CHAPTER XI

THE CASE OF A SPY—MATA HARI

THE drama which we are about to relate will arouse conflicting emotions in all who study it—the natural desire for the punishment of a spy, and the sadness inspired by the ignominious death of a woman who had known how to create with her supple and voluptuous beauty a splendid and artistic vision. Added to which is the uncertainty that mystery brings in its wake—mystery whose veils shrouded this affair and will, perhaps, never be torn asunder.

This tragedy was staged in Paris in 1917, the year that was for France the darkest of the five years of warfare; when no one knew, from moment to moment, if the moral strength of the nation and its armies would not give way before the enemy.

Arrested on the 13th February and condemned to death on the 25th July, Mata Hari was shot on the 15th October as guilty of having " abroad and in France, communicated information to the agents of the enemy power with the object of helping the said enemy in their objectives."

But before going further, I must clear up a point. It might be asked, why, having restricted the plan of this story to crime, in the limited sense of attempts on human life and against public property, I now examine the case of a spy. I have been led to it by a reason which seems to me very strong. In a declaration which I have before me and to which I shall refer again later, Commandant Chatin, one of the judges who condemned Mata Hari, expressed himself in this manner: "What makes me certain of her guilt are the proofs that have passed through my hands and the very confessions of this shameless spy who has caused the death, perhaps, of 50,000 of our men, without counting those who perished at sea through her information."

When the actions of a spy are seen in their true light as leading to such consequences, do they not constitute, not only a crime against the nation, but also collective assassination? I think this cannot be disputed. It is no less certain that among all these spies against whom the states at war had to defend themselves from 1914 to 1918, Mata Hari, who was able to insinuate herself very closely into staff and government secrets, presents the most characteristic personality, one that was most strangely cosmopolitan.

After her artistic début in Paris in 1905, the fashionable papers revealed that Mata Hari had been born in the south of India at Jaffnapatam on the Malabar coast, of a Brahmin family. Her mother, a dancer in the Temple at Kandaswamy, died in giving

her birth, when she was only fourteen years old. The priests who adopted the orphan gave her the name of Mata Hari, which means "Child of the Dawn." From her earliest days, she was shut up in a great underground world in the temple of the God Siva, so that later she might be initiated into the rites of the sacred dance. The high priestess, who regarded her as one predestined, had devoted her to Siva, and had taught her the mysteries of love and faith one spring night in the Sakty-Pudja.

On her first appearance in France as a dancer, which took place on the 24th December 1912, it is recorded in the police dossier before me that M. Paul Olivier, in a preliminary speech of introduction, said: "I scarcely need to present Mme Mata Hari to you. Her name and her art are well known. You are aware that this Indian name hides the personality of a lady of lofty birth. Born on the banks of the Ganges, she shares her time between her ardent country and a small villa at Neuilly, where, though in the midst of commerce, she isolates herself in a Brahmin communion with animals and flowers. Six years ago she showed us at the Guimet Museum the dance of the Devadasis: the sacred art of expressing by harmonious gestures the far-off mysteries of vanished cults. It was a dancing entertainment of which the deep spiritualistic meaning could only be understood by a chosen few. Now she is going to show us an art of the most delicate charm, and at the same time something nearer to our understanding. The legend which she will present is called 'The Legend of the Princess and the Magic Flower.' It is one of the most popular and poetical dances of India."

These exotic origins agreed in the most harmonious manner with her type and beauty, and her sensual and mystic art. From a portrait signed by a celebrated painter which represents her at the apogee of her existence, a writer has described her thus: "Tall and slender, she carries on a marvellous neck, flexible and of the colour of amber, a fascinating face which is a perfect oval, and whose sibylline and tempting expression strikes all at first sight. The mouth, firmly outlined, traces a mobile line, disdainful, very alluring, under a nose, straight and fine, the nostrils of which quiver above two shadowy dimples.

"Her magnificent eyes, velvety and dark, are slightly slanting and set with long curving lashes—they are enigmatic, seeming to look into the beyond. Her black hair, divided in two bands, makes for her face a dark and wavy frame. The effect is voluptuous, tremorous, full of unexpected seductions, possessing a magic beauty and an astonishing purity of outline."

Another writer, Louis Damur, thus describes her as she appeared

in her dances: " . . . The little breasts only were covered with chiselled brass cupolas, held in place by thin chains. Glittering bracelets encrusted with precious stones were on her wrists, arms, and ankles. The rest of her was bare, fastidiously bare, from the nails of her fingers to her toes.

" Dominated by the ornamented bust, the plastic and firm stomach showed a sexless suppleness in symmetric curves which from the arm-pits under the raised arms traced themselves to the haunches. The raised legs were ideal, like two fine columns of a pagoda. The knee-caps, amber coloured, seemed plated with gold-leaf that had rosy reflections. . . . I can never forget her dancing. With serpentine movements, Mata Hari turned smiling the while toward the sleeping god (part of the *mise en scène* in which she invariably danced), and prostrated herself three times. Then turning again slowly, she took from her left wrist in the same rhythmic fashion, the large metal bracelet she wore. We could see then in place of this copper bangle, a thin natural bracelet, tattooed in blue on the pale gold skin, which represented a snake swallowing its tail."

The aphrodisiac charm of her dances made her at once one of the Queens of Paris. This first exposition at the Guimet Museum was a triumph, soon followed by others more surprising, whose echoes are to be found in the memories of those present and in the newspaper reports of that day.

" On a stage, covered with flowers, carefully lighted, five Hindu musicians played on strange instruments, a music that was enervating and spasmodic; and the invited guests, ravished, in ecstasy, could not stop their applause at the voluptuous attitudes and lascivious gestures, the feverish quiverings, the almost epileptic contortions of the dancer, whose suppleness was such that at first she seemed like a serpent, until she leapt up from the ground, full of life, and changed into an exquisite woman. . . ."

Mata Hari became the most sought-after attraction for night parties. She was invited to dance at the clubs and in the most aristocratic drawing-rooms—at the Chilian Embassy, at Count Barraccini's house, at Prince Del Drago's, at the mansions of the Duchesse d'Eckmüll. Then she made her début at a music-hall, danced at the Olympia, at the Casino de Paris, and at the Folies-Bergère, to crowded houses. Mme Colette who often looked on at these dances has given us a description: " I have watched her from her first appearance in Paris, when she danced at Emma Calvé's between the columns of a temple, slender and bare as herself. She scarcely seemed to dance, but disrobed herself progressively, twirling a tall and dusky body, slim and proud.

" A little later she appeared at a Hindu fête in a garden, bare under a great June sun, riding a big white horse, richly caparisoned, with saddlery encrusted with real turquoises. Her skin, amber by night, seemed mauve by daylight, but patchy—from artificial dyeing. Paris swallowed her, and raved about her chaste nudity, retelling anecdotes that Mata Hari had uttered about her hot Asiatic past. She was invited everywhere, men fought to pay her way. She would arrive almost naked, dance vaguely with eyes cast down, and then disappear wrapped in sombre draperies. . . ."

And now, let us see the truth as revealed by the cold and authentic police records of this remarkable creature.

The truth is that the dancer of Siva's Temple was simply a Dutch girl, mother of a family. Mata Hari, the " Child of the Dawn," was really and prosaically Marguerite Gertrude Zelle, born on the 7th August 1876 at Leeuwarden in Frisia. Daughter of a rich business man—Adam Zelle, and Madame Antge Van der Meulen, his wife—at the age of fourteen she lost her mother, and four years later, on coming out of a convent school, where her father had sent her to finish her education, she had married a Dutch army officer, who was over forty.

This Captain Rudolf MacLeod, of noble origin, nephew of an Admiral, well known at the Court of the Hague, was none the less inclined to drink, and was a gambler. The birth of two children did not check him.

After some years of wretched married life the poor Marguerite, worn-out, ruined, ill, abandoned for another woman, found herself one day in 1902 in the streets with her little girl (the elder child, a boy, had died—poisoned by a servant) and two and a half florins as her fortune. She went to her father, and then, with his advice and help, trained herself as a theatrical dancer.

Helped by her strange Oriental beauty, so different from the European, the exoticism of which could not be explained from her origins, she built up a new personality.

Her art, her alluring hieratic dances, were invented by herself. They were all the creations of imagination, mostly intuitive and designed to seduce. She had had the chance of seeing, once or twice, dancers from Java, during a short stay in the Dutch Indies, at Banjoe-Biroe, where her husband was stationed for some time. She knew nothing of the technicalities of dancing. We have decisive evidence of this, that of Antoine, who says : " In the year before the War, I observed her closely. Through the mistake of an impresario, whom I had approached to obtain for me Antar, a Hindu dancer formerly well known at Marigny, I was directed

towards Mata Hari. I was not looking for her at all; but she seemed so royally beautiful to Pierné and to me, that we willingly engaged her. She worked for us for some time, and I have rarely had so little trouble with any artiste. From the first we saw with stupefaction that Mata Hari did not know how to dance. However, we had no time to replace her, we had to go to Monte Carlo to supplement a *première danseuse*. . . . On our return, she was supplemented by Mademoiselle Napierkowska."

This is how she looked on the eve of the drama in which she was to pose as the "heroine." Thus was she heralded by a fascinated press.

"Flower of the extreme Orient, sown by the wind by some unknown mysterious caprice of destiny under the gold and gloomy sky of Frisia, in one of those little strict towns where fancy is treated as a sin, where charm is held to be wrong, and to lead to damnation; where only the copper pots and pans have the right to shine when the pale sunlight falls on them—and then opened out—after what painful vicissitudes!—in the hot-house that was Paris before the War."

But it was not only at Paris and Monte Carlo that Mata Hari—like the dancer of Pompeii—had danced and pleased. She found her way to drawing-rooms and halls in Russia, America, and Germany—in Germany most of all—and everywhere her successes increased in number and quality. It was a triumphal march for Marguerite Gertrude Zelle, who had transformed herself into an Indian dancer and also a courtesan of the first rank. Convinced herself that within her lived a dancer of the ancient Hindu temples, where were celebrated the sixty-four rites of Luxury, she gave herself up to her loves with the same zeal as she had for her dances. She studied love philtres, amulets, incantations, all the magic rites of love—knew them from top to bottom, and practised them.

Even without such study, she was a natural expert in the art of pleasing men, of seducing and holding them, of attaching them to her, of lighting in them a fire of desire that was never quenched. At the same time she was greedy for money, and ambitious.

She was capable both of interesting men by her wit and drugging them with her beauty; she succeeded in gathering round her the most extraordinary international court of adorers. Leading lights of industry, wealthy bankers, noblemen with the most illustrious names in aristocratic Europe. In France a famous member of the bar, a War Minister; in Holland, a Cabinet Minister. Besides these, a Grand Duke, and a world-known

artist, the Prefect of Police at Berlin, and the Crown Prince of Germany, who took her to the manœuvres in Silesia. At one time during her career, letters sent by her from Paris to her friends in Madrid and Amsterdam, were written on paper bearing the address of the Minister for Foreign Affairs! On the other hand, when she entered the Saint-Lazare Prison, my great friend Doctor Bizard, head physician to the Prefecture of Police, remembered, to his great surprise, having met her in a "maison de rendezvous" in the Etoile quarter, where he had gone in the course of duty.

Through being fanciful and disobeying the orders of the "directress," and through sometimes demanding exorbitant prices and at others seeming not to care what happened—notwithstanding who the client might be, whether civil or military—she was able to make other friends, and extend her sphere of influence.

The false temple-dancer, the false nautch-girl, the great cosmopolitan courtesan—all these rôles masked the international spy, paid by the enemy to worm out military, political, and diplomatic secrets—the last between France and her allies.

When Mata Hari, who had passed the first year of the War abroad, came back to France and Paris in 1915, she adopted a different rôle, dropping the masquerade of Oriental dancer for that of a wealthy woman of fashion. The French Secret Service received a few days previous to her return to Paris a report which said: "While examining the passenger list of a Japanese vessel at Naples we have recognized the name of a theatrical celebrity from Marseilles named Mata Hari, the famous Hindu dancer, who purports to reveal secret Hindu dances which demand nudity. She has, however, renounced her claim to Indian birth and become Berlinoise. She speaks German with a slight Eastern accent." This from the Italian Secret Service. As may be imagined on her arrival in France and the French capital, it was not long before the Secret Service were watching her every movement, knowing as it did that she was a spy.

She was also under suspicion at detective head-quarters as a possible criminal of another nature and her papers at the Prefecture of Police, where she had wrongly described herself as born in Belgium, were endorsed: "To be watched." Thus she was always shadowed, with at first rather disappointing results. Suddenly she managed to evade her shadowers and disappeared from Paris altogether until late in 1916. This time her arrival was noted by the counter-spying service of Great Britain who asked that she should be subjected to the strictest surveillance.

Once more the reports of the detective inspectors, ordered to shadow her, brought nothing to light that was decisive against her—nothing but friendly and "gallant" connections with officers on leave.

Two months later she asked for a pass to Vittel, where there was a Russian officer, a friend of hers, seriously wounded, and under treatment. As a matter of fact, there were important army officers installed there whose head-quarters took up most of the town. There was an aviation camp; the head-quarters of several bombing squadrons. Did she seek for information here? The pass she asked for was given at once in the hope of catching her in the act. A too strict watch might put her on her guard. But again she defeated us and got back to Paris without a shadow of evidence against her. She had nursed the wounded man with great devotion and tenderness. Other officers had thronged about her, taking her out, but that was all.

Then it was decided to push matters. Captain Ladoux, Head of the Department that dealt with spying at the French War Office, sent for her and told her point-blank, that being under suspicion with all the allies, she would be returned to Holland.

Mata Hari protested, stating that she had no connection with Germany and all she wished for was to devote herself to France. She even proposed to go to the German Head-quarters at Stenay, where acquaintances, she said, would put her in contact with the Crown Prince.

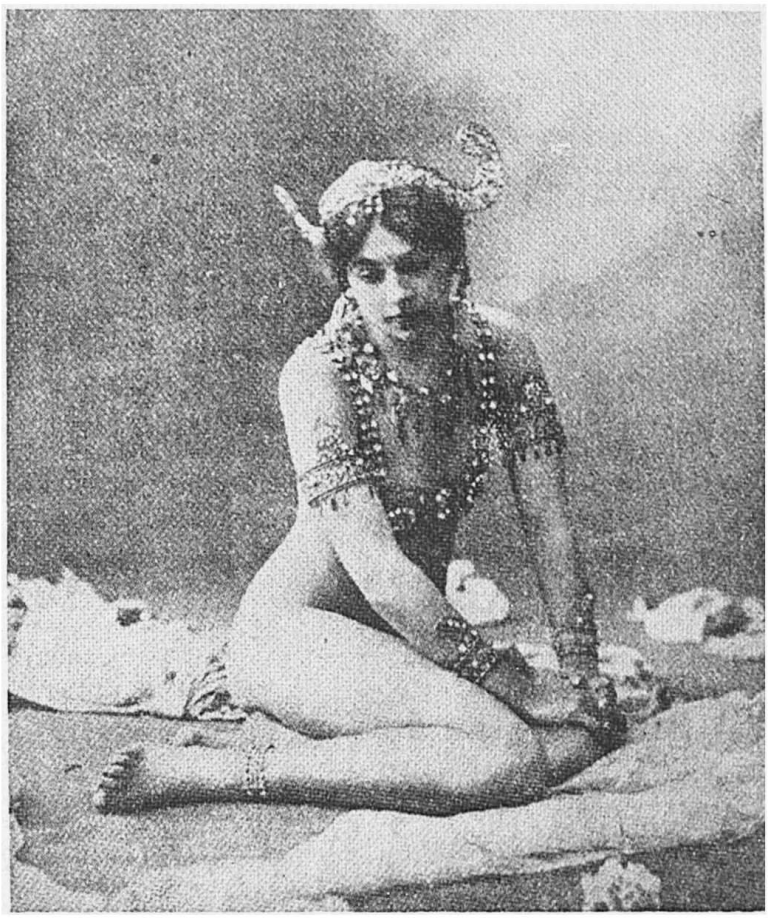
This statement was, later on, to be a terrible charge against her, and broke down her system of defence. Overwhelmed with questions about this and the sources of her income, she cried:

"I am a courtesan—Yes! I confess it: but never a spy!" But the President of the court-martial went on:

"And yet you offered your services to the Head of the French Intelligence Department."

The prosecution represented this offer as an avowal of her trade as a spy, and that she had sought, brazenly, to escape all "surveillance" by becoming a French agent.

The French Department for counter-spying pretended to accept the proposals of Mata Hari. It was arranged that she should go first into invaded Belgium, to carry letters to our secret agents there. She did not do this, but some months later, according to the records of the French Secret Service, we learnt that: "Out of six agents, five were traitors—in German pay: but were known by us to be so, and to them only false information was sent. They were on the pay roll of Germany, and we knew it well, and they got no truth from us. The sixth was straight:



MATA HARI

but he, after Mata Hari got to know him, was arrested and shot by the Germans."

It was then arranged that the dancer should go to Holland by way of Spain, as the cypher for telegrams between Madrid and Berlin was known to us, and the counter-spying department hoped that she would use it and so give us proofs of her treason. Was the trap once more given away?

Mata Hari did not telegraph, and a few days later embarked at Bilbao for Holland. But steps had been taken to ensure that she should not get there. An English cruiser whose duty it was to examine neutral boats, forced her ship to turn about. Landed at Vigo, Mata Hari went to Madrid, where she put up at the Palace Hotel.

This fashionable place was, during the War, one of the most curious centres in the world. Every kind of politics was discussed there: secret diplomatic agents swarmed there: intrigues crossed and counter-crossed so that a close police surveillance was often confounded. Mata Hari was everywhere, frequenting the quarters of the German Military Attaché, Major Kalle, dining out at all the clubs, making the acquaintance of naval officers of every nationality. On account of this the prosecution thought itself justified in believing her responsible for the torpedoing of several ships that were chartered as transports to carry allied troops to Morocco. But decisive proof was still lacking.

At last one morning came a wireless message, which was intercepted, from the German Head-quarters asking the German Embassy at Madrid to tell H.21 to go back to France, where a cheque for 15,000 pesetas, payable at the "Comptoir d'Escompte," would be handed over to her as soon as she arrived at the Chancellerie of a neutral country that acted as intermediary.

A few days later Mata Hari arrived in Paris, and went to the Hotel Plaza-Athenée in the Avenue Montaigne. Next day she was arrested, and taken to the prison of Saint-Lazare. She had not had time to cash her cheque and only a few louis were found on her.

. . . . . .

I heard from the lips of M. Priolet himself, a Commissioner whose duty it was to survey all suspects, how the arrest of Mata Hari was effected. He went in the early morning of the 13th February 1917, with his secretary and two police inspectors, to her hotel at 103 Avenue de Champs Elysées. He found her sitting up in bed eating her *petit déjeuner*. She received the

magistrate very politely, but showed astonishment that she had not been warned of the visit overnight. Though not in good health she would have made herself ready to receive him.

Excusing himself, the Police Commissioner replied that he was not in the habit of warning people under such circumstances, and he began his search in the adjoining dressing-room.

Mata Hari was invited to get up and dress privately. She did not attempt to obstruct the search in the slightest degree and when she was leaving the room, she offered Commissioner Priolet, as a souvenir, a cap with blue and red ribbons as well as two bunches of wild violets.

Mata Hari never lost her usual assurance for a moment; she spoke of her future plans as she was driven from the hotel to the Palais de Justice, proposing to remain in France, and to get settled. She had chosen a flat in the Avenue Henri Martin, which she hoped soon to be able to rent.

In the ante-room of Captain Bouchardon the Commissioner told her that she was under arrest.

Mata Hari preserved her calm, and said she was ready to furnish the magistrate with any particulars he might want.

A few minutes later she was undergoing her first cross-examination.

. . . . . .

Here now is Mata Hari—a prisoner and described at the top of her dossier as "Marguerite Gertrude Zelle, 41 years of age, knowing how to read and write." She was locked up in the old prison of the Faubourg Saint-Denis, which dates from 1683 and was the last residence of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul.

She was first put into the "padded cell." It is one that is only used for unusual cases, perhaps for a prisoner whom the authorities fear might in despair knock out his brains against the wall. The walls were entirely padded, there was no window, and only a feeble light entered from a barred opening high up, outside of which and out of reach was a weak gas-jet. A peep-hole in the door allowed a watch to be kept night and day upon her and the cell lacked all articles that might be used for suicide. A mattress was the only furniture.

But the dancer said at once that she had no fear of conviction. She seemed rather haughty and out of her element. She evidently had no idea of the nature of an old prison in an old country. From Doctor Bizard, who was her first visitor, and who expected to see a woman overwhelmed with grief, she only asked for a bath and the use of a telephone.

Seeing her so calm, she was then put into an ordinary cell, paved with bricks, with two beds, walls whitewashed above and painted with tar below. The beds were of wood, with a straw mattress and a brown blanket—and she passed the day alone, but the night with a woman who worked and slept in the prison. Thus she lived for six months until the 20th July, when she was removed to the conciergerie to be near the hall reserved for court-martials in the Palais de Justice.

Sisters of Mercy—Sister Léonide, Sister Claudia (whose duty it was to watch over her night and day), and Sister Auréa (who brought in her meals)—speak of her as a model prisoner, who fell very quickly in line with the regulations, of an affable nature, eating well, and only complaining now and then of lack of exercise.

How was her famous beauty appreciated in this austere setting, where nothing remained of the atmosphere in which she had so cleverly invested herself? The prisoner who acted as nurse under Doctor Bizard, exclaimed the first day she saw her: "What a great Mare! She has a restless air! A woman fatal to men, and not to be trusted." A telling summing-up, which seems to prove that a woman, above all a woman of the people, has not the same kindness towards feminine beauty that man has!

Doctor Bizard himself, who analysed her feature by feature with the pitiless precision of a surgeon, is severe enough. He wrote: "The features of Mata Hari, especially when looked at full face, gave no impression of beauty. She was of Asiatic type, with plenty of long hair, black and sleek. She had a low forehead, prominent cheek-bones, a big mouth with lascivious lips, large ears, and a large nose with wide nostrils. But her black eyes fringed with long lashes lit up in a singular manner her very mobile features, which were, all the same, without fineness and not at all feminine. Mata Hari, in profile, was much better looking. . . . A being without physical charm, something of a savage, it was certainly through hard work before her mirror and by strength of will that this woman had succeeded in cultivating beauty, by gracious expression and by putting her body into the most pleasing attitudes. This proud and wayward woman had determined to please and had succeeded."

On the other hand, the house-surgeon, Doctor Bralez, recalls the conversation he had with Mata Hari. "When people speak to me of their native countries," she said, "my spirit yearns towards a distant land, where a golden pagoda is reflected in a winding river. There is a secret about my origin, in my blood." Sadness seemed to fill her eyes as she talked.

But over this point also, reality becomes unexplainable. Neither the type, nor the character, nor her culture, nor her coloured skin, nor her mentality—nothing of her belongs to our latitudes. She had something of the primitive savage about her and at the same time something refined and sacerdotal.

Such was the living enigma, whom even scientific men failed to read, who was to be judged for her actions by the third court-martial appointed by the Military Government of Paris.

. . . . . .

On the 25th July, the case was heard behind closed doors. The sentries would allow no one to approach within ten paces. Besides the judges, a single officer, Major Massard, Chief of Staff in Paris, had been authorized to be present. That day, to avoid perhaps the divulging of certain statements and names, the evidential documents were all kept secret. The facts I now give are, as far as I know, revealed for the very first time. I can, however, vouch for their accuracy because they are taken from the official verbatim notes of "L'Affaire Mata Hari," which I have seen.

The President of the Court was a police officer, Colonel Semprou, who commanded the Garde Républicaine. Mata Hari's defender was an eminent lawyer, whom a friendship, ripened in the intimacy of the prison, united with the accused. His name was Maître Clunet. He was not chosen by her, but had been appointed by the President of the Corporation of Barristers, the Solicitor-General, Henri Robert. Lieutenant Mornet was there as Commissioner for the Government. (Note. In English the term is Judge-Advocate-General.)

The President opened with the charge. "On the day that war was declared, you had breakfast with the Prefect of Police at Berlin, and then drove with him through a shouting crowd."

"It is true," she replied. "I had met the Prefect in a music-hall where I danced. That is how we got to know each other."

"A little later the Prefect charged you with a confidential mission and gave you thirty thousand marks."

"That is true. He was the man, and gave me thirty thousand marks. But not for the reason you impute. He was my lover."

"We know that. But this amount seems rather large for a simple gift."

"Not to me."

"From Berlin you came to Paris, passing through Holland, Belgium, and England. What were you going to do in Paris?"

" My real reason was to keep a watch over the removal of my goods from my villa at Neuilly."

" Immediately after that you spent seven months close to the front ? "

" At Vittel, where I was a nurse, I devoted myself to looking after a Russian officer, Captain Marow, who was blinded. My wish was to rebuild my life by the bedside of the unhappy man I loved."

Here, Major Massard recognized that Mata Hari spoke the truth. Police reports recognized that she had nursed Captain Marow " with affection " and had stayed by him for a long time. As a matter of fact one of the last letters she wrote at Saint-Lazare before leaving for Vincennes for her execution was addressed to him.

However, at Vittel, as at other places, Mata Hari was always in the company of numerous officers. A search in her lodgings brought to light many letters, some from well-known Parisians, but the greater part from flying officers. The charge pressed this home. She replied :

" Men who were not in the army did not interest me at all. My husband was a captain. An officer in my eyes is a superior being, a man who is always ready for any adventure, for any danger. When I loved, it was always soldiers, and it did not matter what country they came from : because to me a fighter belongs to a special race above civilians."

Without seeming to show that this remark might be levelled at himself, Colonel Semprou continued coldly :

" The flying officers also came after you ; they flattered you and courted you. How did you manage to get from them for nothing the secrets they had ? It is certain that you told the enemy the places where our aeroplanes would put down our secret agents. Through this you have killed many men."

" I don't deny that I continued, whilst I was with the Red Cross, writing to the head of the German Secret Service, who was in Holland. It is not my fault that he had that appointment. But I wrote nothing about the War. He got no information from me."

Every relation she had had with soldiers she attributed to sympathy. As for the others, she had done what she had for money.

" Harlot, yes : but traitress, never ! "

She was next confronted with her offers to counter-spy for France. For a moment, taken aback, she answered that she had been in need of money to start a new life.

" And how would you have been useful to France ? "

" By using my connections for her ! I have already explained to the chief of the Second Bureau the exact points in Morocco where the German submarines have landed arms. It was interesting."

" Very interesting in fact," broke in the Government Commissioner, " but all these matters you have referred to could not have been known to you without your being in connection with Germany.

She hesitated, and told a tale which was rather confused about confidences she had received during a diplomatic dinner, broke off, and then cried out :

" After all, I am not French. I have no duty towards this people. My services were useful. That is all I have to say. I am only a poor woman whom you are trying to entrap into confessing faults she has not committed."

And then in a sharp voice, which was full of violence, she stretched out her arms towards Captain Mornet, and cried :

" *That man is bad.*"

The President passed on to the case of the agent in Belgium, for whom Mata Hari had received a letter, and who was later shot by the Germans. Mata Hari replied that she had no recollection of this letter.

Questioned finally about her last stay at Madrid, and about the 15,000 pesetas which she was to have drawn in Paris upon the order of the German Headquarters, she used anew the explanation she had already given, that she had been the mistress of the head of the German Intelligence Department at Madrid, and that this functionary had had his love-debts paid by his Government.

" But the remittance was sent to the order of H.21. That is a number on the list of German spies. That is what you were known as."

" That is not true. I . . . I am telling you that it was to pay . . . to pay for my nights of love. It is—it is my price. Believe me, gentlemen."

And so the questioning came to an end. After that a dozen witnesses were heard. The evidence of some was moving ; of others it was painful and gave rise to dramatic scenes. Captain Mornet addressed the Court in a vigorous speech. Then Maître Clunet replied at great length and very heatedly. The Court listened with respect, but his emotion was too intimate to be persuasive. Mata Hari realized this. Calming down, she asked to make a last statement.

" Please note that I am not French, and that I reserve the right to cultivate any relations that may please me. The War is not a sufficient reason to stop me from being a cosmopolitan. I am a neutral, but my sympathies are for France. If that does not satisfy you, do as you will."

After three-quarters of an hour of deliberation the verdict was given unanimously. Marguerite Gertrude Zelle was condemned to death.

During the reading of the judgment, as she stood between her guards, Mata Hari twice murmured : " It is not possible ! It is not possible ! " Then she asked for a revision, and with firm step, smiling, she went to the Clerk of the Court to sign her appeal.

Mata Hari was at once reincarcerated in her cell at Saint-Lazare, but arrangements were modified to those for persons condemned to death. Three beds side by side were there, and two prisoners chosen for their good characters were placed there as her companions during the day and to sleep beside her at night. The regulations demand also that a nun should always be present with a woman condemned to death. Sister Léonide was there by day and two others by night. She had better food, wine with all meals, and permission to read and smoke.

But Mata Hari did not smoke, and read little. Her chief reading seems to have been a kind of Buddhist gospel which Doctor Bralez had brought on her asking for it. It consisted of poetical meditations on the nothingness of life, psalms on the joyful renunciation of life, and the happiness of the Nirvana.

Buddhist by instinct, with an intimate sympathy through which she had interpreted her Hindu art, her birth had placed her in the midst of Protestantism. So she received frequent visits from M. Arboux, chaplain to the prison, but still more from the Abbé Doumergue, the old Catholic almoner, with whom she liked to talk.

Except for her lawyer, the nuns, chaplains, and doctors, she had no contact with the outside world and never sought any. She had an equable nature, which was rarely ruffled except when she spoke of " these French who made her suffer." Nor had she any illusion as to the rejection of her appeal and demand for pardon.

It has been said that she danced in her cell on the eve of her execution. It is true, and these are the words of Doctor Bizard, the police doctor, who watched her : " Sunday is a day of relaxation for those condemned to death ; it is a day they are sure to live from dawn to night : because no execution takes

place on a Sunday. On Sunday morning, the 14th October, I went to Saint-Lazare where I learned that Mata Hari's execution was fixed for the next day. I had an interview with Sister Léonide, and, as usual, we visited the cell of the spy. Our features, betraying no emotion, reassured her to the point of imagining she would be pardoned. After asking after her health, we exchanged commonplaces, and I turned the conversation on the subject of dancing. 'Show us,' said Sister Léonide, in encouraging tones, 'how you dance.' Mata Hari rose, smiling, loosened her dress a little, and began to dance——"

. . . . . .

At last it came to Monday, the 15th October. Four o'clock in the morning had just sounded when Sister Léonide opened the cell door. The Commandant Julien, seeing three women asleep, said: "Which?" "The middle one," replied the Sister. Mata Hari lay asleep between the two guards who, understanding, leapt from their beds weeping. The sister charged with rousing her was on her knees praying, her face just visible in the pale flicker of a night light.

The officer shook the sleeper, who sat up, leaning backward on her closed fists. In firm tones he said to her—

"Zelle—be brave. The President of the Republic has rejected your appeal. The moment has come for carrying out the sentence."

There fell a silence. Then, at first in a dead voice, but one which increased in strength, Mata Hari repeated several times, as she had done before the court-martial:

"It is not possible! It is not possible!

To Sister Léonide, who was leaning over her to encourage her, she said:

"Don't fear, Sister. I shall know how to die without weakness. You shall see a good end!"

Then she glanced round the group of officers and warders who filled the cell and said, pointing at the door:

"Allow me, gentlemen, to dress."

As the two doctors were about to go out with the others, she held them back.

"You can remain here. You have a right to assist at my toilet."

When she began to dress, she made a movement to take off her chemise. A sister stopped her.

"Let me be, Sister," she said. "This is not the moment to feel shame."

She asked for her warmest dress.

" It is cold. I slept so well. Another day I would not have forgiven them for waking me so early. Why do you have this custom of executing people at dawn ? In India it is otherwise. It takes place at noon. I would much sooner go to Vincennes about three o'clock after a good lunch. Give me my nice little slippers too. I always like to be well shod."

Talking all the while very calmly, she powdered her face : " Ah, I must speak to my Pastor."

Monsieur Arboux advanced, and they were left alone for a while.

A few minutes later and she asked the others to return. One might have said she was holding a reception. Clad in a tailor-made costume, she held herself proudly erect, and drew on her gloves calmly.

" Gentlemen, I am ready," she said at last.

An officer approached her and asked, according to law, whether she had any statement to make.

" None. And if I had, don't you think I would keep it to myself ? "

Article 27 of the Penal Code still exacts that a last question must be put. In a low voice, Doctor Socquet, a specialist doctor, asked her whether she had any reason to think herself with child, because in that case, her execution would be delayed until her deliverance. Then she laughed frankly. She pointed out the three beds and the praying-desk for the sisters.

" Oh !—Assuredly no. How could that happen ? "

She went down the passage and seemed to lead the cortège. The chief warder went to take her arm. But she shook herself free, and cried :

" Let me be. Don't touch me. I don't wish it. I am not a thief . . . what manners are these ? "

Penaud, the chief warder, fell back, and she took the arm of Sister Léonide.

" Little mother, don't leave me."

In the middle of the passage, she raised her arm and easily touched a gas-jet more than seven feet from the floor.

" I'll bet you couldn't do that, little mother ! You aren't big enough."

At the exit, a hundred people awaited her. She smiled :

" All these people ! What a success ! "

At the magistrate's office, she asked permission to write. With an ungloved hand that did not tremble, she wrote three

letters, addressed the envelopes, and gave them to the director, saying :

" Above all, don't smudge the addresses. That would be fatal ! "

Her imprisonment was over. " Marguerite Gertrude Zelle was handed over to the military authorities to be executed at Vincennes." She took her place in the carriage, with Sister Léonide and Father Arboux on either side of her and two policemen opposite. The execution had been fixed for 6.15 a.m. On arriving at Vincennes, dawn had scarcely broken. As the conveyance stopped at the end of the barrack square where troops were drawn up in three lines, a trumpet-call was heard. Mata Hari stepped out, gave her hand to Sister Léonide to help her down, and then embraced her. Both, surrounded by police, went slowly towards the fatal spot where she was to be tied.

Very erect, lightly holding up her skirts, and carefully avoiding pools of water, Mata Hari stepped out. Sister Léonide was heard praying aloud.

Once at the place where she was to die, Mata Hari separated herself abruptly from the Sister.

" Embrace me quickly, and let me be. Stand to the right of me. I shall be looking at you. Adieu ! "

Whilst an officer read out the sentence, a last formality, the dancer refused to have her eyes bandaged, and placed herself against the post whose cord was not even knotted about her waist.

The firing party, consisting of a dozen riflemen with four corporals and four sergeants, was about twelve paces away.

Mata Hari smiled again at the kneeling Sister Léonide and made a motion of good-bye.

The officer in command raised his sword, and the dancer fell.

. . . . . .

A waggon drove up from which two soldiers lifted a bier made of pinewood, on which they laid the stiffened corpse, which after the pretension of a burial would be handed over to the doctors.

No one claimed the body. Not one of those who had admired the Priestess of Siva, loved her, committed follies for her, took the trouble to supply her with a last resting-place !

. . . . . .

It is sometimes said that Legend is truer than History. I think, however, that is only because it is not forgotten so easily. Eleven years after the death of Mata Hari, it is possible to study

her life and tragic end—a simple episode in the immense drama of the War. But when her name crops up in conversation, it takes on the colours of one or other of two legends, which are entirely dissimilar and contradictory.

The widest known has a literary origin. It is that which gained for Mata Hari her popular surname of "The Scarlet Dancer" with which she was dubbed for her sins by the wit of Charles Henry Hirsch. In his book about her, the spy is first a precocious girl, then an unnerved criminal, and finally a woman condemned to death and so terrified that she had to be carried to the place of execution. "My mother in giving me her first kiss, whispered in my ear, 'Why, poor creature, sent by God, fruit of my body, did you come to share our ceaseless hunger? —Fear of the Secret Police drove me. In order not to be their victim, I became their servant—I have been a tool, an unhappy girl driven on by hunger and terror through a miserable servitude —a poor wretch, I am that, and nothing but that—I don't want to die—I don't want to be within four walls, and never able to speak to anyone, always in the dark—I still feel happy in finding myself living—my horror of death is terrible." Thus does he describe the final scene of the Mata Hari drama.

But all those who approached Mata Hari, and even those whose patriotism made them wish for her the last penalty, recognized in her a different spirit.

This second aspect deserved, if not all credit, at least attention. The point of view is that of a judicial error. It was born of the fact that until the end of the War, the "dossier" of the trial had been kept secret.

In an article published by *Le Petit Journal* on the 16th July 1925, two writers of talent, Messieurs Marcel Nadand and André Fage, defined in clear words the uneasiness that was troubling many minds. Recorders like Major Massard, in his remarkable book, *Spies in Paris*, have believed as certain, through the documents they have examined, the guilt of Mata Hari. To an impartial mind, the question is still an open one.

Since seven officers have adjudged Mata Hari guilty, we would like to incline ourselves without reserve to this military verdict. Unhappily, how many court-martial verdicts have been quashed. . . .

I cited, at the beginning of these pages, the energetic declaration of Major Chatin: "I found my conviction of her guilt in the proofs that I have had pass through my hands, and on her own avowals. In fact, it has been proved, and we know it, that she received money from an enemy country. But her venality

in affairs of passion was of world-wide notoriety. She never attempted to conceal it. How is one to discriminate between the payments made to the courtesan, and those made for spying ? As to the execution by the Germans of a French agent who worked in Belgium, and whose name was known to Mata Hari, how can we be sure that this luckless person was denounced by her ? Did she confess to anything but relations that she had a right to have and to preserve—as the subject of a neutral country —even in time of war ? Were her inscription on the list of German spies, and her intimate relations with the Police Commissioner at Berlin, and the Crown Prince any proof of guilt ? "

These points which have been raised could, without doubt, be wiped out and solved by the publication of the " dossier."

Captain Ladoux, Head of the Intelligence Department at the War Office ; Captain Bouchardon, Official Recorder to the third War Council at Paris ; Lieutenant Mornet, a Government Commissioner, M. Priolet, Commissioner of the entrenched Camp of Paris, have been in possession, as well as the judges, of every detail of this intriguing affair.

All these experienced officers have stated that " the penalty of Death was the only one for the crimes this woman had been guilty of."

For my part I shall simply sum up as follows :

That she had been a spy cannot be disputed.

Further she had been inscribed as a spy before the War, in the list of Germany's Secret Service agents under the number H.21.

Again, it was out of the question that the German General Staff, being in connection with the dancer, should not have profited by the position she had created in Paris to get her to spy in military and political circles.

Also, her position as a foreigner could not be held to excuse her ; because, whilst serving German interests during the War, she betrayed France which had given her hospitality.

Mata Hari was guilty.

But to what extent ?

It is a question that cannot be answered. Because we still do not know the nature of the documents and information she gave the enemy.

Let History pronounce its impartial verdict later and say the last word about this dramatic adventure.