

CROSS THE LINES BY MARRY STILLWELL EDWARDS

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SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I—Story opens in Richmond, Va., on day Fort Sumter surrendered. Dr. Francis Brodner makes remarkable suggestion of his friend, Dick Somers, to whom Somers finally agrees. He is to marry, blindfolded. He is to know, and finally, when she is out of the power of certain enemies, is to grant her an honorable divorce.

CHAPTER II—According to the agreement, Somers is mysteriously married to a young woman, who is called Frances, and being left with her, they fall in love with each other. Upon her insistence he fights a match in the dark room, that they may see each other. A pistol shot wounds just as Brodner comes to take him away. He is conveyed to the doctor's office.

CHAPTER III—Somers, on his recovery, receives telegram to report to his office immediately. He learns Frances was shot, and asks the doctor to tell her. Brodner refuses to do so, and asks her to serve his country. His duty done, she goes to the end of the earth.

CHAPTER IV—Woman named Louise is visited by Raymond Holbin, who is the father of her child, who has not kept his promise to marry her, and who bears a striking resemblance to Dick Somers. She tells of having in a desperate moment shot a man who she thought was Brodner.

CHAPTER V—Frances' father, John Brodner, makes his will bequeathing her certain property upon condition that she marry Louise. Just before she dies she disillusions his mind of notion that she had been disloyal to him, and tells him a friend has wished her to say to him, "Ask Raymond Holbin what he has done with Louise (the dying man's niece); for he is the man who betrayed her by mock marriage, and took her abroad."

CHAPTER VI—Holbin's absence from the Brodner funeral is noticed. He is busy in the deserted residence of deceased uncle, and the mystery of the connection between the shooting, told him by Louise, and the implied charge against him made by Frances. He finds evidence of a rival's presence in Brodner's room, and his evil mind fills with suspicion of the pure girl.

CHAPTER VII—Holbin decides to ask Dr. Brodner if he knows the man who was shot in Frances' room. The doctor asserts he had been shot there, and that he suspected Mrs. Brodner (Holbin's mother) of being the woman who fired the shot, which, he declares, missed its mark.

CHAPTER VIII—Baffled in attempt to learn anything from Dr. Brodner, Holbin turns to Frances but is again unsuccessful. However, by a skilful move the man has made a most powerful impression upon the woman he hopes to marry.

CHAPTER IX—Holbin having exhausted all his resources for information concerning the victim of the shooting, at last to Frances' old mammy, but she knows nothing.

X—Upon this he goes to his room and makes a clean breast of the facts. She summons Dr. Brodner, and demands to know the information he possesses who then denounces her. Her son, who comes out of his concealment in the room and attacks the doctor with a knife. The doctor escapes, and Frances long enough to tell her what she knows about Somers' assailant and drives away. Misconstruing his meaning, thinking she has been jealous on account of Somers' attentions to her, she visits Louise full of sympathy for latter's troubles, but nothing comes up but to throw the doctor out of her mind.

CHAPTER XI—Frances becomes a nurse for the wounded soldiers brought to Richmond. A wounded federal came under her care. He has been with Capt. Somers, who had been shot, and she is desperately wounded. Frances' love and trust for Somers returns upon this news of him.

CHAPTER XII—Louise has an interview with Holbin, and later with her mother. She has come into possession of evidence proving a common-law marriage. Mrs. Brodner insists on necessity of getting her finally and forever out of her mind, but temporarily yields to all demands, and agrees upon full reparation.

CHAPTER XIII—Holbin wins the gratitude of Frances by offering to export her wounded federal (now well on his road to recovery) across the lines. He has learned reason of Frances' interest in the soldier. The next day the soldier is found dead, shot in the back.

CHAPTER XIV.

Locked within his own room, Raymond Holbin drew from his pocket the packet of papers taken by him from the murdered man with the official order for which he had committed the crime. The order read: "Pass the bearer, Thomas Riley, paroled prisoner, through the lines." "It will not do Louise much good, anyway," he said, "even were I disposed to give it to her." The name "Martha Somers" upon the sealed packet attracted his attention, and he recognized in a Delaware address beneath the home of Richard Somers. He remembered then the dead soldier's description of the battle in which he was wounded, and guessed that the packet contained the papers given to him to deliver. Holbin would hardly have troubled himself to wade through a score of farewell pages from a soldier to his mother, and would have promptly destroyed the whole collection, but that the remaining envelope, addressed to Richard Somers, lay before him, and upon it his eye caught the Brodner crest.

"This is very different," he said to himself with interest. "Let us see what Frances has to say to the fellow."

He broke the seal and read: "I send you back, well and free, the man who saved your life; I found him grievously wounded. It is all right that I have been able to do in return for your kindness to me, a stranger, and for the wound you received in my house. Think me not indelicate when I say that the sweetest memory my heart carries is in the memory of your face beneath the match that night and of the words Frances, my wife, which you have engraved in your locket, and over which I have placed a message to you. Forgive me; it can never matter now, for a sea of blood rolls between us. Good night. God be with you till we meet—in Heaven."

"FRANCES!" Holbin sat gazing blankly upon the lines. His head was in a whirl.

"Her husband! her husband! Fshaw!" he exclaimed with an uneasy laugh, springing to his feet and beginning to walk the floor, "this comes of the damnable work you do today; my nerves are simply out of my head; I took a stiff drink, and tossed it off with one gulp. Then he went back to his table and, picking up the letter, read

had a pass; I needed it. I need it now more than ever." The woman's face glowed with a sudden light.

"You are too rash, my boy; take no steps before consulting me. In the meantime these papers have no value for us. Burn them, burn them now! But no! give me the letter to Brodner; it may be valuable some day as evidence that Richard Somers is dead." One by one Holbin held the others over lighted matches and saw them vanish into cinders. His mother placed her hand upon his shoulder.

"Raymond, you are again planning to cross the lines—"

"I know what I am doing! Do not seek to influence me!"

"What do you mean?" "There is no time for explanation, nor is there any need for you already understand. It is sufficient to say that I am going across the lines for more than one purpose now."

"There are all sorts of people in an army," she said; "I have seen it stated that many officers killed in battle are shot from behind."

"That is one," he replied, "and men who serve their country in time of war are forgiven many things. I am in possession of that which will secure for me a review of my case and restore to me my commission. I have offered my sword to the confederacy once; the next time I will offer it point first!"

"You have valuable information for sale. Is that what you mean? Go slow upon that line; if you draw your sword against Virginia openly you sacrifice all interests here. Better be a friend to both sides, and when you come back with proofs that Richard Somers is really dead all may yet be well. If she is free at 21 the will is binding, even if it were held that she has not already sacrificed her interest."

"Come what may," he said, passionately, "while I live Brodner shall never see Frances Brodner the wife in truth of Richard Somers."

"Nor while I live," said his mother; "there is my hand upon it."

"Keep out of it, mother, keep out, or you will regret it!" said the wretched man.

"Ungrateful boy! Where is your promise? Do you repudiate that? Have you forgotten your danger?"

"No, but she shall not suffer at your hands. Leave her to me. And, mother, if you ever find us dead together in that room downstairs, have no thought of me. The man who has neither love nor reverence has nothing to live for." He seized his hat and rushed from her presence.

CHAPTER XV.

Col. Richard Somers dismounted and took refuge upon the veranda of a little cottage that fronted a crossroad near Mechanicsville while his artillery thundered by and unlimbered to its position to face the enemy. Men, horses and officers were worn out with fatigue and hard fighting and eager for an opportunity to snatch a few hours of rest. The two great armies had battled upon the memorable seven days' fight which was to swing around Richmond and leave a bloody path to Malvern Hill. The cottage seemed deserted, but presently an aged negro made her appearance from somewhere and pathetically attempted to extend its hospitality to the officers who began to swarm into the yard. Clinging to her skirts was a little girl of six or seven years, whose fair complexion, blue eyes and silken curls bespoke a patrician parentage, but whose frail figure and incessant cough gave evidence of a fall weakness.

"Her ma is done dead, sah," said the old woman, respectfully, when Col. Somers hurriedly questioned her concerning the family, "an' her pa left 'er you-all come; done come yistiddy an' go right back to town. He don't stay hyar anyhow."

"But that child must not remain here; she is in danger every moment. You must move out!"

"Why we goin' move, sah? Don't know nobody any better off'n we are roun' hyar. Marster tell me to stay right hyar, an' I goin' ter stay hyar. Better tek 'er folks an' move on, sah, w'ey you started." Somers had other things to think about, and turned away. Very likely the movement next day would carry them beyond the cottage, and the danger was not pressing at the moment. In the morning the child might be sent to the rear if necessary, and to-night he rather welcomed the adjuncts of refined life. He had use for the old woman, for he was but recently out of hospital and somewhat spoiled by nursing. He made himself and officers comfortable in the best rooms after the manner of old campaigners and prepared for the short rest which he so much needed.

Somers had made the necessary dispositions and, left alone upon the porch for a moment, his thoughts reverted to the cherished memento in his locket, the wordless message of love which had so mysteriously reached him. It was just one slender curl—the curl that had touched his cheek, he was sure, and with it a name. They were enough; no words could have summoned up more vividly the scenes of that darkened wing-room, nor have told him more eloquently that within the exciting city there was one heart which held no hatred for him. It was no hour for dressing, and he roused himself to the present. Around him were contending hosts of doomed men, the spirit of war hovered over the rude camps, and death lurked in the shadows, eager for his harvest. From the distance, the echoes of dropping shots came faintly to the ear, and presently what seemed to be a small volley. This volley claimed his attention and that of the junior officers, and he had ordered a sergeant up to inquire as to the cause, when the sound of rapid hoof-beats approached upon the road, and in the dim light as he waited a frightened horse, pursued by half a dozen troopers, sped by. Presently the man returned leading the captured animal and carrying its late rider. The latter was youthful and clad in confederate gray, which was drenched with blood and covered with dust; for the wounded rider, clinging desperately to the mane of the horse as he lay extended upon its neck, had finally fallen and been dragged until the weight stopped the runaway. The face of the unfortunate

fellow had escaped, and so young and so fair was it, even the hardened soldiers were touched.

"He insists upon seeing an officer," said one of them. "Claims to have secrets to tell."

"Place him upon the porch and call a surgeon. Where did he come from?" Somers was strangely affected.

"Don't know. He came riding heading through the rebel pickets. I think, and they shot at him. We didn't shoot at all, for at first the horse seemed to be looking for a man, and when we did see the young fellow on him, we knew he was too near to escape. We had necessary alarms, and so we ran him, and he laid on now unconscious back the curious fellow for Somers to see."

"A woman!" he whispered.

"Is it possible?" "To my room—to my room!" the young soldiers again lifted it upon the bed in a hurried excitement. He wound; a shot passed behind him through the body.

"She cannot live," said the surgeon, gently, as he arose and covered up the white form. "There is not the slightest chance for her." The sentence of death seemed to inspire her with sudden consciousness. She opened her eyes widely, and they rested in wonder upon the blue uniforms and strange faces.

"What has happened?" she asked, weakly. "Where am I?" "You have been wounded, madam," said the surgeon, "badly wounded; but you are in friendly hands."

"Ah!—Raymond!—told me—that he had—had arranged with—the picket—pretend only to fire—oh, they have—killed me!" She shuddered, but with sudden return of full consciousness she

awoke and found herself lying in a room with a woman who she recognized as Louise.

"Louise!" he said, sadly, standing by her side.

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hands tore feebly at a slender chain that had slipped down into her bosom and drew a little locket into view. He recognized it.

"I believe you," he said, gently, at length. And he hid; he had never doubted it in his heart.

"It is the last prayer of the woman—who in all these years—of suffering—shame—has loved you! Go to him! He will come—my child's life—save the child for—her mother's sake! Let me see her!"

The soldier had faced every danger of the battlefield without a tremor. In the presence of this woman's awful agony his heart failed him. The lost papers—duplicates—duplicates! Richmond is yours—Lee's army—destroyed! He stood up then, and was cool, his eyes reading her pale face as an open book. He turned to the door.

"Surgeon," he said, "come to this poor girl. Louise, I will return." He rode to headquarters and laid before his chief all the facts. A long discussion followed.

"It is a desperate venture, general, and if I fail—death! I know that. But if I succeed, it may mean life for many a man in this army. Still, let me be frank; I shall go not for that alone."

"The decision is with you, colonel. My advice is against your plan. And you must get information opened the road to Richmond—that would mean Gen. Somers."

"I have your permission?" "There was no answer. "I shall start in 30 minutes, then," said Somers. The general gave his hand in silence and turned away.

"Avoid capture," he said, sadly. Day by day familiar faces were passing from him.

"I shall not be captured. If it comes, it will be a soldier's death," was the reply. He reentered the presence of Louise clad in the uniform of a confederate captain. The old negro was with her, and, hat in hand, a young man, her son, was delivering a message to her. Somers caught enough of the words to gather that he came from Richmond.

"How did you pass through the lines?" he asked, abruptly. The negro grinned and was silent. "Can you guide me through—quick, man, speak." The negro looked at the uniform.

"Yes, sah. But it's er long ways now—an' through the swamp, too."

"Louise, for your sake and the child's I shall try. If I return no more—it will be because I—have failed!"

"Come to me, Richard—kneel. And now, God—bless you. 'Tis a sinful woman's prayer—but He will hear—even me, a murderer!"

"Murderess! Louise!" "I tried to kill him—tried to end it! I fired to kill in my despair—it was the wrong man. I saw dimly through the blinds—another woman's room—under the light of a match only—and I killed him—an innocent man!"

"Louise—in Richmond—through the blinds—a year ago?" "Ah, you heard of it?" "I was the man."

"It cannot be!" "It was a wing-room. She was kneeling before me, and the bullet struck here." He drew aside his hair and rested his finger upon a white spot. "Brodner—"

"God is comforting me," she whispered. "The rest will come." Tears streamed down her cheeks from her closed lids. Somers chose the moment to leave her.

"Keep her alive until morning," he said to the surgeon. "I will come then—or not at all." And then to the negro: "Now, my boy, \$100 in gold if you guide me safely into Richmond and back. Will you need a horse?" The negro shook his head.

"No horse can cross whar I gointer go." He led away briskly into the Chickahominy swamp, and when Richard Somers found the stars again he was within the lines of his enemy with the Richmond lights in sight. Not until then did he remember that he had no knowledge of Raymond Holbin's whereabouts.

He stopped, amazed that he had failed in this vital matter.

"Do you know Mr. Holbin in Richmond," he asked of the negro, "Mr. Raymond Holbin?"

"Yes, sah, 'course I know him. We all b'longs to es ma."

"What! Then that house back yonder! Whose is that?" "Dat's his house, sah, Ireck'n. Don't nobody come out but him, to see es little gal."

"His girl! Her name—what is her name?" "Calls'er Chickie most generally. Sometimes he called'er Nanna." Somers stopped then and stood with his face toward the stars in breathless reverie a few moments.

"My boy," he said, "you saw the woman who was shot?" "Yes, sah."

"She is dying; that is her child and she does not know it. Here is all the money I have with me; it is yours if you will go back with all your might and tell her about the child. Do this, my boy, and God will bless you."

"How you gointer get back, marster?" "That doesn't matter!—go! go! Here is your money—be quick now!" "Bring it along wid you, marster." The negro vanished as a shadow within a shadow.

"And now, Louise," said the soldier, as he plunged into the city, "God is comforting you!"

So far as the chance of detection was concerned, Richard Somers was as safe on the streets of Richmond that night as in his own camp; but he realized that perhaps he had a difficult task before him to find Raymond Holbin. And if he found him, what then?

The city was in a turmoil. Excited men and women crowded the streets and wounded soldiers were on every side. There was to be little sleep that night in Richmond or in the next five to come, for the fate of the city hung in the balance during the seven days' battle. Somers carried off his novel experience boldly, and, passing into the Spotswood hotel, he sought a directory. His search for Holbin's name was at once successful, and, taking a note of the address, he went forth and prepared himself for the final trial.

"Luck in Misfortune." "Great guns!" exclaimed the absent-minded man. "I just struck the light end of this cigar in my mouth."

"How fortunate you were in discovering it at once, my dear!" rejoined his wife.—Tit-Bits.

Barred. Mrs. Blue—Are you going to join the Audubon club this winter?

Mrs. True—I intended to, but the say bird's wings are all the style in millinery this fall, and I don't see how I could possibly join and be consistent—Detroit Free Press.

Somewhat Different. Tom—Did you ever notice with what style and grandeur Miss Flatie sweeps into a room?

Jack—Yes; but when it comes to sweeping out a room she isn't in it with her poor old mother.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

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BAD BOY IS CHECKMATED.

How a Wise Old Bachelor Persuaded His Squalling Nephew to Shut His Mouth.

A bachelor is not usually credited with a knowledge of the proper treatment of children, but sometimes, say the Chicago Inter Ocean, they step in where angels fear to tread. A confirmed specimen, who is pretty well on in years and not very fond of children, went to see a married sister the other day, and found her trying to amuse her little boy, aged five years.

Not long after he arrived she stepped out of the room to attend to some household duty of other, leaving him alone with the child. The latter eyed



"CRY LOUDER!"

him dubiously for some minutes. He was a spoiled child if ever there was one, and had no idea of making promiscuous acquaintances. The bachelor tried to make the little one laugh, but all he got for his antics was a sour look.

Finally, without any warning, the child burst out crying. Here was a quandary, to be sure. He didn't dare to pick the boy up and soothe him. His attempts in a verbal line were dismal failures. What should he do? Finally a thought struck him. He looked at the crying youngster, and the crying youngster looked at him through his tears. He was evidently much pleased with the impression he was making.

"Cry louder," said he. The child obeyed.

"Louder yet," urged the bachelor. A yell went up that would have done credit to an Indian.

"Cry louder still," insisted the man, and the boy did his best to obey.

"Louder!" fairly howled his uncle. "I won't!" snapped the infant, and he shut his mouth with a click and was quiet for the rest of the day.

THE BLUFF THAT

Mr. Staylate Attempts to Fool His Better Half, But Instead Is Fooled Himself.

A clock in a near-by tower had just tolled off the hour of 4 as he arose unsteadily from the card table, where he had sat for three hours, stretched his weary limbs, bade his comrades good-night and started in the direction of his home.

After a half hour's walk, in which all the lamp post and telegraph poles insisted on getting in his way, he arrived at his home, took out his bunch of keys, at last found the elusive keyhole and softly opening the door and discarding his shoes at the foot of the stairs, climbed heavenward on all fours. With



"YOU'D BETTER GO TO BED."

cat-like footsteps he crept across the threshold of his bedroom and proceeded to undress. He heard his wife move restlessly, which made him hurry, and in doing so he upset a chair. Stepping quickly over to the cradle in the corner he commenced to rock it violently.

"Is that you, John?" came his wife's voice from the bed.

"Yes, dear," he replied. "Well, what in the world are you doing?" she asked.

"Why, I'm rocking this blamed kid to sleep."

"How long have you been there?" "Since 11:30."

"Well, John, I think you had better get right into bed, as I have the child in here beside me, and, moreover, I've had him here ever since 11 o'clock last night."

Rich Wives for Aristocrats. A company has been organized in London for the procuring of wealthy brides for impoverished aristocrats. A percentage on the estimated wealth of the bride is the fee for this work, to be paid within a week after the marriage takes place.

A Mean Trick. Clara—Why in the world did you engage yourself to that Mr. Hardhead? Dora—He took me at such a disadvantage that I had to.

"Nonsense!" "Oh, but you don't know. He proposed to me in an ice cream salon, and I knew perfectly well that if I didn't accept him he wouldn't ask me if I'd have another plate."—N. Y. Weekly.