

# A GIRL OF GRIT.

BY MAJOR ARTHUR GRIFFITHS.

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(CONTINUED.)

With that he pulled a small chart out of his pocket and a pair of dividers. We went over the points one by one, and he took them all in a clear, quick way that was beautiful to see. It was the first time I had to work with a British officer, and if they're all like this major they're a spy, smart lot, and don't you forget it.

"It's all a question of time," he said as he marked a cross upon the chart and, after running out a few more figures, went on.

"That's where the Fleur-de-Lis ought to be by daylight, three or four miles to the westward, steaming at the rate we know of, not necessarily gaining, but possibly with better speed in hand if she wants it. Now, where shall we be? That will depend upon how our hooker steams and for that we must wait till we get on board."

We found her, the Jacob Silverton, with her steam up, lying alongside the wharf in the Millbay docks, and as they expected us, we were soon underway. It was then close on 1 a m. Now the major made anxious inquiries as to her speed, and we found the best she could do was about nine knots. There were no more than three hours to daylight, and then we should have covered a bare 30 miles.

"It'll be a near thing," said the major. "However, let's get 40 knots while they crack on all steam and make her move."

I had not been in bed for a couple of nights and was sound asleep when the major woke me.

"The luck's against us, Snuyzer," he began abruptly. "We've just missed the Fleur-de-Lis, saw her plainly enough, about three miles to the westward and bore down on her straight. I suppose she did not like our looks and turned on full steam ahead. Doubt if we shall catch her now."

"Of course we must stick to her. Has she the heel of us?" I asked anxiously.

"A little, I'm afraid. Can't say for certain. What's worse, she's changed her course southerly."

"Why worse?"

"Steering for the French coast. Don't you see? If she can make a French port or gain French waters, three miles from shore, you understand, she will laugh at us. Can't touch her, they'll say."

I was ready to let out a big oath, but turned out and ran up on deck to see the situation for myself.

It was a perfectly splendid morning. The sun shone, sky clear, water smooth as glass. There was our chase, leaving a long line of coal black smoke, exactly reflected in the sea.

"They're giving her all they can get," I said to the skipper, as I climbed quickly on to the bridge, where the police sergeant joined us. "Is she drawing away from us?"

"Not much, not much. I much doubt if she does at all. The next hour will settle that."

"Has she made us out, think you?"

"Must have, when she changed her course," said the sergeant.

"How is she steering?"

"W. S. W. southerly," answered the skipper. "Bring up on the Brittany coast, I expect, a little short of Ushant."

"We're some 90 miles from the nearest land, as we're now steering," said the major, who had joined us on the bridge. "Ought to strike it this afternoon early, anywhere between Lannion, Roscoff, or St. Pol, if we keep a straight course at the same speed."

"What sort of country might it be?" I asked. "Any big cities or seaports handy?"

"Morlaix is the nearest, and Brest, the great arsenal, is just round the corner."

"Will she communicate, think you? Hardly suit her, I should say."

"It will depend. She's not the sort to appeal to the French police, gendarmes, douaniers, or what not. No doubt she will fight shy of the law unless we force her."

parallel to the coast, touching St. Pol first and then other villages and at last Morlaix.

"They think we can't touch them; that may be so, but I mean to have a try. What's your idea?"

We talked it out at pretty considerable length and settled.

First.—That we could do nothing much till nightfall, unless they came out again, which was not to be expected. We must, of course, watch for that, lying handy under easy steam off and on, ready if it so fell out to continue the pursuit.

Second.—We must reconnoiter; some one must sneak near enough to spy on them, and, without being seen, try to get at their game.

Third.—If she held her ground, we must cut her out some time in the night. It was a bold move. They might show fight, and we might get into serious trouble with the French authorities, for it would be organized war in neutral waters, a grave breach of international law. But the major laughed and said he meant to do it all the same.

"What I am most afraid of is that they should give us the slip, get ashore and run for it."

"They couldn't take the captain, not by force in broad daylight and he wouldn't be likely to go of his own accord."

"True for you, Snuyzer. I'm in hope they'll just stay where they are, thinking to weary us out. However, they may stay a little too long. Now, I'm for the shore, and I shall take Joe."

The major was away for a good hour, and he came back alone. He had left Joe on the watch, with one or two signals arranged to keep us up to the time of day. If the yacht moved her berth, he was to wave his cap; if she sent a boat ashore, his handkerchief, and so on.

"They're not very comfortable on board," the major said. "Get a man at the masthead on the lookout, and I fancy he can see our smoke. Their fires are banked. Should not be surprised if they tried to run for it after dark. We must be on the alert, ready to give chase, or they may get away again."

"You'll wait to take the boy off, I hope?" I was anxious about Joe, not wishing he should come to harm.

"That's all right. He understands. If we have to leave in a hurry he's to make the best of his way back to England on his own account. I gave him money and explained. No fear of him."

"We got his sign from him the whole of that afternoon and evening. The time passed quickly enough, for the major and I talked all the time of what we thought to do and how we should do it. The boldest plan pleased us best, and we meant to row straight for the yacht with all hands, picking up Joe by the way, board her and trust to luck and bounce for the rest."

Night came about 8 o'clock, dark and starless. It was best to get to work right away, and we were to start about 9. But a little before that we heard shots and the noise of a rumpus, faint but distinct in the distance. Something was up, certain sure, and in the direction of the bay, for the sounds came from the yacht.

"Better not poke our noses into any row, not till we're driven to it," the major said quietly. "The night's young yet. We've got it all before us."

So we waited half an hour, and were on the point of starting out on an expedition when we heard a sound of ours approaching.

What could it mean?

Then came a low "Hello! Jacob Silverton ahoy!" in Joe's voice, and he was seen alongside, in a boat that belonged to the Fleur-de-Lis. He said so, anyway, and we were bound to believe him, although it was a confoundedly queer story.

While he waited among the rocks he still kept his lookout on the yacht. Although it had fallen dark, he could make out her hull on the water plainly; there were lights, too, aboard, with streaks and reflections strong enough to show up parts of her.

Suddenly he saw a figure dropping out of the stern into the yacht's dingey, which seemed to have been put there on purpose, and which, anyway, was quickly cast adrift, for it floated slowly and silently away. The tide was making into the bay, and she must have been caught on the current, which carried her inshore. Half way to the land the figure, which had no doubt been crouching in the bottom, out of sight, got up on to the thwart and began pulling like mad.

Joe soon made up his mind. He must know more about this boat and the man in it; so he got up on to the top of the rocks, where there was a better surface, and ran all he knew to the head of the bay, following the sound of the oars and getting a squint now and again of the black smudge of the dingey. He came upon it at last, high and dry on the shore.

But the man was gone.

Joe was a smart nipper; he knew what he had to do, and that was to pass on his news to us. The quickest way would be to row into the dingey; so he ran her back into the water and pulled out to the sea, coasting the far side and giving the yacht a wide berth.

When almost off it, a fierce row broke out aboard. Six shooters were let off, several shots, pretty quickly followed by yells and curses. Joe saw that the disturbance was heard on shore; lights began to dance about in the village, and the alarm was given.

"They'll soon have the gendarmes on their backs. Now's our time. We'll take the dingey back; it will be an excuse for getting on board," said the major. "Sharp's the word, skipper. Man the boat, every soul you can spare, cast loose and give way."

A shore boat was already alongside when we got to the yacht; it had brought the authorities, for when we had the answer came in French to



He saw a figure dropping out of the stern into the yacht's dingey.

keep off, that the police were in charge, and if we had anything to say it must be by daylight.

"Anyway, we'd better bring the tug into the bay and lie close handy against the morning," I suggested, and the advice was considered good, although the skipper did not much like the job of entering a strange place in the dead of night.

There were more difficulties made next day, and it was quite late before the major and I set foot on the Fleur-de-Lis. Some more big French toads had come off from shore a magistrate, one or two doctors, and an officer of gendarmes and they had begun a "verbal process," as it is called, for there had been wounding and attempted murder, so they said, on board the yacht.

The long and the short of it was that the rogues had fallen out among themselves, with good reason, too, from the point of view of some of them. McQuahe, the colored man from Klondike, had fallen out with Lawford for assisting our captain to escape from the yacht, and loosed off at him directly Wood was missed. He was a quick shooter and had pretty well killed Lawford up with lead, so full that it might go hard with him.

But at his own request, they let Major Thornhill have some talk with him, in which a little light was thrown on recent proceedings. William Wood has been brought thus far by the Fleur-de-Lis, a close prisoner, but by Lawford's help had broken out and got to shore in the dingey. He, of course, was the man Joe had seen.

Questioned as to the confidential papers, and whether they were on board, Lawford shook his head.

The duke has stuck to them. There's the money in them, a big pile, and he's crossing the pond by tomorrow's mail to sell them to Uncle Sam. Guess you won't overtake him, and if you try to stop him on landing he'll have the American government on his side. They're hungering for those papers, you bet."

"You are positive they are not here?" insisted Thornhill.

"Don't I tell you? I'm likely to get nothing more from this crowd except my death, and it's to my advantage to serve the other side. If you want those papers, you must look for them on the Chattahoochee, and she leaves Southampton tomorrow (Sunday) morning."

It was now only the afternoon of Saturday, and we might have done it well starting back full steam ahead at once. But French police and French lawyers are a sight slower and more interfering than the British, and they wanted all of us to sign a new "verbal process" all about ourselves. The formalities were not completed by Sunday morning, and by the time we were ready to start for England the Chattahoochee must have already left the Solent.

We made, therefore, for Weymouth, the nearest point, and landed late that night. Thence the major and I took the cars for London, neither of us remarkably happy, for the whole blooming business was more or less of a fizzle.

## CHAPTER X.

CAPTAIN WOOD RESCUES.

After an interminable drive, still bound and gagged, I at last found myself on a narrow bed, probably a cabin berth. The motion, the noises, the odors around, soon satisfied me that I was on a shipboard and at sea. I must have been in a state of semiconsciousness, the result of ill usage and want of food, for I only roused myself with difficulty on hearing my name called aloud. I realized then that my bonds had been cast loose; there was no gag in my mouth; I was so far free that I could use my limbs and speak if I choose. I was in a small cabin, only dimly lighted through the closed port; but it was still daylight, and from the wash against the side I knew that the craft, whatever it might be, was in the open sea.

Three men were in the small cabin, crowding up and filling it completely. Two stood over me, one of whom I recognized as Lawford, the American, and when I saw his face I realized how deep laid was the plot against me. Behind was a third, a coffee colored negro, who took no part in the proceedings, except to show his white teeth in a truculent grin from time to time when reference was made to him.

The spokesman was a tall, thin, lantern jawed man, with a goatee beard and a big slouch hat. His accent was strongly corroborative of the land he hailed from.

"You'll be mad with us, I guess, Mr. Wood, for this rough handling," he began, slowly revolving an unlighted cigar between his lips; "but we've got our reasons, and they're good—to us, anyhow. I may first observe that you are in our power, and that we can do what we like with you."

"Fishaw! The first ship passing, liner or man-of-war, will set me free," I cried contemptuously.

"That's so, if you could communicate; but we shall prevent that, I reckon, by keeping you below, unless you swear to do no such thing."

"What do you want of me? Money, I suppose? Well—I'll pay anything in reason."

"Now you're talking. That's the caper; only I take it we shall pretty well help ourselves. The scheme, as we've figured it, and I don't mind telling you, is to keep you—right here, in this same hooker at sea—while the rest of us dip down into your dollars. We've a better right than you to your misgotten fortune."

"Nonsense. What can you do without my signature?"

"We've got it, young squire, or a first class imitation of it. That was managed long ago."

"There will be a heavy reckoning for you all—all, Lawford, you understand?"

The poor wretch looked down, but said nothing. "Guess we can take care of ourselves; anyway, that's our business. Yours is to consider whether you want to be kept a close prisoner down here. It will be mighty unpleasant in a few weeks' time. I calculate, mayhap you'll think better of it. Mr. Wood, tomorrow or next day. Meanwhile your comfort will not be forgotten. Lysander here is an excellent valet. You will prepare a bath for Mr. Wood."

"Yes, 'Colonel McQuahe,'" replied the mulatto.

"Get him some clean clothes!"—

"Yes, 'Colonel McQuahe.'"—

"And just wait on him closely, punctually, d'ye see? Never let him out of your sight unless he is here in this cabin under close lock and key."

"Yes, 'Colonel McQuahe.'"—

I found to my surprise a portmanteau, one of my own, with shirt, linen

and one or two suits of dittoes, had been put into my cabin. As I was still in evening dress, that which I had worn on the night of my capture, I was glad enough to change. Before I threw off my clothes I felt in all my pockets and found my watch and my purse. Nothing was missing except a small wallet which I always carried and in which I had placed the letter from the New York lawyers announcing my accession of fortune. No doubt it had been removed for some evil purpose, part of the general scheme of fraud.

I could find no fault with the mulatto Lysander except that he was too attentive. His ears were that of a keeper or jailer, tempered with the devotion of a personal body servant. He shaved me very skillfully, helped me into my clean clothes, made my bed, tidied my cabin and brought me what I stood most in need of, a hot and sufficient meal.

Save for one ever haunting, tormenting uncertainty, I could afford to bide my time; I might possess my soul in patience, fairly confident that the right would come right in the end.

But what of Frida? When should I see her again? To win her and be parted from her all within a few short hours—it was hard measure, indeed. And how would she take my disappearance? Would she be grieved, annoyed, suspicious—what?

These last rather anxious speculations were broken in on by the appearance of Lysander, my laconic jailer, who brought me a cup of hot coffee, with the brief words—"Breakfast, boss."

He was presently followed by 'Colonel McQuahe and Lawford. They both inquired most affectionately after my health. Had I slept well, was the food to my taste, the boy attentive?—all as pat as though they were my hosts and we were the best of friends imaginable.

"Say now, Mr. Wood," went on McQuahe, "I dew hope you'll change your decision of yesterday. It was ill considered—yes, sir, you may take that from me. See, we've no wish to keep you here below the whole voyage—because a tarantula long voyage—but we can't let you go on deck unless you promise."

"What?"

"Just this. You must promise not to try and communicate with any hooker that may approach us, neither by waving, shouting, or otherwise signaling. Also, never to speak to any soul on board but our three selves; never to signal or make signs to the captain or any man jack of the crew—not that it would help you any, for they believe you to be sick mentally, a lunatic with disordered senses, brought to sea for his health. We two are the doctors. Lysander here is attendant and keeper. Will you give us your word of honor as a gentleman?"

"To gentlemen?" I interjected, and the irony was not lost on Lawford, whose red face grew redder.

"As man to man," corrected McQuahe. "I calculate that's good enough. And don't raise our dander, or you may hurt yourself."

"I will promise," I said, "but conditionally. I claim to withdraw from it when it suits me, when and how I please."

"As how?"

"If I find that I am fairly treated, if circumstances alter, if—"

"You see a chance of making your escape! Waal, sir, when that time comes we shall take the gloves off, and you will feel our fists."

It was a splendid day on deck, bright sun, a brisk air freshening off the sparkling sea. We were under full canvas—she was a schooner yacht—and doing a good ten knots, I imagined, down channel. I judged the direction of our course by the position of the sun, the movement of the shipping and steamers going both ways, yet more by the blue line on either bow.

I have called our vessel a yacht, her name the Fleur-de-Lis, as I saw it marked on the life belts, brass work and compass box; a yacht, as was evident from her fittings, the clear deck fore and aft, the abundance of

the absence of hammer, the fairly white sails. But she was not particularly shipshape, not as spick and span as scrupulously clean, as if her own crew were on board, her crew were seemingly a scratch lot, not true yachtsmen; and the skipper, although alert as a sailorlike, was in a shabby suit, the regulation blue cloth and buttons.

Then they arranged me in my with quite tender solicitude. I was but that was part of the play; my books and a pipe and left me, but not to myself. Two of the three were always at my elbow or held me constantly in sight. I was close guarded, but I hardly minded it, for a sort of dreamy, luxurious lassitude overcame me, the reaction, no doubt, from so many emotions, and I dozed on and off pretty well all that day, Thursday. I awoke next morning between 6 and 7, feeling fresh and fit, and would gladly have turned out to enjoy the invigorating air on deck. But no one came for a long time, although I rang and called and clapped my hands. When, after a time, Lysander appeared, he wore a discontented, saturnine look on his dark, ugly face and went on with his valeting sullenly and silently till he left me. By and by Lawford came in, anxious and perturbed, as I could see by his face and manner.

"What's amiss, Lawford? Have your sins found you out? The hangman might be aboard, to say nothing of the police."

"They're in sight anyway," he said in a low whisper. Then, checking my exclamation of delight, he added impressively, "Fish, man, fish, or you'll spoil all."

There was evidently a sudden change in the situation. Lawford had come, no doubt, to temporize and treat, and I snatched at the opportunity, forestalling him in what he intended to say.

"Listen, Lawford! You've behaved scurvily enough to me, but I'll forgive you and pay you \$1,000 to come over to my side."

"H-sh, man! Do be careful. It's as much as your life is worth or mine if McQuahe should hear you. You must not be in a hurry. There may be some mistake. She may not be really after us."

"She? What is it you mean? Go on, in the name of goodness."

"A steam tug is in chase. We sighted her at daylight steering our course, and we cannot shake her off. We have shifted our helm twice; so has she. Now McQuahe is bearing down on the French coast, where, of course, nothing English can touch us."

"But I shall appeal to the French authorities."

"Not if they keep you locked up here. That's what McQuahe will do. It's all he wants to do—keep you out of the way while the rest of us fill our pockets with your dollars on the other side. It's all arranged and squared. They leave Southampton in the Chattahoochee on Sunday, and the game is to sweep up everything before you can show a hand."

"Lawford, I will make it two, three, five thousand pounds if you get me out of this trap in time for the steamer."

"You wouldn't be safe on it. They cannot afford to let you up. They've other good reasons for putting a stopper on you and getting first across. You're not perhaps aware that your scheme for the attack on New York has fallen into their hands? The duke has the papers, and he means to trade them with the United States government for coin. Yes, sir."

"I tell you, Lawford, I must recover them. It's a matter of honor, of more than life and death. Name your own price. Only set me free from this."

"It's worth \$10,000, and you won't miss it. Here, scribble down an I. O. U. for the amount. I'll take the risks," and I agreed for the amount conditional on release.

I knew nothing of what was in progress above, for Lawford never came near me again. I saw nothing of the chase, for I was not suffered to go on deck or even leave my cabin. The negro brought me my food, but was absolutely dumb, and I was forced to possess myself in patience for what might come to me. It was early in the afternoon that, looking through my port, I first saw land ahead. The outer port had never been lowered, and the deadlight, being too small in circumference to allow a man to pass through the aperture, had not been closed or fastened. So I easily made out rocks and green slopes, but no houses or signs of life.

I realized as I heard the anchor rattle down at the chains that we had entered some quiet bay, where we might lie free from interference and prying eyes.

For the rest of the day I experienced all a captive's emotions when escape seems near. I alternated between high spirits and the depths of despair, the latter predominating as the hours crept slowly on to nightfall. I had all but given up hope, believing either that Lawford had sold me or could not see his way to help, when something tickled lightly against my porthole, and I

saw a small parcel peering outside. Opening the deadlight eagerly, I fished in the parcel, which was wrapped around with paper and contained a key. There were also a few brief lines from Lawford:

"This will let you out. It is the key of your cabin. Beware of the black and wait till after dinner, when we are on deck and the dark forward. Slip out through the stern ports. The dingey is astern, if you can only reach her. Cut adrift and paddle your own canoe. That's about the best I can do."

I did the rest easier than I thought. (The movements of the dingey have already been told, and the events that followed the escape.)

I was quite lost, at first, when I got on shore; but I did not care, so long as I was free. I was in France, I knew that much, and after climbing a steep path I soon hit on a road gleaming white and dusty in the darkness. I stood for a moment debating which way I should turn, eastward or westward, my object being to reach some town or place on a line of railway, whether by walking to it or taking a vehicle. As soon as I came upon a milestone I struck a match and read the legend. In the direction I was going Lamballe was distant 15 kilometers, and behind me the road led to Brest, 160.

It was clearly to Lamballe, not Brest, that I must make my way, some eight miles in all, and I reached it before 11 p. m. People were still up as I passed along the narrow streets, seated at the cafe doors, and I took my place at one of the tables, calling for a "bock" and a railway guide. I was not long in arranging my plan. Fortunately I had money, plenty of money, in my pockets, and that made everything easy. I found that a train left at 6:30 a. m. for Paris, the longest, yet the quickest, route to Southampton. I could catch the night express for Havre, and be in Southampton at daylight. By this I should have a couple of hours and more in Paris, enough to buy necessities and make a considerable change in my appearance; for I was resolved to take passage incog, and in the fore cabin, where I should attract no attention.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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