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'16 and '61

By ESTHER VANDEVEER

Neil Appleton, a young American who had been to the pan-European war and had been discharged as unfit for service on account of wounds, returned to his home in Maine with a Belgian bride. Appleton was the grandson of a G. A. R. man, and young '16 was swapping stories with old '61.

"The only difference between you and me, grandfather," said Neil, "is that in my case the 1 comes before the 6, while in yours the 6 is before the 1. Come; tell us another yarn about fighting in Virginia."

"There's only one yarn I haven't told you," said the old man, "and that I don't like to tell. It has been a sad memory for me for more than fifty years."

All insisted on hearing the story, and the old man continued: "I'll not make much of a yarn out of it. I'll cut it short. As you know, I was on scouting service during the peninsular campaign. One day I was resting on neutral ground. I was on a hillside from where I could look down on a road running between McClellan's and General Lee's armies. While I was looking down on this road I saw a man on horseback riding in the direction of the Confederates. It struck me that he had been in our lines and was going toward the Confederate lines. Being out for information myself, I was ready

to suspect any one else of doing the same thing. He stopped at a house near the road, and a woman and a girl came out to greet him. By this I felt confident that he was a Confederate, for the woman embraced him in a way that told me he was her son. I couldn't hear what they were talking about, but I knew she was trying to persuade the young man to go in and get a rest or something to eat. He demurred for some time, then yielded to her. That yielding cost him his life.

"I reckon he had been to our lines for information and was carrying it to the Confederates. Mounting my horse I rode down to a lower eminence farther northward toward Richmond, where I could see the house he was in much more plainly and waited for him to come out to ride on. I didn't have to wait long. He soon appeared, his mother on one side of him and the girl on the other. He kissed his mother and then the girl, and I knew by that second kiss that they were lovers. It wasn't like the other at all. Then he rode on toward me, looking back and throwing kisses with his fingers.

"I was posted beside the road behind thick bushes. As soon as he came within pistol range I called out:

"Halt! Hands up!"

"He knew he was covered by some one he couldn't see and obeyed the order, though he told me afterward that if he could have seen me he would have opened fire instead. I disarmed him and drove him before me to one of our outposts, where he was searched and information of the utmost importance was found on him. He turned out to be a Confederate soldier and, being in citizen's dress, fulfilled all the conditions of a spy.

"Well, he was tried by drumhead court martial and sentenced to be hanged. Before he was executed he

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wrote a letter to his mother and one to his sweetheart. I was ordered to deliver them. I'd rather have been hanged myself than obey the order. But I had no choice. Besides, some one must take the letters, and I had to do it because I knew the location of the house.

"I carried also the news that the son and lover had been executed for a spy. Don't ask me to describe the delivery of this news and the letters, for it breaks me up even to this day. This is the last time I shall tell the story."

Young Appleton and his bride looked at each other at the conclusion of the narrative, then suddenly were locked in each other's arms. There was a story between them similar to the one that had been told, but which had resulted differently. Appleton, having relished scouting service, volunteered to go hunting for information in territory that had been conquered by the Germans. Within that territory was the home of the Belgian girl whom he later married and brought to America. Appleton had sought a place of rest and refreshment in the house, for he knew that any Belgian would harbor him. He was eating a supper prepared for him when a company of uhlans rode up to the house. Their commander dismounted and entered. Appleton had no time to evade the officer and, not being able to give an account of himself, was arrested. On his person were sketches of German works, and death stared him in the face. When he was taken away the girl followed, and when the uhlans went into a deserted house with their prisoner for the night she set fire to it. This gave Appleton a chance for his life. During the confusion when the uhlans awakened, encircled in flames, their prisoner, who was wide awake and prepared, got out into the darkness, was joined by his deliverer, and the two disappeared together.

"Grandfather," said the young man, "there's a lot of difference between a man having a girl to help him and one who hasn't. If the girl in your case had known that her lover was in danger of being taken your story might have ended differently."

"I wish she had," said the old man. "I wouldn't have been loaded with the remembrance of the tragedy I had caused."

"You did only your duty."

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