

THE SOUL OF A GERMAN

How It Revealed Itself When the War Came to Algiers

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It was a November afternoon in Algiers, the African city under the Tricolour of France. The air was soft and warm, and the high fronded palms stood up stately in the sunshine, as Jason d'Anvers ran his handsome gray auto across the Place du Gouvernement. Algiers is beautiful to look at, rising as it does, on the side of a steep hill—a city of glistening white roofs, interspersed with tall minarets and cupolas, with a brilliant blue sea at its feet and the sunshine of Africa overhead. But many of the narrow streets in the old native city are only long flights of rough steps, and even on the new French roads the grades are often steep enough.

So Jason drove carefully. He was a faultlessly dressed, middle-aged Frenchman, with kindly shrewd eyes, and a rather long face that showed his Jewish blood. He had two sons in a French regiment fighting in the great world's war, two younger were at the Lycee in Algiers, and two little girls had their governess in the big white house on the hill.

In the bad old days the house had been the home of a famous pirate chief, and it had pleased Jason to keep the oriental character of its decorations, even though he added all modern conveniences. The inner court—the old harem—was suggestive of the Arabian Nights, with its coloured marble pavement, and tinkling fountain, among the banks of orchids that Sarah d'Anvers loved. All round were wonderfully carved, arched doorways and balconies, hung with curtains of eastern hued silks. Old Bahkhar, the Moorish Jew, who acted as door-keeper, also looked as if he belonged to the magic scented East, but the three women, drinking tea by the fountain, had all the awakened soul and intellect of the West in their faces.

They were Sarah, Eve, and Anna, Jason's sisters. The two younger were married, but when Jason's wife died Sarah had stayed single to keep his house and mother his children.

She was a very beautiful woman still, in spite of her forty odd years, as she leaned back in her garden chair, her white dress showing the lines of her tall slim figure. Her hair was a soft golden, and her blue eyes had that intense purity and brooding motherliness that the painters of all ages have striven to give their Madonnas.

Just now she was evidently being teased by her sisters, and as Jason entered, they both exclaimed: "What do you think Sarah has done? Charity is all right, of course, but this is going too far, and in your house too—a German! And then, the Foreign Legion!"

"Whatever Sarah does is always right," said Jason calmly. "Give me a cup of black coffee, please, Eve, with two lumps of sugar. And then you can tell me the parts of your story that you left out."

She and Anna both told him, at great length, while he sipped his coffee. It first concerned the Foreign Legion—that remarkable branch of the French Army which took in the social outcasts, outlaws, and adventurers of France, and of every other nation on the globe. It had on its rolls in that year 1914, Russians, Turks, Hindoos, Negroes, Greeks, and many Germans. One of them, Heinrich Muller, had come to Algiers Hospital, one of a score of men wounded in a skirmish with the wild tribes of Sahara. The French feminine part of Algiers was overflowing with Red Cross enthusiasm, and unhappy because Algiers was too outside the zone of war for them to help their own wounded men, so they suddenly started to visit these soldiers of France, and decided to invite the convalescents to their homes. Then, as they made the arrangements, there was a painful pause at Muller's name, and Sarah, who happened to be present, at once offered to take him.

"And whatever else could she do?" asked Jason, "at a time like this every man who wears the French uniform must be sacred in any Frenchman's—or woman's—eyes."

"Well, I have warned you," said Eve sharply, as she rose. "I am having a Negro in for the afternoon, I shall give him sweets and tobacco, and I know he will never dream of presuming on my kindness. But these blonde beasts of Prussia—the man who gives them an inch is a fool."

But Jason loved and trusted Sarah too much to criticise her even in his thoughts, though he was secretly annoyed that the foolishness of her associates in charity had made it necessary for her to invite this German renegade to her home. Very full and careful introductions are necessary before a stranger can enter any French home, and to a French Jew—one of a race the world barred out so long, that it still bars itself in socially—the thing was unheard of. "But it is War," Jason thought philosophically, adding "and women, also—the two world upsetters."

He asked for the record of Muller, and was sent the following: "Heinrich Muller, born in Schwarzburg, Prussia, 1850." ("Hum," commented the reader, "the animal is nearly sixty-five.") "Took degree at Heidelberg, became Secretary to Dowager Princess Von Schwarzburg. Never married. At forty came to Africa and enlisted in the Foreign Legion." ("Now, what on earth made a man of that age and assured social position do that?" Jason wondered. "He was no boy crazy for adventure, so what was it that drove him from Germany—his own crime, or another's?") Muller's record in the Legion had been very good, and it was certainly nothing but soldierly merit that had won the suspicious French authorities to promote him after fifteen years in the ranks, so that he was now a captain, and would have been retired had not the War prevented.

A big man, offensively—to French eyes—German looking, Muller stood in the oriental court, answering Jason's greeting with a German accent that jarred on his very French-feeling hosts. Sarah saw him as a stupid looking, weather-beaten man, with graying hair, evidently ill at

the things that very paper in your hands said about Jewish plots with England and *juiverie*."

Muller used the slang word, brought out by the anti-Semitic party when talking of "worse things than could be described," committed by the Jews. Calming himself with an effort, Jason answered, "M. Captain, my religion is my own—my soul is God's—but all else that I have is France's. I know that she has made bad blunders, but I know too that when she saw her mistakes she tried to make amends. When I remember the Dreyfus case I remember too M. Zola, foremost of French writers, who heroically opposed his own country when he knew she was wrong. You do not find any great German openly doing that—they are all the soul-slaves of the Kaiser, and degraded beyond hope by their slavery."

There was an uncomfortable silence, and Sarah, wishing to break it, asked Jason to hand her a shawl. He put the filmy soft thing on her head and round her shoulders. It was a vivid blue in the clear white moonlight, and Muller stared at her with something like fear in his eyes. "Gott in Himmel!" he exclaimed, "The Jewish Madonna!"

In her white dress and blue drapery, with her Madonna face, Sarah did look like the Maiden Mother of some of the old master painters. Speaking with an agitation very different to his loud assurance of a few minutes before, Muller continued, "I beg your pardon, but it is a story. It is the legend of the house of Von Schwarzburg. They are

one of the noblest families in Germany, and five hundred years ago they were as wealthy and powerful as now. It was Christmas time then, they were feasting in the Castle, while down in the town a mob were killing an old Jew. His daughter, in a white dress and blue wrap, fled for her life. It was a bitter night, and half-frozen, in her desperation she walked through the open doors into the great hall of the castle.

THE superstitious crowd all fell on their knees, imagining her to be the Madonna. Dazed with the cold she sank on a seat, and took the bread and wine offered her by the kneeling lord of the castle. Then the chaplain drew near with incense, and realizing that she was being worshipped, the girl sprang up, telling her name. And suddenly recognizing her, the castle folks rushed on her in a fury, hurling her out to die. It is a brutal story, but you know what those Dark Ages were, and I have never understood why that girl could not have kept quiet, and played her part till there was a chance to slip away."

"Of course a German could not understand that," said Jason to himself, while Sarah exclaimed, "M. Captain, does not every one have

something that they hold dearer than life? You have your soldiers' honour, and we have the eternal Law. It commands us to bow down to the one God only, and that poor brave girl knew it was better to die than consent to false worship. Your Christian martyrs felt the same."

"I have no religion outside science, Mlle. d'Anvers," returned Muller, "and I have always regarded martyrs to any supernaturalism as a pack of fools. But I have only told half my story. Even in this generation the Jewish Madonna has been seen by the head of the House of Von Schwarzburg. And after this apparition, there has always been some unnatural and frightful crime committed by one member of the family upon another."

"M. Captain," said Jason dryly, "I should like to know how you reconcile your scientific disbelief in any supernatural religion, with this faith of yours in the appearance of a ghost?"

"I suppose, M. d'Anvers, that like all men, I have a foolish streak in me. But as a child I was told how my father came in one day, very pale, 'I have seen the Jewish Madonna,' he said. The servants hurried to bar the doors, as is always done to try to keep her out. But though no one else saw her, the crime, the ghastly crime, was done that night."

Muller stopped, shuddering, and too shaken by his recollections to notice that he had betrayed his close relationship with a noble German house. Sarah did not notice it either, she was pitying him, as she always did anyone that suffered. So she said softly, "Oh, why do your people bar the doors when they know the vision of the murdered girl is near? I am sure she is sent as a sign of pardon instead of punishment, and if you would only open the doors, and ask her in, the curse would pass away from your house."

Muller stared at her. "I never thought of that. But you may be right. Something has put a curse on us, for our unnatural crimes are real, though I have often thought the vision of the Jewish Madonna may only be a coincidence—like me seeing you to-night."

"Well, let us hope you will not (Continued on page 50)



"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."

ease among the refinements of her table. So she talked to him with her sweetest graciousness, and then was dismayed at her success. For Muller had grown too much at his ease for Jason's peace of mind as the three sat by the fountain, with their coffee. The magical African moonlight silvered the Moorish arches around them, and made Sarah's white dress and golden hair look ethereal, while Muller looked at her with a bold appreciation that drove Jason inwardly frantic. The rough shyness the German had learned in those twenty-five years of social exile in French camps, had fallen off, and he was again an arrogant Prussian of the upper class, favouring these people of an inferior race with the honour of his society.

HE talked, incessantly and boastfully, of all he had done in the ceaseless warfare of the desert, but he never mentioned the great War, till Jason, goaded beyond endurance, quoted some bitter anti-German remarks from the *Depeche Algerienne* of that evening. But Muller only smiled. "Just talk," he said loftily. "Here are a dozen countries at war with each other, probably some are more to blame than others, but we need not believe anything any of them say about the others. Such wild talk is only a part of war. A year after peace these excited-talking Englishmen will probably be walking arm in arm to their golf or horse-racing with the very German generals they now curse so fiercely."

"And I suppose Belgians will be laughing at the joke of their abused women and babies, with the very Germans who did the abominable things?" Jason retorted sarcastically. "M. Captain, you talk strangely for a man in French uniform."

Muller laughed easily. "Of course I do not talk so before French people," he observed, "but you are different."

"M. Captain, you are my guest, but I must ask you to explain your words. Who is it that dares to say I am not true French?"

"M. d'Anvers, they told me in town you were a Jew, and French Jews cannot have forgotten the Dreyfus case, and