

The Red Mirage

A Story of the French Legion in Algiers

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SYNOPSIS.

Sylvia Omney, her lover, Richard Farquhar, finds, has fallen in love with Captain Arnaud of the Foreign Legion. In Captain Sower's room Farquhar forces Sower to have Preston's L. O. U's returned to him. Farquhar is helped to his rooms by Gabrielle Smith. Sower demands an apology. Refused, he forces Farquhar to resign his commission in return for possession of Farquhar's father's written confession that he had murdered Sower's father. Gabrielle saves Farquhar from suicide. To shield Arnaud, Sylvia's fiancé, Farquhar professes to have stolen war plans and tells the real culprit why he did so. As Richard Nameless he joins the Foreign Legion and sees Sylvia, now Mme. Arnaud, meet Colonel Destinn. Farquhar meets Sylvia and Gabrielle, and learns from Corporal Goetz of the colonel's cruelty.

Do you believe in divorce? What if you came home some day and learned that your wife was madly in love with another man—your employer? Would you leave her, or would you force her to go with you to another town and begin all over again?

CHAPTER VII—Continued.

He lifted her hand to his lips, his eyes still on her face, and, returning Arnaud's salute, strode across the sunlit courtyard and disappeared into the shadows. Husband and wife watched him in silence. Then Arnaud gave a short, half-angry laugh.

"When the devil goes abroad it is usually to some purpose," he said. "How did he come here?"

"I invited him."

"He had not called on you."

She shrugged her shoulders prettily. "That was just what made me do it. I was bored and lonely, and bored and lonely people are bound to do something mad."

"You are very often bored, Sylvia."

"Yes," she agreed. "But does that mean I am very often mad?"

He looked up at her, his pale eyes full of moody wistfulness. "How much can happen in a year where a woman is concerned. A year ago you would not have been bored, Sylvia. You thought then that there was no more lovely place on earth than Sidi-bel-Abbes, and that there was no other man for you than myself. Now you are restless and discontented. You hate the place and—perhaps your husband." The last words broke from him with a petulant violence. It was the irritable accusation of a man who does not believe what he is saying and expects contradiction. None came. Sylvia Arnaud's fair head was still bent over her flowers. He sprang upright, his face ashy with passion. "Do you hate me, Sylvia?" he stammered. She lifted her eyes for a moment, but not to him. In their brown, velvety depths there were pathos and melancholy infinitely touching.

"Oh, no, I don't hate you, Desire," she said in her soft voice. "I have never hated anyone. But you don't understand. How should you? You are a man, and not even a man of my own race. Women are so different. They live in such a narrow circle, Desire, and their dreams are everything to them. They hold up ideals for themselves, and the whole world is glorified in their eyes. How natural when a man comes to them they should hail him as the consummation of all they hoped and fancied—how natural that they should wake up one day and find the glorious world a desert and their idols shattered forever."

"Have I done that?" She made no answer, and he sprang at her and seized her by the wrist in a paroxysm of excitement. "Have I done that? Am I the broken idol?"

She released herself with gentle decision from his desperate grasp.

"It's too late, Desire," she said sadly. "When a man breaks a woman's faith it is always beyond repair."

She moved away from him to the curtained door leading into the house, but he sprang after her, barring her path, his eyes pleading and full of a worship that might have touched her.

"Sylvia, I will do anything. I have been thinking—the Second regiment is ordered to Tonkin. Shall I exchange? It will give you fresh surroundings—fresh society. The climate isn't bad now. Or shall I get leave—I shall take you to England for a month—two months—or we shall travel!"

She flushed suddenly.

"It is not necessary. I do not want to take you from your duty."

His hand dropped from the curtain. Beneath the half-closed eyelids there flickered two dangerous points of light.

"In other words, you won't attempt to bridge the gulf that has come between us—at your wish, as I verily believe. Very well, whatever happens—on your head be it."

He turned away, and for a moment she hesitated, looking back at him like a child endeavoring to penetrate the meaning of some vague threat of the future. Then the curtains fell softly behind her.

Sidi-bel-Abbes has two great streets running north to south and east to west. In between are the little forgotten byways, unknown to the great ones who saunter about the Place Carnot listening to the band, or take their absinthe on the gaudily decorated cafes of the Algerian boulevards. None the less these unsuspected byways exist. They are very narrow and very dirty.

On the border of this region lies the Cafe du Tonkin. It is comparatively respectable, and occasionally a tourist or newly arrived official under escort makes his appearance in the bar in order to acquaint himself with what he conceives to be the "real thing." Therefore when Capt. Desire Arnaud sauntered along the narrow, evil-smelling street he attracted little notice, the more so as dusk had already set in and deepened the eternal shadows to a concealing darkness. Captain Arnaud entered the unguarded doorway. He was evidently on a serious errand, for he did not appear again. Instead, some ten minutes later a man in ragged, ill-fitting clothes lurched out on to the pavement and slunk on deeper into the labyrinth of alleys and lightless passages. He wore a broad-brimmed hat pulled well over his eyes and a bunch of roses stuck in his half-open coat. He chose a narrow passage running between two empty houses, and felt his way over the uneven flags, his hands touching either wall to keep him from stumbling. The music sounded nearer. Abruptly the passage twisted into an open square, dimly lighted, and the music became a deafening discord of voices. The contrast after the dark eastern reticence of the region behind him was bizarre and brutal. Red lanterns had been strung across from one low-roofed house to another, and their soft light fell on a scene which might have been painted from a wild dream of Montmartre. The place was full. Long tables built a rough semicircle round a central table, laden with empty bottles and chipped, wine-stained glasses. On a free corner a woman sat with folded arms and sang. Her voice was rough and feelingless, but it harmonized with what surrounded her—it was like a shriller note of the red-tinted atmosphere, or the articulate spirit of the madness which caught up the refrain and yelled it back to her in drunken triumph. She sang the "Marseillaise," her splendid eyes fixed on the red, white and blue strip of bunting nailed on the wall opposite, her mouth, even as she sang, curved in a subtle line of mockery. A little to her right a Chasseur d'Afrique crashed out an accompaniment on a tinkling piano, which quivered under his merciless hands. A zouave, scarce able to keep his feet, reeled backward and forward, banging out the rhythm of a pair of cymbals—

"Allons, enfants de la Patrie!" They rose like one man, chasseurs, zouaves, a few French legionaries, and shouted with their empty glasses held high above their heads. While they sang the woman was silent, her sleek head with its massive coils of smooth, black hair bent so that her face was hidden in shadow. The man with the roses crossed the intervening space and stood opposite her. She turned slightly and looked at him.

"Good evening, Mademoiselle Rachael."

"Good evening, monsieur."

"You see, I have come again."

"After all these months?"

He nodded.

"Monsieur is married?"

"So they say."

She laughed, throwing back her head so that the light fell on her bold Semitic features. He laughed, too, and held the flowers outstretched. For a moment she glanced at him with a sharp, suspicious questioning.

"What does that mean, monsieur?"

"What it has always meant."

"Things are to be as they were?"

"Yes."

She bent and kissed him on either cheek.

They had sung the refrain for the third time. The zouave had collapsed in a corner, and the self-appointed accompanist remembered apparently that he was thirsty. He got up, and with the last tinkle of the piano the singing died into a mingled hiccuping and laughter.

Then the girl on the table sprang up, glass in hand. Her face, lifted to the red light, was diabolically beautiful in its mocking laughter.

"You drunken fools!" she said shrilly. "Behold, I will give you a toast which you can all drink with a good heart. To the devil who brought us here—hurrah!"

She tossed down the fiery liquid at one draft, and her audience answered with a wild cheer of gratitude. Forgetfulness at all costs! One young chasseur started the latest chanson from the Parisian boulevards, and the next instant the mad orgy had begun again. The girl looked down triumphantly at the man beside her.

"They are like sheep," she said, laughing. One can make them follow any way one wants."

"It is not hard to follow such a shepherdess," he returned, lifting his hat



DEALTON VALENTINE
"What Are You Doing Here With That Woman?"

with a half-mocking, half-admiring deference.

And it was then that his eyes chanced to meet the eyes of the legionary standing by the piano beneath the cluster of red lanterns. No sign of recognition passed between them. Yet from that moment onward the noisy crowd vanished. The shouts and laughter dissolved itself into a swift, deadly duologue. Richard Nameless

came straight across to the man who had worn the roses.

"Captain Arnaud!" he said quietly. "If you say my name again here I will shoot you down," was the quieter answer. "What are you doing in that masquerade? Spying?"

"Perhaps the meeting I promised you has taken place. You can't turn me out of this company, can you, Captain Arnaud?"

"I have told you to leave my name alone. What do you want?"

"I want to know something—what are you doing here—with that woman?"

"That is my affair."

"And your wife? This is the way to the devil."

"The way she has driven me."

"You are a liar and a coward. I warned you once, and I warn you again. It would be far better for you to be dead than that you should drag her into misery and disgrace. She believed in you—"

"Believed?" The hesitancy passed from Arnaud's face. He leaned forward; his eyes averted and deadly with some sudden flash of intention. "You have seen her?"

"Yes."

"You have spoken with her?"

"Yes."

Arnaud burst out laughing. He turned and, catching the Jewess in his arms, kissed her savagely. "Good night—good night! This gentleman is sending me home, petite. He doesn't approve of either of us." He laughed and flung her from him so that she stumbled against the table. "That's my answer, Farquhar," he said coolly. "Good night."

Someone touched Farquhar on the shoulder. He turned.

"Ah, you, Goetz?"

"Yes. Who was that you were speaking to just now?"

"Captain Arnaud."

"That's to be regretted. Come, we must be getting off. It's near midnight."

He slipped his arm through his companion's.

At that moment an Arab, who had been loitering in the background, his dirty burnoose drawn over his face, slipped past them and disappeared into the shadows.

CHAPTER VIII.

At the Villa Bernotto's.

"Look well, though, don't I, Miss Smith? White is, after all, the most becoming. But one must have a good skin. Mine is still quite smooth. No one would think I had been a year in this dreadful place, would they?"

"No," was the calm answer.

Sylvia Arnaud considered herself for a moment longer in the glass. Then her eyes wandered past her own reflection to that of her companion behind her. Miss Smith, in a pearl gray dress of severe cut, was more than usually uncompromising. The soft brown hair had been dragged back and smoothed into order with a merciless hand, leaving the small, oval face without a softening line. Sylvia laughed gayly. The contrast with her own radiant femininity pleased her.

"Sometimes I really think you are not a woman at all, Miss Smith," she said quizzically. "And now I am ready."

Look out for that Arab! He's spying either for the Jewess, for Sylvia or for Colonel Destinn—what is your guess about him, and how do you think he will act?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

HER LAST HOUR OF SERVICE

This Newark Domestic Made a Cleanly Exit, Aided by the Services of Her Employer.

Mariar was going. For a week the housework had stood still, "because" as Mrs. Woodside said, "you can't ask a maid to do anything when she's leaving."

For a week the kitchen range had been cold, likewise the water tank beside it; and, there being no gas heater in the Woodside home, the grownups had contented themselves with cold baths and the children with such purification as could be accomplished with occasional bedtime teakettles of hot water. "I ought to have Mariar start the fire," said the mistress, "but it means bringing up coal from the cellar, and I'm afraid to ask her."

The hour of Mariar's departure had arrived. She lazed through the breakfast dishwashing, then disappeared upstairs to pack. Mrs. Woodside went into the deserted kitchen and said, "What does that mean, monsieur?" "What it has always meant." "Things are to be as they were?" "Yes."

She bent and kissed him on either cheek. They had sung the refrain for the third time. The zouave had collapsed in a corner, and the self-appointed accompanist remembered apparently that he was thirsty. He got up, and with the last tinkle of the piano the singing died into a mingled hiccuping and laughter.

Then from behind the closed door

of the bathroom came the joyous sound of one luxuriating in a porcelain tub filled with glorious hot water. Mariar was taking a bath.—Newark News.

Use for the New Baby.

A New Englander who is a great angler and whose fish stories are listened to most attentively by his eight-year-old son, recently became a father for the fifth time, another boy being brought by the stork.

The eight-year-old was told of the arrival of this new brother, and he was very curious to see him. The father took the first opportunity to gratify the lad's curiosity. The kiddie gazed at the bit of red humanity for quite a while, and then, with great gravity, he looked into his father's face and said: "Dad, he'd make a first-rate bait, wouldn't he?"—Harper's Magazine.

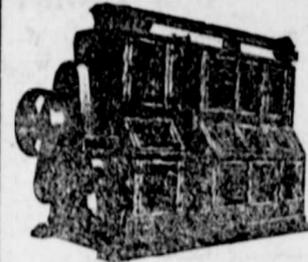
Weak Humanity.

Madden—Some people, I understand, still believe the world is flat. Bilzen—At any rate, some people seem to like to live as close to the edge as possible.—Youngstown Telegram

Too Late.

"As the poet says that ladies' looks should be our books, will you not let me learn from your eyes?" "Thank you, sir, but they both happen to be supplied with pupils."

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Did the Trick.

Patriotism is a strong instinct in the breast of a certain elderly lady, who was recently much troubled at the failure of her three nephews to enlist. They were such stalwart, sturdy fellows that she was ashamed of them.

When strong hints had been received in silence, her patience became exhausted. One day she sent a telegram to each of the three. These all bore the same message:

"Your country is calling. Wire reply if you wish to borrow my ear-trumpet."

She is now very proud of her three lads in khaki.—London Answers.

Preparedness.

Mr. Tompkins was obliged to stop overnight at a small country hotel. He was shown to his room by the one boy the place afforded, a colored lad.

"I am glad there's a rope here in case of fire," commented Mr. Tompkins as he surveyed the room, "but what's the idea of putting a Bible in the room in such a prominent place?"

"Dat am intended for use, sah," replied the boy, "in case de fire am too far advanced for yo' to make yo' escape, sah."—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

Goals to Newcastle.

Mother was measuring a dose of tonic for her little son, who looked up and said:

"What am I taking this for?"

"An appetite," she replied.

"An appetite," he scornfully repeated. "I can't begin to hold now one-half I want to eat."—Philadelphia Ledger.

One Process.

"Since I've been living next door to a dealer in antique rugs I've learned a thing or two about the rug business."

"Yes."

"A rug can be aged very rapidly by allowing a few youngsters to use it as a playground."—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

Works of Art.

"Where did you find this wonderful follow-up system? It would get money out of anybody."

"I simply complied and adapted the letters my son sent me from college."

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