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BEING THE HAPPENINGS OF A NIGHT
IN RICHMOND IN THE SPRING OF 1865

THE PLAY BY
WILLIAM GILLETTE;
BY CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY
ILLUSTRATIONS BY EDGAR BERT SMITH
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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 strangely 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 Mitford, Wilfred's sweetheart.

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

CHAPTER VI—Edith is indignant when Arrisford 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. 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. Arrisford rushes into the room with the guard. Thorne, nonchalantly says: "Corporal, here is your prisoner, we had a fight and I shot him."

"Wouldn't we?" they both cried together. "There's nothing we would like better."

"Well, I will tell you just what to do here," returned the girl gravely and with deep meaning.

Everybody in the room, with the exception of Lieutenant Foray, was now listening intently.

"Start right out this very night," said the girl, "and don't stop till you get to where my real friends are, lying in trenches and ditches and earthworks between us and the Yankee guns."

"But really, Miss Mitford," began one, his face flushing at her severe rebuke, "you don't absolutely mean that."

"So far as we are concerned," said one of the messengers, including his companions with a sweep of his hand, "we'd like nothing better, but they won't let us go, and—"

"I know they won't," said Caroline, "but so far as you two gentlemen are concerned, I really mean it. Go and fight the Yankees a few days and lie in ditches a few nights until those uniforms you've got on look as if they might have been of some use to somebody. If you are so anxious to do something for me, that is what you can do. It is the only thing I want, it is the only thing anybody wants."

"Messenger here!" cried Lieutenant Foray as the two young officers, humiliated beyond expression by the taunts of the impudent young maiden, backed away and finally managed to make an ungraceful exit through the open door, followed by the titters of the messengers, who took advantage of the presence of the young girl to indulge in this grave breach of discipline.

"Messenger!" cried Foray impatiently.

"Here, sir," came the answer. "Commissary general's office!" was the injunction with which Foray handed the man the telegram.

He looked up at the same time, and with a great start of surprise caught sight of Caroline at the far end of the long room.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Mitford," said the operator, scrambling to his feet and making a frantic effort to get into his coat. "I heard some one come in, but I was busy with an important message and didn't appreciate that—"

"No, never mind, don't put on your coat," said Caroline. "I came on business, and—"

"You want to send a telegram?" asked the Lieutenant.

"Yes."

"I am afraid we can't do anything for you here, Miss Mitford, this is a War Department Official Telegraph office, you know."

"Yes, I know," said Caroline, "but it is the only way to send it where I want it to go, and I—"

At that moment the clicking of a key called Lieutenant Foray away. "Excuse me," he said, stepping quickly to his table.

Miss Mitford, who had never before been in a telegraph office, was much mystified by the peremptory manner in which the officer had cut her short, but she had nothing to do but wait.

Presently this message was transcribed and another messenger was called.

"Over to the Department, quick as you can go. They are waiting for it," said Foray. "Now, what was it you wanted me to do, Miss Mitford?"

"Just to—send a telegram," faltered Caroline.

"It's private business, is it not?" said Foray.

"Yes, it is strictly private."

"Then you will have to get an order from—"

"That is what I thought," said Caroline, "so here it is."

"Why didn't you tell me before," returned Foray, taking the paper. "Oh—Major Selwin—"

"Yes, he—he's one of my friends."

"It's all right then," interposed the Lieutenant, who was naturally very businesslike and peremptory.

He pushed a chair to the other side of the table, placed a small sheet of paper on the table in front of her, and shoved the pen and ink conveniently to hand.

"You can write there, Miss Mitford," he said.

"Thank you," said Caroline, looking rather ruefully at the tiny piece of paper which had been provided for her.

Paper was a scarce article then, and every scrap was precious. She decided that such a piece was not sufficient for her purposes, and when Lieutenant Foray's back was turned she took a larger piece of paper of sufficient capacity to contain her important message, to the composition of which she proceeded with much difficulty and many pauses and sighs.

CHAPTER XI.

Mr. Arrisford Again Interposes.

Nobody had any time to devote to Miss Mitford just then, for a perfect rain of messages came and went as she slowly composed her own dispatch. Messengers constantly came in while others went out. The lines were evidently busy that night. Finally there came a pause in the dispatches coming and going, and Foray remembering her, looked over toward the other end of the table where she sat.

"Is that message of yours ready, yet, Miss Mitford?" he asked.

"Yes," said Caroline, rising and folding it. "Of course you have got to take it."

"Certainly," returned the operator smiling. "If it's to be sent, I have to send it."

"Well, here it is then," said the girl, extending the folded paper which Lieutenant Foray took and unceremoniously opened.

"Oh!" exclaimed Caroline, quickly snatching the paper from his hand. "I didn't tell you you could read it."

Foray stared at her in amazement.

"What do you want me to do with it?"

"I want you to send it."

"Well, how am I going to send it? I don't read it?"

"Do you mean to say that—" began the girl, who had evidently forgotten—if she had ever known—how telegrams were sent.

"I mean to say that I have got to spell out every word on the key. Didn't you know that?"

"Oh, I did, of course—I—but I had forgotten," said Caroline, dismayed by this unexpected development.

"Is there any harm in my reading the message that I have to send?"

"Why I wouldn't have you see it for the world! My gracious!"

"Is it as bad as that, Miss Mitford?" he said laughing.

"Dad! It isn't bad at all, but I wouldn't have it get all over town for anything."

"It will never get out of this office, Miss Mitford," returned Foray composedly. "We are not allowed to mention anything that goes on in here."

"You wouldn't mention it?"

"Certainly not. All sorts of private messages go through here, and—"

"Do they?"

"Every day. Now if that telegram is important—"

"Important, well I should think it was. It is the most important—"

"Then I reckon you had better trust it to me," said Lieutenant Foray.

"Yes," said Caroline, blushing a vivid crimson, "I reckon I had."

She handed him the telegram. He opened it, glanced at it, bit his lips to control his emotion, and then his hands reached for the key.

"Oh, stop!" cried Caroline.

Foray looked at her, his eyes full of amusement, his whole body shaking with suppressed laughter, which she was too wrought up to perceive.

"Wait till I—I don't want to be here while you spell out every word—I couldn't stand that."

Caroline had evidently forgotten that the spelling would be in the Morse code, and that it would be

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Girl

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