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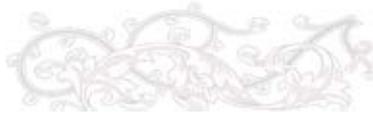


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## THE ADVENTURES OF GERARD - HOW THE BRIGADIER SLEW THE FOX

BY ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

In all the great hosts of France there was only one officer toward whom the English of Wellington's Army retained a deep, steady, and unchangeable hatred.

There were plunderers among the French, and men of violence, gamblers, duellists, and rouses. All these could be forgiven, for others of their kidney were to be found among the ranks of the English. But one officer of Massena's force had committed a crime which was unspeakable, unheard of, abominable; only to be alluded to with curses late in the evening, when a second bottle had loosened the tongues of men. The news of it was carried back to England, and country gentlemen who knew little of the details of the war grew crimson with passion when they heard of it, and yeomen of the shires raised freckled fists to Heaven and swore. And yet who should be the doer of this dreadful deed but our friend the Brigadier, Etienne Gerard, of the Hussars of Conflans, gay-riding, plume-tossing, debonair, the darling of the ladies and of the six brigades of light cavalry.

But the strange part of it is that this gallant gentleman did this hateful thing, and made himself the most unpopular man in the Peninsula, without ever knowing that he had done a crime for which there is hardly a name amid all the resources of our language. He died of old age, and never once in that imperturbable self-confidence which adorned or disfigured his character knew that so many thousand Englishmen would gladly have hanged him with their own hands. On the contrary, he numbered this adventure among those other exploits which he has given to the world, and many a time he chuckled and hugged himself as he narrated it to the eager circle who gathered round him in that humble cafe where, between his dinner and his dominoes, he would tell, amid tears and laughter, of that inconceivable Napoleonic past when France, like an angel of wrath, rose up, splendid and terrible, before a cowering continent. Let us listen to him as he tells the story in his own way and from his own point of view.

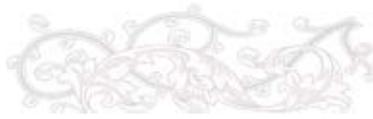
You must know, my friends, said he, that it was toward the end of the year eighteen hundred and ten that I and Massena and the others pushed Wellington backward until we had hoped to drive him and his army into the Tagus. But when we were still twenty-five miles from Lisbon we found that we were betrayed, for what had this Englishman done but build an enormous line of works and forts at a place called Torres Vedras, so that even we were unable to get through them! They lay across the whole Peninsula, and our army was so far from home that we did not dare to risk a reverse, and we had already learned at Busaco that it was no child's play to fight against these people. What could we do, then, but sit down in front of these lines and blockade them to the best of our power? There we remained for six months, amid such anxieties that Massena said afterward that he had not one hair which was not white upon his body.

For my own part, I did not worry much about our situation, but I looked after our horses, who were in much need of rest and green fodder. For the rest, we drank the wine of the country and passed the time as best we might. There was a lady at Santarem—but my lips are sealed. It is the part of a gallant man to say nothing, though he may indicate that he could say a great deal.

One day Massena sent for me, and I found him in his tent with a great plan pinned upon the table. He looked at me in silence with that single piercing eye of his, and I felt by his expression that the matter was serious. He was nervous and ill at ease, but my bearing seemed to reassure him. It is good to be in contact with brave men.

"Colonel Etienne Gerard," said he, "I have always heard that you are a very gallant and enterprising officer."

It was not for me to confirm such a report, and yet it would be folly to deny it, so I clinked my spurs together and saluted.



"You are also an excellent rider."

I admitted it.

"And the best swordsman in the six brigades of light cavalry."

Massena was famous for the accuracy of his information.

"Now," said he, "if you will look at this plan you will have no difficulty in understanding what it is that I wish you to do. These are the lines of Torres Vedras. You will perceive that they cover a vast space, and you will realise that the English can only hold a position here and there. Once through the lines you have twenty-five miles of open country which lie between them and Lisbon. It is very important to me to learn how Wellington's troops are distributed throughout that space, and it is my wish that you should go and ascertain."

His words turned me cold.

"Sir," said I, "it is impossible that a colonel of light cavalry should condescend to act as a spy."

He laughed and clapped me on the shoulder.

"You would not be a Hussar if you were not a hot-head," said he. "If you will listen you will understand that I have not asked you to act as a spy. What do you think of that horse?"

He had conducted me to the opening of his tent, and there was a chasseur who led up and down a most admirable creature. He was a dapple grey, not very tall, a little over fifteen hands perhaps, but with the short head and splendid arch of the neck which comes with the Arab blood. His shoulders and haunches were so muscular, and yet his legs so fine, that it thrilled me with joy just to gaze upon him. A fine horse or a beautiful woman—I cannot look at them unmoved, even now when seventy winters have chilled my blood. You can think how it was in the year '10.

"This," said Massena, "is Voltigeur, the swiftest horse in our army. What I desire is that you should start tonight, ride round the lines upon the flank, make your way across the enemy's rear, and return upon the other flank, bringing me news of his disposition. You will wear a uniform, and will, therefore, if captured, be safe from the death of a spy. It is probable that you will get through the lines unchallenged, for the posts are very scattered. Once through, in daylight you can outride anything which you meet, and if you keep off the roads you may escape entirely unnoticed. If you have not reported yourself by to-morrow night, I will understand that you are taken, and I will offer them Colonel Petrie in exchange."

Ah, how my heart swelled with pride and joy as I sprang into the saddle and galloped this grand horse up and down to show the Marshal the mastery which I had of him! He was magnificent—we were both magnificent, for Massena clapped his hands and cried out in his delight.

It was not I, but he, who said that a gallant beast deserves a gallant rider. Then, when for the third time, with my panache flying and my dolman streaming behind me, I thundered past him, I saw upon his hard old face that he had no longer any doubt that he had chosen the man for his purpose. I drew my sabre, raised the hilt to my lips in salute, and galloped on to my own quarters.

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## **OUT OF DOORS IN FEBRUARY**

**BY RICHARD JEFFERIES**

The cawing of the rooks in February shows that the time is coming when their nests will be re-occupied. They resort to the trees, and perch above the old nests to indicate their rights; for in the rookery possession is the law, and not nine-tenths of it only. In the slow dull cold of winter even these noisy birds are quiet, and as the vast flocks pass over, night and morning, to and from the woods in which they roost, there is scarcely a sound. Through the mist their black wings advance in silence, the jackdaws with them are chilled into unwonted quiet, and unless you chance to look up the crowd may go over unnoticed. But so soon as the waters begin to make a sound in February, running in the ditches and splashing over stones, the rooks commence the speeches and conversations which will continue till late into the following autumn.

The general idea is that they pair in February, but there are some reasons for thinking that the rooks, in fact, choose their males at the end of the preceding summer. They are then in large flocks, and if only casually glanced at appear mixed together without any order or arrangement. They move on the ground and fly in the air so close, one beside the other, that at the first glance or so you cannot distinguish them apart. Yet if you should be lingering along the by-ways of the fields as the acorns fall, and the leaves come rustling down in the warm sunny autumn afternoons, and keep an observant eye upon the rooks in the trees, or on the fresh-turned furrows, they will be seen to act in couples. On the ground couples alight near each other, on the trees they perch near each other, and in the air fly side by side. Like soldiers each has his comrade. Wedged in the ranks every man looks like his fellow, and there seems no tie between them but a common discipline. Intimate acquaintance with barrack or camp life would show that every one had his friend. There is also the mess, or companionship of half a dozen, or dozen, or more, and something like this exists part of the year in the armies of the rooks. After the nest time is over they flock together, and each family of three or four flies in concert. Later on they apparently choose their own particular friends, that is the young birds do so. All through the winter after, say October, these pairs keep together, though lost in the general mass to the passing spectator. If you alarm them while feeding on the ground in winter, supposing you have not got a gun, they merely rise up to the nearest tree, and it may then be observed that they do this in pairs. One perches on a branch and a second comes to him. When February arrives, and they resort to the nests to look after or seize on the property there, they are in fact already paired, though the almanacs put down St. Valentine's day as the date of courtship.

There is very often a warm interval in February, sometimes a few days earlier and sometimes later, but as a rule it happens that a week or so of mild sunny weather occurs about this time. Released from the grip of the frost, the streams trickle forth from the fields and pour into the ditches, so that while walking along the footpath there is a murmur all around coming from the rush of water. The murmur of the poets is indeed louder in February than in the more pleasant days of summer, for then the growth of aquatic grasses checks the flow and stills it, whilst in February every stone, or flint, or lump of chalk divides the current and causes a vibration. With this murmur of water, and mild time, the rooks caw incessantly, and the birds at large essay to utter their welcome of the sun. The wet furrows reflect the rays so that the dark earth gleams, and in the slight mist that stays farther away the light pauses and fills the vapour with radiance. Through this luminous mist the larks race after each other twittering, and as they turn aside, swerving in their swift flight, their white breasts appear for a moment. As while standing by a pool the fishes came into sight, emerging as they swim round from the shadow of the deeper water, so the larks dart over the low edge, and through the mist, and pass before you, and are gone again. All at once one checks his pursuit, forgets the immediate object, and rises, singing as he soars. The notes fall from the air over the dark wet earth, over the dank grass, and broken withered fern of the hedge, and listening to them it seems for a moment spring. There is sunshine in the song; the lark and the light are one. He gives us a few minutes of summer in February days. In May he rises before as yet the dawn is come, and the sunrise flows down to us under through his notes. On his breast, high above the earth, the first rays fall as the rim of the sun edges up at the eastward hill. The lark and the light are as one, and wherever he glides over the wet furrows the glint of the sun goes with him. Anon alighting he runs between the lines of the green corn. In hot summer, when the open hillside is burned with bright light, the larks are then singing and soaring. Stepping up the hill laboriously, suddenly a lark starts into the light and pours forth a rain of unwearied notes overhead.



With bright light, and sunshine, and sunrise, and blue skies the bird is so associated in the mind, that even to see him in the frosty days of winter, at least assures us that summer will certainly return.

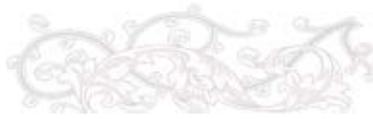
Ought not winter, in allegorical designs, the rather to be represented with such things that might suggest hope than such as convey a cold and grim despair? The withered leaf, the snowflake, the hedging bill that cuts and destroys, why these? Why not rather the dear larks for one? They fly in flocks, and amid the white expanse of snow (in the south) their pleasant twitter or call is heard as they sweep along seeking some grassy spot cleared by the wind. The lark, the bird of the light, is there in the bitter short days. Put the lark then for winter, a sign of hope, a certainty of summer. Put, too, the sheathed bud, for if you search the hedge you will find the buds there, on tree and bush, carefully wrapped around with the case which protects them as a cloak. Put, too, the sharp needles of the green corn; let the wind clear it of snow a little way, and show that under cold clod and colder snow the green thing pushes up, knowing that summer must come. Nothing despairs but man. Set the sharp curve of the white new moon in the sky: she is white in true frost, and yellow a little if it is devising change. Set the new moon as something that symbols an increase. Set the shepherd's crook in a corner as a token that the flocks are already enlarged in number. The shepherd is the symbolic man of the hardest winter time. His work is never more important than then. Those that only roam the fields when they are pleasant in May, see the lambs at play in the meadow, and naturally think of lambs and May flowers. But the lamb was born in the adversity of snow. Or you might set the morning star, for it burns and burns and glitters in the winter dawn, and throws forth beams like those of metal consumed in oxygen. There is nought that I know by comparison with which I might indicate the glory of the morning star, while yet the dark night hides in the hollows. The lamb is born in the fold. The morning star glitters in the sky. The bud is alive in its sheath; the green corn under the snow; the lark twitters as he passes. Now these to me are the allegory of winter.

These mild hours in February check the hold which winter has been gaining, and as it were, tear his claws out of the earth, their prey. If it has not been so bitter previously, when this Gulf stream or current of warmer air enters the expanse it may bring forth a butterfly and tenderly woo the first violet into flower. But this depends on its having been only moderately cold before, and also upon the stratum, whether it is backward clay, or forward gravel and sand. Spring dates are quite different according to the locality, and when violets may be found in one district, in another there is hardly a woodbine-leaf out. The border line may be traced, and is occasionally so narrow, one may cross over it almost at a step. It would sometimes seem as if even the nut-tree bushes bore larger and finer nuts on the warmer soil, and that they ripened quicker. Any curious in the first of things, whether it be a leaf, or flower, or a bird, should bear this in mind, and not be discouraged because he hears some one else has already discovered or heard something.

A little note taken now at this bare time of the kind of earth may lead to an understanding of the district. It is plain where the plough has turned it, where the rabbits have burrowed and thrown it out, where a tree has been felled by the gales, by the brook where the bank is worn away, or by the sediment at the shallow places. Before the grass and weeds, and corn and flowers have hidden it, the character of the soil is evident at these natural sections without the aid of a spade. Going slowly along the footpath—indeed you cannot go fast in moist February—it is a good time to select the places and map them out where herbs and flowers will most likely come first. All the autumn lies prone on the ground. Dead dark leaves, some washed to their woody frames, short grey stalks, some few decayed hulls of hedge fruit, and among these the mars or stocks of the plants that do not die away, but lie as it were on the surface waiting. Here the strong teasle will presently stand high; here the ground-ivy will dot the mound with bluish-purple. But it will be necessary to walk slowly to find the ground-ivy flowers under the cover of the briers.

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## THE BAZAAR IN MOROCCO

BY PIERRE LOTI

How can I describe the swarming crowds of the bazaar, the constant, noiseless stir of all those bournouses in the semi-darkness! The little labyrinthine avenues cross each other in every direction, covered with their ancient roofing of wood, or else with trellises of cane, over which grape-vines are trained. Fronting on these passages are the shops, something like holes in a wall as regards size, and in them the turbaned dealers sit squatted, stately and impassible, among their rare knick-knacks. Shops where the same kind of goods are sold are grouped in quarters by themselves. There is the street of the dealers in clothing, where the booths are bright with pink, blue, and orange silks, and with brocades of gold and silver, and where ladies, veiled and draped like phantoms, are posted. There is the street of the leather merchants, where thousands of sets of harness of every conceivable color, for horses, mules, and asses, are hanging from the walls; there are all sorts of objects of strange and ancient fashion for use in the chase or in war: powder-horns inlaid with gold and silver, embroidered belts for sword and musket, travelling bags for caravans and amulets to charm away the dangers of the desert. Then there is the street of the workers in brass, where from morning till night is heard the sound of hammers at work on the arabesques of vases and plates; the street of the papooch embroiderers, where all the little dens are filled with velvet, pearls and gold; the street of the furniture decorators; that of the naked, grimy blacksmiths; that of the dyers, with purple or indigo-bedaubed arms, Finally, the quarter of the armorers, who make long flint-lock muskets, thin as cane-stalks, the silver inlaid butt of which is made excessively large so as to receive the shoulder. The Moroccans never have the slightest idea of changing the form adopted by their ancestors, and the shape of their musket is as immutable as all things else are in this country; it seems like a dream to see them at this day making such quantities of these old-fashioned arms.

A stifled hum of unceasing activity arises from the mass of people, clad in their gray woolen robes, thus congregated from afar to buy and sell all sorts of queer small objects. There are sorcerers performing their incantations; bands of armed men dancing the war-dance, with firing of guns, to the sound of the tambourines and the wailing pipes; beggars exposing their sores; negro slaves wheeling their loads; asses rolling in the dust. The ground, of the same grayish shade as the multitude upon it, is covered with all kinds of filth: animal refuse, chicken feathers, dead mice; and the crowd tread down the revolting mass under their trailing slippers.

How far removed is all this life from ours! The activity of this people is as foreign to us as its stagnation and its slumberousness. An indifference which I cannot explain, a disregard of everything, to us quite unknown, characterized these burnous-clad folk even in their greatest stir and bustle. The cowed heads of the men and the veiled heads of the women are occupied by one unchanging dream, even in the midst of their bargaining; five times a day they offer up their prayer, and their thoughts turn, to the exclusion of all besides, upon eternity and death. You will see squalid beggars with the eyes of an inspired man; ragged fellows who have noble attitudes and faces of prophets.

People of all the different tribes meet and mingle promiscuously among themselves. Negroes from the Soudan and light-colored Arabs: Mussulmans without conviction of the faith, whose women veil only their mouths; and the green-turbaned Derkaouas, merciless fanatics, who turn their heads and spit upon the ground at the sight of a Christian. Every day the "Holy woman," with wild eyes and vermilion-painted cheeks, is to be seen prophesying in some public place. And the "Holy man," too, who is incessantly walking like the wandering Jew, always in a hurry and all the while mumbling his prayers.

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