

## YOUNG GERARD AND THE CAMERA.

(With apologies to Conan Doyle.)

Gerard was indeed a study as he leaned forward in his chair, with his well-marked, regular features lit up by clear grey eyes kindling with passion, while the rich rays of ruby light streaming in through the open door of his dark room made a soft background that completed the effect.

"Yes," he said, "the story is a painful one; but our friendship demands some explanation of my conduct to-night, and I know that I can trust you.

"My grandfather, as you are aware, was on terms of great intimacy with the Emperor, and I do not hesitate to say that Napoleon placed greater confidence in Brigadier Gerard than in any other man in France or out of it. But enough—I was early left orphan, and my boyhood and early youth were passed under the care and direction of this hale and hearty old veteran. Grafted, as it were, upon this heroic old stock, I sapped up some of its spirit, and I trust you will not accuse me of overweening self-esteem when I say that my valour in the battles before Metz gave proof that the blood of Brigadier Gerard flowed in my veins. My only friend and companion was a youth called Paul Elmiro; we loved each other as brothers, and were inseparable. It was Paul who sat with me at my grandfather's death-bed, and with me followed the remains of him whom all France delighted to honour to their last resting place.

"Indeed, the reputation of Brigadier Gerard was so great that, when Paul and I went to the front in '70, all France looked at me and expected something from the heir of such a name. Nor were they, according to the journals, disappointed; but, after all, four bullet wounds and a bayonet thrust are nothing—my grandfather once had—but that's another story. Paul was also wounded at Gravelotte, but recovered first, and would come and sit by the side of my cot and tell me the sad, sad news of our humiliation. I soon noticed, however, that these visits became more frequent than would be expected of even the dearest comrade; but, probably owing to my weak condition, I failed to comprehend the occasional glances exchanged between my friend and the *petite demoiselle* of the red cross to whose patience and skillful ministrations I owed my life. Once, as I lay in a kind of trance, I caught a

snatch of their conversation. 'Do you doubt my love?' said Paul. 'Well, no,' she replied, 'not exactly, but the poet says that "Men are April when they woo, December when they wed," and are you different from the rest?' 'Oh Marie,' he exclaimed, and his voice trembled. 'A man who meets you is changed, his nature becomes different, and though all men are fickle, my love for you will never, can never change, should we live a thousand years.'

"She laughed lightly as she replied: 'Oh I have no objections to your love, women are made to be loved, and it is pleasant to have you so kind and attentive; let us always stay engaged and you will always bring me bonbons and will say sweet things to me, but marriage, no—no! I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad.'

"Paul was evidently nettled, for he said: 'I'm not your fool; and, since you seem so fond of the poets, how of him who says that "Every woman is at heart a rake." Why are you like this, Marie? Sometimes you yield, and from your eyes I read my love returned, and again you mock and taunt me and treat me with derision and scorn as if I were a detestable and loathed object. "Woman's at best a contradiction."'

"They had almost reached a quarrel when a slight movement of mine caused Marie to turn to smooth my pillow, and Paul passed out. She stood by my cot's head, following him with her eyes, and unconsciously she seemed to murmur: 'Love him!! love him!! as an eagle loves its prey.' A low moan of mine recalled her from her reverie.

"Several weeks after I left the hospital I was not surprised to have Paul introduce to me, as his fiancée, Marie, and I warmly congratulated him. Yet strangely enough that sentence flashed back into my mind, 'love him as an eagle loves its prey.' I put it aside, however, as probably a vagary of my imagination during my illness.

"As you know, I am old for my years and of rather a speculative turn of mind, and it was therefore with the keenest pleasure and interest, unmingled with any suggestion of envy, that I watched the silken bond grow stronger and stronger, watched their happy faces, and with them shared their joy. Yet, time and again, Paul came to me in deepest dejection and vowed that Marie did not love him, that she was cold and heartless, and at such times that old phrase came back, 'love him as an eagle loves its prey.'