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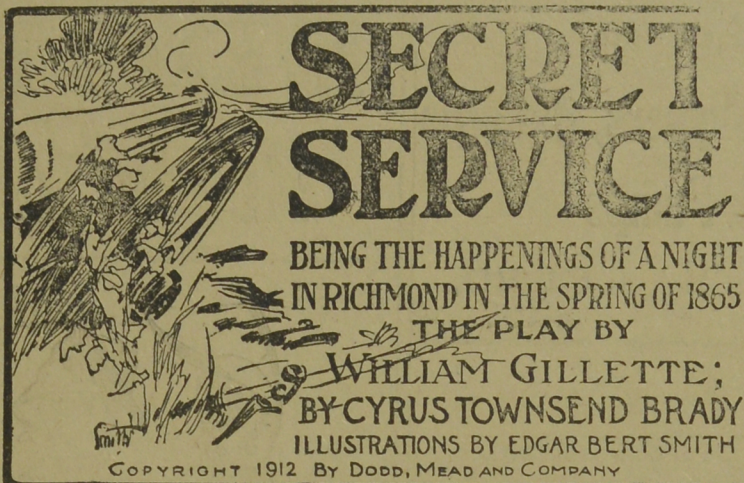
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SYNOPSIS.

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 a spy 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 secretly themselves to watch Thorne, whose arrival Arrelsford expects.

CHAPTER XII—Thorne takes charge of the telegraph office and after satisfying the night guard, he alone is 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 after the secretary's dispatch. Thorne is shot in the wrist 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 becoming the prisoner, is sent to the front. Arrelsford, 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.)

With one brief, voiceless prayer to God for guidance, she turned to General Randolph, and it was well that she spoke when she did, for the pause had become insupportable to Thorne at least. He had made up his mind to relieve the dilemma and confess his guilt so that the girl would not have to reproach herself with a betrayal of her lover or her cause, that she might not feel that she had been found wanting at the critical moment. Indeed Thorne would have done this before but his duty as a soldier enjoined upon him the propriety, the imperative necessity, of playing the game to the very end. The battle was not yet over. It would never be over until he faced the firing party.

And then Edith's voice broke the silence that had become so tense with emotion.

"Mr. Arrelsford is mistaken, General Randolph," she said quietly, "Captain Thorne has the highest authority in this office."

Arrelsford started violently and opened his mouth to speak, but General Randolph silenced him with a look. The blood of the old general was up, and it had become impossible for anyone to presume in the least degree. Thorne started, too. The blood rushed to his heart. He thought he would choke to death. What did the girl mean?

"The highest authority, sir," continued Edith Varney, slowly drawing out the commission, which every one but she had forgotten in the excitement, "the authority of the president of the Confederate States of America."

Well, she had done it for weal or for woe. She had made her decision. Had it been a wise decision? Had she acted for the best? What interest had governed her, love for Thorne, love for her country, or love for her own peace of mind? It was in the hands of General Randolph now. The girl turned slowly away unable to sustain the burning glances of her lover and the vindictive stare of Arrelsford.

"What's this?" said General Randolph. "Umph! A major's commis-

sion. In command of the telegraph department. Major Thorne, I congratulate you."

"That commission, General Randolph!" exclaimed Arrelsford, his voice rising, "let me explain how she—"

"That will do from you, sir," said the general, "you have made enough trouble as it is. I suppose you claim that this is a forgery, too—"

"Let me tell you, sir," persisted the secret service agent.

"You have told me enough as it is. Sergeant, take him over to headquar-

ters."

"Fall in there!" cried the sergeant of the guard. "Two of you take the prisoner. Forward march!"

Two men seized Arrelsford, and the rest of them closed about him. To do the man justice, he made a violent struggle and was only marched out at the point of the bayonet, protesting and crying:

"For God's sake, he's in the Yankee secret service! He'll send that dispatch out. His brother brought in the signal tonight!"

All the way down the corridor he could be heard yelling and struggling. General Randolph paid not the slightest attention to him. He stepped over to the telegraph table beside which Thorne stood—and with all the force of which he was capable the young man could hardly control the trembling of his knees.

"Major Thorne," he said reprovingly as Thorne saluted him, "all this delay has been your own fault. If you had only had sense enough to mention this before we would have been saved a damned lot of trouble. There's your commission, sir." He handed it to Thorne, who saluted him again as one in a dream. "Come, gentlemen," he said to his officers, "I can't understand why they have to be so cursed shy about their secret service orders! Lieutenant Foray?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take your orders from Major Thorne."

"Yes, sir," returned Foray.

"Good night," said the general, forgetful of the fact apparently that Edith Varney was still standing by the window.

"Good night, sir," answered Thorne. Foray moved over to the table as the right, while Thorne leaped to his former position, and his hand sought the key. At last he could send his message, there was nothing to prevent him or interrupt him now, he was in command. Could he get it through? For a moment he forgot everything but that, as he clicked out the code again, but he had scarcely pressed the button when Edith Varney stepped to his side.

"Captain Thorne," she said in a low voice, giving him the old title.

He looked up at her, stopping a moment.

"What I have done gives you time to escape from Richmond," she continued.

"Escape!" whispered Thorne, clicking the key again. "Impossible!"

"Oh," said the girl, laying her hand on his arm, "you wouldn't do it now!"

And again the man's fingers remained poised over the key as he stared at her.

"I gave it to you to—to save you life. I didn't think you'd use it for anything else. Oh! You wouldn't!"

Her voice in its low whisper was agonizing. If her face had been white before, what could be said of it now! In a flash Thorne saw all. She had been confident of his guilt, and she had sought to save his life because she loved him, and now because she loved her country she sought to save that too.

The call sounded from the table. Thorne turned to it, bent over it, and listened. It was the call for the message. Then he turned to the woman. She looked at him; just one look. The kind of a look that Christ might have turned upon Peter after those denials when he saw him in the courtyard early on that bitter morning of betrayal. "I saved you," the girl's look seemed to say, "I redeemed you and now you betray me!" She spoke no words, words were useless between them. Everything had been said everything had been done. She could only go. Never woman looked at man nor man looked at woman as these two at each other.

The woman turned, she could trust herself no further. She went blind toward the door. The man followed her slowly, crushing the commission in his hand, and ever as he went he heard the sound of the call behind him. He stopped fully by the door and the table and watched her go, and then he turned.

(To Be Continued.)

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