close to it I saw the door was ajar and I was attracted by the sound of voices talking Spanish, which I knew Lawford held no back, possibly fearing to be indiscreet and to intrude upon some family quarrel. What was said did not impress him, perhaps, for I think he did not understand Spanish. The voices were raised high enough to be plainly audible to any one outside a man's, course, harsh and menacing; a woman's in reply, pleading softly, yet firmly.

"You know the conditions and you are bound to assist. The man has been handed over to us. He is our game, where they will be entirely delighted to receive you. Send back a line at your early convenience and oblige, yours very faithfully, RUTH W. LAWFORD.

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eyes. "Very much so, Captain Wood. If I were a friend, an old friend, let me say, I would counsel you, strongly urge you, to be constantly on your guard, very much on your guard."

As she spoke a deadly pallor overspread her face, which was high colored, as is often seen in very fair haired women, even when still quite young. Her husband had returned silently, and she first had caught sight of him standing there behind me. Why was she thus terrified? Because the duke had heard her last words?

Whether or not the Duke of Tierra Sagrada had even heard his wife when so earnestly counseling me to be upon my guard, I was unable to judge. At least, he made no sign. His manner was perfectly quiet and natural, and he spoke in an unconcerned tone when he pressed me to keep my seat in the front of the box.

At the next interval he said very courteously: "Do you propose to stay for the Cavallera Rusticiana? Would you care to accompany us? Our carriage is here. Susette will be very pleased to present you."

"You are very good," I said. "I should like to go very much if I may run away early. I have a couple of balls tonight."

It was a curious and not unimportant circumstance which viewed by the light of later events, that the three houses I was to visit that night were within a stone's throw of each other.

The first, that of the Jos Kios minister, to which I was introduced by the Duke and Duchess of Tierra Sagrada, was in Rutland Gate. The next, Mrs. Collingham Smith's, was in Prince's Gardens, and the last, Lady Delane's, in Prince's Gate. My new friends would have sent me on in their carriage, especially when they learned I had not far to go. This near neighborhood was remarked on by the duke, when, observing that the reception did not greatly amuse me, he asked if I was not dying to get to my dancing and where, exactly, I was going.

"You must let us send you on to Prince's Gardens in the carriage," he said, very civilly. "We have brought you out of your way to a not very bright entertainment and now we ought to speed your departure. We must stay on here for an hour or so more, but there is no reason why you should."

I protested that Prince's Gardens was only a few yards off, round the corner in fact, and I really preferred to walk. Besides, I only meant to look in for a moment. My real destination was Lady Delane's, which was also quite close at hand.

"To be sure, yes, certainly. I know well, well, if you will not be persuaded. But the carriage is entirely at your disposition. Is that not so, Susette?"

It occurred to me that the duchess was not altogether pleased at this off hand disposal of her carriage. So I refused the kind offer and left them with the pleasurable sensation of having made a couple of charming new acquaintances.

There was another acquaintance, if I might so call him, whether friend or foe, waiting for me outside the same stuffy slipshod creature whom I had seen sitting that evening. Directly I went out I saw him emerge from the porch of an unfurnished house and follow me to the very door in Prince's Gardens.

He was still on the watch when I left Mrs. Collingham Smith's having found nothing to detain me there, no sign of Frida Fairholme, whom I had hoped to run down. I would now have confronted this pertinacious "shadow," calling him to account for thus dogging my footsteps, and if he gave no satisfaction, handing him over to the police. But it would have taken time and I felt I had none to lose.

It was already long past midnight. I might miss Frida, and that was not to be borne. Mrs. Fairholme, her mother, could give me no news of her charge. "Yes, Frida is here, somewhere. That is all I know," she answered in a weary, far-off, semi-somnolent voice, as, no doubt, she had answered a dozen similar queries. "But I have not seen her for an hour or more. I do wish, Mr. Wood, you would find her and bring her to me," she said plaintively.

As I wandered about dejectedly, all at once I heard, "Captain Wood, Miss Fairholme wants to speak to you," and I saw a hated rival, with no friendliness in his face, pointing to where Frida sat behind a great mass of flowering azaleas.

She was as gracious a sight as ever, one of the fairest and brightest of a sex created for the delight and torment of mankind. Her dress is beyond my powers of description. I think it was a pale blue satin with pink roses, but that is all I can say, except that from the feathery alight that crowned her sunny hair to the tip of a tiny shoe pushed a little out, but working prettily upon the carpet, she was the most absolutely charming woman I had ever seen.

"I don't think I shall speak to you," began Miss Frida, with a sniff. "What have you to say for yourself? Are you aware that I kept you three dances?" I took a seat by her side without answering, and then, giving way to an elation I did not exactly feel, in spite of the great change in my fortunes, I laughed in her face.

"Really, Captain Wood, I am at a loss to understand this most idiotic proceeding," she went on, with great stentorianness; "something must have happened."

"It has—something most strange and surprising. I have been looking for you the whole day, in the park, at the opera, at Mrs. Collingham Smith's, to tell you that—that—that. Do you remember once saying that you felt perfectly safe with me?"

Have firmly that you are a dangerous lunatic, and I will ask you, please, to take me back to mother." She half rose from her seat.

"Stay—you used to say that there could be no nonsense between us; that I was only a pauper, a harmless, in-



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significant moment, and impossible—whenever I were a duke, or an American millionaire, you might—perhaps?"

"Do you mean to say that you have been deceiving me all this time? I at together refuse to be bound by any unguarded words I may have uttered, and if you persist shall also decline the honor of your acquaintance."

"Hear me out at any rate," I pleaded, as I seized her hand and gently drew her back, for she had now got up and was leaving me like a frightened bird.

Then I blurted out the whole story, in that clumsy, blundering way a man has when his heart is full and all his happiness depends on what he is saying. Still never a word from her, until at last I cried despairingly:

"Frida, darling, my first thought when I heard of this fortune was of you—say you will share it with me."

"I think you have been most abominably deceitful and underhand," she faltered. "You should not have kept it from me. I had a right to know, I should have been told."

"I only heard the news myself this very morning."

"But just think what people would say. I should be called a mercenary wretch, accused of selling myself for my millions."

"They shall be yours. I will make them all over to you at once. I do not care for the million bits except that they give me the right to ask you for this."

I took her gloved hand and kissed it, but she herself, turning her blushing face up to mine offered me her lips.

When I left Prince's Gate I seemed to tread an air. We had been among the last. Frida and I had lingered on among the azaleas till Mrs. Fairholme's patience was fairly exhausted and she came herself to end the tete-a-tete. I think she saw enough in our cautious faces to comfort her with the hope that the pillars of her chaperonage were as good as her own, and she to be truly indeed a risk's invitation to come to lunch, and consequently.

Then I saw them into their carriage, refusing the proffered seat, for I wished to be alone with my new found happiness.

The night was fine, the air soft, under the pale sky for dawn was near at hand, and I stepped out gayly, with all the buoyancy of one with whom the world went well.

I was brought up shortly and sharply to the realities of life by running up plump against my "shadow." The man who had stuck to my heels so pertinaciously all the evening was still on the watch.

round and was heading westward. "Here, hi, hi!" I shouted, lifting the flap. "Where are you going?"

"Wot's up?" answered the caddy insolently, as he pulled up short. "Think I don't know my way about? Stow it, or—"

The alternative I never heard, for at that moment two men jumped up on the front tread of the cab and opening the doors threw themselves upon me. Their weight alone would have sufficed to overpower me, to silence me, and crush out all resistance. I could do no more than give voice to one frantic yell for help, for now the strong, pungent smell of chloroform under my nostrils and the vain struggle I made with fast increasing torpor told plainly that they had called in another dread ally, and that I was absolutely helpless in their hands.

CHAPTER V.
FROM SAULT JOHN'S CLERK OF MESSRS. SARABAND & SONS, NEW YORK CITY AND CHICAGO.

In my earnest desire to further the wishes and interests of your firm I visited the gentleman named in your last pleasure and put before him, briefly and with much circumspection, the reasons why he should secure the services of Messrs. Saraband & Sons. Captain Wood did not respond very cordially to my proposal, which he guessed was not serious. It is my settled conviction now that he would give the earth to reconsider that hasty and mistaken reply.

I shadowed him the evening of the first day "now just 48 hours ago, following him to the Hyde park, to his club, to his house. In Hyde park only one person spoke to Mr. Wood. I knew him by sight and name, a half American, Jimmy Lawford, having crossed with him once in the same Cossard and taken a hand in the same game of poker in the smoking saloon. He passed then as an ocean drummer, although some said he was engaged in the secret service of the federal government. Now, I take it, he is just loafing around—just the sort of chap to be in this crowd against Wood.

I did not hear what he said to Wood, but when leaving by the park gates I noticed Jimmy in close talk with a hansom cab man who had got off his perch and was very particular to hear what Lawford said.

I only caught the last word or two. "Any time tonight or tomorrow night you'll get the office, mind you're on the quiet."

I shadowed the captain all that blessed night, to the opera, out west, to several parties, and spoke to him, or rather he spoke me, roughly, too, at the door of a house in Prince's Gate, when he was seeing two ladies to their carriage. That was not quite the last of him, for somewhere near Knightsbridge he was poked up by a cab, and next thing it comes back, ten miles an hour, caddy standing up and flogging his horse like mad. It was so near daylight that I got a view inside the hansom as it passed me full tilt. I caught sight in that short moment of a mass of people inside the cab, two or more men struggling and fighting with some one underneath them.

Of course Captain Wood was being kidnaped and carried off. I reckoned that up on the spot, and gathered my self together then and there to give chase to the cab. I followed it steadily

He was seeing two ladies to their carriage, down the Kensington road, losing my distance, of course, very fast. By the time I reached High street I had lost the cab.

But a man at an early coffee stall had seen it pass, holding straight on the main road toward Holland House. I heard of it again at St. Mary Abbott's terrace, and was told that it had turned up Addison road. I traced it by Holland road to Shepherd's Bush Green, and there a herring was drawn across the street.

I was on the track now of two cabs, one going by the Shepherd's Bush or Uxbridge road, the other by the Starch Green road. I followed the first, and knew blank. It was a night hawk working home to his stables, and where, by and by, I caught the chap settling into his crib. He swore he hadn't had a fare for the last two hours, and I could see he was speaking truth, for his horse had not turned a hair.

I went back then to the Starch Green road, asking all and several for my galloping hansom cab. There were very few people about at this early hour, only the policemen, and they looked very shy at my tramp's clothes, giving no answer. At last a couple of decent farm folk bringing in milk told me they had passed a hansom with a worn horse on the far side of Hammersmith bridge, in the district of Barnes.

By the time I reached the Strathallan road it was broad daylight. I found a long road of detached villa houses, each in its own garden, many with stables adjoining. I figured it out, as I walked up and down this road twice, that one of these cottages was just suited for the purpose of sequestering Captain Wood, if he could be got

to it. He could be driven straight into the stable yard; the cab would be no more seen when the coach house door closed behind him, and no one, neither the neighbors nor the police, would be a bit the wiser as to what mischief was being worked inside.

It took me just two hours to examine the entrance gates of every villa house with stables in that road. In three of them there were the new tracks of wheels marked plainly in the thick lying summer dust. I could not discover which were the most recent, but I carefully noted the numbers of these houses, meaning to put a watch upon them all.

I called up the boy Joseph Vials, a very smart young square-toe, from the office in Norfolk street, as soon as I could get a telegram through. By the time he arrived I had narrowed my investigations to a single point for further observation.

The day had so far advanced that the business of life was well begun. I saw the blinds drawn up in two of the houses, the front doors opened, the women helps busy shaking the mats and washing down the stoops. Presently some of the young folks ran out into the gardens, and I could see the family gatherings round the breakfast tables, from which on the early morning air came the smell of hot coffee and English breakfast bacon, with the temptation of Lantulus for a starving man who had been out all night. All this while the third house remained closed, hermetically sealed. It was closed on tight shuttered, not a sign of life in it. When I reached my lodgings in Norfolk street I was pretty well washed out. But I turned in for an hour and at 10 a. m. I awoke much refreshed. As I dressed with care I pondered deeply over this business and the course that I should adopt. My first and most urgent duty was to secure the release of Mr. Wood, always supposing that my gentleman was the person actually carried off to the cab. At present I had no certainty of this, only a bit more than strong suspicion. Yet if I could ascertain that he had not returned home I should be justified in taking some course for him.

First I went to Clarges street. The man there remembered me, but looked strangely when I inquired for Captain Wood.

"You have not heard the news, then?" he said.

"What in thunder is there to hear more than I have to tell you?" I asked, nettled at thinking some one was before me.

"Why, that the captain has met with an accident. He slipped up somehow last night or early this morning and hurt himself badly."

"Who told you that story? Do you believe it?"

"I believe the captain's own handwriting."

"What did he say exactly?" I was quite taken aback, as you may suppose but did not want to show it too much.

"Here, read it for yourself. It's not all his own, of course, and you will understand why. But that's his name at the bottom there sure enough."

It was written on good gray note paper in a fair running hand, and it said: Savory, I've come to get driving home. Here slipped. I'm all right. I was thrown out of the cab. Some kind people picked me up and are taking good care of me. But I can't be able to go to bed. I'll be home in some days. Send me by best postman a dozen shirts, dressing gown, collars, neckties, buttons, papers and the rest. Yours, W. A. Wood.

"17A Laburnum street, Harrow Road?"

"And you sent them? How?"

"By the cab that brought the letter."

"Why didn't you go with them your self?"

"I thought of it certainly, and I wish I had."

"You may well wish that. And now, if you will be guided by me, you'll go and find out 17A Laburnum street right away, if there's any such place at all."

"Oh, but there is. It's in the directory."

"Is that so? Well, if you come across Mr. Wood there I'll run you for next president of the United States. You've got just the face for a postage stamp."

"What in the name of conscience d'ye mean? What's appened to him, then?"

"It's my opinion that Captain Wood has fallen among thieves, brigands, worse ruffians, who'll hold him to ransom for blackmail, rob, murder him. God knows what, unless some of us can circumvent their blackguard maneuvers. And I am going to try. I don't believe in cab accidents and Laburnum streets. You may, so you'd better go and judge for yourself."

But he was not going to find him in Laburnum street. I was pretty sure of that, but it was right to look there on the off chance that this story was true. For myself I was more than ever persuaded of foul play, and I considered I was bound to lay the whole matter before the London police.

I was not very well received at Scotland Yard. They told me to get proper credentials, a certificate from the American consul. I was terribly rolled, but not to waste time I took a cab straight to Great St. Helen's, where of course I was perfectly well known.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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