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BY CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY EDGAR BERT SMITH

### 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 2. 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 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 after the secretary's dispatch. Thorne is shot in the wrist by Arrelsford when he attempts to send the message. 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 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.

CHAPTER XV—She produces Thorne's commission as chief of the telegraph at Richmond. She, having seen enough to convince her he is a real hero, him not to send the forced order. After she leaves he tears it up.

CHAPTER XVI—Thorne plans to escape from Richmond.

(Continued.)

"Yes, my mother; they locked him up. Mr. Arrelsford wants him for carrying a message."

"That's all right," said the sergeant. "If he wants him, he can have him."

"We're looking for some one else. Put him back in his closet. Here, this room! Be quick now! Cover that door. Sorry to disturb you, ma'am."

"Do what you please," said Mrs. Varney; "I have nothing on earth to conceal."

As the men hurriedly withdrew to continue their search, the voice of a newcomer was heard on the porch. The words came to them clearly:

"Here, lend a hand, somebody, will you?"

The next moment General Varney's orderly entered the room, caught sight of the sergeant, saluted, and then turned to Mrs. Varney.

"I've brought back your boy, ma'am," he said.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Varney faintly; "what do you mean?"

"We never got out to General Varney's. We ran into a Yankee raiding party, cavalry, down here about three miles. Our home-guard was galloping by on the run to head them off, and before I knew what he was about, the boy was in with 'em, riding like mad. There was a bit of a skirmish, and he got a clip across the neck. Nothing at all ma'am. He rode back all the way, and—"

"Oh, my boy! He's hurt—he's hurt!"

"Nothing serious, ma'am; don't upset yourself," returned the orderly reassuringly.

"Where did you—"

But that moment the object of their solicitude himself appeared on the scene. The boy was very pale, and his neck was bandaged. Two of the ser-

geant's men supported him.

"Oh, Wilfred!" cried his mother; "my boy!"

"It's nothing, mother," said Wilfred, motioning her away. "You don't understand." The boy tried to free himself from the men who still held him by the arm. "What do you want to hold me like that for?" he expostulated, as he drew himself away and took a few steps. "You see I can walk," he protested.

His words were brave, but his performance was weak. His mother came close to him and extended her arms toward him. But Wilfred was a soldier now, and he did not want any scenes. Therefore, with a great effort, he took her hand in as casual a manner as possible, quite like a stranger paying an afternoon call.

"How do you do, mother?" he said.

"You didn't expect me back so soon, did you? I will tell you how it was. Don't you go away, orderly. I will just rest a minute, and then I will go back with you." Another outburst of the cannon and the frantic pealing of the alarm bells caught his attention. "See, they are ringing the bells calling out the reserves." He started toward the door. "I will go right now."

"No, no, Wilfred," said his mother, taking his arm; "not now, my son."

"Not now?" said Wilfred, whose weakness was growing apparent. "Do you hear those—those—those bells and—then tell me not—to go—why—"

He swayed and tottered.

"Stand by there!" cried the sergeant.

The two men immediately caught hold of him as he faltered. They carried him to the lounge.

"Find some water, will you?" continued the sergeant. "Put his head down, ma'am, and he'll be all right in a minute. He's only fainted."

One of the privates who had hurried off in search of water soon came back with a basin full, with which Mrs. Varney laved the boy's head.

"He'll be all right in a minute," said the sergeant. "Come, men."

He turned as he spoke, and, followed by the men, left the room, leaving Mrs. Varney with Wilfred and the orderly. It was the latter who broke the silence.

"If there isn't anything else, ma'am, I believe I'd better report back to the general."

"Yes," said Mrs. Varney, "don't wait. The wound is dressed, isn't it?"

"Yes; I took him to the Windsor hospital. They said he would be on his feet in a day or two, but he wants to be kept pretty quiet."

"Tell the general how it happened."

"Very well, ma'am," said the orderly, touching his cap and going out.

The next person to enter the room was Caroline Mitford. The noise of the men searching the house was very plain. Having informed Edith of the meaning of the tumult, she had come downstairs to inquire if they had found Thorne. She came slowly with in the door—rather listlessly, in fact. The exciting events of the night in which she had taken part had somewhat sapped her natural vivacity, but she was shocked into instant action when she saw Wilfred stretched upon the sofa.

"Oh!" she breathed in a low, tense whisper; "what is it? Is he—"

"Caroline dear," said Mrs. Varney, "it is nothing serious. He isn't badly hurt. He was cut in the neck and fainted. There, there—" the woman rose from Wilfred's side and caught the girl—"don't you faint, too, dear."

"I am not going to faint," said Caroline desperately. She took Mrs. Varney's handkerchief from the latter's hand, and dipped it in the water. "I can take care of him," she continued, kneeling down by her boyish lover.

"I don't need anybody down here at all. The men are going all over the house and—"

"But, Caroline—" began Mrs. Varney.

"Mrs. Varney," returned the girl, strangely quiet, "there's a heap of soldiers upstairs, looking in all the rooms. I reckon you'd better go and attend to them. They will be in Edith's room, or Howard's, in a minute."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Varney, "and Howard so ill. I must go for a few minutes, anyway. You know what to do?"

"Oh, yes," answered the girl confidently.

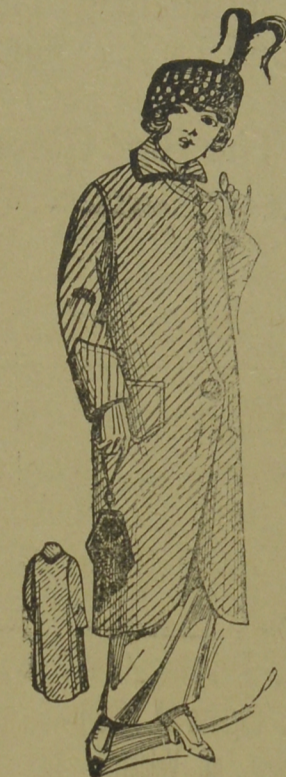
"Bathe his forehead. He isn't badly hurt, dear. I won't be long, and he will soon come to, I am sure," said Mrs. Varney, hastening away.

Presently Wilfred opened his eyes. He stared about him unmeaningly and incomprehensibly for the moment.

"Wilfred, dear Wilfred," began the girl in soft, low, caressing tones, "you are not hurt much, are you? Oh, not much. There, you will feel better in just a moment, dear Wilfred."

(To Be Continued.)

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