

The Red Mirage

A Story of the French Legion in Algiers

By I. A. R. WYLIE

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—you failed." She sat by 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 forget me—that the shadow had



She Heard the Door Close Softly. He Had Gone.

passed away and left no trace. I should like to know you—happy."

"I am happy."

Still he waited, watching her with hungry wistful intensity.

"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.

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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 tearless.

"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 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 silenced 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 steadied. He smiled wryly. "I'm not threatening, dear. By this time I have learned your lesson; there shall be any more throwing down of weapons. Whatever hap-

pens—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 those 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 together 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 Destinn 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 Destinn 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 Destinn 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 Destinn's sword sank in farewell.

"Toujours, ma fol, le sac au dos—" Singing, they left the glitter of lights and the sound of the town's joyous hubbub behind them. Colonel Destinn 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.

GREAT WRITER NOT ALONE

Elizabethan Age Was Memorable for Its Drama Without the Famous Bard of Avon.

The score of busy playwrights who preceded Shakespeare and prepared the ground with experiments in which he was to triumph were reviewed recently by Prof. Felix Schelling, head of the English department of the University of Pennsylvania.

Doctor Schelling's lecture was on "Shakespeare's Competitors in the Drama."

"For, had Shakespeare's death been untimely like that of Marlowe," Doctor Schelling said, according to the Philadelphia Bulletin, "we might question his primacy. Had Shakespeare never lived, his age would still have been memorable in the drama for the group of playwrights of extraordinary stature—a group in which the lesser names can easily match our Shaws, Barries or Pineros." Doctor Schelling compared the modern problem-dramatists unfavorably with those of the past.

Doctor Schelling expressed regret that it has been the habit of the older scholarship "to disregard the environment of Shakespeare and to neglect the lesser luminaries who surround him." He said, in part:

"Shakespeare is not the inventor of Elizabethan drama. He did not find his dramatic London brick and leave it marble. Shakespeare added no single new form of the variety that already flourished on the stage.

"We have to deal with the group of writers known to every school book as

the predecessors of Shakespeare: Lyly, Peele, Greene, Lodge, Kyd, Nash and Marlowe.

"Among the competitors of Shakespeare none was so important as Ben Jonson."

Increasing Potato Yield.

Farmers in the British Isles are conducting experiments with sulphate of ammonia to increase the productivity of the potato fields. In this connection one of the recent reports of the department of agricultural and technical instruction for Ireland showed that 15 tons of farmyard manure gave a yield of 8½ tons of potatoes. The addition of a hundredweight of ammonium sulphate increased the potatoes by nearly a ton. The University college of North Wales has made similar experiments which show that in four years the expenditure of £1 (\$5) in sulphate of ammonia and superphosphate produced once one ton and three times one and a half tons of potatoes beyond the yield of the ten tons of farmyard manure to which it was added. Potatoes were worth £4 (\$20) a ton last year.

May Be a Weather Sign.

Thomas Warner cannot explain it so he took them downtown and placed them in the show window of a Columbus store. He owns a white rabbit. Three little rabbits came to her house to call her "Mother" and to seek her parental care. Two of them are as white as the proverbial driven snow. The other one is as black as the ace of spades in a new deck.—Indianapolis News.

Most Eminent Medical Authorities Endorse It.

Dr. Eberle and Dr. Braithwaite as well as Dr. Simon—all distinguished authors—agree that whatever may be the disease, the urine seldom fails in furnishing us with a clue to the principles upon which it is to be treated, and accurate knowledge concerning the nature of disease can thus be obtained. If backache, scalding urine or frequent urination bother or distress you, or if uric acid in the blood has caused rheumatism, gout or sciatica or you suspect kidney or bladder trouble just write Dr. Pierce at the Surgical Institute, Buffalo, N.Y.; send a sample of urine and describe symptoms. You will receive free medical advice after Dr. Pierce's chemist has examined the urine—this will be carefully done without charge, and you will be under no obligation. Dr. Pierce during many years of experimentation has discovered a new remedy which he finds is thirty-seven times more powerful than lithia in removing uric acid from the system. If you are suffering from backache or the pains of rheumatism, go to your best druggist and ask for a 50-cent box of "Anuric" put up by Dr. Pierce. Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription for weak women and Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery for the blood have been favorably known for the past forty years and more. They are standard remedies to-day—as well as Doctor Pierce's Pleasant Pellets for the liver and bowels. You can get a sample of any one of these remedies by writing Dr. Pierce.

Doctor Pierce's Pellets are unequalled as a Liver Pill. One tiny, Sugar-coated Pellet a Dose. Cure Sick Headache, Bilious Headache, Dizziness, Constipation, Indigestion, Bilious Attacks, and all derangements of the Liver, Stomach and Bowels.

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Learned Something.

"What's the matter with Flubdub? He used to claim that our politicians were the most unscrupulous in the world."

"He has been traveling abroad. I think it was a great blow to his civic pride when he found they were not."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Thread of Interest.

"This cookbook ought to be popular."

"Why so?"

"There's a love story mixed in with the recipes."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Foolish Man.

"Can't say I like that new hat of yours."

"Yet you liked it in the store."

"Well, it did look pretty when the girl tried it on."

Then the trouble started.—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Sticks There.

The man who drops his anchor in the Slough of Despond never gets any farther.—Answers.

HOW MRS. BEAN MET THE CRISIS

Carried Safely Through Change of Life by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Nashville, Tenn.—"When I was going through the Change of Life I had a tumor as large as a child's head. The doctor said it was three years coming and gave me medicine for it until I was called away from the city for some time. Of course I could not go to him then, so my sister-in-law told me that she thought



Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound would cure it. It helped both the Change of Life and the tumor and when I got home I did not need the doctor. I took the Pinkham remedies until the tumor was gone, the doctor said, and I have not felt it since. I tell every one how I was cured. If this letter will help others you are welcome to use it."—Mrs. E. H. BEAN, 525 Joseph Avenue, Nashville, Tenn.

Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, a pure remedy containing the extractive properties of good old fashioned roots and herbs, meets the needs of woman's system at this critical period of her life. Try it.

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