

# Maida's Secret.....

By the Author of....  
"A Gipsy's Daughter,"  
"Another Man's Wife,"  
"A Heart's Bitterness,"  
Etc., Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS—Guy Hartleigh leaves England to find his long lost cousin in San Francisco. Maida Carrington, an actress in that city, is persecuted by genteel loafers amongst whom is Caryl Wilton who proposes and is rejected. She learns the story of her mother's betrayal by Sir Richard Hartleigh. Sir Richard's child, Constance, whom Guy isates her and is taken to Hartleigh Hall by Guy.

## CHAPTER VI.

If the first fear that he would find his daughter such a one as he must be ashamed of, ever occurred to Sir Richard, it was only to be dismissed with a smile and an increased wonder that she, who had lived as she had, could accommodate herself to her new situation, with an ease which no one could have surmised. He could not keep his eyes from her, but watched her as she presided at the table with all the grace and nonchalance of one who has done the same thing so often as to be unconscious of the details of her movements. And yet Maida Carrington was acting as she never before had acted, recalling the many bits of "business" with which she had taken the part of the lady on the stage. But after the meal there came a harder trial than merely sitting at a tea table and acting as if she were at home there. Sir Richard, anxious to please her, gave her his arm as they rose from the table, and led her into the little gallery where he had sat that night awaiting her coming. With a pleased smile on his face he led her from picture to picture, without making any comment on any of them, and she got the idea, somehow, that an ordeal was being prepared for her, and she was on the alert to meet it, whatever it might be. It came, but it was different from anything she had foreseen, and it nearly betrayed her.

The portraits had not interested her, and she had given them but scant attention, so that when Sir Richard stopped in front of the picture of his wife, she was not even looking at it. He saw that she was thinking of other things, and gently called her by name: "Constance!"

"Father!" and she looked at him, and then, following his glance, turned her eyes on the face in the portrait.

A look of startled horror crept into her eyes, and she shrunk back, murmuring: "No! no!"

The last time she had seen that face was in the dim light of a gray morning, after which she had taken from her that which was to aid her in robbing her of her birthright. Yes she was dead, and she had said she might have the little book, but was it not a betrayal of the gentle, loving girl's trust? She covered her face with her hands, and moaned softly to herself.

Sir Richard was alarmed at the effect of the picture on his daughter, and exclaimed, in an agony of self-reproach:

"My darling, what have I done? It was wrong to bring you to your mother without a word of warning; but I thought only of surprise."

"Yes, yes!" she murmured.

"Forgive me, will you not?"

"It is unnecessary."

"I have always kept it covered by the doors, but it is yours now, and I brought you here to give you the key."

He took a little golden key from his pocket and put it into her listless hand. She took it, mechanically, and then, recovering herself by degrees, lifted her eyes steadily and gazed full into the calm, sweet eye of the woman whose child she was wrongly pretending to be. The eyes seemed to look back into hers with a pitying glance, and it seemed to her that if she had to see that face often she would surely betray herself.

"My mother!" she made herself say, and then, with a deep-drawn breath, walked to the picture, and, closing the doors, locked them. Then she put the key in her bosom, and whispered, "Let us go away."

Her father led her away, blaming himself for this want of tact, and not until they were in the drawing-room again did she venture to look at Guy. He was regarding her intently, but he blushed, and dropped his eyes like a schoolboy when he found himself observed. She did not believe he suspected her, but the thought that she was under observation gave her the self-control she needed, and she turned to her father and said:

"Are you fond of music?"

"Very. Do you play?"

"Do you like any particular thing? Have you a favorite?"

"You are too tired to play to-night," he said solicitously.

"I am not too tired," she answered, and, without another word, she sat down at the piano and ran her fingers over the keys to try them, betraying, as she did so, a thorough familiarity with the instrument.

She loved music and could find in it a solace for her troubles when everything else failed, and so, as she

sat there now, she forgot those who were in the room with her, and instinctively drifted into one of those wonderful songs without words into which the gifted Mendelssohn poured so much feeling and emotion. Her execution was marvellous, and showed careful training, but her expression—which is to music what the soul is to the body—proved her a natural musician.

Sir Richard and Guy stood entranced, listening to the weird, sorrowful strain as it poured sadly from the awakened instrument. Sir Richard placed his hand on Guy's arm, and there were tears in his eyes as he said:

"She is not happy, Guy. We will make her so if there is power in love. You will help me, Guy?"

"There is nothing I would not do to make Constance happy," returned the young man, with a singular fervor.

The older man looked at him with a smile of comprehension and pleasure.

"Could anyone help loving her," he asked proudly.

"She is very beautiful," was the answer, accompanied by a sigh.

"Is she not? Why did you not tell me she was beautiful and accomplished?—so different from what I had every reason to fear she might be. Blood will tell, Guy. Why, she bears herself as if she had been accustomed to having the whole world at her feet."

How little either suspected that the dotting father's words were true in a sense neither thought of. Yes, she had been accustomed to having the world at her feet, and more than once that evening she had thought, with a bitter sense of humor, how she was merely practising on a small audience what she had been used to doing on a large one.

Guy assented to his uncle's words with another sigh, which this time did not escape the old man's notice. He turned quickly, and asked:

"Have you told her, Guy, what is the dearest wish of my heart?"

"You mean—"

"I mean your marriage."

"How could I?"

"True," assented Sir Richard, with a light laugh, "it would not have come with very good grace from you, would it? I am not mistaken in the symptoms, am I, Guy—you love her, do you not?"

"Too much, I am afraid," was the almost inaudible reply.

"You do not mean"—the old man turned pale with a sudden fear—"that there is a more favored one than yourself?"

"I do not think we need to fear that. She told me there was no one in the world to regret her since her mother died."

"Her mother? Has she said much to you about her mother?"

"Very little. Nothing of her own accord. She told me of her life and all that was necessary to establish her identity, and then begged me to say as little as might be. You saw how deeply affected she was by the sight of her mother just now."

"They must have suffered. And she has locked the picture into darkness again. Well, it is best. It will be the burial of the past. I can never do enough for her, Guy."

The thought of the dreary past overcame the old man, and he sank into a chair, and with downcast eyes rested his head on his hand.

"Guy," he said a moment later, "do not tell me for a few days anything about her past life. I would enjoy her as she is without any thought of the past if I can."

Guy answered by a sympathetic glance and crossed lightly to the piano, where, unnoticed by Maida, he stood and watched her with admiration and longing. Presently she became aware of his presence and looked swiftly up, catching his glance and interpreting it. An indescribable air, in which pity and coldness were mingled, came over her in an instant, and, ceasing the pathetic thing she was playing, she changed the tune and broke into a gay aria from one of the popular operas.

Guy turned away moodily for he had noticed the effect of his presence on his cousin, but the old man looked up gayly and began to nod his head in appreciative time to the music. He arose and went over to her side, and when she stopped, said, enthusiastically:

"You play and sing divinely."

"I am glad if you are pleased."

"More than pleased. Guy! He was here a moment ago."

"He has stepped out on the verandah."

"He wished to smoke, I suppose. Constance, how do you like Guy?"

"He is handsome, good and noble. A true man, I should say."

The old man smiled in a pleased way and stroked the dark hair.

"I am glad to hear you say that," he said.

"Why? It seems to me nobody could say less of Guy."

"Guy is all that you say, and I am glad that you—like him. Before you were found, and when we feared—"

"I am about to say, will you not?"

She turned a little pale, but answered steadily that she would.

"I will not speak of it now, when you have just returned home, but that it seems better to have it understood at once. Besides, you know Guy, and it is not as if he were a stranger to you."

She seemed to comprehend what was coming, but she only looked expectantly at her father, and he went on:

"Before you were found, and when it seemed as if you could not be what—what you are, we had formed a little plan. I could not have hoped that you were so beautiful, so fit to grace the throne of a queen if necessary; and then we had arranged—"

Guy and I—then he would insure your proper reception by the world by marrying you. And now that you are what you are—I am afraid I do not express myself as I should—but if there is no obstacle, could you look forward to being his wife. Remember, my darling, that your will shall be the law. If you have engaged your heart elsewhere, or if for any reason you would rather not have it so, you need fear no opposition from me. Do not answer now. Take time to consider it."

The beautiful face was downcast now, and very pale. And as she listened to her father she could not help thinking of that night in San Francisco, when Caryl Wilton had told her of his love. She did not know why she thought of it. She did not love the man, and yet she had thought of him more than once since she had become Constance Hartleigh. It seemed very long ago. She was silent for a few moments after her father ceased speaking, and then said, in a low tone, devoid of all emotion:

"I do not need to consider it. Something told me that you had this at heart. I know of no reason why I should not be his wife—in time."

"In time, of course," agreed the delighted old man, "in time. You must have a life full of happiness first. Ah, here is Guy. Is it a fine night, Guy?"

"It could not be more beautiful. If you would like to see an English night at its best, Constance, you would be wise to come out here."

Glad of any diversion, she expressed her readiness, and started for the window, and would have gone out had not her father laughingly detained her until he could wrap something about her, saying:

"The night may be beautiful, but it is none the less treacherous."

"Beauty and treachery do sometimes go together," she said, as if thinking aloud. And then she stepped through the window and stood alone in the moonlight with the man she had said she would marry.

## CHAPTER VII.

For some minutes no word was spoken between the cousins. Constance was gazing out across the lawn, seemingly watching the fitting moon shadows as they chased each other across the tree-tops. Guy was watching her. It was enjoyment enough for him. Suddenly, as was so often the case, she became conscious that he was looking at her and she turned quickly toward him and said:

"Why do you look at me so much?"

"I have seen poor little children looking in at a jeweler's window, longing for the diamonds there."

She turned away again, and said, coldly:

"Hartleigh Hall is very beautiful."

"Very," he answered.

"If I had not been found would there have been any difference to you?"

"The Hall, with a small estate, and the title, will be mine in any case."

"But my coming will make some difference to you?"

"Nothing that affects me. Your father's wealth, of which there is a great deal, will be lost to me; but I hope I do not need to assure you that I am only too glad to lose it under the circumstances."

"I know you are generous."

"I am not generous in this," he answered.

"How so?" she demanded quickly.

"The happiness of pleasing you overshadows every other feeling. I am rewarded for any loss by the feeling that you have gained something thereby."

"That is very nicely said," was her only comment, made in a chilling tone.

"I do not know how it was said, Constance," he replied, sadly. "I only know that I would give title, estate, and all if I could but please you."

She affected to misunderstand him, and said, lightly:

"But I do not want the title, nor the estate."

"I wish you did want them," he said, quickly, and then, as she did not ask him why, as he had expected he went on, "because they are inseparable from me."

"Then of course, I could not want them. Let us go in. How cool your nights are."

"I hope you have not caught cold," exclaimed her father, who had overheard her last words, as she stepped through the window.

"Oh, no. I am not so delicate. I am used to exposure."

The old man flushed at the words, as if feeling that they carried a reproach to him, but with touching humility said nothing that would indicate it.

"You must be tired," he said. "Shall we not say good-night?"

"Perhaps it would be better," she answered.

"I hope you will have sweet dreams and refreshing sleep the first

night of your return home," he said, gently, as he took her hand and kissed it.

Her demeanor had been studiously cold, but at this act a struggle seemed to take place in her breast. She had already taken a step to leave him, but she suddenly turned, and putting both hands on his shoulders kissed him on the lips. He caught her in his arms and murmured brokenly:

"My daughter! my daughter! how good you are to me!"

"I wish I could be," she cried; "for, oh! you are my father."

Neither Sir Richard nor Guy understood what she meant then; they thought it was merely the cry of a forlorn heart; but in times after they remembered it and understood better.

She left them and went to her own chamber—a perfect gem which Sir Richard had fitted up with all the luxury wealth and good taste could command. Her maid awaited her, and conducted her into the dressing-room where she assisted her to remove her garments. No one would have supposed, to see her then, that she had ever disrobed without a maid, she submitted herself to her offices so naturally.

But she dismissed her maid as soon as she could, and then locked herself in with a sigh of relief. She threw herself into an easy cushioned chair, and knitted her brows in deep and troubled thought. Alone there, with no fear of prying eyes to surprise her thoughts on her face, she gave way to her feelings.

All of her past life, from the night her mother died, seemed to have lost itself in a strange distance of time. It seemed so very long ago. But every incident of that time was as clear to her as if it had been burned into her memory. She could see her mother dying and vengeful; the words of her promise to the dying woman were before her eyes in blazing letters of fire. Then she saw her sister, with the sweet face upturned to heaven, rigid in death; then herself fleeing from her. There ended her happiness. Since then she had been living a life full of falseness and wrong.

"Oh, mother, mother!" she wailed, "how could you blight my life with the wrongs of your own? If you knew how gentle and good the old man is, could you have made me promise as I did? If you had known how true and generous Guy is could you have wished me to deceive him as I must? And yet!—she started from the chair and clenched her hands—"is it not justice after all? Is not his atonement for the other woman, and not a particle of it for the poor, wronged outcast—made so by his act—and never even remembered? I must look at it so. Oh, mother, mother, I must think of that or I shall falter! The poor old man!"

She threw herself on the bed and wept fierce, bitter tears. Some of them were for herself and some were for Guy; but most of them were for the old man, who, whatever his sins, was her father. After a while she arose and dried her tears, and with a reaction of bitter scorn hated herself for the unworthy part she was playing.

And so, torn between her emotions, she mechanically extinguished her lamp and retired to her luxurious couch to fall into a slumber which lasted until late the next morning.

Sir Richard was waiting for her when she went down stairs, and she kissed him with such an air of tenderness that he flushed with joy.

"I am so sorry to be so late," she said. "Have I kept you waiting long?"

"Not at all. I always breakfast late, and Guy is always early. He has been out for a gallop or a row on the lake. Here he is now, and he has the mail with him."

Guy came in, with the flush of exercise on his cheeks, and looking as handsome as any woman could desire. He greeted his cousin with some embarrassment, and put his uncle's mail by his plate. Then he sat down in an easy chair and asked permission of his cousin to read his papers. She gave it with so gracious an air that he sighed softly and looked wistfully at her, whereupon she seemed annoyed, and turned to her father to ask if he would have both cream and sugar in his coffee.

"You must not trouble yourself, my dear," he answered.

"But it will be only a pleasure," she said, as she took her seat at the table and arranged the cups. "Will you not drink a cup of coffee, Guy?"

"Thank you, no."

Sir Richard looked around at his nephew, and said, laughingly:

"Guy wants nothing now, but to be allowed to read his theatrical news. He is daft on the drama, Constance."

"Not quite as bad as that, uncle," remonstrated Guy. "I am fond of the theatre though."

"And still fonder of amateur theatricals. Have you ever acted, Constance? I mean on the amateur stage?" and the old man looked smilingly at his daughter.

A quick flush, followed by a deadly pallor, showed on the fair face, but she answered steadily:

"Never."

"Here's bad news," suddenly exclaimed Guy, without looking up from his paper. "Do you remember that Maida Carrington, who made such a sensation in California and was to have come to London?"

Sir Richard answered yes, but Maida only put down the cup she was holding, and listened with a set face. Guy continued:

"It seems that she was killed in an attack on an overland stage in which she was traveling. Why, Con-

stance, it must have been about the—oh! What is it?"

It was nothing very much. Constance had let a cup of hot coffee fall on the floor and had scalded herself a very little. She was ashamed to have cried out. No, she was not really scalded after all. She was a great deal more frightened than hurt. She contrived, however, to prevent any further talk about Maida Carrington, and the subject was not taken up again.

"You are looking pale, my dear," said Sir Richard, suddenly.

She smiled faintly, by way of answer, for she had not yet recovered from the shock of the memories which Guy's words had recalled to her.

"She must have outdoor exercise, Guy. It won't do to have her looking pale."

Guy glanced keenly at her and acquiesced with his uncle.

"We must have a pair of ponies for her, Guy. You must go down to the city at the first opportunity and get them for her. Have you any choice for color, Constance?"

"Oh, you must not be worried about me. If I am pale it is only for the moment, and proves what a foolish girl I am more than anything else."

Sir Richard shook his head in loving dissenting dissent, for he would not have this wonderful daughter of his take the slightest risk.

"You will have a trying ordeal to pass through during the coming few days, for all the county will call upon you," he said, "and you must not be worn out. If you could only ride horseback, now."

"I can do that, if it will please you," she said.

"Oh, then, if you can ride, it will be all right until we can get the ponies for you. Is there a horse in the stables she can ride, Guy?"

"Scamp is safe, and as spry a little horse as ever trod turf."

"What do you say then, Constance, will you ride?"

"Anything to please you."

"But I want you to please yourself."

"I like nothing better than a good gallop, and only ask that you will not select for me too tame a horse."

"I see we shall have to watch her, Guy. She is disposed to be reckless."

And the old man glanced at his beautiful daughter with so much pride and affection that she arose with a sudden impulse and went around to him and kissed his forehead, saying:

"You will spoil me."

"We can't spoil you," answered he fondly, "but we will do all that love can to make you happy, won't we, Guy?"

Guy looked quickly at his cousin, a bright flush mounting to his cheeks, and there was a world of meaning in the blue eyes that met her brown ones.

Constance flushed slightly, as she caught the glance, and then, with that strange coldness which had so often repelled him, walked to the window and looked out.

To be Continued.

## "MOLTKE SMOKES AGAIN."

### A Sulphur Match That Won the Battle of Gravelotte.

It is said that at the battle of Gravelotte, during the Franco-Prussian war, there was for some hours, at a critical point of the field, an appearance of greater success on the part of the French than of the Germans. Von Moltke had been made aware of the perilous position of his forces in that quarter, and he hurried to the spot. For some time it was observed by those around him that he appeared much more anxious than usual.

He gained a prominent position, where he was greatly exposed to the enemy's fire. He held his cigar between two fingers of his left hand, from time to time striking a fusee, and applying it to the weed, but always neglecting to put the cigar between his lips.

When the crisis of the day was evidently approaching the last fusee had been burnt, and nothing but the cold ashes of Moltke's cigar remained.

At length Bismarck's attention was directed to the great general, upon whose sagacity the fortune of the fight so largely depended. Moving up to him, Bismarck quietly struck a fusee, applied it to Moltke's cigar, and the welcome sight of the blue tobacco smoke curling up from the commander's lips rewarded the attention of the Chancellor. Bismarck drawing back in his solid way, said, with exultation in his voice: "All must, now be well, Moltke smokes again." The battle was won.

### VALUATION OF LOST LIMBS.

According to a scale of value furnished by the miners' unions and miners' accident insurance companies of Germany, the loss of both hands is valued at 100 per cent., or the whole ability to earn a living. Losing the right hand depreciates the value of an individual as a worker 70 to 80 per cent., while the loss of the left hand represents from 60 to 70 per cent. of the earnings of both hands. The thumb is reckoned to be worth from 20 to 30 per cent. of the earnings. The first finger of the right hand is valued at from 14 to 18 per cent., that of the left hand at from 8 to 13½ per cent.

Please excuse William from school to-day, wrote the boy's mother to the teacher, as he sat up late last night studying his lessons and is too sleepy to come today.