



MATA HARI'S *Tragic* FATE is Shared by Her **LAST LOVER**

THE flame-lit path along which the light feet of Mata Hari danced their dance of death during the World War has led one more victim to the firing squad—and closed the books, probably forever, on the strange and terrible story of love and bloodshed which the enigmatic dancer began so many years ago.

Mata Hari was killed by a French firing squad on a rifle range at Vincennes in 1917, convicted of having trafficked with the enemy.

Nineteen years later, in the garden of a monastery near the town of Penaflor, in Spain, a monk named Pedro de Mortisac also faced a firing squad. When the echoes of its ragged volley died away, and his body slumped down to the trampled turf, the last lover of Mata Hari had gone to join the shadows in the train of the woman who had remade his life.

Pedro de Mortisac was a man of mystery—so much so that several spellings of his name are extant. He had been a monk for nearly 20 years. The Spanish firing squad that killed him could not have known that it was writing "finis" to one of the most grim and romantic of all the World War's legends.

He was executed simply as an uncommonly determined and heroic fighter for the rebel cause.

Spanish government troops had advanced upon the town of Penaflor and had sought to occupy the monastery of Aula Dei. Word was sent that the monastery must be abandoned. The order was obeyed—by all except de Mortisac. He stayed, with a machine gun for company.

His ammunition at last gave out. The soldiers came sweeping forward and took possession of the monastery. De Mortisac, the lone defender, was overpowered. A few moments later an impromptu firing squad killed him.

THAT was the end of Pedro de Mortisac, of course, and very likely he welcomed it. But it was not the end of his story, for his story is the other half of Mata Hari's story.

De Mortisac had been a monk ever since the World War. For years he had been known simply as "Brother B." The villagers at Penaflor knew snatches of his story. They knew, too, that he never smiled, that he had no visitors, that he had once repulsed, without a word, an extremely wealthy woman who had come to the little town to see him. They had called him "El Misterioso," the mysterious.

He was originally a man of riches and high social position. He had been well educated, he spoke several languages, he owned a great town house in Paris, a country place near London, a chalet at San Sebastian. He lived from all accounts, a gay and carefree life that was devoted almost entirely to the pursuit of pleasure.

And then Mata Hari came across his path, and everything was changed. The tempo of his life was speeded up. For a few months all was furious activity, tense and nervous, brought to an abrupt stop at last by the firing squad.

Mata Hari brought that sort of change into a number of lives. She was, and still is, a queer and mysterious figure—a woman who, making men her victims, was herself the victim of forces which could not be swayed by a lovely face or an alluring body.

She was born in Leeuwarden, Holland, in 1876, and was baptized with the unromantic name of Margaret Gertrude Zelle. At 14 she was admitted to a convent. At 18, spending a vacation in The Hague, she met and married an officer in the Dutch colonial army, one Capt. Campbell MacLeod—a roving soldier of fortune whom the years had turned into an accomplished libertine.



Mata Hari, the dancer who bewitched Frenchmen into disclosing their country's secrets. . . . At upper left, Pedro de Mortisac, her lover, as he looked when he was "Brother B" in a Spanish monastery.

THE next few years are obscure. Captain MacLeod dabbled in blackmail occasionally and found his wife willing to help him. He disappeared from her life, eventually, and by 1903 or thereabouts she bobbed up in Paris, alone, to see what sort of fortune a good-looking young woman who had said goodbye to all her scruples could find for herself in the capital of France.

She found a good one. She adopted the name of Mata Hari, and invented for herself a luridly romantic past in which an Indian birth and a career as

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dancer in the temples of Siva figured very largely. She called herself "The Red Dancer," and—following a routine which seems to have been remarkably like that of a 1936 strip-tease dancer in an American burlesque house—became the sensation of Europe.

She danced in all the European capitals, especially in Berlin; and in Berlin the groundwork for her World War career was laid. She seems to have begun by acting as an agent for the German secret service, which found that it could occasionally get interesting information from and about foreign military attaches in Berlin with the help of a good-looking woman. This work led her deeper and deeper into the game of espionage.

She reappeared in Paris, after the war began. She gave a number of performances of her dance in the theaters; but she was by now, frankly an expensive courtesan, and her chief rendezvous was a house of assignation in the Rue Braye, a favorite resort for men of wealth and position.

There she met and ensnared many men. Some of them were high French government officials; many more were army officers. From them, first and last, Mata Hari extracted a good many military secrets—all of which she transmitted promptly to Germany.

Eventually the French counter-espionage service caught up with her. She was arrested, tried by court-martial, found guilty of being a spy and sentenced to die by a firing squad.

De Mortisac, it is said, was present at her execution. She wore no bandage over her eyes, and it is said that just before the volley was fired she smiled gaily and kissed her hand to him. He wept, as did so many of the other men present.

After the execution, de Mortisac disappeared. Apparently he closed his houses, put his affairs in order, and went at once to Spain to enter a monastery.

