

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 pestered 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 is seeking, dies, and Maida impersonates her and is taken to Hartleigh Hall, where she becomes the idol of the household. A fete is given in her honor at Vynar Castle during which it is suggested that she take part in some amateur theatricals. Mildred Thorpe, an unemployed American girl in London is exhausted by her fruitless efforts to obtain work. After securing engagement as country church organist she is about to faint when she is assisted by Carl Wilton who is struck by her likeness to Maida Carrington. He visits the Duke of Belvedere at whose seat the amateur actors are disconcerted by the loss of their Romeo. He is persuaded to act as substitute.

CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

They stood aside with a movement of curiosity. The tall, graceful figure in its magnificent costume came in, carrying his domino and mask in his hand, and looking around with a nonchalant, easy grace, so natural to him. He was certainly another who showed neither apprehension nor nervousness.

"Come on," said Lord Algy in his gentle voice, now tremulous with excitement, "I want to introduce you to Juliet."

At this moment Guy came into the room and announced that all was ready.

"We are ready, too," answered Lord Algy. "Where is Miss Hartleigh?"

"There."

"Oh, Constance, let me introduce my friend who has so kindly consented to come to the rescue and save us all from failure. Mr. Caryl Wilton, Miss Constance Hartleigh."

She was still talking to the Mercutio, and turned gracefully with some light remark upon her lips.

They were all looking at her, and they all, without exception saw the mask slip from the hand that went with a quick movement to the heaving bosom, as the face, a moment ago so smilingly, so girlishly serene, turned a deathly white, from which the dark eyes gleamed as might those of a doe at bay.

A certain expression of incredulous horror, dimly defined, passed over the white face, and she stood silently staring at the man before her, who had not yet taken the trouble to lift his languid eyes.

But the silence, the stillness aroused him, and he coolly lifted his eyes to ascertain the reason. With a well-bred slowness, far enough removed from insolence, yet all indifference, he let his eyes run from the little satin slippers to the frozen lace.

With a start he made a half step backward, and his dark face turned white underneath the rouge. Moments are ages sometimes; and this was one of the times. The two stood regarding each other for a moment in silence; then, as summer clouds flit over the sky, there chased across her face a look as of a hunted animal—of dread and of defiance. And then the actress was herself again; and had taken up her part. Her only glance, and that a veiled one, was of keen inquiry.

Caryl had been the first to recover himself, and, as if he had read and understood each flashing glance of the other, had answered it. His first expression had been one of fierce exultation, his next had been one of doubt, and then had succeeded a calm cold smile of composure and waiting.

As long as it had taken to record this meeting, it had taken but a moment for it to take place, and ere any one there to witness it had fully realized that anything was amiss, Caryl Wilton had bowed low, and in his most natural tone had said:

"I am afraid I have kept you waiting, Miss Hartleigh—an unpardonable sin behind the scenes. I dare not hope for forgiveness, though I am filled with remorse."

With a mechanical smile her eyes fell upon his, and she inclined her head, struggling for the voice which would not come. Then, with an effort not the less strenuous that no one was cognizant of it, she said:

"I do not think you have kept us waiting. It is very much better late than never in such a case."

Her voice, though low, was as steady as his own, and her eyes met his unflinchingly. And this was all, only two polite, conversational sentences, while the heart of each throbbed wildly under the strain of a sudden recognition. And if the outward eye of each was cold and steady, the inward eye was none the less feverish with the far away visions of another theatre far distant, where a Romeo had stood one night before a Juliet; of a lonely house and of a passionate declaration of love.

What of the boasted stoicism of the

red Indian in the face of self-restraint such as this?

With his white fingers playing with apparent carelessness with the jeweled handle of his sword, stood a man who had suddenly, without a hint of warning, come upon the woman whose face had haunted him for weary weeks, and whom he had longed to see as only such a man could long; stood carelessly waiting and talking, his heart on fire, his brain reeling with astonishment, delight, wonder.

And almost touching him, erect and composed, with her delicate lips curved in a faint, sweet smile, stood a girl face to face with the detector of her crime, face to face with one who must either be a passionate lover or a deadly foe. And before her was a task sufficient to try the strongest to the uttermost—a task requiring all the delicate fire of genius, all the calm composure of trained talent.

How was it possible that she could go through it with this man—this relentless pursuer, watching her every word and looking for some sign of weakness?

Realize it! Words cannot even describe it.

"Well," said Lord Algy in a commonplace tone that seemed all out of tune with the passions hidden in those two breasts, "are you ready?"

Caryl Wilton glanced at the face opposite him, and then, in his most indolent tone, answered:

"Oh, yes; but give me a drop of champagne to drive away the nervousness of an amateur. My knees are trembling."

"You look frightened," said Lord Algy, laughing. "But here is the champagne," and he handed him a glass.

Caryl took it and appeared as if about to drink it, when a sudden thought seemed to strike him, and he offered it to Maida. She shook her head with a smiling negative, but he did not take back his hand.

He still held the glass before her, and bowing courteously, said, in a tone audible to every one:

"Take the advice, Miss Hartleigh, of one who has had the misfortune to go through this sort of thing several times, whereas you, probably, have never had a taste of amateur theatricals before. You would be wise to take a glass of champagne."

Only Lord Algy notices the change which has come over the whilom indolent man. The indifferent drawl has gone from his voice, the dark-gray eyes flash with a new fire, and there is something imperative in the poise of his head.

Maida hesitated a moment and then took the glass. Did he know that her throat was parched and burning, that her heart was beating so that it took all her strength to speak? What did he mean? Was he covering a threat under his proffer of aid? Was he merely playing with his victim? Or was he trying to encourage her?

She drank the wine slowly in order to collect her forces as well as to profit by the liquid refreshment. Her eyes sought his face and studied it.

It was a face handsome enough at all times, but made particularly so now by the long, flowing hair, which set it off in a Titian-like modeling. There was no weakness in it, and though it was inscrutable even to her sharpened eyes, she seemed to feel that it held her fate with a conscious power. Should she defy him, deny him, or yield to him? Neither. She would be woman-like and wait. And if fight she must, then, woman-like again, she would fight to the last gasp.

"Another glass?" he asked politely, as she took the empty glass from her lips and held it out to him.

"No more, thank you," she answered, as calmly as he.

"Better be persuaded. It will not hurt you."

"No more."

"Will you not drink yourself?" demanded Lord Algy, seeing that he was about to put the glass down.

"Oh, I was forgetting. My nervousness, you see," and he held out the glass to Lord Algy to be filled.

And when the glass was filled he raised it to his lips, and, with a smile which only Maida could understand, said, carelessly:

"If it were not bad manners to propose a toast to a lady at such a time, I would drink this to Miss Hartleigh's success in Juliet—or in any other part she may play." He drank the wine. "Now I am ready to do poor Romeo to his death. Have no concern Miss Hartleigh; should your lines fail you, you may rely on me, for I have played the part quite recently." He leaned a little nearer, so that only she could catch his words, and went on, with a light smile: "I don't mind telling you that the last time I played it was with a professional actress in America. Her name was Maida Carrington. You must have heard of her, though I know you have never seen her, for she was killed on the overland route during a stage robbery."

"Hush!" said Lord Algy. "All ready, now. Take your places for the first set."

CHAPTER XIV.—Continued.

The curtain rose, and there was a delighted ripple of applause at the beautiful scene disclosed; another and still another, as each actor made his appearance.

Then Romeo, with moody, abstracted step, entered. At sight of the tall, richly dressed figure there was a loud welcome—then a little buzz and hum of surprise.

"Why—why," said the duke, "that is not Manville! Who can it be?"

"It is—no, it isn't—yes, it is. Why it is Caryl Wilton!" whispered her grace.

"Eh?" muttered Sir Richard, leaning forward. His only interest in the matter was its bearing on his daughter. If it was anything to affect her he was anxious to know. "Who is it? Caryl Wilton? Wouldn't you know him. Where is Manville, then? I hope he will do as well."

"As well?" echoed the duke. "I should think so. Manville was a good Romeo to look at, and—By Jove! listen to him! He has the nerve of a professional. I didn't know he was here. I'll wager Algy is delighted."

If Algy was, so was the audience. They had been well enough satisfied to get a handsome Romeo, but here they had the looks and much more besides.

Composed and self-possessed, Caryl Wilton played as if he was earning his daily bread. Letter-perfect, action perfect, but rather like an admirable machine than a real Romeo. He was playing mechanically, for there ran constantly through his brain the query, How comes Maida Carrington to be Constance Hartleigh?

He went off to a hearty round of applause, and Lord Algy caught him by the hand and thanked him eagerly for having done so well.

"I see you have forgiven me, old fellow," he said. "How well you did it!"

"Did I?" asked Caryl as a peculiar smile passed over his face.

He looked around for Maida, but she was not to be seen. She had retired to her room. But presently she came out, and when he looked at her he saw that she had fought the battle with herself and had conquered. A calm smile was on her face, and her eyes rested on Caryl Wilton as unconcernedly as if she had never been agitated by Constance Hartleigh.

"Have I been called?" she asked of him.

"Not yet," he answered; "they are shifting the scene. Will you not take a seat?"

She declined with a slight gesture, and stood looking past him toward the wings, and his eyes watched her with only half-concealed earnestness.

They were standing thus when Guy, covered with perspiration, came suddenly upon them. A puzzled expression flashed over his face, and he dropped into a chair, looking at Maida with admiring, wistful eyes.

"All ready?" he asked. "Now for your boasted courage, Constance. Are you sure you feel calm?"

"Quite," she answered, but she did not look at him. Her eyes were full on Caryl Wilton. "I have courage enough to carry it through. Of that I am confident."

And Caryl Wilton, looking straight back into her eyes, saw a gleam there which told him that she was prepared to hold the position in which he had found her.

"I, too, am confident of it," he said.

Guy turned to him with a sort of apologetic smile, and said, in his frank way:

"We have not been introduced. I am Guy Hartleigh, and stage carpenter, at your service. I want to congratulate you on your performance. I never saw a professional do it as well."

"I suppose I may thank you for the compliment without fear of being understood as believing it," replied Caryl, with his careless smile.

"Oh, but I meant it literally."

Caryl bowed with an air that might be construed any way but as one of acceptance.

"Juliet! the nurse! Lady Capulet!" shouted the call-boy.

With a composed glance around, Maida moved away, followed by the other characters. Guy looked after her for a moment, and then turned to find Caryl also gazing after her. And he was struck by the singular expression on his face.

"By the way," he said abruptly, "I have you met my cousin—Miss Hartleigh, you know—before, Mr. Wilton?"

Caryl turned a cool, composed, absent gaze on the frank, handsome face of his questioner, and, without the least show of consciousness, answered:

"I have not had the pleasure of meeting Miss Hartleigh before tonight. Why do you ask?"

Guy hesitated a moment.

"I fancied—I don't know, either—that you seemed to recognize her. Foolish, of course, but I had the notion."

Caryl watched him narrowly to see if there was any hidden meaning, but the honesty and openness of Guy was unimpeachable, and he answered, slowly:

"One does not meet such beauty as Miss Hartleigh's every day, and, to confess the truth, I was startled by it."

Guy colored and looked curiously at Caryl. He did not seem the man to be startled by anything, but it was not Guy's way to harbor suspicion without more than good cause, and so he now dismissed the subject from his mind for the time.

Moreover, there came a diversion which, anyhow, would have effectually driven the thought from his brain,

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"Say, why don't you wear yer hair in a psyche knot? Yer too old fer plaits."

and that was a sudden and prolonged burst of applause from the audience. Guy jumped to his feet and cried enthusiastically:

"She is on. Listen to them!"

Caryl laid his hand upon the back of a chair and turned to listen.

"It is an ovation," he said. "I wonder if it is for the beauty or for the acting."

It was for the beauty, for as yet she had not said a word. The costumer's art will render even a plain person fair look upon; there is a wonderful magic in pearl powder, rouge and India ink. Imagine then Maida's loveliness, heightened by their aid, her exquisite form set off by the close-fitting costume of satin and pearls, the whole set in a beautiful picture and moving to soft music. They were astounded and looked from one to the other in amazement.

Was this young creature with the girlish, almost childish face, with the happy, innocent smile on her half-parted lips, and deep, translucent eyes, the reserved, silent Constance Hartleigh, who had come among them like a vision, none knew whence.

Sir Richard, pale and agitated, as much by her beauty as by the noise, half arose from his seat, then sank back and looked at her with his trembling hand shading his eyes, which were moist with tears of loving pride.

"Hush, hush!" said twenty voices, and at once there fell a silence of expectation.

Most of them there had met and talked with Constance Hartleigh, and they now listened to hear her voice, but they listened for what was not to come. Constance Hartleigh no longer stood there. Maida Carrington had sunk her identity into that of Juliet, and those who sat there heard fall from the cherry lips only the artless prattle of the child-woman of old Florence.

It was Juliet herself who stood there, Juliet who spoke; and she had not uttered a half dozen words ere all had forgotten that she was anything else. The audience sat spell-bound.

But there was still a further surprise in store for them. Presently there came the meeting between Romeo and Juliet. For an instant Maida grew cold and merged into the Constance Hartleigh they all knew, but, as if Caryl Wilton's spirit had caught the fire from hers, his acting was quite different from that in the first act, when he had been alone. It was all intense, earnest, passionate, now.

And so it went on, she cold and he passionate, until her nature could stand it no longer, and the actress once more conquered the woman. Then there came such acting as none in that audience had ever seen or hoped to see. Romeo and Juliet in the body seemed to be before them, talking and moving about, instinct with the life great Shakespeare had given them.

To be Continued.

PROMISED NOT TO MENTION IT.

A well-known clergyman tells of driving along a country road one winter's night, when just ahead of him he noted a woman walking.

Drawing up his horse, he asked the woman if he could give her a lift. The woman got in and they drove along for some distance.

When he had set her down at her own gate she thanked him, and he politely answered: Don't mention it.

No, I won't, said the matter-of-fact lady in an obliging tone.

PUNISHMENT IN ADVANCE.

Mother—Johnnie, I am going to whip you for taking that piece of pie.

Johnnie—All right, maw; whip me real hard; there's another piece left.

AT THE ZOO.

Johnnie—Look at the elephant moving his great big fins, mamma.

Mamma—Those are his ears, dear. What use has an elephant for fins?

Johnnie—Huh! I guess he can use them when his head swims, can't he?

HIS REAL REASON.

Bifkins—I tell you I hate to think of my wife going away on a vacation.

Bilkins—I dare say you will be lonely, old man.

Bifkins—It isn't that, but she always mowed our lawn.

PROOF.

Diggs—There goes a newly married couple.

Daggs—How do you know?

Diggs—I saw him give her a \$5 bill to buy some chocolates with.

NO JOY IN LIFE.

SO SAY THE SUFFERERS FROM CHRONIC DYSPEPSIA.

A Trouble That Makes the Life of Its Victims Almost Unbearable—Causes Headaches, Heart Palpitation, Dizziness, a Feeling of Weariness, and a Dis-taste for Food.

From "L'Avenir du Nord," St. Jerome, Que.

Sufferers from dyspepsia or bad digestion are numerous in this country. Almost daily one hears some one complaining of the tortures caused them by this malady and it is no uncommon thing to hear a sufferer say "I wish I was dead." And no wonder, the suffering caused by bad digestion cannot be imagined by anyone who has not suffered from it. The victim is a constant sufferer from headaches, heart burn, heart palpitation, and nausea. He has a bad taste in the mouth, is unable to obtain restful sleep and has always a feeling of weariness and depression. But there is a sure cure for this trouble and it is found in the greatest of all known medicines—Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People.

Among those who have been cured of this distressing malady by Dr. Williams' Pink Pills is Mr. Alfred Chasbot, a well known farmer living near St. Jerome, Que. To a reporter of "L'Avenir du Nord," Mr. Chasbot told the following story of his illness and subsequent cure:—

"For three years I was an almost continual sufferer from the tortures of bad digestion. After eating I felt as if some heavy weight was pressing against my chest. I was racked with violent headaches; my temper became irritable; my appetite uncertain; my nerves were a wreck and I was always troubled with a feeling of weariness. I was able to do very little work and sometimes none at all. Although I tried many remedies I was unsuccessful in my search for a cure until a friend advised me to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. Any doubts I may have had as to the merits of these pills were soon dispelled, for I had not been taking them long before I noticed an improvement in my condition. I continued the use of the pills some weeks when I considered myself fully cured. To-day I am as well as I ever was in my life, and would strongly advise all similar sufferers to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills and I am sure that they will find them as beneficial as I have.

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills cure by going to the root of the disease. They make new, rich, red blood, strengthen the nerves and thus tone up the whole system. Sold by all dealers in medicine or sent by mail, post paid, at 50 cents a box or six boxes for \$2.50 by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

MISTAKEN.

Did you say those folks who had just moved into the neighborhood were socialists? asked the woman who was leaning over the back fence.

Yes, answered the next door neighbor.

Well, I suppose you see by this time that you are mistaken. We have had four socials since they moved in and they haven't been at one of them.

AN INDUCEMENT.

Dot was a perfect fit, said Moses Cohenstein, the clothier, as he pinched up the customer's coat in the back.

It seems to be too loose said the customer doubtfully.

Vell, said Mr. Cohenstein enthusiastically, but see how much extraneous goods you get for de same munny!

CLIMATIC COURAGE.

The Chinaman, remarked the Orientalist, is one of the meekest, most self-effacing people in the world.

Oh, I don't know, answered the friend who is always doubtful. The Chinaman is the only person I know of in this hot weather who isn't afraid to go out in public in his pajamas.

TOO BUSY.

Uncle Joshua—I s'pose sence yef son John got back frum collig he's helpin' y' considerable on th' farm?

Ebenzer—Naw, John jes' hain't got time; he's too plague bizzzy swingin' dumbells an' smokin' ciggyretts.

SWEET REVENGE.

Nebb—You must like to hear that dreadful grind organ, since you pay the man to play under your window every day.

Nobb—No, I don't like it any more than that girl over the way who is taking vocal lessons.

SUPERFLUOUS.

Summer Boarder—You didn't mention having so many mosquitoes.

Uncle Extra—No, I knowed it wasn't no use, cuz you'd find thet out soon as y' got here.

ALL ALIKE.

Farmer Dunk—How's your new hired man, Ezry?

Farmer Hornbeak—Jest like all the rest of 'em I've ever had—so lazy that he gets tired restin'.