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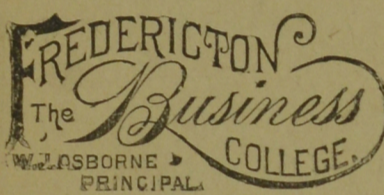
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Wilfred paused and looked apprehensively at Caroline, who nodded with eyes sparkling brightly. "That's fine," she said. "I thought it sounded like a soldier." "It does; you ought to have heard the Third Virginia swear—" "Oh," said Wilfred, who did not quite relish that experience; but he went on after a little pause. "Tom Kitt-ridge has gone; he was killed yesterday at Cold Harbor. Billie Fisher has gone and so has Cousin Stephen. He is not sixteen, he lied about his age, but I don't want to do that unless you make me. I will, though, if you do. Answer this right now or not at all."

"I think that is the finest letter I have ever heard," said Caroline proudly, as Wilfred stopped, laid the paper down, and stared at her. "Do you really think so?" "It is the best letter I—" "I am glad you are pleased with it. Now the next thing is how to end it." "Why, just end it." "But how?" "Sign your name, of course." "Nothing else?" "What else is there?" "Just Wilfred?" "No, Wilfred Varney."

"That's the thing." He took up a pen from the table and scrawled his name at the bottom of this interesting and historical document. "And you think the rest of it will do?" "I should think it would," she assented heartily. "I wish your father had it now." "So do I," said Wilfred. "Maybe it will take two or three days to get it to him and I just can't wait that long."

Caroline rose to her feet suddenly under the stimulus of a bright idea that came into her mind. "I'll tell you what we can do." "What?" "We can telegraph him," she exclaimed. "Good idea," cried Wilfred, more and more impressed with Caroline's wonderful resourcefulness, but a disquieting thought immediately struck him. "Where am I going to get the money?" he asked dubiously. "It won't take very much." "It won't? Do you know what they are charging now? Over seven dollars a word only to Petersburg." "Well, let them charge it," said Caroline firmly, "we can cut it down to only a few words and the address won't cost anything."

"Won't it?" "No, they never charge for that," continued the girl. "That's a heap of money saved, and then we can use what we save on the address for the rest."

Wilfred stared at her as if this problem in economics was not quite clear on his youthful brain, but she gave him no time to question her ingenious calculations. "What comes after the address?" she asked in her most businesslike manner. "Sir." "Leave that out." Wilfred swept his pen through it. "He knows it already," said Caroline. "What's next?" "This is to notify you that I want you to let me come right now."

"We could leave out that last 'to,'" said Caroline. Wilfred checked it off, and then read, "I want you—let me come right now." That doesn't sound right, and anyway it is such a little word.

"Yes, but it costs seven dollars just the same as a big word," observed Caroline. "But it doesn't sound right without it," argued the boy; "we have got to leave it in. What comes after that?" Caroline in turn took up the note and read: "If you don't, I'll come anyhow, that's all."

"You might leave out 'that's all,'" said Wilfred. "No, don't leave that out. It's very important. It doesn't seem to be so important, but it is. It shows—well—it shows that that's all there is about it. That one thing might convince him."

"Yes, but we've got to leave out something." "Not that, though. Perhaps there is something else. The seventeen call is out—that's got to stay." "Yes," said Wilfred. "The sixteen comes next. That's just got to stay." "Of course. Now, what follows?" "I'm not going to wait for it," read Caroline.

"We can't cut that out," said Wilfred; "we don't seem to be making much progress, do we?" "Well, we will find something in a moment. Do you think I am—" she hesitated a moment, "a damned coward," she read with a delicious thrill at her rash, vicarious wickedness. Wilfred regarded her dubiously. He felt as an author does when he sees his pet periods marked out by the blue pencil of the ruthless editor. "You might leave that out," he began, cutting valiantly at his most cherished and admired phrase.

"I protested," Caroline vehemently. "Certainly not! That is the best thing in the whole letter." "That 'damn' is going to cost us seven dollars, you know." "It is worth it," said Caroline. "It is the best thing you have written. Your father is a general in the army, he'll understand that kind of language. What's next? I know there's something now." "Tom Kitt-ridge has gone. He was killed yesterday at Cold Harbor."

"Leave out that about"—she caught her breath, and her eyes fixed themselves once more on that little round hole in the breast of his jacket—"about his being killed." "But he was killed and so was Johnny Sheldon—I have his uniform, you know."

"I know he was, but you don't have to tell your father," said Caroline, choking up, "you don't have to telegraph him the news, do you?" "No, of course not, but—" "That's all there is to the letter except the end."

"Why, that leaves it just the same except the part about—" "Yes," said Caroline in despair, "and after all the work we have done."

"Let's try it again," said Wilfred. "No," said Caroline, "there is no use. Everything else has got to stay." "Well, then, we can't telegraph it. It would cost hundreds of dollars." "Yes, we can telegraph it," said Caroline determinedly, "you give it to me. I'll get it sent."

"But how are you going to send it?" asked Wilfred, extending the letter. "Never you mind," answered the girl. "See here!" the boy cried. "I am

Wilfred Swept His Pen Through It.

not going to have you spend your money, and—" "There's no danger of that, I haven't any to spend." She took the letter from his hand. "I reckon Douglass Foray'll send it for me. He's in the telegraph office and he'll do most anything for me." "No," said Wilfred sternly. "What's the reason he won't?" asked the girl. "Because he's a—"

### 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. His father consents. The federals are making their last assault in an effort to capture Richmond.

CHAPTER II—Edith Varney secured 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. Arrelsford 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. Arrelsford suspects it is intended for Thorne. The note reads: "Attack tonight. Plan 3. Use 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.

(To Be Continued.)

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