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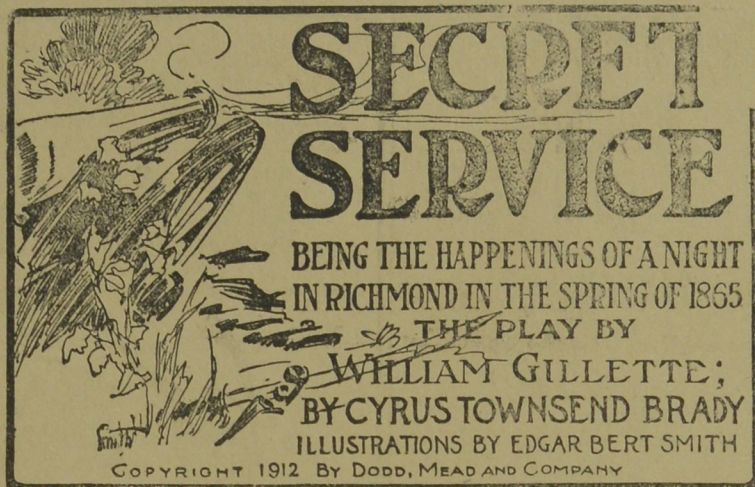
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SYNOPSIS.

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 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. Arrelford 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. Arrelford suspects it is intended for Thorne. The note reads: "Attack tonight. Plan 3. Use Telegraph."

CHAPTER VI—Edith is indignant when Arrelford tells her of his suspicions regarding Thorne. He declares the latter is Lewis Dumont of the 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. Arrelford 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—Arrelford refuses to let Caroline's message go through. It is a telegram to Wilfred simply asking forgiveness, but Arrelford suspects a double meaning. He and Edith secretly themselves to watch Thorne, whose arrival Arrelford expects.

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

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

CHAPTER XIV—The removal of Arrelford is stopped by the arrival of General Randolph. Thorne again begins sending the dispatch. Arrelford 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.

CHAPTER XV—She produces Thorne's commission as major in command of the government telegraph. She having seen enough to convince her he is a secret agent, she orders him to leave. After she leaves he tears it up.

CHAPTER XVI—Thorne plans to escape from Richmond.

CHAPTER XVII—Arrelford calls at the Varney home and demands to see Edith. Mrs. Varney refuses. A sergeant appears with an order to search the house for Thorne. Wilfred Varney returns from the front wounded.

(Continue I.)

forward, Thorne's revolver still in his hand.

"No," he said decisively; "whatever he is, whatever he has done, he has the right to a trial."

"The head of the secret service department said to me if I found him, to shoot him at sight," snarled Arrelford.

"I don't care what General Tarleton said. I captured this man; he's in this house, and he is not going out unless he is treated fairly."

The sergeant looked uncertainly from Wilfred to Arrelford. Mrs. Varney, who had entered with the rest of them, and who now stood by her daughter's side, looked her approval at her son. The mettle of his distinguished father was surely in his veins.

"Well done," said the woman softly, but not so softly that those about her did not hear; "your father would have spoken so."

Arrelford came to a sudden decision.

"Well, let him have a trial. We'll give him a drumhead court-martial. But it will be the quickest ever held on earth. Stack your muskets here, and organize a court," he said.

"Fall in here," cried the sergeant, at which the men quickly took their places. "Attention! Stack arms! Two of you take the prisoner. Where shall we find a vacant room, ma'am?"

"Across the hall," said Mrs. Varney; "where the ladies were sewing this evening."

"Very good," said the sergeant.

"Left face! Forward, march!"

Arrelford and Wilfred followed the soldiers.

"I am the chief witness," said the

former.

"I will see that he gets fair play," remarked the latter, as they marched out.

"I must go to Howard," said Mrs. Varney; "this excitement is killing him; I am afraid he will hardly survive the night. Caroline is with him now."

"Very well, mother," said Edith, going slowly up the now deserted room and standing in the window, looking out into the night, thinking her strange, appalling thoughts. They would convict him, shoot him, there was no hope. What had he said? He was not ashamed of his work. It was the highest duty and involved the highest and noblest sacrifice, because it made the greatest demand; and they would shoot him like a mad dog.

"Oh, God!" she whispered; "if some bullet would only find my heart as well."

CHAPTER XIX.

The Drumhead Court-Martial.

It so happened that the soldiers who had thrust old Jonas back in his closet, whence they had taken him a short time before, in their haste, had failed to lock the door upon him. The negro, who had listened for the click of the key in the lock, had at once known of their carelessness. So soon as they had withdrawn from the room, and their search look them to other parts of the house, he had opened the door cautiously and had made his way toward the hall by the drawing-room, which he felt instinctively was the place where the exciting events of the night would soon culminate.

Thorne's entry and the circumstances of his apprehension had been so engrossing that no one had given a thought to Jonas, or to any other part of the house, for that matter, and he had been able to see every thing through the hangings. He was a quick-witted old negro, and he knew of course, that there would be but one verdict given by such a court-martial as had assembled. Now, the men who composed the court would of necessity be detailed to carry out their own sentence. The long room was filled with stacks of guns. Every soldier, even those under the command of Corporal Matson in Arrelford's department, had gone to the court-martial. There was nothing else of interest to attract them in the house. Every gun was there in that room, unguarded.

A recent capture of a battalion of Federal riflemen had put the Confederates into possession of a few hundred breech-loading weapons, not of the latest and most approved pattern, for the cartridges in these guns were in cardboard shells, but still better than any the south possessed. These rifles had been distributed to some of the companies in garrison at Richmond, and it so happened that the men of the secret service squad and the provost guard had received most of them. Every gun in the stacks was of this pattern.

In his earlier days, Jonas had been his young master's personal attendant, his body-servant, and as such he had often gone hunting with him. During the war he had frequently visited him in camp, charged with messages of one sort or another, and he knew all about weapons.

As he stared into the long room after the departing soldiers, he did not know Edith Varney was still there, nor could he see her at all, for she was on the other side of the curtain, looking out of the window, and it seemed to him that the room was empty.

Jonas was a very intelligent negro and while under any ordinary circumstances his devotion to his master and mistress would have been absolutely sure, yet he had become tinged with the ideas of freedom and liberty in the air. He had assisted many and many a Union prisoner. Captain Thorne, by his pleasant ways and nice address, had won his heart. And he himself was deeply concerned personally that the young man should not be punished for his attempt to bring about the success of the Union cause which Jonas felt to be his own cause. Therefore he had a double motive to secure the freedom of his principal if it were in any way possible.

As he stared at the pyramids of guns, listening to the hum of conversation from the room across the hall—the door had been fortunately closed—a thought came to him. He pushed aside the portieres with which he had concealed himself, and entered.

(To Be Continued.)

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