

# STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

"For mercy's sake, spare me," he yelled. "My house has been gutted by the French and harried by the English, and my feet have been burned by the brigands. I swear by the Virgin that I have neither money nor food in my inn, and good Father Abbot, who is starving upon my doorstep will be witness to it."

"Indeed, sir," said the Capuchin, in excellent French, "what this worthy man says is very true. He is one of the many victims to these cruel wars, although his loss is but a feather-weight compared to mine. Let him go," he added, in English, to the trooper, "he is too weak to fly, even if he desired to."

In the light of the lantern I saw that this monk was a magnificent man, dark and bearded, with the eyes of a hawk, and so all that his cowl came up to Ratanian's ears. He wore the look of one who had been through much suffering, but he carried himself like a king, and we could form some opinion of his learning when we each heard him talk our own language as fluently as if he were born to it.

"You have nothing to fear," said I, to the trembling innkeeper. "As to you, father, you are, if I am not mistaken, the very man who can give us the information which we require."

"All that I have is at your service, my son. But," he added, with a wan smile, "my Lenten fare is always somewhat meagre, and this year it has been such that I must ask you for a crust of bread if I am to have the strength to answer your questions."

We bore two days' rations in our haversacks, so that he could have the little he asked for. It was dreadful to see the wolfish way in which he seized the piece of dried goat's flesh which I was able to offer him.

"Time presses, and we must come to the point," said I. "We want your advice as to the weak points of yonder Abbey, and concerning the habits of the rascals who inhabit it."

He cried out something which I took to be Latin, with his hands clasped and his eyes upturned. "The prayer of the just availeth much," said he, "and yet I had not dared to hope that mine would have been so speedily answered. In me you see the unfortunate Abbot of Almeixal, who has been cast out by this rabble of three armies with their heretical leader. Oh! to think of what I have lost!" his voice broke, and the tears hung upon his lashes.

"Cheer up, sir," said the Bart. "I'll lay nine to four that we have you back again by to-morrow night."

"It is not of my own welfare that I think," said he, "nor even that of my poor, scattered flock. But it is of the holy relics which are left in the sacrilegious hands of these robbers."

"It's even better whether they would ever bother their heads about them," said the Bart. "But show us the way inside the gates, and we'll soon clean the place out for you."

In a few short words the good Abbot gave us the very points that we wished to know. But all that he said only made our task more formidable. The walls of the Abbey were forty feet high. The lower windows were barricaded, and the whole building loopholed for musketry fire. The gang preserved military discipline, and their sentries were too numerous for us to hope to take them by surprise. It was more than evident that a battalion of grenadiers and a couple of breaching pieces were what was needed. I raised my eyebrows, and the Bart. began to whistle.

"We must have a shot at it, come what may," said he.

The men had already dismounted, and, having watered their horses, were eating their suppers. For my own part I went into the sitting-room of the inn with the Abbot and the Bart., that we might talk about our plans.

I had a little cognac in my saviour, and I divided it amongst us—just enough to wet our mouths. "It is unlikely," said I, "that those rascals know anything about our coming. I have seen no signs of scouts along the road. My own plan is that we should conceal ourselves in some neighbouring wood, and then, when they open their gates, charge down upon them and take them by surprise."

The Bart. was of opinion that this was the best that we could do, but, when we came to talk it over, the Abbot made us see that there were difficulties in the way.

"Save on the side of the town there is no place within a mile of the Abbey where you could shelter man or horse," said he. "As to the townsfolk, they are not to be trusted. I fear, my son, that your excellent plan would have little chance of success in the face of the vigilant guard which these men keep."

"I see no other way," answered I. "Hussars of Conflans are not so plentiful that I can afford to run half a squadron of them against a forty foot wall with five hundred infantry behind it."

"I am a man of peace," said the Abbot, "and yet I may, perhaps, give a word of council. I know these villains and their ways. Who should do so better, seeing that I have stayed for a month in this lonely spot, looking down in weariness of heart at the Abbey which was my own? I will tell you now what I should myself do if I were in your place."

"Pray tell us, father," we cried, both together.

"You must know that bodies of deserters, both French and English, are continually coming in to them, carrying their weapons with them. Now, what is there to prevent you and your men from pretending to be such a body, and so making your way into the Abbey?"

I was amazed at the simplicity of the thing, and I embraced the good Abbot. The Bart. however, had some objections to offer.

"That is all very well," said he, "but if these fellows are as sharp as you say, it is not very likely that they are going to let a

hundred armed strangers into their crib. From all I have heard of Mr. Morgan, or Marshal Millefleur, or whatever the rascal's name is, I give him credit for more sense than that."

"Well, then," I cried, "let us send fifty in, and let them at daybreak throw open the gates to the other fifty, who will be waiting outside."

We discussed the question at great length with much foresight and discretion. If it had been Massena and Wellington instead of two young officers of light cavalry, we could not have weighed it all with more judgment. At last we agreed, the Bart. and I, that one of us should indeed go with fifty men under pretence of being deserters, and that in the early morning he should gain command of the gate and admit the others. The Abbot, it is true, was still of opinion, that it was dangerous to divide our force, but finding that we were both of the same mind, he shrugged his shoulders and gave in.

"There is only one thing that I would ask," said he. "If you lay hands upon this Marshal Millefleur—this dog of a brigand—what will you do with him?"

"Hang him," I answered.

"It is too easy a death," cried the Capuchin, with a vindictive glow in his dark eyes. "Had I my way with him—but, oh, what thoughts are these for a servant of God to harbour!" He clasped his hands to his forehead like one who is half demented by his troubles, and rushed out of the room.

There was an important point which we had still to settle, and that was whether the French or the English party should have the honour of entering the Abbey first. My faith, it was asking a great deal of Etienne Gerard that he should give place to any man at such a time! But the poor Bart. pleaded so hard, urging the few poor skirmishes which he had seen against my four-and-seventy engagements, that at last I consented that he should go. We had just clasped hands over the matter when just broke out such a shouting and cursing and yelling from the front of the inn, that out we rushed with our drawn sabres in our hands, convinced that the brigands were upon us.

You may imagine our feelings when, by the light of the lantern which hung from the porch, we saw a score of our hussars and dragoons all mixed in one wild heap, red coats and blue helmets and busbies, pelting each other to their hearts' content. We flung ourselves upon them, imploring, threatening, tugging at a lace collar, or at a spurred heel, until, at last, we had dragged them all apart. There they stood, flushed and bleeding, glaring at each other and all panting together like a line on troop horses after a ten-mile chase. It was only with our drawn swords that we could keep them from each other's throats. The poor Capuchin stood in the porch in his long brown habit, wringing his hands and calling upon all the saints for mercy.

He was indeed, as I found upon inquiry, the innocent cause of all the turmoil, not understanding how soldiers look upon such things, he had made some remark to the English sergeant that it was a pity that his squadron was not as good as the French. The words were not out of his mouth before a dragoon knocked down the nearest hussar, and then in a moment, they all flew at each other like tigers. We would trust them no more after that, but the Bart. moved his men to the front of the inn, and I mine to the back, the English all scowling and silent, and our fellows shaking their fists and chattering, each after the fashion of their own people.

Well, as our plans were made, we thought it best to carry them out at once, lest some fresh cause of quarrel should break out between our followers. The Bart. and his men rode off, therefore, he having first torn the lace from his sleeves, and the gorget and sash from his uniform, so that he might pass as a simple trooper. He explained to his men what it was that was expected of them, and though they did not raise a cry or wave their weapons as mine might have done, there was an expression upon their stolid and clean-shaven faces which filled me with confidence. Their tunics were left unbuttoned, their scabbards and helmets stained with dirt, and their harness badly fastened, so that they might look the part of deserters, without order or discipline. At 6 o'clock next morning they were to gain command of the main gate of the Abbey, while at that same hour my hussars were to gallop up to it from outside. The Bart. and I pledged our hopes to it before he trotted off with his detachment. My sergeant, Papillette, with two troopers, followed the English at a distance, and returned in half an hour to say that, after some parley, and the flashing of lanterns upon them from the grille, they had been admitted into the Abbey.

So far, then, all had gone well. It was a cloudy night with a sprinkling of rain, which was in our favour, as there was the less chance of our presence being discovered. My vedettes I placed two hundred yards in every direction, to guard against a surprise, and also to prevent any peasant who might stumble upon us from carrying the news to the Abbey. Oudin and Papillette were to take turns of duty, while the others with their horses had snug quarters in a great wooden granary. Having walked round and seen that all was as it should be, I flung myself upon the bed which the innkeeper had set apart for me, and fell into a dreamless sleep.

No doubt you have heard my name mentioned as being the beau-ideal of a soldier, and that not only by friends and admirers like our fellow-townsfolk, but by old officers of the great wars who have shared the fortunes of those famous campaigns with me. Truth and modesty compel me to say, however, that this is not so. There are some gifts which I lack—very few, no doubt—but, still, amid the vast armies of the Emperor there may have been some who were free from those blemishes which stood between me and perfection. Of bravery I say nothing. Those who have seen me in the field are best fitted to speak about that. I have often heard the soldiers discussing round the camp-fires as to who was the bravest man in the Grand Army. Some said Murat, and some said Lasalle, and some Ney; but for my own part, when they asked me, I merely shrugged my shoulders and smiled. It would have seemed mere

conceit if I had answered that there was no man braver than Brigadier Gerard. At the same time, facts are facts, and a man knows best what his own feelings are. But there are other gifts besides bravery which are necessary for a soldier, and one of them is that he should be a light sleeper. Now, from my boyhood onwards, I have been hard to wake, and it was this which brought me to ruin upon that night.

It may have been about two o'clock in the morning that I was suddenly conscious of a feeling of suffocation. I tried to call out, but there was something which prevented me from uttering a sound. I struggled to rise, but I could only flounder like a ham-strung horse. I was strapped at the ankles, strapped at the knees, and strapped again at the wrists. Only my eyes were free to move, and there at the foot of my couch, by the light of a Portuguese lamp, whom should I see but the Abbot and the innkeeper!

The latter's heavy, white face had appeared to me when I looked upon it the evening before to express nothing but stupidity and terror. Now, on the contrary, every feature bespoke brutality and ferocity. Never had I seen a more dreadful-looking villain. In his hand he held a long, dull-coloured knife. The Abbot, on the other hand, was as polished and as dignified as ever. His Capuchin gown had been thrown open, however, and I saw beneath it a black-frogged coat, such as I have seen among the English officers. As our eyes met he leaned over the wooden end of the bed and laughed silently until it creaked again.

"You will, I am sure, excuse my mirth, my dear Colonel Gerard," said he. "The fact is, that the expression upon your face when you grasped the situation was just a little funny. I have not done that you are an excellent soldier, but I hardly think that you are fit to measure wits with the Marshal Millefleur, as your fellows have been good enough to call me. You appear to have given me credit for singularly little intelligence, which argues, if I may be allowed to say so, a want of acuteness upon your own part. Indeed, with the single exception of my thick-headed compatriot, the British dragoon, I have never met any one who was less competent to carry out such a mission."

You can imagine how I felt and how I looked, as I listened to this insolent harangue which was all delivered in that flowery and condescending manner which had gained this rascal his nickname. I could say nothing, but they must have read my threat in my eyes, for the fellow who had played the part of the innkeeper whispered something to his companion.

"No, no, my dear Chenier, he will be infinitely more valuable alive," said he. "By the way, Colonel, it is just as well that you are a sound sleeper, for my friend here, who is a little rough in his ways, would certainly have cut your throat if you had raised an alarm. I should recommend you to keep in his good graces, for Sergeant Chenier, late of the 7th Imperial Light Infantry, is a much more dangerous person than Captain Alexis Morgan, of His Majesty's foot-guards."

Chenier grinned and snook his knife at me, while I tried to look the loathing which I felt at the thought that a soldier of the Emperor could fall so low.

"It may amuse you to know," said the Marshal, in that soft, suave voice of his, "that both your expeditions were watched from the time that you left your respective camps. I think that you will allow that Chenier and I played our parts with some subtlety. We had made every arrangement for your reception at the Abbey, though we had hoped to receive the whole squadron instead of half. When the gates are secured behind them, our visitors find themselves in a very charming little medieval quadrangle, with no possible exit, commanded by musketry fire from a hundred windows. They may choose to be shot down; or they may choose to surrender. Between ourselves, I have not the slightest doubt that they have been wise enough to do the latter. But since you are naturally interested in the matter, we thought that you would care to come with us and to see for yourself. I think I can promise you that you will find your titled friend waiting for you at the Abbey with a face as long as your own."

The two villains began whispering together, debating, as far as I could hear, which was the best way of avoiding my vedettes.

"I will make sure that it is all clear upon the other side of the barn," said the Marshal last. "You will stay here, my good Chenier, and if the prisoner gives any trouble you will know what to do."

So we were left together, this murderous renegade and I—he sitting at the end of the bed, sharpening his knife upon his boot in the light of the single smoky little oil-lamp. As to me I only wonder now as I look back upon it, that I did not go mad with vexation and self-reproach as I lay helplessly upon the couch, unable to utter a word or move a finger, with the knowledge that my fifty gallant lads were so close to me, and yet with no means of letting them know the straits to which I was reduced; it was no new thing for me to be a prisoner, but to be taken by these renegades, and to be led into their Abbey in the midst of their jeers, befuddled and outwitted by their insolent leaders—that was indeed more than I could endure. The knife of the butcher beside me would cut less deeply than that.

I twitched softly at my wrists, and then at my ankles, but whichever of the two had secured me was no bungler at his work. I could not move either of them an inch. Then I tried to work the handkerchief down over my mouth, but the ruffian beside me raised his knife with such a threatening snarl that I had to desist. I was lying still looking at his bull neck, and wondering whether it would ever be my good fortune to fit it for a cravat, when I heard returning steps coming down the inn passage and up the stair. What word would the villain bring back? If he found it impossible to kidnap me, he would probably murder me where I lay. For my own part I was indifferent which it might be, and I looked at the doorway with the contempt and defiance which I longed to put into words. But you can imagine my feelings, my dear friends, when, instead of the tall figure and dark, sneering face of the Capuchin, my eyes fell upon the grey pelisse and huge moustaches of my good little abbot, Papillette!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

To regard morals and habits and not money in selecting their associates.

## BRITISH SHIPS THE BEST.

### WHAT A STUDY OF LLOYD'S STATISTICS SHOWS.

Certain Facts That Should Gladden the Hearts of Britons—Steamships Making Passages and With a Regularity Bordered on the Marvellous—Each Year Shows a Decrease in Loss of Life on Vessels Belonging to the United Kingdom.

The statistical summary of shipping losses during 1894 issued by Lloyd's Register of British and Foreign Shipping sets forth certain facts that should gladden the hearts of shipowners, and all those who go down to the sea in ships under the British flag, whether as crews or passengers, says the Liverpool Journal of Commerce. Still, these interesting comparisons of losses and casualties can express only a tittle of the superiority which our sailing ships and steamers have over foreign vessels in the matter of safety. For example the United Kingdom shows the smallest percentage of loss, 28 per 1,000 of the vessels owned, compared with France 39 per 1,000, and Norway 64 per 1,000. Roughly speaking, then, so far as this compilation goes, Norway has a little more than double the percentage of losses that the United Kingdom has. Actually, if some system of weighting were introduced for the higher rate of speed attained by British ships as compared with those of Norway, the results would be much more decidedly in favour of our ships. Norway has not a single ship like the Campania, the Majestic, the Scot, the Caledonia, and similar steamships making passage after passage at a speed, and with a regularity bordering on the marvellous. Such splendid specimens of naval architecture run every risk from collision, or from stranding that can possibly be imagined, almost without accident of any kind. Yet, with ships as with men, it is the pace that kills. Hence the good monthly boats under foreign flags ought to show a smaller percentage of loss, caeteris paribus, than the leviathans whose passages are reckoned to

### THE NEAREST SECOND

under the British flag. A north-east country shipowner not long since said that foreigners can sail their vessels and navigate them as safely as Englishmen, and do not have more losses than the English. Statistics are altogether opposed to this view, which is a discreditable reflection upon the ships and their navigators under the British flag. The more favorable percentage obtained by our merchant navy is not altogether to be attributed to better education or better seamanship. Our carrying craft as a general rule, to which every year there are fewer exceptions, are much more fit for their work than a large majority of the Norwegian wooden vessels. Moreover, they frequently carry larger crews than the foreigner. It is just possible that the superior education of the Norwegian officer and seaman prevents an even more unfavorable comparison for ships of their fatherland. This inference seems borne out by the fact that of the merchant navies having a total tonnage of over a million, the United Kingdom, the British colonies, the United States of America, France, Germany and Norway, as regards steamers, the average percentage of loss for the six countries is 2.3, whereas the percentage for the United Kingdom stands at 2.33. Hence, given better ships, apparently the higher education stand a better chance of coming to the front. For sailing vessels the six countries gave an average percentage of 5.5 against 39, for the United Kingdom. Inquiries into

### THE FATE OF MISSING SHIPS

are seldom worth the trouble taken with them. The principal witnesses are full thomsen five, and all else is conjecture. Those who believe that loss of life at sea is on the increase will not find it an easy matter to account for the persistent decrease from year to year of the vessels belonging to the United Kingdom which are abandoned, are missing, or founder. In 1891 such vessels were 62, in 1892 68, in 1893 62, and in 1894 as only 47. There is decidedly room for congratulation under this head. Strandings are, as ought to be expected, the most prolific source of shipping casualty. Fog shuts down when near the land, a master waits till the watch is about to be relieved and all hands on deck before taking a cast of the lead, and the ship goes ashore. Or perchance the master has left port provided only with a general chart of most intricate passages where too refined detail would be impossible. He either allows too much for the sea surface, or not enough; or he may allow exactly what is laid down on the chart, based on insufficient information, only to find his vessel piled up and the current running by her in just the opposite direction to that which the current chart led him to make the allowance he did. Shipmasters condemned by a court of enquiry for neglect of currents should take care to find out whether the nautical assessors always have the latest and most reliable information before them. No less than forty-two per cent. of the casualties to steamers, and 48 of sailing vessels, are attributable to stranding. In the days to come this should increase, even though the absolute number of casualties decrease. Ships must of necessity become safer as the knowledge of

### FLOATING STRUCTURES

is more extended, but accidents cannot possibly be provided against altogether. Coral reefs are growing continually in some parts of the ocean, solitary rocks crop up in the Red sea and elsewhere not far from the tracks passed over by hundreds of fine ships, weather forecasting has not yet arrived at a state of perfection in any part of the world so that the shipmaster may put to sea confident of clear weather, and stranding will always form a considerable percentage of the disasters to ships. Steamers and sailing vessels carrying badly stowed cargoes of grain in bulk are always liable to a short shrift, and apparently the courts of inquiry are not always capable of determining right off a ship's stability,

having given precisely similar information to that supplied the shipmaster. Collision again is another frequent source of disaster for the steamships. Much has been written to warn the navigator of the risk attending an attempt to manoeuvre in a thick fog by locating a sound signal. Too often the action resolved upon precipitates the very collision it was adopted to avert. Time is so short for decision even in clear weather that the officer of the deck needs to have all his wits about him, and he always well in evidence on a steamer's bridge. Taking everything into consideration this summary of losses for 1894 clearly shows, if any evidence were wanting to that effect, that there are not any ships of the world's merchant navies so safe as those belonging to the United Kingdom.

## BICYCLING WITHOUT LEGS.

This Illinois Lad Pedals With His Stumps and Can Turn Off a Mile Under Five Minutes.

Ever since wheeling became a craze, the human race, big and little, high and low, powerful and weak, has thought it no dishonor to be found in scanty attire, pushing pedals. There seems to be no limit to the fad, and the result has been no end of freaks and freakings. Now, however, the greatest of all freaks makes its appearance. It is a bicycle whose rider has no legs and only one arm.

The rider is Arthur Roadhouse, a boy resident of De Kalb, Ill. He is thirteen years old, bright and as active as his physical imperfections, which came from birth, will allow. Like most cripples, his mind is precocious. The bicycling craze left him in body more hopeless and helpless than ever. A neighboring bicycle manufacturer agreed to make a wheel which the boy could ride, and he did so. His one hand guides the handle bar and bars of steel lead up from the pedals to the short stumps which he has known as legs. Strange to say, he experienced very little trouble in balancing the machine.

He began riding about three weeks ago, and after three or four hours' instruction and practice he made a half mile on a track in less than three minutes. He can now do a mile in less than five minutes, and expects to reduce this time to four minutes. He has already made a half mile in 2m. 10s. He has learned to dismount, and can handle his wheel readily and without assistance. He has to be assisted, though, when he mounts, but he expects soon to be able to do this alone.

De Kalb seems to have more than her share of bicycle riding cripples. A year ago one of the young women of the town had a leg taken off by the cars. She now rides a bicycle very creditably, it is said.

## BROKEN HEARTS IN FRANCE

Heid of Less Account by the Law than Broken Legs.

In no instance does the profound difference of national character in England and France appear more striking than in the views held on both sides of the Channel regarding breach of promise. Of course engagements are broken off in France as well as in England, but it is only in England that heavier damages are awarded for a broken heart than for a broken leg. The offense is all but unknown in the French law courts, whether it is that Frenchmen are less inclined to it, or that the French girl dislikes bringing her sentimental troubles into court. To show English readers how incredibly prejudiced French persons of both sexes are upon this subject, it is enough to say that a young lady who attempted to turn her wounded feelings into cash would be regarded as only a degree less mean than the faithless man. The very small number of suits for breach of promise have always been supported by a plea that the lady was put to expense, and there must be besides evidence of an intent to deceive. Damages in any case are very small beside the royal amounts awarded by English juries. On Saturday, however, an action for breach of promise a l'Anglaise was brought into the Third Paris Police Court. The lady and her father, as nearest friend, produced a bill showing that they were £50 out of pocket for the broken engagement. They might have had this but, badly advised, they put on another item of £350 for the moral prejudice. The French judge did not understand this, and he dismissed the case.

## An Insulting Suspicion.

Winks—What's the matter? You look mad as a hornet. Jinks—I ought to be mad. I've been grossly insulted, and by my own preacher, too.

Your preacher? Yes, my preacher. He stopped me in the street, and said he'd noticed that on two or three occasions lately, I'd left the church just as the contribution box started around.

Did you leave? Yes; but you don't suppose it was to avoid adding a paltry dime to the church funds, do you? The idea! It makes me boil think that preacher—my own preacher, too—should suggest such a thing is outrageous.

But why did you leave? It was raining. I'd forgotten my umbrella, and I knew there were only a few in the vestibule.

## Walnut Ice Cream.

The ice cream freezer is a permanent fixture in so many homes that most housewives will be glad to know of choice desert that is made from frozen cream and walnuts. Crack and pick over enough nuts to make a pint of the meat, then pound them into a paste, and mix with a quart of sweet cream, adding a little at a time. Make a boiled custard from a pint of milk and four eggs, add a cup of sugar when it thickens, then add the cream and walnuts, and freeze. It is a great convenience if a bag of stout burlap or sacking is kept in the house in which to crush ice.