

PLAYING A NEAR-SIGHTED MAN
By VERNON ARNOLD.

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Major Ringold, commanding a three company post in the west at a time when the United States army consisted of 30,000 men and fought Indians, was a stickler for military precision. An officer in those days seldom rose to the rank of major before arriving at the age of forty, and Major Ringold was forty-five. Indeed, he was the father of a daughter aged twenty. Florence Ringold was, much to her father's chagrin, in love with a young Lieutenant, Horace Tourtelotte, whose pay and commutation for fuel and quarters barely exceeded \$1,300 a year, and that was all he had in the world to live on. Ringold, or, rather, his wife, was well off, and their daughter could afford to marry a poor man. But the girls who usually marry poor men are those who can't afford the luxury. Major Ringold was decidedly opposed to the match between his daughter and Lieutenant Tourtelotte. The consequence was that he hated the young man and was constantly on the watch for opportunities to put him in disgrace.

Lieutenant Tisdale of Company B resembled Tourtelotte, and the two were occasionally mistaken for each other. One day Tourtelotte, for some reason or other, found it essential to be absent from the post and applied for leave. It was his turn to be officer of the day, and this application was denied. He told Tisdale of his dilemma, who offered to act in his place. But the major refused to permit the adjutant to make the substitution.

"Go anyway," said Tisdale. "Old Ringold will never know the difference between you and me, and no one will report you."

The very next day Tisdale was walking across the parade ground, uniformed for officer of the day, when he saw the major coming. Tisdale diverged in his course; so did the major. The latter felt for his nearsighted glasses, but they were not in their accustomed place. Tisdale saw the motion and resolved to play a bold game. When the major came near him he saluted and was passing on, but the major stopped, stared at him and said:

"Mr. Tisdale, why are you acting as officer of the day? Mr. Tourtelotte was detailed."

"Why, major," said Tisdale, "what's the matter with your eyes?"

"My eyes! My eyes are all right, sir. What do you mean?"

"You're mistaken, major. But I'm often mistaken for Tisdale. Better eyes than yours have failed to recognize me for myself."

"Umph!" said the major, not being sure whether he was talking to Tisdale or Tourtelotte, and he passed on without another word.

The commandant was walking from his quarters while Tisdale was walking toward him. Tisdale hurried on and on the porch of the Ringold family quarters saw Florence.

"Miss Ringold," he said, "Tourtelotte is away without leave, and I'm doing his turn as officer of the day. I've just met your father and tried to make him believe I was Tourtelotte. Do you know where he keeps his glasses? If you do get hold of them and don't give them up."

"I'll hunt for them," said the girl and, going upstairs, saw the glasses on her father's dresser. She took them to her room and locked them in her jewel box.

She had scarcely done so when Ringold came back and began a hunt for his glasses. Not finding them, he called on every member of the family to help him. Miss Florence was assiduous in the search, but notwithstanding her efforts the glasses were not found.

"Go tell my orderly to send the officer of the day here," he said to his daughter.

The order was given, and in due time Tisdale appeared. Florence met him at the door and gave him confidence by telling him that the glasses were under lock and key. She stood chatting with him in the hall before he entered the mayor's presence, addressing him as Mr. Tourtelotte.

"Lieutenant," said the major. "I've sent for you to say that I'll go the grand rounds tonight."

"Yes, sir."

"I'll start at midnight. Keep the matter a secret. Report here at five minutes of 12 precisely."

"Yes, sir."

The major, who had really sent for the officer with a view of discovering if he were Tourtelotte, was staring at him while giving his instructions.

"The resemblance between you and Tisdale is remarkable," he said. "Flo, some in here."

Florence entered. A quick glance passed between her and Tisdale. It was an anxious glance.

"I'll bet you can't tell who that is, Flo," said her father.

"Who who is?"

"The officer of the day."

"What's the matter with you, father? Is your nearsightedness getting so bad that you can't distinguish Mr. Tourtelotte?"

"Oh, I only wished to test my eyesight. It's worrying me a good deal lately. That'll do, Lieutenant. On second thoughts I won't go grand rounds tonight."

The major never knew how he had been deceived till his daughter had married Tourtelotte. Then he was told how she had stolen his glasses and the man she loved was saved from a court martial.

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