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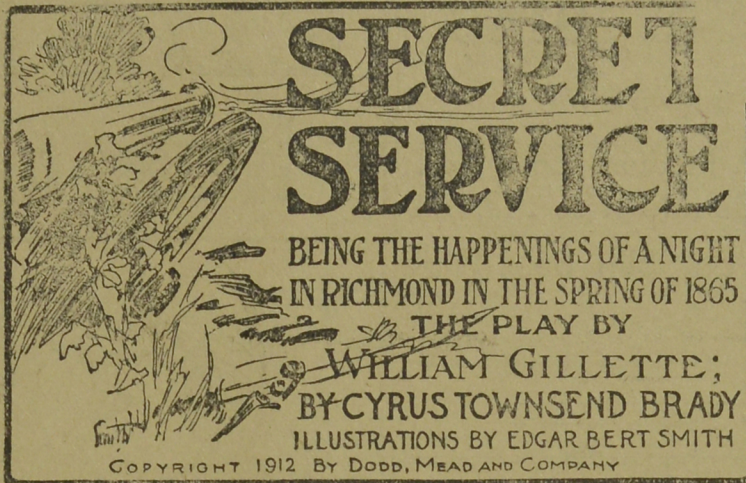
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SYNOPSIS.

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 see the commission, but is prevented by the arrival of Caroline Mifflin, 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."

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, but 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 leg 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 being sent 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.)

But Arrelsford's evil genius prompted him to interpose again. When all pairs were going to his liking he should have let them alone, but fate seemed to be playing into his hand, and he determined to make the most of it and the chance.

"Another witness! Miss Varney,"



"Captain Thorne Has the Highest Authority in This Office."

he cried triumphantly, as he bowed toward the window in which Edith had at that moment appeared. "She was here with me, she saw it all. Ask her."

General Randolph turned toward the window and in his turn bowed to the girl.

"Miss Varney," he asked courteously, "do you know anything about this?"

"About what, sir?" answered Edith in a low voice.

"Mr. Arrelsford claims that Captain Thorne is acting without authority in this office and that you can testify to that effect," was the general's answer.

CHAPTER XV.

Love and Duty at the Touch.

Thorne's case was now absolutely hopeless. By the testimony of two witnesses a thing is established. All that Arrelsford had seen Edith had seen. All that he knew, she knew. She had only to speak and the plan had failed; the cleverly constructed scheme would fall to pieces. His brother's life would have been wasted may more, his own life also; for well did he realize that the bold way he had played the game would the more certainly hasten his immediate execution. A spy in the Confederate capital!

He could reproach himself with nothing. He had done his very best. An ordinary man would have failed a dozen times in the struggle. Courage, adroitness, resourcefulness, and good fortune had carried him so far, but the odds were now heavily against him and nothing that he could do would avail him anything. The game was played and he had lost; Arrelsford had triumphed.

Thorne, in the one word that Edith Varney was to speak, would lose life honor and that for which he had risked both. And he would lose more than that. He would lose the love of the woman who had never seemed so beautiful to him as she stood there pale-faced, erect, the very incarnation of self-sacrifice, as were all the women of the Confederacy. And he would lose more than her love. He would lose her respect. His humiliation would be her humiliation. Never so long as she lived could her mind dwell on him with tenderness.

His condition was indeed pitiable yet, to do him justice, his thought were not so much for himself as they were for two other things. First and foremost bulked largest before him the plan for which he had made all this sacrifice, which had promised to end the weary months of siege which Richmond and Petersburg had sustained. His brother had lost his life he more than suspected, in the endeavor to carry it out, and now he had failed. That was a natural humiliation and reproach to his pride, although as his mind went back over the scene he could detect no false move on his part. Of course his allowing his love for Edith Varney to get the mastery of him had been wrong under the circumstances, but that had not affected the failure of success of his endeavors.

And his thoughts also were for the woman. He knew that she loved him, she had admitted it, but once his eyes had been opened, he could have told it without any admission at all. All that he had suffered, she had suffered, and more. If she would be compelled to apologize for him, she would also be compelled to assume the defensive for him. She loved him and she was placed in the fearful position of having to deal the blow. The words which would presently fall from her lips would complete his undoing. They would blast his reputation forever and send him to his death. He knew they would not be easy words for her to speak. He knew that whatever his merit or demerit, she would never forget that it was she who had completed his ruin; the fact that she would also ruin the plan against her country would not weigh very heavily in her breaking heart against the present personal consideration—after a while maybe but not at first. And therefore he pitied her.

He drew himself erect to meet his fate like a man and waited. The wait was a long one. Edith Varney was having her own troubles. She knew as well as anyone the importance of her testimony. She had come from the commissary general's vacant office and had been back at the window long enough to have heard the conversation between General Randolph and the two men. She was an unusual keen-witted girl and she realized the situation to the full.

Her confidence in her lover had been shaken, undermined, restored, and shaken again, until her mind was in a perfect whirl. She did not know, she could not tell whether he was what he seemed to be or not. It seemed like treachery to him, this uncertainty. It would be a simple matter to corroborate Mr. Arrelsford at once and it occurred to her that she had no option. But coincident with this question flashed into her mind something she had forgotten which made it impossible for her to answer in another way. Thus, she understood that the life of her lover hung upon her decision.

Her eyes flashed quickly from the vindictive yet triumphant face of Arrelsford, whom she loathed, to the pale, composed, set face of Thorne, whom she loved, and her glance fell upon his wounded left wrist, tied up, the blood oozing through the handkerchief. A wave of sympathy and tenderness filled her breast. He was hurt, suffering—that decided her.

(To Be Continued.)

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