

# The Red Mirage

A Story of the French Legion in Algiers

By I. A. R. WYLIE

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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 I 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. Arnaud becomes a drunkard and opium smoker. Sylvia becomes friendly with Colonel Destinn. Arnaud becomes jealous of Farquhar. Farquhar, on guard at a villa where a dance is in progress, is shot down by Arnaud. Arnaud justifies his insanely jealous action to Colonel Destinn. Arnaud goes to a dancing girl who loves him for comfort. Gabrielle meets Love, for whom she had sacrificed position and reputation, and tells him she is free from him. Sylvia meets Destinn behind the mosque. Arnaud becomes ill but Sylvia will not help him, nor interfere for Farquhar. Gabrielle, aiding Farquhar, who is under punishment, is mistaken by him in his delirium for Sylvia.

What does duty mean to you? Despite his position of power, the situation in which Colonel Destinn finds himself is hopeless. There is nothing to live for, apparently. At this moment sounds the stern call to duty, but an instant later temptation in the person of Sylvia stays his response. Will duty win?

## CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

Once past the sentries, the spahi turned into one of the quieter avenues leading to the barracks. He had not decreased his speed, and his horse's hoofs struck a metallic, ominous music out of the cobbled roadway. Colonel Destinn heard it and it seemed that another sound had caught his attention, for he went to the window and stood with his hand on the clasp, his head bent. Something rustled—something white flashed out from between the trees and came gliding hurriedly toward him.

"Sylvia!" he muttered. She almost flung herself into his arms, clinging to him with a child's panic, and for the moment that he held her their shadows were sharp cut against the light. Then he half dragged, half carried her into the room and closed the windows. There were heavy curtains on either side, and he dragged them across. Save for the soft jingle of his spurs and her own quick breathing there was no sound. He came back to her and drew her veil from her white face.

"Where have you come from?" "From the Cercle. Desire left me. I don't know where he went to—but I ran here."

"I have watched five nights for you." "I knew. It has been awful—the temptation, the fear, the uncertainty. Every night I tried to make up my mind one way or another, but I couldn't. I seemed to have lost hold. Oh—her white baby hands clutched at his doorman in helpless despair—oh, what have you done—what have you done?"

"I was very brutal." He led her gently to an armchair far from the window and stood quietly beside her, his hand still holding hers, his eyes turned from the bowed head to the disordered table, as though seeking a memory. "Some men are born brutal—some become brutal through habit, Sylvia. I have seen life too long from my deliberately chosen standpoint to change. And then I meant there should be no illusions—either for you or me."

"I have none," she broke out bitterly; "they are all gone. I would not have come to you tonight if you had not made me see my own worthlessness."

"I knew that. You would have played on the safe side of the game and called it virtue."

"Paul, how cruel you are!" "Yet—you love me, don't you?" She looked up at him with veiled wistful eyes.

"Yes—I believe I do. You are the one real thing left me—the one real thing of my whole life. I have been fed on illusions, my own and other people's. They thought because I was beautiful—more beautiful than most women—that I was also better, different. And I believed so, too. From our second meeting I knew that you had seen me—the real me—the foolish, selfish, vain, shallow child. And at

first I was frightened, angry, fascinated against my will, and then—instantly, unutterably grateful."

He bent over her and lifted her to her feet.

"You have been honest," he said, in a changed tone. "That is all I wanted. We wear masks—every one of us—and I mine. I am not absolutely a devil. It's hard to believe, I suppose, but there was a time when I was fond of—all sorts of unlikely things—flowers and music, and men and women—and children." His hands released hers, and he walked restlessly to the table, where he stood a moment in silence, his back toward her, his head bowed. "This is a miniature of my son," he said abruptly. She came softly across the room and took it from him. There was a moment in which they seemed to pass out of each other's consciousness. Then she looked up timidly. His head was still bowed, and the sharp-cut indomitable profile gave her no clue, no indication.

"He died?" she said almost in a whisper.

"No, it was I who died." He straightened up like a man shaking off a dream. "I am getting sentimental, Sylvia. You are young and very beautiful—and I am an old man who has murdered the best in him—"

"I never think of you as old," she interrupted thoughtfully. "There is something about you—"

"What was that?" She had broken off abruptly, her features white with panic. He lifted his head, but did not look at her.

"Did you hear anything?" "Someone rode up—I heard the horse's hoofs—there is someone coming—now—"

Her voice was dry. Terror had stamped out all trace of beauty from her face. Destinn crossed the room and held open a side door.

"Go in there!" he commanded quietly. "It is probably a message. In five minutes the man will have gone. Don't come in till I call you."

She obeyed unresistingly, and with one haunted glance over her shoulder, crept past him into the unlighted room. He closed the door and went back to his table. He was now perfectly calm. Someone knocked imperatively, and he answered the summons with tranquil indifference. As the door opened he



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glanced up, and the eyes of the two men met fixedly over the wavering candle-flame. It seemed to blot out everything but their faces.

Richard Farquhar saluted. "I have come with a message from General Meunier."

"The message is urgent, then?" "Yes. A spahi arrived this evening with news that the tribes are rising. The outposts have been cut up. There is no communication between here and—"

"Give me the letter!"

With rapid, steady fingers Colonel Destinn broke the seals and hurried over the half a dozen lines of precise writing. When he had finished the whole man had changed. The mask was in its place, so absolute in its disguise of energy and steely purpose that what had been before now seemed a grotesque incredible comedy.

"The First marches at midnight," he said, half to himself. "The orders were already given when you left?"

"Yes. Corporal Goetz's men were in campaign but five minutes after the signal."

"You were badly wounded. What are you doing in this business? You aren't fit to carry a rifle."

He saw the tightening of the dogged jaws, and for a moment there flashed between them a strange sympathy—the sympathy of fighters to whom fighting is the great essence of life. It passed like a streak of light in the darkness. Colonel Destinn turned away.

"Give my compliments to General Meunier. I shall be with the regiment in ten minutes."

"This time there was no answer. The silence seemed to impress itself slowly on Colonel Destinn's consciousness. He looked up over the top of the letter which he still held to the light and his gaze rested for a second on the little ivory fan and the white gloves—then passed upward, as though drawn by an irresistible fascination, to the face of the man opposite. He, too, had seen. A minute later their eyes met. In the distance a bugle chanted the Legion's war signal, "Aux armes! Aux armes!"

Richard Farquhar swung round and closed the door behind him. Instinctively Colonel Destinn had placed himself between Farquhar and the door leading to the inner room. It was typical of him that he did not threaten or attempt to deny the vital facts of the situation. In an hour this man might be arrested and shot down—but not now. Richard Farquhar picked up the fan and opened it.

"Colonel Destinn, a man I knew gave this to the woman he was to have married. How did it come here?"

Colonel Destinn looked into the blazing eyes of his opponent and frowned. It was the first sign of yielding self-possession.

"You are brave. Courage is the one thing I can respect. You are free to go, Englishman."

"Not till you have answered." "I shall then have double cause to order out a shooting party on your behalf."

"What you insinuate is a damnable lie."

Destinn laughed. "At least you have the courage of your convictions," he said, almost with regret.

The legionary made no answer. He had thrust aside the intervening table, and the next instant both men were locked together in a merciless embrace. There was no sound—scarcely a movement. The first fury of Farquhar's onslaught balanced his fever-weakened condition and leveled their respective strength to practical equality. Then the steely muscles of the elder man asserted themselves, and slowly, imperceptibly, he retreated.

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from the door, seeming to yield, never for an instant relaxing his tenacious hold upon the other's arms. Suddenly he wrenched himself free and sprang back to his writing table.

"If you touch that door I shall shoot you down—now," he said quietly.

Farquhar turned, conscious that his own rage had suddenly burned out. He saw that the door which Destinn had protected had opened, and that Sylvia Arnaud, white and large-eyed with terror, stood trembling on the threshold. Farquhar recoiled a step. Colonel Destinn had replaced his revolver on the table. There was something akin to pity written on his hard face. Sylvia glanced at him and then at Farquhar. Behind her fear there had already begun to dawn the knowledge that the situation was dramatic and wholly in her hands.

"I knew that you were a traitor, Richard," she said. "But I thought you were still a gentleman. It seems I was mistaken." Her manner was tearful, childishly resentful.

He turned from her without answer. "I owe you an apology, Colonel Destinn," he said simply. "Do you trust me enough to let me place myself under arrest?"

"I trust you enough to let you find your punishment under fire," was the courteous answer. "I shall need brave men."

"I thank you."

They saluted each other—gravely, with respect, as unreconciled duelists who have learned each other's worth in the bitterness of battle; then, with a slight bow to the woman, standing against the dark background of the inner room, Richard Farquhar passed out of the open window.

"Aux armes! aux armes!" He laughed to himself, his teeth clenched. But the music of that storm signal was as the call of the blood, a challenge to the fighting spirit of his race. He swung himself lightly into the saddle and drove his heels against the horse's dripping flanks.

"En avant, Grane!" The animal answered. Someone had caught at the bride. Farquhar bent forward, peering into the darkness. "Who is it? My God—Gabrielle!"

"Yes; I thought I recognized you. Where have you come from?"

"Colonel Destinn's—"

"Is—"

"Yes; she is there."

"Captain Arnaud is asking for her, and I suspected. There isn't a moment to be lost—"

Has Captain Arnaud discovered his wife's utter treason, and started out to kill her and her men friends? After what you know, would you blame the husband for anything murderous he did?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Quiet in the Trenches.

A soldier at the front, who writes a letter to a British provincial paper, says that there is usually an evening bombardment, and after it is over everything is very quiet. "You can then wander through the communication trenches," he says, "for a mile or more without meeting a soul, and when the fire trenches are reached, one often sees nothing more dreadful than a man in the depths of a dug-out peacefully cooking his evening steak over a coke brazier." Later, the "star shells" begin to go up, and these shed a sort of silent glimmer over the whole flat country."

Why He Likes Chess.

"What is your favorite pastime?" "Chess," replied Mr. Growcher. "But you don't play it?"

"No. I like it because it keeps the people who do from making a noise around the house."

band in giving full praise to a stenographer who justly deserved it.

In Boudoir Dress.

It is related that a scene showing the interior of a racing stable was thrown on the screen at a certain theater. Each horse was covered with a bright colored blanket. Little two-year-old Nan, who had never seen a stable before, exclaimed to her mother:

"Oh, mamma, see the horses with their kimonos on!"

Everything Due to Effort.

In all human affairs there are efforts, and there are results, and the strength of the effort is the measure of the result. Chance is not, "Gifts," powers; material, intellectual, and spiritual possessions are the fruits of effort; they are thoughts completed, objects accomplished, visions realized.—James Allen.

What He's Worried About.

"I presume you are giving a great deal of thought to your forthcoming address on preparedness."

"Oh, yes," replied the statesman, "although my secretary, as a matter of fact, is writing the speech. What I'm thinking about is the possible effect it may have on my constituents."

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The War Children of Paris.

How beautiful they are, the war children! How well cared for, how thriving, and how showered with love! Their prolonged sojourn in the Bois or in the gardens have freshened the bloom of their cheeks. Their immaculate pink-and-whiteness seems to testify to the girl mother's loving care of the now sovereign baby who for two years has had no rival. The mother's entire time is devoted to His Majesty, the baby, nor is he ever forgotten except occasionally when her thoughts wander to the absent one, she traces in the baby's dimpled face the sometimes fugitive, sometimes striking resemblance to his soldier-father. Sacred moments these when in the twilight the curly head and downy cheek resolve themselves into the pale or sunburnt features of one "somewhere in France."—Cartoons Magazine.

Start the year by getting Hanford's Balm. You will find frequent use for it. Adv.

Gypsies Use Automobiles.

"Even gypsies are abandoning horses for motors," says the July Popular Mechanics Magazine. "A band of about 40 of these nomads recently visited Columbus, Ohio, traveling in three covered automobiles which had been purchased a short time before. Each motor was fitted up in true gipsy fashion, and portions of the tops were painted in the bright colors characteristic of the familiar gipsy wagons. In all, three families inhabited the three cars. The sage of the group was a woman 75 years old; the youngest of the children was three months old."

The Best Lintment.

For falls on icy walks, sprains and bruises, rub on and rub in Hanford's Balm of Myrrh. Apply this liniment thoroughly and relief should quickly follow. Adv.

Nervy.

"That fellow's got his nerve with him!"

"What's the matter now?"

"He actually asked me to lend him a couple of gallons of gasoline until next Saturday."—Detroit Free Press.

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