

The Red Mirage

A Story of the French Legion in Algiers

By I. A. R. WYLIE

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SYNOPSIS.

When Sylvia Omney, a beautiful English girl, returns from a search in Algiers for her missing brother, her lover, Richard Farquhar, finds she has fallen in love with Captain Arnaud of the Foreign Legion.

Do you belong to that class of persons who believe that gambling debts should be paid before all others? Does your creed of honor prescribe the payment of a bar debt even if the grocer and the dry goods merchant must go unpaid and your family go without some necessities? There are such creeds of personal honor.

CHAPTER II.

The Fourth Floor Back.

Capt. Robert Sower had never been called a drawing-room soldier, and this in spite of the fact that he had many detractors. When he was in town he kept open house, and it became gradually a custom to such of his comrades as were in the vicinity to congregate in the luxuriously appointed smoking room, smoke his cigars and drink his wine.

On the evening when Capt. Desre Arnaud entered the softly lighted apartment four men were seated round the card-table smoking and chatting, apparently taking their game none too seriously. Sower himself stood by the log fire warming his hands and exchanging desultory remarks with a man whom the indefinable something stamped as a civilian. As Arnaud's name was announced Sower turned round and advanced with hospitably extended hand.

"My good fellow, delighted to see you. I was half afraid the fog had swallowed you up. Let me get the introductions over. Preston, Hardy, St. Clair, Benson—all of my regiment—Captain Arnaud of the French army." By what appeared to be a slip he passed over the elderly man by the fireside, and the latter made no move to repair the omission. Arnaud glanced at him curiously, and then came over to the fire.

Sower laughed and shrugged his shoulders; and then as though dismissing the subject, "You're late. Where have you come from?"

"From the Omneys. Miss Omney is very charming—" he said.

"And wealthy. Am I to congratulate?"

Arnaud put his hand to his little fair mustache, but he did not answer directly, though his smile might have counted as an answer.

"I have just met a comrade of yours," he remarked instead, "a some-



"I Say, This is a Damned Gambling Hell."

what unusual character for an Englishman—hot-headed, with admirable nerve—Richard Farquhar, if you know him."

The man by the fireside shifted his position and glanced up. By mere chance Sower was looking in his direction, and their eyes met for an instant.

"Lieutenant in my regiment," Sower answered quietly. "Quite promising; served out in South Africa."

"Ah!" Arnaud's restless eyes had wandered from the fire to the distant card-table, where the four younger men were now playing with a listless interest. "Well, I do not suppose we shall often meet. He and Miss Omney are great friends, is it not so?"

Sower pushed the cigar box along the mantelpiece.

"Help yourself. No, I should not call them great friends. Miss Omney's brother was a kind of David to Farquhar's Jonathan—"

"And it was David who mistook the broad path for the narrow?"

"Exactly. There was a scandal, of course, a dishonored check and a bolt. Gambling, I believe. Old Charles Omney has the reputation of a hard man. Like most hard articles he has broken up under the first blow."

Arnaud was silent a moment, his delicate, nervous face overclouded with some unpleasant reflection. He was still watching the players, and his cigar had been allowed to go out.

The man in the armchair lifted his head.

"Gambling always seems to me the last resort of daring minds from the deadly security of modern life," he observed sententiously.

He spoke for the first time, and Arnaud glanced at him quickly and almost with appreciation.

"You may be right. One has the feeling sometimes of stifling." He laughed cynically, and the older man rose. It was noticeable for the first time that he limped.

"All Frenchmen gamble," he said, "either with their lives, other people's

Desert mirages and heart mirages. This is one you must not miss.

lives, their honor, or somebody else's honor. Will you not take a hand?"

Arnaud hesitated with something of his first frigidly of manner, but there were nervous, feverish patches of color in his pale face.

"I beg your pardon—I did not catch your name?" he said coldly.

"Lowe—Stephen Lowe, at your service."

Arnaud returned the formal little bow.

"I shall be delighted."

They turned toward the table. Sower laughed significantly.

"Be careful, Arnaud; remember the adage 'Lucky in love—'"

It was at that moment that the door opened and Farquhar entered. For no obvious reason his appearance caused a moment's awkward silence. He had, in fact, the look of a man who has been drinking hard, but has somehow managed to retain a dangerous self-possession. There was no trace of hesitancy in his manner as he answered Sower's belated welcome, but instead a not easily defined shade of insolence. Sower appeared to notice nothing.

"Help yourself," he said hospitably, "and sit down. You look queer. Anything wrong?"

Farquhar made no answer. He sank down into the proffered chair, and, having poured out half a tumbler of brandy from the decanter at his elbow, stared moodily into the firelight. Sower watched him cautiously.

"You look ill, Farquhar," he repeated after a moment. "Can I do anything for you?"

Farquhar looked up.

"Ever been drunk?" he asked abruptly.

"No. I've never been tempted that way. Have you?"

"Not yet. I'm thinking of trying it."

He threw back his head with a laugh. Sower tossed his cigar end into the fender.

"I shouldn't if I were you," he said coolly. "We have inspection tomorrow afternoon."

Farquhar returned to his fixed contemplation of the firelight. During the hour that passed he did not move, except to replenish the glass beside him. Then Preston suddenly left

the card-table, went over to the fireside and stood there with his back turned, his head bent. He did not notice Farquhar, who looked up as though raised from his deliberate lethargy by some painful sound. The boy's round, unformed face was wet.

"Hullo—Preston!"

He started violently.

"Oh, you, Farquhar—I didn't know you were there. For God's sake don't look at me—I'm a fool—but I'm cleaned out. Two hundred pounds at a sitting—all my allowance—" He broke off.

Farquhar shifted his position so that he faced the card-table. His eyes were dangerous.

"I say, this is a damned gambling hell," he said clearly.

"Did you speak, Farquhar?" Sower asked quietly.

Farquhar did not move.

"Yes, I said this was a damned gambling hell. I may add that you are a damned scoundrel. Ask your friend there to return his L. O. U.'s on the spot, or I promise you we two shall be explaining matters at headquarters tomorrow morning. You know what that means, I fancy."

There was no answer for a minute. All five men looked instinctively at Sower, waiting for his next move. The cloud of the gaming passion had lifted, leaving a rank, bitter-tasting reality. Sower recovered his calm good-nature with unaffected ease.

"Farquhar, you are undoubtedly the worse for my brandy," he observed. "Lowe, I should be glad if you would return Mr. Preston's note of hand. I shall settle with you myself for your loss. I trust that Farquhar will see fit to apologize—if not now, at least when he is sufficiently recovered."

Richard Farquhar rose leisurely to his feet. There was no trace of unsteadiness in his steps as he crossed the room, but it was obvious that Sower had not overstated his condition.

"I do not suppose that even when I have recovered I shall see things differently," he said, turning his white, ironically smiling face for a moment to the motionless group. "Come along, Preston."

Farquhar had not far to go, a by-street bringing him to a quiet, unpretentious house which his instinct recognized. Inside all was inky obscurity. He stumbled against the first step of the stairs, touched something that was warm and living, and in the recoil struck his head against a treacherous overhanging shelf.

"I beg somebody's pardon," a quiet voice said through the subsequent silence. "I'm afraid I've killed somebody."

Then the light was switched on.

Farquhar saw before him a small person, dowdily dressed, with a small, thin face under a small hat. He took his hand from his head and considered it.

"No very serious damages, I fear. Give me an arm up to my room, will you?"

She obeyed instantly and with some adroitness.

"It's that ridiculous back," she said. "It blocks up the whole hall. I have often spoken to Mrs. Ferrier about it."

"You—" He stopped short, with drawing his arm and leaning against the banisters. "I thought—really I must be far gone—I thought you were Mrs. Ferrier."

"Oh, no; I rather wish I was. I'm the fourth floor back."

"Well, I don't know who the fourth floor back is exactly, but I know I have taken an unwarrantable liberty—"

"Don't. You are not in a condition to offer resistance. This your room, isn't it?" She pushed open a door on the first floor and turned on the light. He looked at her in weary, half-amused perplexity.

"I can't allow this sort of thing. It's not right that a young lady—"

"I'm not a lady—at least, not by circumstance. Anyhow, I don't care. You are ill. Sit down."

He obeyed, tossing his coat and hat onto the nearest chair, and sat listlessly with his head in his hands. From a long way off he heard her soft, rapid movements. They were curiously soothing, and presently he looked up again, urged by an idle wonder. But apparently she had forgotten his existence. Hatless, with sleeves rolled up to her elbows, she knelt before the fire, engaged in a quiet but determined struggle with a rusty and refractory kettle. Presently she got up from her knees.

"In two minutes you will have your tea," she announced in the ruthless tones of a professional nurse. "How is your head now?"

"Better—" For the first time she turned and looked him full in the face, and he broke off blankly. Either she was young, or she had conserved in those two clear, steady eyes all that is youthful and all that is splendid in youth. She was smiling, and inexplicably



"I Am a Cur," He Said Under His Breath.

cably her frank pleasure seemed to goad him out of his heavy indifference.

"I am a cur," he said under his breath.

"Oh, no, you're not a cur. You are drunk. It's not a nice word, but I'm afraid I'm too busy to think out pretty ways of expressing myself. There's your tea."

She placed the cup fearlessly at his elbow. "Please drink it at once."

He obeyed.

Don't you just love a game little girl that isn't afraid of appearances and rules of conduct when she knows she's helping a fellow creature in trouble? Wouldn't it be a fine piece of business if Farquhar had the gumption to cast aside family pride and marry a really sensible girl?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

WATER WHEELS OF SYRIA

Move on Simple Principle But Do the Work Required of Them Most Effectually.

Hama, in northern Syria, referred to in the Old Testament as Hamath the Great, is justly famous for its huge water wheels. The city lies some 110 miles northeast of Damascus on the River Orontes, and upon its banks are four large water wheels used for drawing water for irrigating purposes and also for supplying the town. These wheels are driven by the flow of the river on what is known as the undershot principle; that is to say, the wheel is moved by water passing beneath it.

The largest has a diameter of 75 feet. Upon its outer rim is a series of buckets which raise the water and deposit it in the aqueduct at the top. Like its companions the wheel is built of mahogany, with an axle of iron. The creaking of the wheels is incessant day and night, year in and year out, for they never stop.

It is interesting to note that wheels built on this same principle are in actual use in this country, in one of the fertile valleys of California.—Popular Science Monthly.

Fish Failed to Respond.

For some hours the angler had sat on the river bank, patiently waiting, always waiting.

A stranger to the place had been watching him for some time. At last he went up to the old man and asked casually:

"How are the fish in these parts?"

The old fisherman rebated his hook, threw it back into the water and then turned calmly to his questioner.

"Well," he replied grimly, "I really can't say. I've dropped them a line every day for nearly a week now, and I've had no reply yet."

Discouraged.

Tommy, are you going to bed without saying your prayers?"

"Yeessum."

"You are a wicked boy."

"Aw, what's the use? I've been prayin' ever since I can remember, an' I thought the Lord was on my side, but today he let Sam Towse give me a black eye."

A Shortage in Paper.

A commodity even so indirectly related to the demands of war as paper is showing the prevailing tendencies to such a degree as seriously to embarrass publishers. The higher prices of paper stock and the difficulty of obtaining it at all in England was a chief factor in the discontinuance in March of the London daily Standard, after a career of sixty years, for a considerable portion of which it was the most important organ of the middle classes in England. In America the demand for paper has been increasing for six months as a result of general business activity. At the same time, supplies used in its manufacture have been decreased by war conditions, and in some cases have almost been shut off. The supply of old rags is affected by the cutting off of the importations from the European peasantry and by the demand for the making of gun cotton. The chemicals used in bleaching the paper produced by sulphuric acid and alum are being devoured by the manufacturers of explosives, while importations of jute have fallen off until the price is doubled. An embargo has been placed on shipments of wood pulp from Norway and Sweden, while Canada stopped access to her vast resources some time ago. The newspaper publisher is, indeed, hard hit by war conditions in many other items of supplies besides the basic one of paper stock. Practically everything going into the manufacture of a daily newspaper has increased in price from 10 to 50 per cent—inks, owing to the advance in the cost of acids and dyes, from 300 to 3000 per cent; type, owing to the higher cost of lead, tin and antimony—even the rubber and felt blankets wrapped around the press rollers add their quota to the increased "cost-of-living" of the metropolitan daily.—From "The Progress of the World," in the American Review of Reviews for April, 1916.

Demonstrating It.

Mrs. Binx—I was just reading about a man 70 years old who has been sent to the penitentiary for the fifth time for burglary.

Mr. Binx—Yes, old age steals on—



How is Your Mouth?

Are you wearing a temporary and insubstantial rubber plate? Do you find your mouth inflamed and irritated? You should have a permanent, clean, sanitary cast aluminum plate. Let me make one for you. Unless you are perfectly satisfied you will not have to pay for it.

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"Did you ever study French?"
"No, but I know this much: If you ever see anything printed in French on a bill of fare 10 to 1 it's some kind of a stew."

GIRL COULD NOT WORK

How She Was Relieved from Pain by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Taunton, Mass.—"I had pains in both sides and when my periods came I had to stay at home from work and suffer a long time. One day a woman came to our house and asked my mother why I was suffering. Mother told her that I suffered every month and she said, 'Why don't you buy a bottle of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound?' My mother bought it and the next month I was so well that I worked all the month without staying at home a day. I am in good health now and have told lots of girls about it."—Miss CLARICE MORIN, 22 Russell Street, Taunton, Mass.



Thousands of girls suffer in silence every month rather than consult a physician. If girls who are troubled with painful or irregular periods, backache, headache, dragging-down sensations, fainting spells or indigestion would take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, a safe and pure remedy made from roots and herbs much suffering might be avoided.

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