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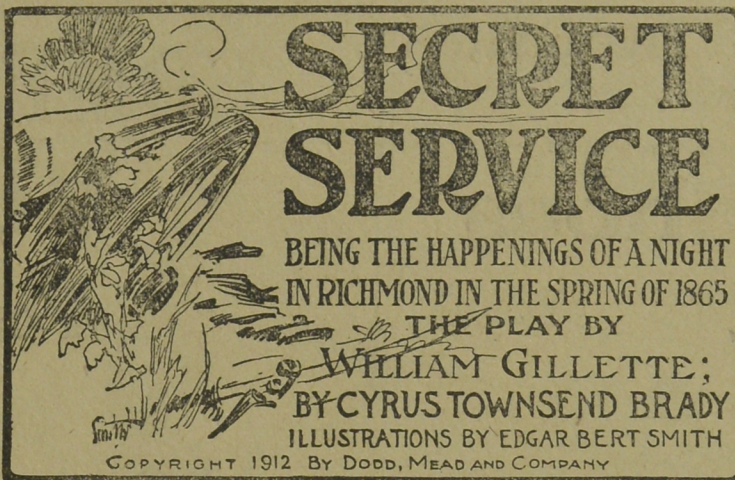
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SYNOPSIS.

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 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.

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."

Thorne's muscles relaxed, his hand still clutched the butt of his revolver, he was still alert, but here was not an enemy. He began at once to fathom something at least of the plan and the purpose of the people who had trapped him. In a flash he perceived that his enemies were not yet in possession of all the facts which would warrant them in laying hands upon him. He was suspected, but the final evidence upon which to turn suspicion into certainty was evidently lacking. He could feel, although he could not see them, that every door and window had eyes solely for him, and that he was closely watched for some false move which would betray him. The plan for which he had ventured so much was still possible; he had not yet failed. His heart leaped in his breast. The clouds around his horizon lifted a little. There was yet a possibility that he could succeed, that he could carry out his part of the cunningly devised and desperate undertaking, the series of events of which this night and the telegraph office were to be the culmination.

A less cautious and a less resourceful man might have evinced some emotion, might have gone forward or spoken to the newcomer, would have at least done something to have attracted his attention, but save for that relaxation of the tension, which no one could by any possibility observe, Thorne stood motionless, silent, waiting; just as he might have stood and waited had he been what he seemed and the newcomer been utterly unknown and indifferent to him.

His brother was dressed in the blue uniform of the United States; like the others it had seen good service, but as Thorne glanced from his own clothes to those of his brother, the blood came to his face, it was like seeing his own flag again. For a fleeting moment he wished that he had on his own rightful uniform himself and that he had never put it off for anything; but duty is not made up of wishes, gratified or ungratified, and the thought passed as he watched the other man.

Henry Dumont had been thrust violently into the room by the soldiers outside. He had been captured, as Arrelsford had said, earlier in the day; he had allowed himself to be taken. He had been thrust into Libby prison with dozens of prisoners taken in the same sortie. He had not been searched, but then none of the others had been; had he been selected for that unwanted immunity alone it would have awakened his suspicions, but the Confederates had made a show of great haste in disposing of their prisoners, and had promised to search them in the morning. Therefore Henry Dumont had retained the paper which later he had given Jonas, when by previous arrangement he made his daily visit to the prison.

He had been greatly surprised, when about a quarter to nine o'clock a squad of soldiers had taken him from the prison, had marched him hurriedly through the streets with which he was entirely unfamiliar and had taken

him to the residence section of the city, and had halted at the back of a big house. He had asked no questions, and no explanations had been vouchsafed to him. He was more surprised than ever when he was taken up to the porch, the window was opened, and he was thrust violently into a room, so violently that he staggered and had some difficulty in recovering his balance.

He made a quick inspection of the room. Thorne, in the deeper shadows at the farther end of the room was invisible to him. He stood motionless save for the turning of his head as he looked around him. He moved a few steps toward the end of the room, opposite his entrance, passed by the far door opening into the back hall which was covered with portieres and went swiftly toward the near door into the front hall. The door was slightly ajar, and as he came within range of the opening he saw in the shadows of the hall, crossed bayonets and men. No escape that way!

He went on past the door toward the large windows at the front of the house and in another moment would have been at the front window where Thorne stood. The latter dropped the curtain and stepped out into the room.

For the thousandth part of a second the two brothers stared at each other and then, in a fiercely intense voice Thorne, playing his part, desperately called out:

"Halt! You are a prisoner!"

Both brothers were quick witted both knew that they were under the closest observation, both realized that they were expected to betray relationship, which would incriminate both, and probably result fatally for one or certainly ruin the plan. Thorne's cue was to regard his brother as the prisoner whom it was important to arrest and Dumont's cue was to regard his brother as an enemy with whom it was his duty to struggle. The mind of the two were made up instantly. With a quick movement Dumont sought to pass his brother, but with a movement equally rapid Thorne leaped upon him, shouting again:

"Halt, I say!"

The two men instantly grappled. It was no mimic struggle that they engaged in, either. They were of about equal height and weight; if anything, Thorne was the stronger, but this advantage was offset by the fact that he had been recently ill, and the two fought therefore on equal terms at first. It was a fierce, desperate grapple in which they met. As they struggled, both by a common impulse, reeled toward that part of the room near the mantel which was farthest away from doors or windows, and where they would be the least likely to be overheard or to be more closely observed. As they fought together Thorne called out again:

"Corporal of the guard, here is your man! Corporal of the guard, what are you doing?"

At that instant the two reeling bodies struck the wall next to the mantel with a fearful smash, and a chair that stood by was overturned by a quick movement on the part of Henry Dumont, who did not know his brother had already received the important message. In the confusion of the moment, he hissed in Thorne's ear:

"Attack tonight, plan 3, use telegraph! Did you get that?"

"Yes," returned Thorne, still keeping up the struggle.

"Good," said Dumont. "They are watching us. Shoot me in the leg."

"No, I can't do it," whispered Thorne.

All the while the two men were reeling and staggering and struggling against the wall and furniture. The encounter would have deceived the most suspicious.

"Shoot, shoot," said the elder.

"I can't shoot my brother," the younger panted out.

"It is the only way to throw them off the scent," persisted Dumont.

"I won't do it," answered Thorne, and then he shouted again:

"Corporal of the guard, I have your prisoner!"

"Let me go, damn you!" roared Dumont furiously, making another desperate effort—"If you don't do it, I will," he added under his breath. "Give me the revolver!"

"No, no, Harry," was the whispered reply, and "Surrender, curse you!" he shouted answer. "You'll hurt yourself," he pleaded.

"I don't care," muttered Dumont.

"Let me have it."

His hands slipped down from Thorne's shoulders and grasped the butt of the revolver. The two grappled fiercely, but the struggle was beginning to tell on Thorne, who was not yet in full possession of his physical vitality. His long illness had sapped his strength.

(To Be Continued.)

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