

Mistinguett's Heroic Sacrifice for Love and France

How the Beautiful Parisian Actress Risked Not Only Her Life, but Honor and All a Woman Holds Dearest, to Win Freedom for Her Sweetheart and to Save Her

Country's Armies From Defeat

Mlle. Mistinguett, the French actress who is to be awarded the coveted Legion of Honor in token of her country's gratitude for the great service she rendered during the war as a spy

The shapely and much admired legs of Mlle. Mistinguett which are now insured for \$150,000



Mata Hari, the fascinating Javanese dancer who is believed to have broken more hearts than any other woman of modern times, and whose spectacular career as a spy in the service of Germany was at last ended by her capture and execution by the French



Mlle. Mistinguett showing how demure and girlish she can look

These two widely different photographs show two of the many roles Mistinguett is said to have assumed in wheedling precious military secrets from high German officers



Maurice Chevalier, the sweetheart whom Mistinguett's self-sacrifice rescued from a prison camp

"IT IS for France!"

The eyes of the soldierly old figure in horizon blue flashed with the exaltation of the appeal. The veteran officer rose as he made it and stood for a moment framed against the tricolor that hung behind his desk. Unconsciously his right hand came to the salute as if he stood in the very presence of his beloved country.

"For France," he repeated. "And you alone may serve!"

It was such a dramatic situation as is the very breath of life to the French, as inspired them to the most heroic deeds of gallantry and sacrifice when the Germans drove on Paris and Verdun. Such an impassioned clarion call as had come from lips of the old colonel had sent whole regiments, whole army corps cheering into battle and to a forlorn hope.

But though his solitary auditor rose with him, breathing quickened, cheeks flushed and an answering light in eyes, there came no immediate response. The woman hesitated.

She was beautiful and typically Parisienne from the top of her chic hat to the tips of her shapely feet, and she was in love with life. The task she was called upon to undertake was hazardous, more fraught with peril than the pollu's midnight raid or climb over the parapet for the charge.

She had been asked to penetrate in disguise the lines of the enemy and seek information. And well she knew that on such a mission a charming woman risks something even dearer than life itself—her womanly honor and good name.

So she hesitated. She sank to her chair trembling, her limpid eyes downcast.

The colonel considered a moment. Wise in the ways of the hearts of women, he spoke again.

"There is," he said, "in one of the prison camps of Spain—and none too pleasant a place it is—a Frenchman of the name of Maurice Chevalier."

He paused. A wave of color flooded the face of the woman.

"When the mission I ask of you is accomplished," the colonel continued, "all the influence of the government shall be brought to bear upon the King of Spain, so that this man shall surely be released and returned to his country."

The woman no longer hesitated, but offered herself as a sacrifice for love and for France.

It was such a stirring incident as that just narrated which took place one war-black day in 1916—one of the unsung episodes of the great conflict, which never was heard until the other day when its heroine was revealed with the announcement that a movement was under way to obtain the award of the Legion of Honor for pretty Mlle. Mistinguett, star of the music halls.

Women spies! What a thrill their very mention brings! What hints of intrigues, of light flirtation which are a reality toying with a grisly death, of

acting more consummate than ever has been seen on the stage, for life itself depends on it. Shadowy tales which tell of the pitting of woman's wit against the enemy's might, of the tossing of life and virtue in the scales for the sake of patriotism, love or gold.

Women spies who risk their all on the knowledge that all men, in the heat of the passions of war, are not always like the old cavalier poet who could not love his lady half so much "loved he not honor more."

Mlle. Mistinguett, whose real name is Jeanne Bourgeois, long has been a favorite of the Paris stage. She is famed for her dancing, her singing and her character acting, and it has been boasted that her legs are the most shapely in all France if not in the whole world. She was dancing at the Olympia when the Germans were only sixty miles from Paris and became the idol of the city when she refused to be frightened away. But the real test of her courage came later.

How this beauty of the blue eyes played the spy and became an important link in the chain of the French espionage system was partially told recently in the newspaper, "Liberte," by Commandant Massard, who has been the source of some of the other fascinating spy stories of the war, notably that of the German agent, Mata Hari.

In 1916 it came to be of vital necessity that something should be learned of the plans of the enemy. The information wanted was of a kind that could be obtained only from a source too high to be reached by the ordinary spy. Who better for the purpose than a lovely woman of proven charm and with natural ability for the dangerous acting which would be required?

Mlle. Mistinguett with her powers of mobile expression seemed admirably fitted for the task. She had long been famous for her ability to assume at will either the innocence of an angel or the guile of the archtemptress.

It was natural that Mlle. Mistinguett should have both fear and distaste for the mission proposed to her. Hers was not the detached spirituality of Jeanne d'Arc, whose namesake she was. No, she was too human for that. But as already has been related the French espionage chiefs found the key to her heart.

They promised her that should she accept, her beloved Maurice Chevalier would be released from a war camp in Spain. And that promise, it must be said to their credit, was faithfully kept.

Mlle. Mistinguett made the bargain knowing full well that she might never return to see its fulfillment. She knew, too, that she might survive the ordeal under conditions that would make her sweetheart unwilling to claim her heart any longer. Bravely, with a smile on her lips, she agreed to undertake the perilous mission that meant so much to her love and her country.

Upon her acceptance, false papers

and a motor car were put at the disposal of Mlle. Mistinguett. The chauffeur of the car formerly had been in the service of Prince Eitel Friedrich of Prussia and hence he was well suited for the mission. His wife and children were held by the French as hostages for his good behavior.

The two set out through Switzerland and Italy on the dangerous task, the nature of which has not yet been disclosed. Suffice it to say that Mlle. Mistinguett returned alive. The rest of the story has not reached the stage where "now it can be told." All is shrouded in speculation. It is among the secret chapters of the war—one which, when it is revealed, will probably prove most thrilling.

To what lengths was the pretty dancer compelled to go to obtain the information her country needed? Just what were the wiles she had to practice in order to succeed so brilliantly, and what was the fearful price her womanhood had to pay? And who were the high German officers into whose hearts she won her way, only to trick them out of the secrets they guarded so jealously? Nothing can definitely be said. But

not for nothing is a citizen of France deemed worthy of the great distinction of the Legion of Honor. And Mlle. Mistinguett's admirers believe that, once having given her word, she stopped at nothing to gain her end. The serious emergency that had arisen was met through Mlle. Mistinguett's heroic self-sacrifice. In fact, rumor has it that had it not been for what she did the war might have ended in an overwhelming German victory.

The drafting of Mlle. Mistinguett into the spy service is said to have been a French counter move against Mata Hari and other dangerously clever spies who were supplying the Germans with the most valuable information. Shortly after this, Mata Hari's activities were ended before the smoking rifles of a French firing squad.

An astrologer would tell you that the stars of not a few men who were destined to prominence in France or already had attained it passed under an evil influence when the daughter of a Dutch planter and a Javanese woman was born in the tropic Isle of Java. The child was Mata Hari.

It was but a jest of fate that the girl should be taken to Burma to become one of the temple dancers and be pledged to the celibacy of their life. The career that was in store for her was strangely different.

She was only fourteen when she broke her vows, fled from the temple and became the wife of a British officer, and she was not many years older before she understood the power both of

giving life and taking it. A son born to her was poisoned by a servant. Calling the man to her, she made him kneel, put a pistol to his head and fired.

Mata Hari drifted away and became a dancer on the stage of Paris, whose fickle favor she gained by the sinuous grace of her temple dances, by the hypnotic glances of her black eyes and the seductive smile which played across her olive cheeks.

She came to know the capitals of Europe and the rich and influential men thereof. For a time she presided over the magnificent menage of a German diplomat, but tiring of him and the restraint he imposed, she fled to a Frenchman who had been a Minister of Finance. Him she left for his brother-in-law, and the latter for a wealthy Parisian banker.

At the beginning of the war, she was with the German diplomat again, and in this way she is believed to have entered the Kaiser's spy service. Suspected, she was followed to a town in England where the tanks were secretly being constructed to be sprung as an overwhelming surprise. Using the potent weapon of her charm—just as Mlle. Mistinguett is thought to have later done—she fascinated a young British officer. It was not long before the secret plans of the tanks were in the possession of the Germans.

Mata Hari was caught and tried by a court martial. She was convicted and

sentenced to face a firing squad. The reputations of not a few prominent men were dragged through the mire of scandal by the disclosures she made at her trial.

One gray dawn, the former temple dancer rose to attire herself in her finest gown. Accompanied by weeping nuns, she rode out through Vincennes Wood.

Refusing to have her lovely eyes blindfolded, she coolly faced the vengeance of the nation whose ruin she had been plotting. The rifles spoke as one and she fell. An under-officer stepping forward with a pistol sent still another bullet into her heart.

It was the fate of a captured woman spy. When they are not caught—as in Mlle. Mistinguett's case—they receive their country's medals of honor.

