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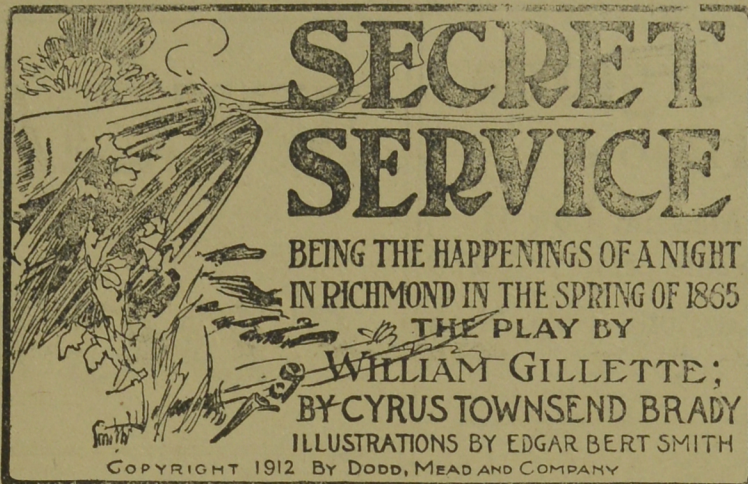
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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—Mrs. Varney, wife of a Confederate general, has lost one son and has another dying from wounds. She reluctantly gives her consent for Wilfred, the youngest, to join the army if his father consents. The federals are making their last assault in an effort to capture Richmond.

CHAPTER II—Edith Varney secures from President Davis a commission for Capt. Thorne, who is just recovering from wounds, as chief of the telegraph at Richmond.

CHAPTER III—Capt. Thorne tells Edith he has been ordered away. She declares he must not go and tells him of the commission from the president. He is strongly agitated and declares he cannot accept.

CHAPTER IV—Thorne decides to escape while Edith leaves the room to get the commission, but is prevented by the arrival of Caroline Milford, Wilfred's sweetheart.

CHAPTER V—Mr. Arrelsford of the Confederate secret service, a rejected suitor of Edith's, detects John Mrs. Varney's butler, carrying a note from a prisoner in Libby prison. Arrelsford suspects it is intended for Thorne. The note reads: "Attack tonight. Plan 3. U.S. Telegraph."

CHAPTER VI—Edith is indignant when Arrelsford tells her of his suspicions regarding Thorne. He declares the latter is Lewis Dumont of the Federal secret service and that his brother Henry is a prisoner in Libby. Edith refuses to believe and suggests that Thorne be confronted with the prisoner as a test.

CHAPTER VII—Edith detains Thorne while the prisoner is sent for. An order comes from General Varney for Wilfred to report to the front at once.

CHAPTER VIII—Edith is forced to carry out her part in the test of Thorne. She gives him the message taken from Jonas, which he reads without betraying himself. He suspects that he is being watched.

CHAPTER IX—The prisoner is thrust into the room alone with Thorne, who recognizes him as his elder brother, Henry Dumont. They put up a fake fight. Henry implores his brother to shoot him in the leg. Thorne refuses and Henry accidentally kills himself. Arrelsford rushes into the room with the guard. Thorne nonchalantly says: "Corporal, here is your prisoner, we had a fight and I shot him."

CHAPTER X—Caroline goes to the war department telegraph office to send a message.

CHAPTER XI—Arrelsford refuses to let Caroline's message go through. It is a telegram to Wilfred simply asking forgiveness, but Arrelsford suspects a double meaning. He and Edith secrete themselves to watch Thorne, whose arrival Arrelsford expects.

CHAPTER XII—Thorne takes charge of the telegraph office and after satisfying himself that he is alone attempts to send a message. It is interrupted by the arrival of a messenger from the secretary of war with a dispatch.

CHAPTER XIII—Arrelsford and Edith see Thorne alter the secretary's dispatch. Thorne is shot in the wrist by Arrelsford when he attempts to send it. Arrelsford calls the guard, and when they appear Thorne turns the tables by ordering the arrest of Arrelsford.

CHAPTER XIV—The removal of Arrelsford is stopped by the arrival of General Randolph. Thorne again begins sending the dispatch. Arrelsford protests, declaring Thorne is sending a forced order to weaken the lines of defense. Randolph demands upon what authority Thorne has assumed command of the telegraph office. Miss Varney appears.

(Continued.)

"Yes, sir," answered Thorne.

"What is he saying?"

Thorne stepped to the table and bent over the clicking key. "His compliments, sir," he read off slowly. "He asks—waiting for a few minutes—for the rest,"—still another pause—"of that dispatch—he says it's of vital importance, sir, and—"

The communication which Thorne had made to General Randolph was in itself of vital importance. The general was too good a soldier not to know the danger of delay in the carrying out of military maneuver which was probably part of some general plan or attack or defense of which he was not privy. He made up his mind instantly. He took the dispatch from the hand of the sergeant and turned it over to Thorne again.

"Let him have it," he said decisively. The captain with his heart pounding like mad sat down at the table and seized the key. Was he going to complete the dispatch? Was the plan to be carried out. Had he triumphed in the bold and desperately played game by his splendid courage, resourcefulness, and assurance? His eyes shone, the color came back into his pale cheeks as his hands trembled on the key.

"General!" cried Arrelsford, "if you—"

"That's enough, sir. We will have you examined at headquarters."

At that instant Lieutenant Foray came rapidly into the room.

"Thank God!" cried Arrelsford, as he caught sight of him. "There's a witness, he was sent away on a forged order, ask him?"

Another interruption, thought Thorne, desperately fingering the keys. If they would only give him a minute more he could complete the order, but he was not to have that minute apparently.

"Wait, captain," said General Randolph quickly, and again the key was silent. "Now, sir," he said to Lieutenant Foray, "where did you come from?"

The lieutenant did not at all compre-

hend what was toward, but his answer to that question was plain.

"There was some mistake, sir," he answered, saluting.

"Ah!" cried Arrelsford, a note of triumph in his voice.

"Who made it?" asked the general.

"I got an order to go to the president's house," returned Foray, "and when I got there the president—"

Thorne made one last attempt to complete his message.

"Beg pardon, general, this delay will be most disastrous. Permit me to go on with this message. If there's an mistake, we can rectify it afterward."

He seized the key and continue sending the message as he spoke.

"No!" cried Arrelsford.

General Randolph either did not hear Thorne's speech or heed it, else he did not care to prevent him, and he continued his questioning.

"Where did you get this mistake?" he asked.

But Arrelsford, intensely alive to what was going on, interposed.

"He's at it again, sir!"

"Halt, there!" said General Randolph. "I ordered you to wait."

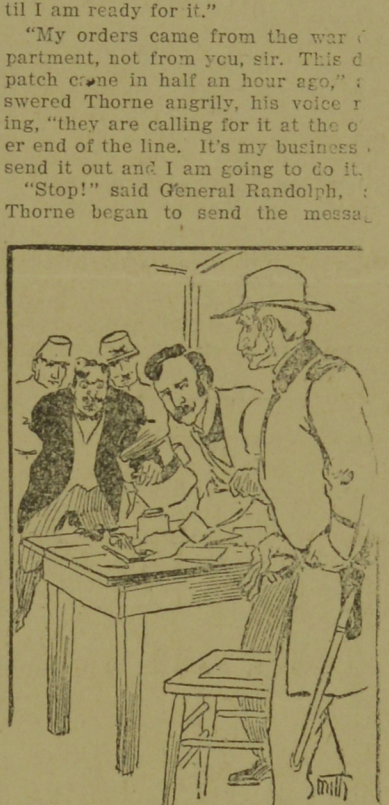
The dispatch was almost complete. Thorne ground his teeth with rage at his impatience. He had tried audaciously before, he would try it again.

"I was sent here to attend to the business of this office and that business is going out," he said resolutely.

"No," said General Randolph with equal firmness, "it is not going out until I am ready for it."

"My orders came from the war department, not from you, sir. This dispatch came in half an hour ago," answered Thorne angrily, his voice ringing, "they are calling for it at the other end of the line. It's my business, send it out and I am going to do it."

"Stop!" said General Randolph, "Thorne began to send the message."



"Silence, Sir," thundered Randolph.

again. "Sergeant, seize that man and keep him from that machine."

Well, the last hope was gone. As the sergeant stepped forward to execute his orders, Thorne, desperately determined to the last, clicked out a letter, but he was cut short in the middle of a word. The sergeant and two men dragged him away, chair and all, from the table, and two others posted themselves in front of the key.

"I will have you court-martialed for this, sir," said General Randolph angrily.

"You will have to answer yourself," cried Thorne, playing the game to the last, "for the delay of a dispatch of vital importance, sent by the secretary of war."

"Do you mean that?" cried Randolph.

"I mean just that," answered Thorne, "and I demand that you let me proceed with the business of this office. Before these officers and men I repeat that demand."

"By what authority do you send that dispatch?"

"I refer you to the department, sir."

"Show me your orders for taking charge of this office."

"I refer you to the department, sir," answered Thorne stubbornly.

"By God, sir!" continued General Randolph hotly. "I will refer to the department. Leave your men on guard there, sergeant. Go over to the war office. My compliments to the secretary of war, and ask him if he will be so good as to—"

(To Be Continued.)

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