



## ***THE SPIRIT OF FRANCE***

*By S. B. H. Hurst*

She danced for Mohammedans, and she was white; and when Mergui boiled over with religious fanaticism—white she remained!

“**M**ERGUI is a dirty and most immoral town.” Father Murphy, the stout, kindly missionary paused dramatically. “But hitherto we have been spared this—a white girl dancing for Mohammedans and Chinamen! You must do something, Bailey!”

The youthful English magistrate, who, with ten Sikh policemen and one white clerk, was administrator of the affairs of the little town and the district adjoining it on the Tenasserim strip of the coast of Burma, looked through the window of his office at the mud of low tide in the harbor. A puff of wind brought the reek of it. He sniffed, then answered testily:

“You know as well as I do, Padre, that I can do nothing. Until the girl commits a crime I cannot have her arrested. English law does not infringe on the rights of people to live where they wish. If she wants to live among the colored population, that’s her business. Let her dance! I have received no complaints about her. If you are worried about her morals, well—that’s in your department, not mine!”

The priest sighed.

“Yes,” he answered. “But the girl won’t listen to me. She politely avoids discussion. Admits being a Catholic, too! Orphan. Daughter of some Frenchman who died up Indo-China way. I don’t know how she drifted down here.”

“Well, I can’t help you, Murphy. I detest having a white woman of her occupation in the town—liable to

stir up any sort of trouble. But you can find ‘em all over Burma. We must bear our burdens, Padre. Good morning!”

The priest left the magistrate’s office. The heat weighed heavily upon his huge figure. He felt, both physically and spiritually, depressed. This pretty child—for she was little more—who politely refused to worry about her soul’s welfare! Father Murphy clenched his fists.

“If I have to use force,” he said firmly, “I’ll do it! I will break the law if need be—the law that protects vice from the assaults of decency! I will break through that ring of Mohammedan and Chinese brutes who leer at her dancing. I may have to hit a few ugly faces, for which Bailey could have me arrested; but I will—for the good of that young woman’s soul. It’s my duty, and by the living God I’ll do it! I’m Irish, and before I got so fat I could use my hands for other things than blessing people!”

He was spared this necessity. His walk had brought him to the tiny church he himself had designed and helped to build. In its quiet he would compose himself. He took off his large solar hat and wiped his streaming forehead. Then he dropped the hat in joyful astonishment. For the girl he had thought apostate was kneeling there, praying!

“Oh, Father, I thank Thee!” he murmured.

The girl looked up and saw him. She was vaguely disturbed. The priest, that massive man of intuitions, felt

that she had timed her visit to the church to correspond with his absence. No doubt there were other visits.

"Daughter," he said, "I do not understand this!"

She smiled, mischievously.

"My Father, there is, ah, so veree mouch that ees hard to ounderstand!"

His voice became hard.

"I do not understand why you have refused to talk with me. I do not understand why you have come here when you knew I was away. And . . . I have known other women like you. But the others did not avoid the priest. Instead, they sought absolution!"

She shrugged her shoulders. The flash of her smile was of pearls. Her eyes were violet lakes in which dwelt mystery and delight.

"Perhaps they needed it!" she answered.

For a moment the priest was so angry at her pert reply that he could not answer her. She went on. But she no longer smiled, and the lids covered her provocative eyes.

"But I, what am so small, joost come 'ere because, maybe, God ees 'ere! Onnyways, if He is anywhere in Mergui, He will be 'ere! And you know, Father, that there is times when every woman feel lonelee for God. So I do not come when you are here. Becos' I do not want to talk about my sins. Eet would take too much time. And the time I come 'ere is the time I 'ave give to God!"

Her eyes met his defiantly.

Murphy mastered his anger.

"Do you realize that God sees you when you are not in His church—when you are dancing and—and living with those horrible heathen men?"

She raised her small head proudly.

"I do not 'live' with any man!" Her eyes blazed, her little hands clenched. "For what you 'ave said, but that you are a priest, I would strike you! I live with no man! I 'ave never lived with any man! And I have never even kissed any man but my father—what is died!"

The flash left her eyes. Her head drooped. She sank down upon the wooden bench and sobbed.

Father Murphy was deeply distressed. He could not believe her, but . . .

"My child! My poor child!" He laid a hand gently upon her shoulder. "But you must realize how your dancing for such creatures seems!"

"To dance is all I know," she sobbed. "I 'ave tried to dance for the white men, but they do not want me. They want women who will kees after dancing—who will kees and love for money. I must live! Mohamet Ali and his nasty bearded men 'ave never tried to kees me. Mohamet looks cruel, but he treats me square! And the Chinamen are afraid of him. The men for whom I dance know that if they try to kees me they will 'ave a long knife in their ribs. Mohamet is 'eathen, you say. Yes. But I would razzer dance for heem than for white men

who do not want dancing as mouch as they want something else!"

"Some other way of making a living may be found," began the baffled priest.

She interrupted fiercely. "To scrub floors, eh! I 'ave a right to live my own life. I love to dance!"

"I know you are French, of course, and you said you were an orphan; but you have not told me your name," the priest conciliated.

She answered with proud mischievousness:

"When I was leetle girl, my father called me 'Leetle Spirit of France,' because eet is the spirit of France to dance and sing—and to fight! So now I call my name, 'Spirit of France!' But you will say I am conceit—is it not?"

And she laughed and bowed and went out into the glaring morning.

Murphy sighed. A bit of human thistledown!

THE Mergui day dragged its festering way through the hours. Night came over the place with the stars peering dubiously through a velvet pall, with the bats and huge moths winging like evil souls visiting friends still incarnate, with phallic music throbbing feverishly. Sikh policemen stalked here and there, daintily contemptuous of the filth of it all.

In a small, low-lit courtyard danced the Spirit of France. Avid eyes glowed at her beauty, wondering how long Mohamet Ali would continue to bestow upon her his quite unusual protection. There were no Burmese there; only Mohammedan traders, adventurers from Northern India, with their co-religionists of Mergui.

The music throbbed and the girl whirled to it, abandoned to a sheer ecstasy of physical rhythm, borne upon the swell of the poetry of herself.

But this night the mood of her audience was different. Its sensuous absorption of her was sporadic. Piqued, she danced the more enticingly. The shadows of the place were gathered and twisted and festooned about her, but her audience was far from paying her its customary attention. Mohamet Ali and his nearest friends paid no attention at all. In vain she danced closer to him. If he looked at her at all it was an abstracted look that did not see her. Matters of great moment seemingly engaged him. He talked in undertones to his friends. They smoked and drank their coffee, but the sensuality of their faces was sublimated to a fierce interest in the affair of their conversation.

The Spirit of France danced on, puzzled, irritated, vastly curious. About what thing were they talking? Their hairy faces were grouped together. They had even laid aside their pipes. . . . The Spirit of France changed the rhythm of her dancing. She moved like a leaf before vagrant puffs of wind . . . slowly. Pausing, and bending, and moving again. In sleepy cadence she danced before Mohamet Ali and his lieutenants. . . .

Fragments of words came to her straining ears. But she could not linger there. Burning with curiosity, she dared not wait for more. She whirled into allegro again, and the music caught her mood and ran with her.

But again and again she floated like a lazy leaf before Mohamet Ali, and the fragments of their words wove themselves into a baffling tapestry—a picture blurred, and without outline, yet vividly colored with significance. Significance of what?

They were laughing now, those bearded men from the North. Grimacing, rather, much as tigers grimace. The Spirit of France shivered. But she fought the fear in her gallant heart and killed it before it could grow to terror. And she danced on.

But what were they planning? It did not seem to concern herself; they had hardly glanced at her for an hour. The Mohammedans of lesser parts had been beckoned into conference. The girl felt a premonition of death touch her soul heavily. Neither was it a new thing they planned. She felt intuitively that these fierce men were discussing something done before that was to be done again. Their minds were running in old, well-loved grooves.

Mohamet Ali was looking at her! The Spirit of France danced the more merrily. He beckoned her towards him.

“Little sparrow,” he said, “dance no more this night. Go and sleep.”

“And I will dance for you tomorrow night?”

The heavy lids of the man flickered. The eyes of his companions became blank—a blankness that seemed overdone.

“Yes, you will dance for me again,” said Mohamet gravely, “because you are under my protection. Sleep now. I will send for you when I want you. Here is your money.”

SHE was dismissed. And she was racked with a problem. There had been something terrible about those men. Never before had they been like that. But Mohamet had not been lying—he really meant she should dance for him again. But what were they planning? Pirates, robbers, fierce men of the North. What did they plan? The few words she had gleaned made darkness—darkness fraught with something terrible. It was three hours past midnight.

As she began to undress she heard footsteps along the narrow street. There were two men. One spoke to the other as they passed her window. His voice was like the hiss of a snake.

“Let them cry for help! We have cut their talking wire!”

“And the girl?” muttered the other.

“Nay, Mohamet Ali says that he himself will slay the man that so much as touches a hair of her head!”

They passed on. But the Spirit of France knew! Crouched on her bed, shivering, hardly breathing, she knew.

The disconnected words. The cruel grimaces. Religious fanaticism, like burning oil, was to be poured upon the Christians. Four white men and ten loyal Sikhs in Mergui—and the telegraph wire to Rangoon had been cut!

But she would not be harmed. She had no doubts about that. Her safety was assured. Mohamet would rather die than break his word. And the man who touched her would surely die. Mohamet and his men had treated her decently. To do so was a queer freak in their cruel natures. But they had done so, and would continue to do so. And the white people—had reviled her. They had tried to make a prostitute of her. And the fat priest—

She writhed on her bed at the memory of it—at the memory of all her treatment at the hands of the Christians. She fought the problem. If she stayed in her room she was safe. If she warned the unsuspecting white men her doom was certain. It would be better, far better to kill herself than to fall into Mohamet’s clutches again. If she warned the white men! . . . And what would the white men do for her if she did warn them? Continue to revile her, to offer cheap pay for her lovely body? She smothered a bitter laugh. For there would be no white men left to revile her, and she would be worse than dead. What chance had four Englishmen, with their ten fighting Sikhs, against five hundred Mohammedans, every one believing that Paradise waited the man who died fighting against an unbeliever?

She walked up and down the floor. This was agony. It was horrible to think of those men being killed! But she was safe! And if she warned the Christians her fate would be more horrible than theirs! But—she might die!

The Spirit of France. Her little pet name of childhood. And the brave things her father had told her about the spirit of France—about the gallantry of that distant homeland she had never seen! The history of a nation seemed to be watching her. . . .

How would France face such a problem? . . . How would the glorious national spirit of France respond to such a situation? . . .

She was walking stealthily to the door, cursing herself. Valuable time was wasted while she dwelt upon her own safety.

“I am a disgrace,” she muttered.

She crouched in the dark doorway. More men were coming along the street. She held her breath, her soul damning these men for detaining her from her duty. They passed, and her light feet were flying as they had never flown before. Like a leaf still, but now like a leaf before a hurricane, the Spirit of France was running through the streets of Mergui.

A SCANDALIZED Father Murphy woke to her tearing away his mosquito curtains, to her fierce shaking of his arm.

“What! What are you doing here? Go away. George!”

He called for his servant—converted, and baptized with that familiar name.

The Spirit of France sneered. But she continued to pull fiercely at the furious priest.

“Your servant!” she laughed shrilly. “He weel ‘ave run away—with all your other made-Christians!”

She pulled at the priest, swearing like a cat. And, somehow, she told her story.

“But such a thing cannot happen in Burma anymore!” the priest exclaimed.

“Come! Come and see, foolish man!” she stormed. “They ‘ave cut the telegram!”

“Go away while I put on some clothes!”

“There is not time!”

“Wait outside! I will not run through the streets in pajamas to save my life!”

She waited, feverishly biting her fingernails. Then, the hour before the dawn saw a heavily panting Father Murphy doing his utmost to run with the Spirit of France through the streets of Mergui towards the fairly stout jail and the magistrate’s office.

“Hurree! Hurree!”

“The doctor!” panted the priest. “We must wake Doctor Pelham!”

They roused the doctor, a calm and cynical person.

“I’m safe,” he drawled. “I’m an infidel, and these chaps, you say, are out to kill the Christians!”

“Don’t jest at this terrible moment,” said Murphy severely.

“Not jestin’. How many times have you called me an infidel, Murphy? But I’m accustomed to being woke up at ghastly hours to go on unpleasant business. I’ll go with you.”

“Hurree!” cried the girl. “I ‘ear ‘em!”

“So do I,” replied the doctor. “But there is time to get my bag. Somebody will need surgical aid—most of us, probably.”

They reached the jail. In the yard were all the Sikhs. They had just wakened the magistrate, reporting “some sort of disturbance.” The Spirit of France shrilled out the truth. The magistrate was skeptical. He could not know that this was the beginning of the riots of 1897.

“Telegraph Rangoon immediately,” the magistrate told his white assistant.

The Spirit of France laughed wildly. Then she sat down weakly.

“Wire’s down, sir!” reported the operator.

“Now you know I tell truth,” the Spirit of France cried indignantly. “They are going to keel every Christian in Mergui. I ‘ear them when I dance, but am

not sure till they pass my window after cutting the telegram wire.”

“So,” said the young magistrate cheerfully. “Then we’ll have to fight it out alone. Have to anyway, because it would be days before Rangoon could get help to us. But I would like to let the boss know who did this thing.” He turned to the Spirit of France, and bowed. “I—I’m much obliged to you for what you have done. And now you had better go.”

“Go!” She jumped to her feet. “M’sieu, many times ‘ave I fired a gun. I fight joust so well as onybody!”

“Don’t doubt it,” responded the magistrate. “It isn’t that. The point is that if you leave us now Mohamet Ali will not hurt you. He will just regard you as a frightened woman—liable to do anything. Run along, now. Cry, and say the noise has terrified you! Don’t suppose Mohamet knows you roused Father Murphy and the doctor; so, goodbye—and thank you!”

He held out his hand.

“I stay ‘ere and fight for you!” she answered firmly.

“Do you realize,” he said gently, “that there is little chance of any of us seeing the sunset—that we’ll do well to last until noon? Do you know that if you stay here and help us Mohamet will give orders to his men to take you alive? Do you realize what horrible things will be done to you then?”

She laughed.

“Do you realize that my father was a Frenchman? He call me for pet name ‘Little Spirit of France!’ Do you realize Spirit of France—what eet mean? Give me a gun, please!”

The magistrate beckoned to Sergeant Ruttan Singh.

“Give the mem sahib a gun, Sergeant.”

Then he turned to the Spirit of France. His voice shook somewhat. Trying to honor her, he spoke in such awful French that she was hard put to it not to laugh. But his words more than excused his accent.

He turned to the still heavily breathing priest.

“Padre, have you any scruples about pulling the trigger when the sight’s on another human being?”

“Not a one—in this case!” responded Father Murphy cheerfully and with perfect conviction.

“Good! We will divide. You will take three Sikhs and defend the northwest corner.”

“I was Irish before I was a priest. Give me a rifle!” answered Murphy.

“They are coming!” whispered the Spirit of France.

“We will be ready,” replied the magistrate quietly. “Take the southeast corner, will you, Doctor? It’s liable to be hot there while it lasts, but you’re a first-class shot.”

“Very good, General,” drawled the doctor. “But won’t my friends laugh when they hear of this! Old Pelham, the infidel, killed in a religious war!”

The magistrate grinned.

"All right, then. I will command at the northeast, and Mason and Ruttan Singh shall have the southwest corner. Now we are ready. Good thing we have lots of ammunition. Here they come! Steady now! Don't waste a shot! If they get over the wall, shoot; and keep on shooting as long as any of 'em are in the yard! And if a head shows let it have it!" He walked across the room and whispered to the doctor, "If I go first, Pelham, and you see that we're done in, and the girl is still alive—keep a bullet for her."

The doctor nodded.

"And I'll tell Ruttan Singh to tell his men to do the same," the magistrate added.

AS it grew light the raging hundreds beyond the circling wall began firing their first broadside—of verbal filth, that hymn of hate which has sounded down the years, that way of honoring God peculiar to religious enthusiasts. Some scattered shots were fired which did no damage, and Mohamet Ali could be heard shouting to his followers.

"We have days of time, oh men of the True God! Haste not! Let the infidels shudder a while as death stares them in the eye. Let them die slowly!"

A mocking voice answered him.

"That hellcat pet of thine was seen warning the fat mullah of the infidels, oh Mohamet Ali!"

"So, the woman, eh! A snake in my bosom!" Mohamet foamed down his beard, but realizing the probable effect on his followers, controlled himself "So it was written, then, that she should furnish amusement for the Faithful! See that she is not killed! Catch the cat alive and unhurt. She asked me if she should dance for me again! She shall! But it will be such a dance as she has never dreamed of!"

He followed with unprintable threats. He gesticulated and raved about the fun to follow the killing of the white men. But he showed a little too much of himself. The doctor took a snap shot at him, and Mohamet Ali lost the greater part of one of his ears.

"Damn rotten miss," muttered that sarcastic medico. "Must have lost my temper at hearing such an awful creature call me an infidel. Can't shoot straight when my trigger hand itches to punch a chap's nose."

"Magistrate Sahib." Ruttan Singh saluted. "It is sunrise and the flag has not been hoisted. Will the sahib give the order?"

"Rutah Singh, you know it is certain death to venture out of here into the yard?"

The big Sikh grinned.

"Death is at our elbows, sahib!"

"Yes, and there's something about the old rag that makes it more enjoyable to fight when it's flying; but we can't afford to lose a man. Sorry, Ruttan Singh, but we must fight this fight with the flag lying on the table yonder."

"Very good, sahib," replied Ruttan Singh regretfully, saluting and returning to his post.

The sun rose, and the besieging horde became suddenly quiet. It turned as one man towards Mecca, and said its morning prayer.

"Can't we rush 'em?" muttered the priest to the magistrate.

"No! It's tempting, but we've got to hold the fort! Never can tell what may turn up, you know; but if we rushed out on those praying people we'd all be killed in short order!"

"Religion is a fearful and wonderful thing!" remarked the doctor.

"I wish they'd hurry," whispered Mason.

"So do we all," answered the doctor. "But let's not show it."

The praying ended.

"Ready, everybody!" shouted the magistrate.

Forgetting, of course, Mohamet Ali's cautious suggestion that they let the Christians die slowly, and stimulated to paradisiacal ardor by their prayers, the followers of the prophet leaped shrieking at the wall, and went over it like a brown wave.

THEN for some minutes there was very warm work.

Rapid firing did not stem the wave. It broke it, but those unhit dashed with a truly terrible bravery at the bars of the jail windows. Shrieks, groans and monstrous blasphemies made a frightful din as they charged. The defenders were for the most part grimly silent. Only the doctor muttered encouragingly.

"A little lower, young lady. These birds are flying low."

But the Spirit of France never heard him. Her mind was set on the fearful hairy faces against whom her soul raged, while a mockery of memory wondered why she had danced for them. She fought joyously. In her blood a long line of heroes surged. As she dashed the sweat from her eyes she saw with surprise that the yard was filled with dead men.

Such a stout defense was too much, even for such fanatics. The canny Mohamet saw that he was not getting value for his dead. He called his men.

"Lot of wounded out there," remarked the doctor casually. "But I have two minor casualties to attend to in here. Ruttan Singh has a bullet in his shoulder, although he won't admit it; and one of his men is hit. Ah! Hullo, General; close shave that!"

A bullet had grazed the magistrate's forehead, and he was bleeding freely.

"You attend to the men! Give me ze plaster for ees head!"

And the Spirit of France began deftly to bind the magistrate's wound.

"It may be inhuman," said the young man, "but those chaps out there will have to attend to their own

wounded, Doctor. Do you think I should let them carry them off under a flag of truce?"

The doctor gave him a searching look. The magistrate's wound had shaken him badly.

"Take a big drink and don't be an ass," advised the doctor. "Good work, young lady. Now, before the charming enemy tries another charge, please help me bandage this fine sergeant of Sikhs."

But Mohamet Ali had thought of a better and more entertaining plan of campaign than charging across that death-strewn yard. And the one redeeming feature of a Mergui morning, the brief breeze from the sea, would aid the new plan. Mohamet disclosed his new and brilliant plan to his lieutenants behind the wall. It was hailed with shrieks of approbation, delighted yells. It gratified the lust for cruelty of a mob maddened by primitive emotion. Hence there was a pause in the conflict.

"What now?" said the doctor. "Are the brutes saying their prayers again?"

"Not at this hour!" answered the priest.

"Well, I don't pretend to be an authority," retorted the doctor. "But I wish we could see over the jail wall! They are up to some devilry! And they could bring up a dozen batteries along the side of the hill while we couldn't see them doing it!"

"There is no artillery they can get," said the distressed magistrate.

"That's right—there isn't," soothed the doctor.

The wait was nerve-racking—the wait and the impossibility of seeing what the enemy was doing. But the doctor had more than his suspicions. The yells of delight could mean only one thing. Yes, that would be it. A whiff of sea breeze confirmed his deduction.

"But I won't tell the others," he muttered grimly. "Bad enough when it comes, without having 'em suffer the dread of waiting for it."

The enemy had become silent. Then there was some chuckling borne on the breeze. It was followed by a great yell. The breeze became pungent.

"They are trying to smoke us out!" shouted the priest gamely.

"Yes," drawled the doctor. "Better tie wet towels over our faces!"

He turned away. He was very pale now. Should he tell his friends? What a mercy they didn't realize. But a short-lived mercy. Better let them know—they were brave men. He beckoned the priest and the magistrate.

"May as well tell you," he whispered. "They are rounding up cases of oil from the Chinese stores. They will pour the oil over the wall, and the fires will do the rest! The delay is caused by the Chinks. They don't want to supply oil for which they know they won't be paid—and they don't want to be mixed up in their affair. The Mohamet Ali gang can run up country, having no

property here to leave when our people get here—but the Chinks have stores they don't want to lose!"

He whispered this very gently:

"Hadn't we better shoot the girl and then rush out on them and end it?" said the magistrate now, with full hold on himself, as calm as the doctor.

"But . . . who will . . . shoot her?" whispered the priest. No one answered.

"Oh, hell, let's stick it out!" said the doctor. "The oil isn't here yet!"

**T**HE wounded Ruttan Singh reeled to the magistrate. He saluted stiffly.

"Sahib, there is a steamer coming into the harbor!"

"Thank you, Sergeant!" the magistrate answered. "Don't tell anyone! It's probably one of those native owned coast boats, Mohammedan crew. There is one due here today. And while they perhaps would not help the enemy, they certainly won't help us. They couldn't, anyhow. When they see the row, they will run out of the harbor without discharging the cargo!"

The smoke became worse. The defenders peered through it as best they could, guns ready, but the Mohammedans kept their heads behind the wall.

Coughing, the doctor turned to the window.

"Hullo!" he muttered. "That isn't a native coast boat. Damn the smoke—I can't see!"

He wiped his eyes carefully, and looked again. The breeze blew more strongly. The doctor clenched his fists.

"No," he said, and his voice sounded far away to him, and like an excited girl's. "No." His voice rose so that all heard him. "No! It's a small cruiser—flying the American flag!"

The magistrate gasped. He clapped his hands excitedly.

"Of course!" he shouted. "I forgot. The *Florida*, going to Rangoon for the governor's big tomashe! I had word she would call here. But—she's two days ahead of time! Hurrah! We're saved!"

"No chance," snapped the doctor. "Look! The oil!"

"But the Americans will help us!" the magistrate screamed.

"How's her captain to know we need help? Until it's too late? He'll find our ashes when he comes ashore! They are starting the oil! The captain will see the fire and hear the fuss, but how will he know what's going on? Unless he knows what's happening— It isn't his business to land on British territory to put out fires!"

"Oh, God," groaned the priest, "is there no way we can let that American captain know we need help?"

"Of course there is!"

**I**T was the Spirit of France who shouted. It was the Spirit of France who seized the flag lying on the table and dashed for the jail door. Understanding, the men

tried to stop her—to do the work themselves. But she eluded them.

She dashed out into the yard—a Joan of Arc, undaunted among the flames and smoke. Mohamet Ali saw her.

“Don’t shoot!” he screamed to his men. “Does she come to me for mercy? Don’t shoot her—my mercy waits!”

The girl turned and dashed for the flagpole. Swiftly ran the Spirit of France. Her nimble fingers were at the flag halyards. The smoke beat about her. The red flame of the oil creeping across the yard struck at her like tongues of snakes. But—a long moment—and she was hoisting the flag! *Half mast and Union down—a signal of distress everywhere!* And Mohamet understood. Of the volley that broke around the girl he fired the first shot.

She was hit. She was hit again. But she managed to stagger into the doctor’s arms, and he lifted her into the jail.

“Tear it down! Down with that signal!” screamed Mohamet Ali.

But his men could not obey! The flaming oil made a barrier of safety for the flag which even their fanaticism could not pass. And the flag stiffened in the morning breeze, and sent its message seaward.

The yelling besiegers redoubled their efforts. They were shooting the Chinese who wouldn’t give them oil. Was there time? Surely, the American captain would understand! But was there time? If Mohamet Ali could get more oil quickly—

A shell from the American cruiser shrieked over the jail. A messenger!

A messenger of comfort and hope to tell the defenders their signal had been seen—for of course a bombardment of the enemy would have been dangerous to the defenders of the jail.

“American bugles coming up the hill!”

“The girl?” asked the magistrate. “Is she dead?”

“No,” said the doctor gruffly. “No. Badly wounded, but we’ll pull her through!”

The Spirit of France opened her eyes.

“You won’t die,” said the doctor gently.

She smiled.

“The Spirit of France will never die!” she answered.