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## THE SOUL OF A GERMAN

(Continued from page 7)

make seeing my sister with a blue shawl on her head an excuse for committing some 'frightful and unnatural crime' this night, though it would be exactly in line with the usual German reasoning if you did." This Jason said to himself, adding aloud, "Here is Bahkhar to say the car is waiting. I trust we have made your visit pleasant, M. Captain."

So Heinrich Muller went out of Sarah's home and thoughts. She was a busy woman, with her books and her friends, and her charities, and her brother's family, whom the passion of her life was to mother and love. She quite forgot the tactless old man to whom she had tried to be kind for an hour.

But Muller did not forget her. For five and twenty years he had lived in a world where white women, except for the very lowest class—and very few of them, in Africa—were not. He had seen women like Sarah d'Anvers beyond the bars that hedged in a soldier of the Legion, but he had never dreamed of sitting beside one of them as an equal again. His life had hardened and coarsened him, and he was too old to feel any of a boy's sentimental passion for the woman who had been kind to him, but like many materialistic men he was superstitious, and the charm of Sarah's face in the moonlight had made him believe that the Von Schwarzburghs could be saved, if only they would let their Jewish lady of the curse into their house, and the longer he thought of it the more sure he was that Sarah was the actual Jewish Madonna—and he knew that he, though in exile, was the real Prince Von Schwarzburgh.

It was a May evening, and Sarah was driving home. She had had an extra busy day. Italy had joined the Allies, which meant that France, quite secure now from any attack in Africa, was calling all her men from Algeria. There had been much extra work for the ladies of the Red Cross, and Sarah was tired as she leaned back in her seat. Jason would be home to a late supper that night, when he would like to talk over many things with her, and knowing that a woman past forty who wishes to keep her figure and complexion must not get over tired, she planned to rest in her own room till it was time for Jason's return. So everything combined to make her annoyed and indignant when as she entered the house, Bahkhar told her that Muller was there waiting to see her.

"To come, without the least invitation, how unspeakably Prussian," she thought, adding aloud, "why did you not tell him I was out, Bahkhar?"

The old man spread out his hands deprecatingly. "I did, but El Caid (the captain) would not be denied. Also he bade me give the gracious lady this. 'This' was a card on which Muller had written—'Will a woman of France listen to a few words from a soldier of France in great distress?' Sarah did not refuse to see him then.

Without thinking she had put on the blue shawl again over her white dress, as she sat in the moonlit courtyard. Bahkhar, looking very oriental with his flowing white robes and big bronzed face, came in with Muller, whom he stood near, watching jealousy, though he knew too little French to follow the conversation.

Muller ignored the seat offered him, and standing before Sarah he said abruptly, "The Legion is ordered to France. You must tell me what to do."

Her eyes were blue ice as she answered, "I do not understand you."

"I am German-born," cried Muller dramatically. "Can I change my blood? Can I forget the home of my childhood, or the land where I spent the best years of my life. I am only an exile in Africa. I did not mind fighting the Arab savages for France, but how can I go armed against my own country? How can I strike at the flag of Germany?"

Sarah rose. "I know nothing of military matters," she said coldly, "but I should think that at your age and with your record, you would be permitted to retire under the circumstances. Or else you might desert. And now Bahkhar will show you out. Good-night."

"Stay, I implore you," he cried, "I must tell you who I am, and why I am in Africa. Hear me for pity's sake."

Unwillingly Sarah sat down again, and Muller spoke hurriedly. "My grandfather was Prince Von Schwarzburgh. He had twin sons, Max, my father, and Otto, his younger brother. The twins shared everything even to their thoughts, till Max became entangled with the dreamers who opposed the overlordship of Prussia, and the fusing of Germany by blood and iron, into one united empire that should soon dominate the earth. The old

prince was dead, and there was no one to interfere when Max made his castle the headquarters of the plotters against Prussian rule of Germany. Outwardly Otto was with him in everything, but when Max fraternized with the Socialists of that day, privately marrying some girl of the people, Otto grew more and more appreciative of the iron order and efficiency only possible under an intellectual autocracy. Then came the night when Max saw the Jewish Madonna, and while they barred the doors, Otto was writing a full description of the plot to the King of Prussia. There was nothing weak about that Wilhelm Hohenzollern. Like his grandson he was a great ruthless soul. He crushed the plotters. Max faced a firing party, and when his wife heard, she died as I was born. Under the circumstances it was not hard for Otto to suppress the evidence of Max's marriage, and take his place as head of the house. Only my grandmother, the old Princess, knew the truth, and she was too broken-hearted to say much. She brought me up, telling me I was a peasant's child that she had taken a fancy to and adopted. I was called her secretary, but really I was master of her house, for my uncle lived in Russia, where he had some high diplomatic position. Then when I was forty she told me the truth, for my uncle was coming home, and she was too old to resist him. He offered me an income, but ordered that I should go to live in America. He had murdered my father, she said, and defamed my mother. Could I take favours from his hand? And I—I think I went mad. I had been brought up to regard the House of Von Schwarzburgh as my benefactor, and now I was it robbed and wronged head. I could get no one to listen to me, and I rushed out here. I drank, I had no money and I enlisted in the Legion. For years I thought I hated Germany, but now she seems to be pulling at my heart."

Muller's last words were a low cry, and Sarah bent towards him with soft compassion in her eyes. She could not hate this German with his helpless sentimentalism. "I will help you," she began impulsively, then stopped in dismay, while Bahkhar put his hand on the huge Arab sword he wore, for Muller had dropped on one knee before her.

"Sarah Madonna," he exclaimed, "the doors of my heart are open, come in and save my house, as you said the lady of our curse could do. Don't look at me so. I love you, but it is as men love stars in Heaven above them."

"M. Captain," said Sarah sternly. "Unless you rise instantly I shall leave you." Then, as Muller unwillingly obeyed, she went on severely. "The fault of you Germans is mental sloth; you want someone else to think for you. It is this trait in you that has made your wicked Kaiser and junkers. I read that some German soldiers weep in secret at the abominations they are forced to witness!—and commit. But, of course they could not defy a 'sacred order.' I am disgusted with you all, and I will not be a substitute Kaiser to even one German. Think for yourself, man. Have you no conscience to guide you?"

"You are French," said Muller in a low voice, "so you are unjust to many—some Germans. You call it wrong for a German to obey some war-time orders, yet you would condemn a Frenchman who disobeyed any of yours."

"I would die for France," she answered instantly, "but I would not sin for her. That is what makes a man free, when he holds his soul for God only, and proudly gives his body to serve his country—but he wrongs her if ever he consents to sin for her."

"You mean that honour should keep even a German from fighting for Germany, but surely he should not fight against her?" Muller persisted.

"This is not an ordinary war between nations," cried Sarah. "Men are fighting now because God is the Eternal Law, instead of a Kaiser's deferential assistant. Oh, that I were a man to fight for those glorious ones among the nations—England, Belgium, and France—vive la France!"

She sprang up as she said the last words, with her eyes flashing. The man looked at her, then saluting, repeated "Vive la France!" and went out of the house, but this time Sarah did not forget him.

IN the early dawn of an autumn day Muller sat on a stump in a shell torn forest with a soldier of his company kneeling beside him, bandaging a flesh wound in his leg. "There," he said, as he rose, "there, my captain, with me for your crutch, we shall get on nicely."

"You are going on without me," said Muller shortly.

"My captain, I will not. Shall I desert a wounded comrade because he also happens to be my captain and orders me to go? Never, we stay or go together."

"Idiotic child," growled Muller. "What does your feelings or life or anything matter, so that France lives. Have we not seen where the enemy is placing his great guns? One of us must get through with the information. They are beating the wood for us now, and do you suppose I am going to spoil your chance of a quick get-away by tying you to a cripple? Go instantly, and—vive la France!"

THE soldier saluted, then bent suddenly down, and kissing the captain's very dirty hand, he darted off.

Muller sat still, smoking stolidly. He knew that when the enemy found him his accent would betray his German origin, and he would be shot, but that did not trouble him. He had passed, like many another materialist in the trenches, to the extreme of mystical belief. And he needed the support of something outside himself, for his position was a very hard one. Twenty-five years as a French soldier had made military obedience to France a habit. But the sight of German flags and uniform, and hardest of all, the sound of German music, tugged at his heart with the memories of childhood and young manhood, till his soul would well nigh turn traitor to the Tricolour. Then he would fall back on his faith in Sarah d'Anvers. For from her words he had taught himself to believe that Germany was only a magnified House of Von Schwarzburgh. Because of past crimes against humanity Germany believed that a spirit of hate against her moved in the hearts of other nations, so she barred her gates, and frantically committed frightful and unnatural sins. And her only hope of salvation from the curses she was breeding within her was to throw open her doors in complete surrender to the spirit she thought was Punishment, but Muller believed now was Pardon—in his visions it was a white-robed, blue-draped Madonna, whose face was the face of Sarah d'Anvers. So his faith in her words made him able to fight Germany, believing that in helping to batter in her gates of pride he showed the truest love for the fatherland of his heart.

But he said nothing of his beliefs to the savage men who captured him. They tied his hands when he admitted his German birth and education, then despite his wounded leg he was dragged to the ruins of a French village, and stood up against a wall. "Traitorous swine," snarled the German officer, "shooting is too easy a death for you, but we will only shoot you when you say Gott strafe France."

Muller's reply was short. "Vive la France!"

Six hours later he looked with dim eyes at the western sun. He hung against the side of a house with spikes through his hands and feet. A few rags of clothing and his broken sword hung from his neck, but the rest of him was covered only with the flesh wounds from the knives of the men who stood round.

Then suddenly he was free. One minute, it seemed to him, he hung there in blood and nakedness, staring through a blinding mist of burning pain, and the next, uninformed and sworded, he stood in the moonlit inner court of the d'Anvers house. Not only had all feeling of pain left him, but the memory of it was growing vague.

She was sitting by the fountain, with her head bowed, for she had just seen Heinrich Muller's name marked as "Missing," and she knew the quality of the mercy that Germans would show to a man they called a traitor. Then looking up, she saw him standing in the moonlight.

He thought she was angry with him when he saw her turn white, and he knelt before her pleading. "Do you mind me coming to you, Sarah Madonna? You have saved my soul, for I opened the doors of my heart, and you have come in, to stay there forever."

She did not seem to hear him, for she only said in an unsteady voice, "Thank God, you are dead. I was afraid they had captured you."

Her words had no meaning to him for he knew he was alive, so he still looked at her with dumb pleading eyes, and with an effort she said, "Soldier of France, well done!" then, because she did not know what to say to him, she added, "Vive la France!" And she saw his eyes grow satisfied.

She heard him say softly, "Vive la France!" Then he walked out of the court.

Were they to know each other in some Hereafter? Perhaps.