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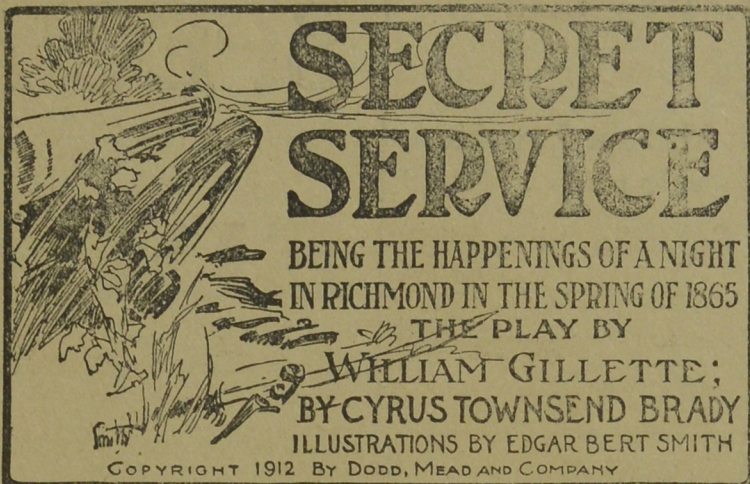
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THE PLAY BY

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BY CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY

ILLUSTRATIONS BY EDGAR BERT SMITH
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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."

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 for his release, but Arrelsford suspects a double meaning. He and Edith resolve themselves to watch Thorne, whose arrival Arrelsford expects.

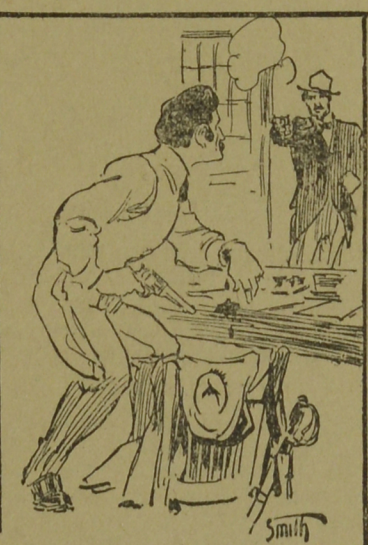
CHAPTER XII—Thorne takes charge of the telegraph office and after satisfying himself that he is alone attempts to send a message, but is interrupted by the arrival of a messenger from the secretary of war with a dispatch.

CHAPTER XIII—Arrelsford and Edith see Thorne after the messenger's dispatch. Thorne is shot in the wrist by Arrelsford when he attempts to send it. Arrelsford tells the guard, and when 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 begins sending 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.

The game appeared to be up this time. Mr. Arrelsford held all the winning cards, thought Thorne, and he was playing them skillfully. He ground his teeth at the thought that another moment and the order would have been sent probably beyond recall. Pat had played him a scurvy trick, it had thwarted him at the last move, and Arrelsford had so contrived that his treachery had been before the woman he loved. Under other circumstances the wound in his wrist would have given him exquisite pain; as it was he scarcely realized at the time that he had been hurt.

Arrelsford still stood by the window, glancing out on the square but keeping Thorne under close observation. The evil look in his eyes and the malicious sneer on his lips well seconded the expression of triumph in his face. He had the man he hated



"A Jet of Blood Spurted Out Upon the Table."

where he wanted him. It was a splendid piece of work that he had performed, and in the performance he had his private vengeance and carried out his public duty.

On his part, Thorne was absolutely helpless. There was that in the bearing of the woman he loved that prevented him from approaching her. He shot a mute look of appeal to her which she received with marble face, apparently absolutely indifferent to his presence, yet she was suffering scarcely less than he. In her anguish she turned desperately to Arrelsford. "I am not going to stay," she said decisively, "I don't wish to be a witness."

"Whatever your feelings may be Miss Varney," persisted Arrelsford, "I can't permit you to refuse."

"If you won't take me downstairs I will find the way myself," returned the girl as if she had not heard.

She turned resolutely toward the door. Before she reached it the heavy tramping of the guard was heard.

"Too late," said Arrelsford triumphantly, "you can't go now, the guard is here."

Edith could hear the approaching soldiers as well as anybody. The way was barred, she realized instantly. Well, if she could not escape, at least she could get out of sight. She turned and opened the nearest window and stepped out. Arrelsford knew that she could not go far, and that he could produce her whenever he wanted her. He made no objection to her departure that way, therefore. Instead he looked at Thorne.

"I have you just where I want you at last," he said mockingly, as the tramping feet came nearer. "You thought you were mighty smart, but you will find that I can match you trick every time."

Outside in the hall the men came to a sudden halt before the door. One of them knocked loudly upon it.

"What's the matter here?" cried the sergeant of the guard without.

The handle was tried and the door was shoved violently, but the brass bolt held.

"Let us in!" he cried angrily.

Quick as a flash of lightning an idea came to Thorne.

"Sergeant!" he shouted in a powerful voice. "Sergeant of the guard!"

"Sir!"

"Break down the door! Break down with your musket butts!"

As the butts of the muskets poked against the heavy mahogany doors Arrelsford cried out in great surprise:

"What did you say?"

In his astonishment he did not notice a swift movement Thorne made toward the door.

"You want them in, don't you?" the soldier said, as he approached the door. "It is locked and—"

But Arrelsford recovered himself, little and again presented his revolver.

"Stand where you are," he cried, but Thorne by this time had reached the door.

"Smash it down, sergeant," he cried. "What are you waiting for? Batter it down!"

The next moment the door gave way with a crash, and into the room poured the guard. The grizzled old sergeant had scarcely stepped inside the room when Thorne shouted in tones of the fiercest authority, pointing at Arrelsford:

"Arrest that man!"

Before the dazed secret service agent could say a word or press the trigger the soldiers were upon him.

"He got in here with a revolver," continued Thorne more quietly, "and is playing hell with it. Hold him fast!"

CHAPTER XIV.

The Call of the Key.

This astonishing denouement fairly paralyzed Arrelsford. With a daring and ability for which he had not given Thorne credit, and which was totally unexpected, although what he had learned of his previous career might have given him some warning, the tables had been turned upon him by a man whom he confidently fancied he had entrapped beyond possibility of escape!

His amazement held him speechless for a moment, but his natural resourcefulness came back to him with his returning presence of mind. He knew the futility of an attempt to struggle with his captors, he therefore decided to try to reason with them.

"Sergeant," he began, quietly, enough, "my orders are—"

(To Be Continued.)

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The "Floor-and-Door-a" Girl

work and the endless doors, until when Hubby saw them, too, reflections said: "Why, howdy-do!"

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