

STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

EXPLOITS OF A BRIGADIER GENERAL.

"Indeed, madame," said I, "You do us less than justice. These are the Colonel Despienne and Captain Tremeau. For myself, my name is Brigadier Gerard, and I have only to mention it to assure anyone who has heard of me that—"

"Oh, you villains!" she interrupted. "You think that because I am only a woman I am very easily to be hoodwinked! You miserable impostors!"

I looked at Despienne, who had turned white with anger, and at Tremeau, who was tugging at his moustache.

"Madame," said I, coldly, "when the Emperor did us the honor to intrust us with his mission, he gave me this amethyst ring as a token. I had not thought that three honourable gentlemen would have needed such corroboration, but I can only confute your unworthy suspicions by placing it in your hands."

She held it up in the light of the carriage lamp, and the most dreadful expression of grief and of horror contorted her face.

"It is his," she screamed, and then, "Oh, my God, what have I done? What have I done?"

I felt that something terrible had befallen. "Quick, madame, quick!" I cried.

"Give us the papers!"

"I have already given them."

"Given them? To whom?"

"To three officers."

"When?"

"Within the half-hour."

"Where are they?"

"God help me, I do not know. They stopped the berline, and I handed them over to them without hesitation, thinking that they had come from the Emperor."

It was a thunder-clap. But those are the moments when I am at my finest.

"You remain here," said I, to my comrades. "If three horsemen pass you, stop them at any hazard. The lady will describe them to you. I will be with you presently." One shake of the bride, and I was flying into Fontainebleau as only Violette could have carried me. At the palace I flung myself off, rushed up the stairs, brushed aside the lackeys who would have stopped me, and pushed my way into the Emperor's own cabinet. He and Alcedon were busy with pencil and compass over a chart. He looked up with an angry frown at my sudden entry, but his face changed colour when he saw that it was I.

"You can leave us, Marshal," said he, and then, the instant that the door was closed: "What news about the papers?"

"They are gone," said I, and in a few curt words I told him what had happened. His face was calm, but I saw the compasses quiver in his hand.

"You must recover them, Gerard!" he cried. "The destinies of my dynasty are at stake. Not a moment is to be lost! To horse, sir, to horse!"

"Who are they, sire?"

"I cannot tell. I am surrounded with treason. But they will take them to Paris. To whom should they carry them but to the villain Talleyrand? Yes, yes, they are on the Paris road, and may yet be overtaken. With the three best mounts in my stables and—"

I did not wait to hear the end of the sentence. I was already clattering down the stairs. I am sure that five minutes had not passed before I was galloping Violette out of the town with the bride of one of the Emperor's own Arab chargers in either hand. They wished me to take three, but I should have never dared to look my Violette in the face again. I feel that the spectacle must have been superb when I dashed up to my comrades and pulled the horses on to their haunches in the moonlight.

"No one has passed?"

"No one."

"Then they are on the Paris road. Quick! Up and after them!"

They did not take long, those good soldiers. In a flash they were upon the Emperor's horses, and their own left mastered by the roadside. Then away we went upon our long chase, I in the centre, Despienne upon my right, and Tremeau a little behind, for he was the heavier man. Heaven, how we galloped! The twelve flying hoofs roared and roared along the hard, smooth road. Poplars and moon, black bars and silver streaks, for mile after mile our course lay along the same chequered track, with our shadows in front and our dust behind. We could hear the rasping of bolts and the creaking of shutters from the cottages as we thundered past them, but we were only three dark blurs upon the road by the time that the folk could look after us. It was just striking midnight as we raced into Corbail; but an ostler with a bucket in either hand was throwing his black shadow across the golden fan which was cast from the open door of the inn.

"Three riders!" I gasped. "Have they passed?"

"I have just been watering their horses," said he. "I should think they—"

"Oh, on, my friends!" and away we flew, striking fire from the cobblestones of the little town. A gendarmerie tried to stop us, but his voice was drowned by our rattle and clatter. The houses slid past, and we were out on the country road again, and with a clear twenty miles between ourselves and Paris. How could they escape us, with the finest horses in France behind them? Not one of the three had turned a hair, but Violette was always a head and shoulders to the front. She was going within herself, too, and I knew by the spring of her that I had only to let her stretch herself, and the Emperor's horses would see the color of her tail.

"There they are!" cried Despienne.

"We have them!" growled Tremeau.

"Oh, comrades, on!" I shouted, once more.

A long stretch of white road lay before us in the moonlight. Far away down it we could see three cavaliers, lying low upon their horses' necks. Every instant,

they grew larger and clearer as we gained upon them. I could see quite plainly that the two upon either side were wrapped in mantles and rode upon chestnut horses, whilst the man between them was dressed in a chasseur uniform and mounted upon a grey. They were keeping abreast, but it was easy enough to see from the way in which he gathered his legs for each spring that the centre horse was far the freer of the three. And the rider appeared to be the leader of the party, for we continually saw the glint of his face in the moonshine as he looked back to measure the distance between us. At first it was only a glimmer, then it was out across with a moustache, and at last when we began to feel their dust in our throats I could give a name to my man.

"Halt, Colonel de Montluc!" I shouted. "Halt, in the Emperor's name!"

I had known him for years as a daring officer and an unprincipled rascal. Indeed, there was a score between us, for he had shot my friend, Treville, at Warsaw, pulling his trigger, as some said, a good second before the drop of the handkerchief.

Well, the words were hardly out of my mouth when his two comrades wheeled round and fired their pistols at us. I heard Despienne give a terrible cry, and at the same instant both Tremeau and I let drive at the same man. He fell forward with his hands swinging on each side of his horse's neck. His comrade spurred on to Tremeau, sabre in hand, and I heard the crash which comes when a strong one is met by a stronger parry. For my own part I never turned my head, but I touched Violette with the spur for the first time and flew after the leader. That he should leave his comrades and fly was proof enough that I should leave mine and follow.

He had gained a couple of hundred paces, but the good little mare set that right before we could have passed two milestones. It was in vain that he spurred and thrashed like a gunner driver on a soft road. His hat flew off with his exertions, and his bald head gleamed in the moonshine. But do what he might, he still heard the rattle of the hoofs growing louder and louder behind him. I could not have been twenty yards from him, and the shadow head was touching the shadow haunch, when he turned with a curse in his saddle and emptied both his pistols, one after the other, into Violette.

I have been wounded myself so often I have to stop and think before I can tell you the exact number of times. I have been hit by musket balls, by pistol bullets, and by bursting shell, besides being pierced by bayonet, lance, sabre, and finally by a broadsword, which was the most painful of any. Yet out of all these injuries I have never known the same deadly sickness as came over me when I felt the poor, silent, patient creature, which I had come to love more than anything in the world except my mother and the Emperor, reel and stagger beneath me. I pulled my second pistol from my holster and fired point-blank between the fellow's broad shoulders. He slashed his horse across the flanks with his whip, and for a moment I thought that I had missed him. But then on the green of his chasseur jacket I saw an ever-widening black smudge, and he began to sway in his saddle, very slightly at first, but more and more with every bound, until at last over he went, with his foot caught in the stirrup and his shoulders thud-thud-thud along the road, until the drag was too much for the foam-spattered bridle-chain. As I pulled him up it eased the stirrup leather, and the spurred heel clinked loudly as it fell.

"Your papers!" I cried, springing from my saddle. "This instant!"

But even as I said it the fuddle of the green body and the fantastic sprawl of the limb in the moonlight told me clearly enough that it was all over with him. My bullet passed through his heart, and it was only his own iron will which had held him so long in the saddle. He had lived hard, this Montluc, and I will do him justice to say that he died hard also.

But it was the papers—always the papers—of which I thought. I opened his tunic and I felt in his shirt. Then I searched his holsters and sabre-tasche. Finally I dragged off his boots, and undid his horse's girth so as to hunt under the saddle. There was not a nook or crevice which I did not ransack. It was useless. They were not upon him.

When this stunning blow came upon me I could have sat down by the roadside and wept. Fate seemed to be fighting against me, and that is an enemy from whom even a gallant hussar might not be ashamed to flinch. I stood with my arm over the neck of my poor wounded Violette, and I tried to think it all out, that I might act in the wisest way. I was aware that the Emperor had no great respect for my wife, and I longed to show him that he had done me an injustice. Montluc had not the papers. And yet Montluc had sacrificed his companions in order to make his escape. I could make nothing of that. On the other hand, it was clear that, if he had not got them, one or other of his comrades had. One of them was certainly dead. The other I had left fighting with Tremeau, and if he escaped from the old swordsmen he had still to pass me. Clearly my work lay behind me.

I hammered fresh charges into my pistols after I had turned this over in my head. Then I put them back in the holsters, and I examined my little mare, she jerking her head and cocking her ears the while, as if to tell me that an old soldier like herself did not make a fuss about a scratch or two. The first shot had merely grazed her off shoulder, leaving a skin-mark, as if she had brushed a wall. The second was more serious. It had passed through the muscle of her neck, but already it had ceased to bleed. I reflected that if she weakened I could mount Montluc's grey, and meanwhile I led him along beside us, for he was a fine horse, worth fifteen hundred francs at the least, and it seemed to me that no one had a better right to him than I.

Well, I was all impatience now to get back to the others, and I had just given Violette her head, when suddenly I saw something glimmering in a field by the roadside. It was the brasswork upon the chasseur hat which had flown from Montluc's head; and at the sight of it a thought made me jump in the saddle. How could that hat have flown off? With its weight,

would it not have simply dropped? And here it lay fifteen paces from the roadway! Of course he must have thrown it off when he had made sure that I would overtake him. And if he threw it off—I did not stop to reason any more, but sprang from the mare with my heart beating the pas-de-charge. Yes, it was all right this time. There, in the crown of the hat was stuffed a roll of papers in a parchment wrapper bound round with yellow ribbon. I pulled it out with the one hand and holding the hat in the other, I danced for joy in the moonlight. The Emperor would see that he had not made a mistake when he put his affairs into the charge of Etienne Gerard.

I had a safe pocket on the inside of my tunic just over my heart, where I kept a few little things which were dear to me, and into this I thrust my precious roll. Then I sprang upon Violette, and was pushing forward to see what had become of Tremeau, when I saw a horseman riding across the field in the distance. At the same instant I heard the sound of hoofs approaching me, and there in the moonlight was the Emperor upon his white charger, dressed in his grey overcoat and his three-cornered hat, just as I had seen him so often upon the field of battle.

"Well!" he cried, in the sharp, sergeant-major way of his. "Where are my papers?"

I spurred forward and presented them without a word. He broke the ribbon and ran his eyes rapidly over them. Then, as we sat our horses head to tail, he threw his left arm across me with his hand upon my shoulder. Yes, my friends, simple as you see me, I have been embraced by my great master.

"Gerard," he cried, "you are a marvel!"

I did not wish to contradict him, and it brought a flush of joy upon my cheeks to know that he had done me justice at last.

"Where is the thief, Gerard?" he asked.

"Dead, sire."

"You killed him?"

"He wounded my horse, sire, and would have escaped had I not shot him."

"Did you recognize him?"

"De Montluc is his name, sire—a Colonel of Chasseurs."

"Tally," said the Emperor. "We have got the poor pawn, the hand which plays the game is still out of our reach." He sat in silent thought for a little, with his chin sunk upon his chest. "Ah, Talleyrand, Talleyrand," I heard him mutter. "If I had been in your place and you in mine, you would have brushed a viper when you held it under your heel. For five years I have known you for what you are, and yet I have let you live to sting me. Never mind, my brave," he continued, turning to me, "there will come a day of reckoning for everybody, and when it arrives, I promise you that my friends will be remembered as well as my enemies."

"Sire," said I, for I had had time for thought as well as he, "if your plans about these papers have been carried to the ears of your enemies, I trust that you do not think that it was owing to any indiscretion upon the part of myself or of my comrades."

"It would be hardly reasonable for me to do so," he answered, "seeing that this plot was hatched in Paris, and that you only had your orders a few hours ago."

"Then how—?"

"Enough," he cried, sternly. "You take an undue advantage of your position." That was always the way with the Emperor. He would chat with you as with a friend and a brother, and then when he had wiled you into forgetting the gulf which lay between you, he would suddenly, with a word or with a look, remind you that it was as impassable as ever. When I have fondled my old hound until he has encouraged to paw my knees, and I have then thrust him down again, it has made me think of the Emperor and his ways.

He reined his horse round, and I followed him in silence and with a heavy heart. But when he spoke again his words were enough to drive all thought of myself out of my mind.

"I could not sleep until I knew how you had fared," said he. "I have paid a price for my papers. There are not so many of my old soldiers left that I can afford to lose two in one night."

"When he said 'two' it turned me cold."

"Colonel Despienne was shot, sire," I stammered.

"And Captain Tremeau out down. Had I been a few minutes earlier I might have saved him. The other escaped across the fields."

I remembered that I had seen a horseman a moment before I had met the Emperor. He had taken to the fields to avoid me, but if I had known, and Violette been unwounded, the old soldier would not have gone unavenged. I was thinking sadly of his sword-play, and wondering whether it was his stiffening wrist which had been fatal to him, when Napoleon spoke again.

"Yes, Brigadier," said he, "you are now the only man who will know where these papers are concealed."

It must have been imagination, my friends, but for an instant I may confess that it seemed to me that there was a tone in the Emperor's voice which was not altogether one of sorrow. But the dark thought had hardly time to form itself in my mind before he let me see that I was doing him an injustice.

"Yes, I have paid a price for my papers," he said, and I heard them crackle as he put his hand up to his bosom. "No man has ever had more faithful servants—no man since the beginning of the world."

As he spoke we came upon the scene of the struggle. Colonel Despienne and the man whom he had shot lay together some distance down the road, while their horses grazed contentedly beneath the poplars. Captain Tremeau lay in front of us upon his back, with his arms and legs stretched out, and his sabre broken short off in his hand. His tunic was open, and a huge blood-clot hung like a dark handkerchief out of a slit in his white shirt. I could see the gleam of his clenched teeth from under his immense moustache.

The Emperor sprang from his horse and bent down over the dead man.

"He was with me since Rivoli," said he, sadly. "He was one of my old grumblers in Egypt."

And the voice brought the man back from the dead. I saw his eyelids shiver. He twitched his arm, and moved the sword-hilt a few inches. He was trying to raise it in a salute. Then the mouth opened, and the hilt tinkled down on to the ground.

"May we all die as gallantly," said the Emperor, as he rose, and from my heart I added "Amen."

There was a farm within fifty yards of where we were standing, and the farmer, roused from his sleep by the clatter of hoofs and the racking of pistols, had rushed out to the roadside. We saw him now, dumb with fear and astonishment, staring open-eyed at the Emperor. It was to him that we committed the care of the four dead men and of the horses also. For my own part, I thought it best to leave Violette with him and to take De Montluc's grey with me, for he could not refuse to give me back my own mare, while there might be difficulties about the other. Besides, my little friend's wound had to be considered, and we had a long return ride before us.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

OLD COUNTRY LETTERS.

Large Number of Letters Posted Last Year Without Any Address on Them.

There are some careless people living in the old country, if one is to judge from the last report of the English Postmaster-General. No less than 30,691 letters were posted last year without any address on them, and 1,742 of them contained remittances, amounting to over \$25,000 in all. By way of offset 32,632 stamps were found loose in the post, which may explain why the letter carrier so often calls at some people's houses for "five cents to pay."

There was falling off in the number of letters delivered of over 2 per cent., which is largely accounted for by the tremendous increase—26 per cent.—in the use of post cards. A new regulation permits anyone to stick a halfpenny stamp on a card and post it, and this privilege has been extensively used. Over 2,000 million letters and post cards were delivered in the United Kingdom, while only 50 millions were sent out of the country. Of these, nearly half went to France, Germany and the United States; only eight millions were sent to the colonies and the colonies sent still fewer back. In the division of the eight millions India ranks before Canada, and Australia comes close on the heels of the Dominion. The small amount of

COLONIAL CORRESPONDENCE

has been used as an argument in favor of Imperial penny postage, and there is no doubt that this would result in a large increase; but it is not altogether a matter of the difference between five cents and two. A Canadian hardly thinks more or five cents than an Englishman does of a penny; it is the writing of the letter and not the postage that is the real trouble. The English settlers in Canada have come to stay, and after a while they find their correspondence with the old country drags heavily. The English people in India intend to go back home, and it is therefore worth their while to keep up their old country interests, but the English-Canadian soon finds that his affairs here demand all his attention. A few are tenacious enough of family ties to keep a correspondence going at long intervals, but with the next generation the connection is forgotten. It is in the nature of things that it should be so, for while modern science has greatly improved means of communication, it has also greatly increased the demands of one's time and attention. The post-card, increasing in use at the rate of 26 per cent., is driving the old-fashioned epistle out of the field. We have no time to write letters nowadays. A communication the length of a post-card must serve our turn, although for the sake of privacy or for the look of things we may put it in an envelope. To send such short notes across the Atlantic would be absurd, and so most of us send nothing at all. Only a few still keep to the delightful old fashion of maintaining old country correspondence.

THE ENGINEER.

How it Appears to the Man at the Throttle.

The locomotive engineer is a remarkably placid fellow, with a habit of deliberate precision in his look and motions. He occasionally turns a calm eye to his gauges and then resumes his quiet watch ahead. The three levers which he has to manipulate are under his hand ready for instant use, and when they are used it is quietly and in order, as an organist pulls out his stops. The noise in the cab makes conversation difficult, but it is not so bad as that heard in a car when passing another train, with or without the windows open, and in looking out of the engine cab the objects are approached gradually, not rushed past, as when one looks laterally out of a parlor car window. The fact is, the engineer does not look at the side—he is looking ahead, and therefore the speed seems less, and the objects are approached gradually.

Those who have ridden at 90 miles an hour on a locomotive know that on a good road (and there are many such) the engine is not "shaken and swayed in a terrific manner," but is rather comfortable, and the speed is not so apparent as when one is riding in a parlor car, where only a lateral view is had. The engineer can be very comfortable if he is quite sure of the track ahead, and it is only in rounding curves or in approaching crossings that he feels nervous, and it is doubtful if it is any more strain to run a locomotive at high speed than to ride a bicycle through crowded thoroughfares. Judging by the countenances of the bicycle rider and the engineer, the engineer has rather the best of it.

Horseflesh for Cat Meat.

There is a big butcher's shop in London where they kill on an average 26,000 horses a year, or 500 a week. These 500 horses are killed and cooked to make London cats happy. The firm owning this immense slaughter house of horses turns out 70 tons of cat meat each week. There are 13,440 cats in a ton of horseflesh. Cats' meat is meals handed to the customer on a skewer. It is only a little piece of meat, but it takes a ton of wood cut up into skewers to provide for a single day's consumption of cats' meat. No fewer than 182½ tons of wood are used every year in making cats' meat skewers. The horseflesh trade of London employs 30 wholesale salesmen and over 1,000 retailers.

HEALTH.

Nervous Children.

An increased tendency to nervous disorders in childhood is a characteristic of the present age. Children now suffer from various symptoms which formerly were uncommon, except in advanced life or among confirmed invalids.

Some of the symptoms thus observed are extreme exhaustion after slight overexertion, neuralgic pains in the head or back, a tendency to hysteria, and on the other hand, an abnormal craving for excite ment.

Parents of children who suffer in this way from "nervous" symptoms should look the matter squarely in the face and ask themselves if they are not in part to blame.

One of the common mistakes of parents is that of allowing their children to share in the pastimes and pleasures of their elders; pastimes and pleasures which in many cases are of too stimulating a character for a child's more susceptible nervous organization. The fact that this is done out of affection for the children, and from a desire for their companionship, does not render it less harmful.

Again, children are too frequently granted the things for which they ask or cry, without regard to the wisdom of their desires. It is a mistake to suppose that the will power of a child is weakened by denying him that which gives him momentary pleasure.

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The tendency toward making children prominent in the household, while not to be condemned altogether, may easily be carried to excess.

A child, even at an early age, should be allowed to play and to spend some time in amusing himself. When the bed-hour comes he should be put to bed, and it is best that this should be done without rocking or walking. The hours of sleep should be long.

If any unusual or unnatural habits are developed by the child, the physician should examine him carefully. In nearly every case some local irritation will be found, the relief of which will remedy the evil. The child's clothes should fit loosely.

The hysterical nature of the child is developed by "showing him off," or by relating his exploits before him. Constant scolding tends to make him less tractable. Out-of-door air is a necessity to the child's health. Play in the open air supplies the physical wants of a child better than the restraints of carpet and furniture.

Uric Acid.

Prominent among the many causes of nervousness is the state known as the "uric acid condition."

Sufferers from this condition are especially subject to biliousness and sick headaches, while the excess of acid in the system is frequently relieved by the vomiting of quantities of extremely acid fluid, with which are often mingled portions of undigested food.

Inactivity of the liver certainly takes a prominent part in producing this unnatural state. The spleen and the kidneys are also affected unfavorably.

Much of the modus operandi of the chemical changes carried on in the human body is scarcely to be followed by the observer in his laboratory.

The chemistry of the human system, which by early physiologists was considered comparatively crude, is now recognized as most complex and puzzling; and many of its mysteries are yet far from having been completely unravelled, active as are the investigations now being carried on, and competent and ardent as are the investigators.

Food is the fuel introduced into the furnace of the human system, while the excreta are the ash from its waste-pan. Let one or more of the organs perform their functions improperly, and unconsumed fuel clogs their workings, and products improperly fitted for meeting the demands of the system are formed. This crudely represents the state of the system in which uric acid is found in the blood, and excreted by the kidneys in abnormal quantities.

Nervousness, bilious attacks, headaches, sleeplessness or the reverse, attacks of colic, whose passage through the kidneys is attended with most agonizing pains, or severe pains localized elsewhere, are symptoms of the improper performance of the functions of the organs mentioned. Such symptoms are not often found among persons actively employed in out-of-door work, but rather among the sedentary and inactive.

Those who suffer in this way should drink a much greater quantity of water, and consume less starchy and sugary foods. They should indulge in more exercise, and if the symptoms are severe they should consult a physician, who may carefully revise their diet and mode of life.

Deep Breathing.

Cultivate the habit of breathing through the nose and taking deep breaths. If this habit was universal, there is little doubt that pulmonary affections would be decreased one-half. An English physician calls attention to this fact, that deep and forced respirations will keep the entire body in a glow in the coldest weather, no matter how thinly one may be clad. He was himself half frozen to death one night, and began taking deep breaths and keeping the air in his lungs as long as possible. The result was that he was thoroughly comfortable in a few minutes. The deep respirations, he says, stimulate the blood currents by direct muscular exertion, and cause the entire system to become pervaded with the rapidly generated heat.

Full Blooded.

Fleecy—Is it a full-blooded dog?
Downey—It ought to be; I paid a full-blooded price for it.