

The Red Mirage

A Story of the French Legion
in Algiers

By I. A. R. WYLIE

(All rights reserved. The Bobbs-Merrill Co.)

CHAPTER XXIII—Continued.

Goetz von Berlichingen lifted himself on his elbow. The hard-lined face was shrunken with suffering.

"If I might speak to you—alone—my general?"

"By all means."

He bent lower. The staff, watching impatiently, saw him start and then slip his arm beneath the dying head.

"It shall be as you wish," General Meunier unclasped the cross from his own uniform and laid it gently on the shattered breast. "The Legion is proud of you—comrade."

Goetz von Berlichingen frowned. The fast-glazing eyes lit up for one instant with a flash of the old arrogance. He thrust the order impatiently aside.

"It was for the Englishman—my friend—"

He fell back. His face became a mask. But about the mouth there hovered a smile of an inscrutable peace.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Oasis.

He had said good-by. He stood now at the door and looked at her with the sad reluctance of a man who is about to turn his back forever on a well-loved picture.

"I shall not trouble you again, Gabrielle," he said gently. "Our ways lie in different worlds. I have not deserved much comfort of you. I spoiled my own life and I did my best to spoil yours. There is only one consolation that I can take with me—the knowledge that I failed."

"Yes—yes—yes," she said in the rickety hotel writing table, her chin resting on her hand, her eyes fixed absently on the half-finished letter before her. "You are not to worry about that, Stephen. Lives are not so easily ruined."

"I should like to think that you could



She Heard the Door Close Softly. He Had Gone.

forget me—that the shadow had passed away and left no trace. I should like to know you—happy."

"I am happy."

Still he waited, watching her with hungry watchful intentness.

"You will go back to England."

"Yes, I think so."

"Farquhar is worthy of you. You will begin a new life. If I could, I would pray for your happiness together."

"I thank you, Stephen."

She heard the door close softly. He had gone. She felt as though with his passing the curtain had dropped upon the first great act of her life. And now a new act was to begin—a lonelier one. He had taken with him his own dream of it; she knew that he would cling to her phantom happiness as to a last comfort, and she had had no heart to tear it from him. All happiness is mirage. But to the dreamer the dream is reality. He would sleep in peace. She went on writing. It was very quiet in the little room. The drowsy hush of midday seemed to creep in through the half-open shutters on rays of sunshine which shifted slowly till they rested on the sheet of closely-written paper. She covered her face with her hands as though dazzled. In the peaceful silence there was a sound like a smothered cry of pain.

The door leading into the inner room opened and closed. She lifted her head and went on writing. Her hand shook, but when Farquhar stood beside her she looked up, and her face was white and tearful.

"It is nearly finished," he said almost beneath his breath. "She is trying to ask for you."

"I will come at once."

"Wait one moment. I wanted to leave them alone together for a little. You understand?"

"Yes, of course."

Both were silent. She studied him wistfully. Without the ragged beard and in these clothes he seemed once more the man as she had known him in the London days—the reckless, headstrong soldier, without restraint, without fear. Only as she looked closer she saw the grave ennobling lines which men gather on the road through suffering. Suddenly he lifted his eyes to hers. They puzzled, almost frightened her in their dogmatic composure.

"My father goes south tonight with the troops," he said. "He will suppress the risings and make treaties, and the work on his great road will be finished. That is his own wish. We have spoken together and I have understood, as I know you will. We have each to work out our own salvation in our own way. Out there in the desert he may find peace."

"And you?"

"My pardon and release were confirmed an hour ago. It was his own request, and they could not refuse. In a few weeks I shall go back to England. My father has given me the rough memoranda of his plans. I shall work them out in detail—if possible to perfection. They will be offered in due course to the government. I hope that even now I may serve my country."

"I know you will." The old fire flashed into her voice, but she did not look at him. She felt the piercing eyes on her face; they seemed to reach the innermost thought in her. They sliced an empty phrase that she was forcing to her lips.

"Perhaps I am disturbing you," he said abruptly. "You are writing letters?"

"Yes."

"To whom?"

She looked up with a touch of fierce defiance.

"Have you a right to ask?"

"I don't know—I am afraid—"

"Of whom—of what?"

"Of you—of my happiness."

She was silent an instant, battling with weakness.

"The letter is to you, Richard."

"May I read it?"

"Not now."

He took it from her, and she did not resist. The roughness in his voice and manner shook her as no gentleness, no pleading could have done. This man was indeed afraid, and this fear, linked with that great strength of purpose, was at once terrible and pathetic. She did not move, and he read the letter to the end in silence. Then he tore it deliberately across and across, and the pieces fluttered to the ground.

"I know all that—I guessed it," he said brutally. "Yet out there on the plateau you told me that you loved me."

She rose and faced him.

"I do love you," she said firmly. "I am not ashamed to tell you so—even now, for love like mine cannot hurt you. But in those days it was all different. I believed that we were equals—that we were two outcasts who had erred, not meanly or wickedly, but recklessly, and that we were fighting our way back to the thing we had lost. You were my comrade in exile, and I was yours. That was what I believed. But it was not true. You had lost nothing—and now your exile is over."

"And so you meant to desert me? Had fate not brought me back here, I should have had to hunt the world over for you."

"I thought that you would understand—that it was just."

"What? That when I was dying, hunted and friendless, a veritable worthless scamp, as you believed, you condescended to love me, to go forward shoulder to shoulder with me and make life worth living. Now that I have come into my own, that I appear more worthy of happiness, I am to be left to march the desert alone. Is that justice?"

"Richard!"

"Haven't I had enough of the desert—haven't you had enough? If you leave me now—"

"His voice steeled. He smiled wryly. "I'm not threatening, dear. By this time I have learned your lesson; there shall be no more throwing down of weapons. Whatever happens—whether you stand by me or not—I shall go on. But it will be a hard going on—and it might have been a glory."

She turned to him with a gesture of helpless pain.

"Richard—my dear—don't you understand? It is fear of dimming that glory that drives me away from you. What am I? What should I be to you? A drag—a heavy burden. Even if I would I cannot go back into the old life. The world has passed judgment on the woman I was—the doors are shut against her. Only insignificant little Gabrielle Smith can go her way in peace."

"I care nothing for the world's judgment," he interrupted quietly. "Nor do you. If there is anything behind these closed doors worth having—which I doubt—we shall batter them in. And it is not to the woman who was that I am speaking. I do not ask her to go back anywhere. I ask her to go on with the life which we began to-

gether two years ago when she helped a desperate, intoxicated boy up Mrs. Ferrier's stairs—incidentally back to reason and self-respect. From that night we have been comrades." The grim laughter in his eyes faded. He held out his hand as though to take hers, then let it drop, leaving her free.

"And from that night I have loved Gabrielle Smith," he went on gently. "That was something you did not quite realize when you meant to leave me. Under one shape or another I have loved you all my life. Only when you first came I did not recognize you. You hid behind the little gray shadow of yourself and I followed the mirage over the desert. And I suffered badly—until I found you, the reality of all I believed in—the oasis. Do you think I am going to let you turn me out into the loneliness and desolation? You know that I shall not, Gabrielle." He paused an instant, watching her. He saw the light dawn behind the mist of pain, and then he took her hands and held them with a joyful strength. "You saved my life twice," he said. "And you saved something greater than my life—my faith. That is a bond between us no one—not even you—can break. We belong to each other as a man and woman belong to each other perhaps once in a generation. You dare not deny a union so glorious, so sanctified."

She looked at him with steady radiant eyes.

"Do you believe that?"

"As you do."

"I have not dared to believe until now."

"And now?"

"You have given me courage to believe my own heart, Richard."

He did not kiss her or, for a moment, speak. Yet what then passed between them was beyond words, above all tenderness. He led her at last toward the inner room.

"Come with me now, Gabrielle."

Within the hush had deepened. All life, all feeling seemed to draw together an awed expectancy about the little figure lying quietly in the midst of the great bed. Even the wig, still awry, could not take from the peaceful dignity of the small tired face beneath. A hand, heavily jeweled, rested on the shoulder of a man who knelt beside her. Her eyes had been closed as Gabrielle and Farquhar entered. They opened now and passed from one to the other. In that moment they looked very blue—almost young. She tried to speak and instead smiled faintly, apologetically, with a touch of wry self-mockery that passed, leaving only the quiet happiness. As though grown suddenly weary, the jeweled hand slipped from the man's shoulder, and he took it and bowed his head upon it.

"In a little while, my wife—a little while."

Her eyes closed in peaceful assent. They did not open again. To those watching it seemed that the room had grown darker. A little half-drawn sigh hovered on the silence and then drifted out on a ray of sunshine into the full daylight.

ENVOY.

Close by the barracks of the Foreign Legion there is a little garden and beyond the garden a kind of chapel. Within are many relics of a glorious past.

On the walls are the pictures of the great dead.

It is the Legion's Holy Ground.

Colonel Destin entered for the last time. Outside, beyond the garden, he could hear the tramp of feet and the gay call of a bugle. Here everything was peace. Deep shadows hid the watching portraits, but in the midst, on either hand of the raised coffin, two great candles threw their light into the darkness and on the two men who, with drawn swords and sightless eyes, kept guard. They wore dark uniforms which the little chapel had never seen, and the coffin was hidden by a stranger's flag.

Colonel Destin drew softly nearer to where a woman heavily veiled, knelt in prayer. Before her were two wreaths. One bore an imperial crown, the other a simple inscription—

"To Our Comrade—Goetz von Berlichingen."

As Destin approached the veiled woman looked up. He stood quietly beside her.

"Your highness, he died bravely. He was worthy of his race."

"I thank you, colonel."

"He left her. He went out again into the evening sunshine. An orderly held his horse in readiness and four hundred men marked time to the strong rhythm of the Legion's war song. He swung himself into the saddle.

"In column—forward—march!"

They swung out of the gates—out into the road. Half Sid-el-Abbes ran at their heels. On the outskirts the general with his suite waited to give them Godspeed.

"Return in honor, my children!"

The band crashed out a triumphant answer. Colonel Destin's sword sank in farewell.

"Toujours, ma foi, le sac au dos!"

Singing, they left the glitter of lights and the sound of the town's joyous hubbub behind them. Colonel Destin rode on alone. No man spoke to him. There was on his face a grave and peaceful knowledge.

And before him lay the desert and the night shadows, which were but a promise of another day.

THE END.

Parcel Post Carries Live Men.

On the rural free delivery route in Harwinton, Conn., a woman sent a live hen by parcel post to a neighbor living about a mile away. The carrier weighed the hen and canceled the stamps to the amount of 8 cents and took the hen to its destination. The hen laid an egg in the mail bag en route.

NEW HOW IT WAS

SON UNDERSTOOD WHAT MEMORIES MEANT TO MOTHER.

Lesson in This Story to the Young Who Fail to Realize What Associations Represent to Those Who Are Aging.

The time had come for the family to be broken up. One by one the children had married and moved away. Mother had bidden them good-by with tears. She had taken care of them all for so long! She had been the big factor in all their lives. Yet she knew that it could not last forever. The boy, the "baby" of the household, was the last to go.

The daughter who was to live with mother had been getting along well in the world and had seen no reason for having a man help her manage her affairs, and as she vowed that this state would last forever she decided that mother had best go with her.

Daughter decided that all the old furniture must be sold and that they must move into a new house with all new furniture.

It was pathetic to see how mother watched each old piece of furniture, as she dusted it on her daily rounds. The old walnut bedstead, the cherry dresser, the old-fashioned cane-bottomed walnut chairs that had been in her room so long were old friends.

She protested feebly against having to have a new brass bed in the new home. As the day for moving drew nearer mother became more and more depressed. The business daughter, engrossed in her own affairs, did not know the heart pangs it was taking for mother to reconcile herself to the parting with the old furniture. It was mother's link to the past.

A day before moving into the new place, the son from the far city came home. He had an understanding heart. He saw in a minute what the daughter had failed to see. Mother just could not part with the old furniture.

The daughter insisted that she must not have any old-fashioned stuff cluttering up the new house. The son argued for a room for mother with all the old furniture. But the daughter was not sentimental.

A bed was to be slept in. That was the extent of its value. How mother could cling to those relics was more than she could understand. Sister had always remembered her brother as too sentimental for his own good. She had wondered how it was he had escaped marriage thus far. But the son understood his mother.

He could see how she was aging, for he had not been with her every day for years. He understood her as her daughter did not. Life without the old associations would be mere existence.

He found mother rubbing the looking-glass on the old dresser. There were tears in her eyes. Then he could stand it no longer.

"Mother, I just came home to tell you that I have come back to the old town to accept a new position, and I am sick and tired of hotels. Why can't I move my trunk home here, fix up father's old room for my desk and papers and live like I used to?"

"Everything in this old house will stay just as it is. Only I have to get some of those old rag carpets for the bedrooms like we had years and years ago. You are going to be boss of the ranch. I'll be the hired hand, and we'll make the old house be glad it's still standing."

Mother did not say a word. She began to cry. And because the son understood women—and especially mothers—he was glad to hear her cry, for he knew it was for joy.—Indianapolis News.

Irrigation in Egypt.

The Egyptian ministry of public works, which has been experimenting in cotton raising during the past ten years in the Gezira region in the Sudan, has issued an optimistic report to the effect that it will be possible to do better than double the yield of cotton in the Nile Delta by means of a system of dams for irrigation in connection with the White Nile and the Blue Nile.

Vast quantities of water have been stored already, and during the past 30 years nearly a million acres of entirely new land have been added to the taxable soil of the country. It is estimated that in this newly explored region about 2,500,000 acres of land could be made capable of growing cotton. This, as a matter of fact, would give more land than is now planted with cotton in Egypt. Irrigation works are now being constructed, and a plot of 150,000 acres is being treated.

Industrious Knitter.

"I never saw a more industrious woman than that Mrs. Crum," the teacher remarked, before the Kentucky mountain boys and girls gathered at the school dinner table. "Why, even when I meet her on the road she pulls her yarn and needles out of her pockets and goes to knitting!"

Teacher's manifestation of surprise brought forth a volley of ejaculations from the children, each of whom had mother, aunt or cousin who was equally ardent at wool-working.

"Oh," exclaimed one little fellow, reaching the climax of the discussion, "I had a grandmother who was the knittiest woman I ever knew. She used to take her knitting to bed with her, and every few minutes she would up and throw out a pair of socks."—Harper's Magazine.

WHITE RUSSIAN PUREST SLAV

His Racial Habitation is the Most Backward Region of the Empire of the Czar.

A sketch of white Russia, the first part of old Russian soil to feel the power of the invader, is given in a statement issued by the National Geographic society.

"White Russia comprises four Russian governments, Vitebsk, Smolensk, Moghileff and Minsk. It is said that the name is derived from the predominant color of the peasant dress. This division of Russia is bounded by the Pripiet river basin on the south and by the Duna, or southern Dvina, on the north. It supports a population of about seven and one-half million, two-thirds of which is white Russian and the rest Lithuanian, Jewish and Polish. Here, likely, is to be found the purest Slav type, almost unblended. This region, blanketed by swamps and marshes, and smothered in forests, is one of the poorest, most backward regions in European Russia.

"Finns dwelt here before history began for Europe. They were expelled by Lithuania, who in turn gave way before migrating Slavonic tribes. The country finally passed back to the Lithuanians, then to Poland, and was won piecemeal by Great Russia. Polish oppression and religious persecution worked a wholesale desolation here, and thousands of peasants fled into Russia, while those who remained intrigued for Russia's coming. The whole of the region was not annexed by the Great Russians until the end of the eighteenth century. Starvation has swept this land again and again with as terrible effects as those experienced by India in the grip of famine.

"The White Russian is not so sturdy a build as the Great Russian, nor so comely as the Little Russian. He is less aggressive than his northern neighbor, and more heavy than his southern neighbor. His hair and eyes are light, and his face is generally drawn. The garment peculiar to him is his white overcoat which he wears on all special occasions as proudly in sweltering July as in the winter. His villages are small, isolated and badly kept. His homes are primitive. His fight for existence is a bitter one. From his ranks are recruited the workmen for the hardest, least-paying tasks of the empire."

Pacific Kelp.

In a recent article in the Journal of Agricultural Research, Mr. Guy R. Stewart of the University of California agricultural experiment station discusses the kelps of the Pacific coast as a source of nitrogen. As a result of extensive experiments, the author finds that the readiness with which the nitrogen in dried and ground kelp used as fertilizer is changed to ammonia and nitrates in fresh field soil varies with the species and with the way it is prepared. Nereocystis luetkeana gives up its nitrogen with relative quickness, but it is of minor commercial importance. Macrocystis purifera changes slowly in the soil, but the availability of its nitrogen is increased if it is used fresh, or at least only partly dried. Unfortunately, macrocystis must be dried until crisp in order to grind readily. The drying should not be continued longer than is necessary, and the kelp should not be scorched or overheated. In the same journal another California chemist, Mr. D. R. Hoagland, gives a detailed account of the "Organic Constituents of Pacific Coast Kelps." Incidentally, he deals with certain interesting economic questions in regard to kelp; namely, the possible feeding value of kelp for man or animals, the utilization of its organic by-products, and the destructive distillation of it for commercial uses. For all three purposes its usefulness appears to be slight.

All for Fifteen Shillings.

Recently there appeared in a London newspaper an advertisement from an experienced insurance clerk, wages 15 shillings a week. The advertiser got a lot of sarcastic letters, like the following, and he deserved them:

"Dear Sir—I would respectfully apply for the position you offer. I am an expert in insurance in all its branches. In addition, I converse fluently in Gum Arabic, Gorgonzola, Zola and Billingsgate. I write shorthand, long hand, left hand and right hand. I can supply my own typewriter, if necessary, and I may mention that I typewrite half an hour in ten minutes—the record for Great Britain. I would be willing also to let you have the services, gratis, of my large family of boys, and, if agreeable to you, my wife would be pleased to clean your office regularly without extra charge. The cost of postage for your answer to this application can be deducted from my salary. Please note that if you have a back yard I would make bricks in my spare time."

Science and Nature.

One great feature of the nineteenth century, from 1850 onwards, was the extraordinary progress of science and the interpretation of nature.

Everywhere it was discovered that by keeping close to the sphere of reality, by seeking to understand nature, we were able to make large progress, not only in knowledge, but also in the practical conveniences and utilities of life.

If science won successes in the intellectual sphere, they were rapidly adapted to the uses of mankind, and the conquest over nature meant not only definite mental acquisition but a larger material comfort.

Thus the keynote of the time was naturalism in thought and utilitarianism in morals and social life.

MAKING DUTY EASY

HOUSEWIFE'S SCHEME DECIDELY WORTH CONSIDERATION.

Much Less a Task When One Can Convince to Turn Necessary Work into Something That May Be Termed Amusing.

"Dear, will you see to Horace? I think he's hungry," remarked the hostess to her husband.

"Who is Horace?" asked the week-end guest. The hostess laughed.

"Why, it's the furnace," she admitted. "You see, we have got into the merry way of playing a game with our housekeeping, and naming everything in the house. It isn't nearly as much of a task to tend the furnace when it is named Horace and is, in a way, a helpful, active member of the family, as when it is regarded merely as a nuisance. A furnace isn't a nuisance, you know. It is a big, comfortable friend—only, like most friends, it has to be liked and appreciated and visited with in order to do its best work. So, instead of going down to put coal in a cold, forbidding, ugly stove, my husband goes down to feed Horace, and make him feel better for having his cinders shaken down, to pat him metaphorically with the poker, and thank him for keeping the water in the bathroom warm. Silly, isn't it? But it brings such a nice glow of fun into an ordinary job."

"My kitchen range is named Aunt Susan. Into her ample lap I put my cooking utensils, knowing that she will help me make everything appetizing and savory, aid me in getting my dinner ready on time, and hum gently to herself when I leave her alone with the teakettle. She is like a wise, experienced old aunt to a young housekeeper like me."

"We have a battered old roadster that is lovingly termed Old Dobbin, since the accession of the smart little car which we call James—as if it were chauffeur, footman and butler rolled into one. Dobbin drives the children to school, runs all the village errands, and takes us on all the family outings, while with James, I go calling, we drive to church, and altogether keep up the family 'tone.'" The hostess, a simple woman of simple tastes, smiled at this as at a huge joke, for she and the host were their own chauffeurs and footmen, and were as free from pretension as well could be.

"It is just one way of making friends of the familiar objects we have about us every day," she explained. "One takes a special interest, then, in even the commonplace, uninteresting, even unattractive, things one may have to deal with. For example, I don't so much mind scouring my big iron skillet now that I call it Old Black Joe. And the children do not mind washing and wiping dishes when they name the different kinds of china and glass by families—Mr. and Mrs. Willowware being the two large platters, and the plates and other dishes being their children, nephews and nieces. It is just one of the jolly little games that may make over the prosaic program of everyday duties into fun."

Brightening the Shave.

An Englishman, weary of bloodshed, has bethought him of a means of enlightening the gloomy and otherwise dangerous ritual of the shave, says Popular Science Monthly. He has invented a miniature electric lamp provided with an adjustable clip and flexible cord which may be attached to the razor and light the path of the blade through the tough bristles of the human face.

With his lamp attachment one may plunge fearlessly into the blackest depths of a three days' growth of beard and emerge from the ordeal unscathed. The lamp is attached to a conventional type of razor by a simple clip. It travels with the blade or with the motion of the hand. By looking into the mirror the man shaving himself can determine just what progress he is making and whether or not he is going to come through the operation with his two ears intact.

Siberia Picking Up.

A number of new commercial enterprises have recently been undertaken in northeast Siberia. Many iodine works have been established in the neighborhood of Vladivostok, on the shore of the Japanese sea, the iodine being made from seaweed found there in abundance. An interesting distillery for ether has been opened, the bulk of the ingredients being violets and iris blossoms from the Ussuri countryside. A good deal of amber is being collected from the beach along the coast of Premorsk and many new salt workings have been opened in the government of Irkutsk and in the Lena hinterland in the vicinity of Viluiusk.—Chicago Journal.

People in Books.

There is no possession people are so unwilling to let one have as an imagination. In private friends will tear a book to shreds to discover some portrait they can recognize; and in the case of authors famous enough to be dead, critics rake the ground wherever they have trod in an effort to prove that the folk of their fancy were drawn from the earth rather than the air. There seems no means of convincing a reader that in a writer's head are constantly a thousand faces he has never seen or heard of, all subtle with story, and all so real that they often make his daily waking seem a dream.—Winifred Kirkland in the Atlantic Monthly.