

THE ADVENTURES OF BRIGADIER GERARD

16 EPISODES

SYNOPSIS

The sixteen stories contained in the two novels about Brigadier Gerard are the representation of an age of chivalry, which ended at Waterloo. Arthur's depiction of the Napoleonic era with its duels, grand battles and unselfish acts of heroism is romantic-adventurism at its most noble, with a nice touch of levity. Brigadier Gerard is a hero for the ages, a character whose exploits in battle and with the ladies are legendary. Like the characters Sharpe, in "Sharpe's Rifles," and "Horatio Hornblower", Brigadier Gerard gives us an exhilarating, exciting, unforgettable glimpse into a time when men of honour created their own destiny and glory.

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THE ADVENTURES OF BRIGADIER GERARD

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

To replace Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle created Etienne Gerard, a young French cavalry officer from the time of the Napoleonic wars. Brigadier Gerard's epic adventures triumphantly revive the spirit of Napoleon's armies and of the nations aroused against them.

'Of course I read every Sherlock Holmes story, but the works I like even more than the detective stories are his great historical stories'

- Sir Winston Churchill-

Dumas's Four Musketeers all in one...Don Quixote inextricably entangles with Sancho Panza...Tolstoy's *War and Peace* harmonised with the Marx Brothers...Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Brigadier Gerard stories surely constitute the finest series of historical short stories in literature, mingling the comedy and the tragedy, the pathos and the irony, or, in Napoleon's phrase, the sublime and the ridiculous. It is Napoleon and his Europe, his dedicated followers and the awakened nationalisms of the peoples they enraged, possessing our minds in savage realism and enrapturing romance. And in Brigadier Etienne Gerard, Arthur Conan Doyle created a hero worthy to take his place in the great line stretching from Homer's Odysseus to George MacDonald Fraser's Flashman, nearest of all perhaps to Stevenson's Allan Breck and Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster.

'Conan Doyle's Brigadier Gerard for thrust and instant atmosphere'

-John Le Carré

'Brigadier Gerard is, after Holmes and Watson, Conan Doyle's most successful literary creation.'

-Julian Symons-

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EPISODE ONE: HOW HE SLEW THE BROTHERS OF AJACCIO

In the year 1807, during a lull between campaigns, the Emperor Napoleon and his Empress Josephine were enjoying a period of peace and gaiety in their Court at Fontainebleau. Lieutenant Gerard, of the 10th Hussars, a cavalry unit attached to Napoleon's personal horse chasseurs of the guard was billeted nearby. Gerard, with nothing pressing to occupy his time, took full advantage of the opportunity to pursue the ladies and engage in serious bouts of drinking, revelry and the occasional duel.

Naturally, Gerard was filled with great consternation and apprehension when summoned to appear before his superior, Colonel Lasalle and the second most powerful man in France, Napoleon's trusted statesman, Talleyrand.

When informed that the Emperor had requested him personally for a special, secret assignment, Gerard was astonished and dumbfounded. What could the Emperor possibly want from a lowly, insignificant lieutenant?

That afternoon, in the presence of the mighty man, Gerard found out why the Emperor had chosen him. It was a matter of honour, a matter so serious and profound that Gerard was sworn to eternal secrecy. No one, his superiors, or Talleyrand, must ever know what mission he had been entrusted with. That night, Gerard would act as Napoleon's private bodyguard, and if necessary, his personal assassin.

Filled with pride and some misgivings, Gerard accompanied the Emperor into the dark forest behind Fontainebleau, until they came into a clearing known as Abbot's Beech. There, beside the shattered stump of a gigantic tree stood two men. Slowly, they advanced, until they were only feet away from the Emperor.

Suddenly, without any warning, one sprang forward and buried a long poniard straight into Napoleon's heart. Galvanized into instant action, Gerard killed the murderer with one thrust of his sword and turned to dispatch the other who fled into the forest.

Knowing the blow inflicted upon the Emperor was fatal, Gerard didn't hesitate, but immediately ran after the second assassin who vanished into the dark forest ahead.

Distraught with emotion and the agony of failure, Gerard finally overtook the assailant and with cold, unrelenting fury dispatched the assailant to hell!

Overcome with grief, Gerard staggered back to the clearing and was about to impale himself upon his sword, when before him appeared the Emperor, alive and well.

Thinking he was going mad, Gerard staggered back, but was brought to attention by the Emperor's harsh command, asking him to give an account of his actions. Gerard stammered a reply that he had killed both men. The Emperor, pleased, smiled and laid his hand on Gerard's shoulder.

EPISODE TWO: HOW HE CAME TO THE CASTLE OF GLOOM

In February, 1807, Lieutenant Etienne Gerard, an officer in Napoleon's Tenth of Hussars Cavalry Regiment is commissioned along with Major Legendre to bring four hundred horses from Prussia into Eastern Poland. Despite deep snows and horrendous weather the two officers manage to get their mounts as far as Reisenberg, across the Vistula River.

Upon arrival, Gerard is ordered to report to General Lasalle in Rossel and rejoin his cavalry squadron in preparation for an upcoming battle.

On his big black charger, Rataplan, Gerard sets off across the clogged roads of Poland until he reaches the crossroads village of Saalfeldt. There, Gerard chances upon Sub-Lieutenant Duroc, a young officer with the Third Hussars of Conflan.

To reach Rossel on time, Gerard agrees to travel with Duroc across country, a barren landscape filled with marauders and Cossacks. Little does Gerard know that this detour will almost cost he and Duroc their lives.

Upon reaching Arensdorf, Duroc learns that Baron Straubenthal, a man he has been seeking for years, resides in the Castle of Gloom, a foreboding edifice situated atop a hill on the other side of the forest.

Unable to hide his excitement, Duroc confides in Gerard. Before becoming the Baron, Straubenthal's name was Carabin, a noted duellist in Sansterre's guard and a Jacobin who assisted in brutal executions of the aristocracy, including Duroc's father, a wealthy banker. After Robespierre's downfall, Carabin forced the Baroness Straubenthal to marry him in order to save her life. The two fled France and disappeared. Vowing to avenge their family honour, Duroc's eldest brother searched everywhere for Carabin, but before he could fulfil his vow, he was killed at Jena. Now, fate has intervened and Duroc's search is over. Honour and justice will finally be served. Duroc requests Gerard be his second when he challenges Straubenthal to a duel.

That night, at the castle, Duroc and Gerard are taken before the Baron. Accused of murdering Duroc's father, the Baron attempts to avoid a fight. Duroc slaps him in the face. The insult is too much and the Baron leaves the room to retrieve his sabre. At that moment a young lady runs into the room, grabs Duroc's hand and kisses it again and again, pleading for a champion to rescue her.

She informs Duroc that since the death of her mother she has been a prisoner in her own castle. Like Duroc, she wants the Baron dead.

As suddenly as she appeared, the young lady vanishes, just as the Baron re-enters the hall, accompanied by a servant who will act as his second. The Baron requests Duroc and Gerard to follow him into another room, more spacious for the task at hand. As the two comply, the door is slammed behind them and the two find themselves imprisoned. The Baron's mocking laughter echoes in the chamber outside.

Trapped with no way out, Duroc spies a small window. Climbing up on barrels he looks out just in

wooden crossbeams. Still alive, Hubert begged for water. Gerard, seeing a wine flask, raised it to his lips. Gerard, knowing the man was dying, asked him where he could find the powder magazine. Hubert told Gerard that he had managed to lay a trail of powder through a hole in the wall of a sister's cell into the storage room. But before he could light it, he was caught. Fortunately, no one had discovered the trail of powder, as it was hidden behind the nun's sleeping pallet. It was still there ready to ignite. Hubert then begged Gerard to end his life. The pain was becoming unbearable. Gerard took his phial from his pocket, poured the poison into the wine flask and was about to give it to Hubert when he heard guards approaching.

Quickly, Gerard hid behind some wine casks and waited. Two men entered and began to taunt Hubert. One took the wine and held it up for Hubert to drink. But before he could, the man snatched it away and drained it down as Hubert cursed him. The man laughed, then began to choke and crashed to the floor stone dead just as Hubert's head fell forward. The other guard, believing "black magic" was at work, fled outside, yelling in fear. Gerard took the opportunity to leave the house and made straight for the cathedral.

Once inside, Gerard saw wounded soldiers and townspeople huddled together, misery everywhere. Gerard stepped over bodies and carefully made his way to a door that led to the convent.

Down the corridor he raced until he came to the sister's cell. Quickly he pulled the pallet from the wall and saw the trail of powder disappearing into the next building through a small hole in the wall. Gerard lit a candle, placed the flame to the powder and threw himself through the door into the corridor outside.

A noise like thunder filled his ears. The ground shook. Rubble flew. But Gerard, though deafened was unhurt, saved by the thickness of the stone walls.

As he staggered to his feet, Gerard threw off his monk's cloak, revealing his officer's uniform, just before an infantryman stabbed him with a bayonet. When the troopers realised Gerard was the one responsible for blowing a huge hole in the wall of Saragossa, they hoisted him on their shoulders and carried him to safety.

Dawn was breaking as Gerard, his ears still ringing, arrived at the duelling field. All twelve of the Hussars were standing at attention, waiting. Gerard, who had been summoned to appear before Marshal Lannes immediately, enquired politely if he could fight all of them together as he could only spare ten minutes.

The Hussars stood there impassively. Then, all together, they raised their swords in salute. Flabbergasted, Gerard just stared. Then he understood. He was being paid homage! With tears in his eyes he embraced his fellow officers. The Hussars of Conflans had accepted Senior Captain Gerard as their friend and champion!

EPISODE FOUR: HOW THE BRIGADIER HELD THE KING

For one month, Etienne Gerard, now a Colonel of the Hussars of Conflan, has been confined in the village of Alamo, due to an ankle injury caused by a lance thrust. With his regiment about to engage the British in a major battle at Pastores, across the Spanish border, Gerard is impatiently determined to join them.

But, with no mount to ride and unable to walk any distance, Gerard must find an alternate form of transportation. When a Monsieur Vidal of the army commissariat rides into the village, Gerard offers to buy his horse. But the gentleman refuses. He is under orders to get to Pastores immediately. Even though he would like the companionship of Gerard as another sword against the Spanish guerrillas in the hills, led by the infamous bandit El Cuchillo, he has no choice but to press on.

A travelling priest, seeing Gerard's frustration suggests they travel together by mule cart. If Gerard can pay, the priest knows a man who can take them over the mountains. Gerard agrees at once. As they enter a narrow mountain pass, the priest suddenly jumps Gerard and stabs him in the cheek, narrowly missing his eye. Instinctively, Gerard counter-attacks and in the struggle, the cart is overturned and both men are sent sprawling to the ground.

As Gerard is about to dispatch the priest to hell, he is surrounded by a group of brigands and taken prisoner.

The false priest, screaming in agony from Gerard's counter-attack is flung over the back of a horse along with a trussed up Gerard. The band of guerrillas follow a narrow, winding trail that leads to their hidden camp in a mountain valley and Gerard finds himself at the mercy of the infamous El Cuchillo whose brutality and torture of prisoners is made uncomfortably clear. Impaled upon a tree is the mutilated, dead body of the army commissariat.

Prepared to die with honour, Gerard is defiant when brought before the bandit chief. His arrogance and unwillingness to beg for his life enrages El Cuchillo. He tells Gerard, tomorrow morning he will die a very painful death.

That night, Gerard uses the darkness to unloosen the bonds around his ankles and wrists. When the time comes, he will use surprise to attack his captors and kill as many of them as he can before he's struck down.

At dawn, Gerard watches as two saplings are bent over double and tied. El Cuchillo means to tie Gerard between the two trees, cut the ropes and watch as his body is torn in two.

As he is led to his gruesome execution, Gerard hears the clinking of horseshoes and jangling of spurs. He throws off the men holding him and yells at the top of his voice for help.

Out of the forest gallops a troop of English cavalry. Gerard fights his way towards them as the English officer leads a charge into the midst of the brigands. A fierce fight ensues and the bandits are subdued, leaving Gerard a prisoner once again. This time however, in the hands of a

courageous, honourable English officer.

Thankful for his escape, Gerard gives the officer his word that he will not try to escape. Together, the two ride side by side towards Wellington's encampment.

As they travel, they exchange pleasantries and recount anecdotes of battles they've fought and heroic deeds they've performed. Then, they begin to confide personal matters. Both men respect and like each other immensely. The English officer, Sir Russel Bart is extremely proud of his skill at Ecarte, a card game that Gerard is also very adept at.

That gives Gerard an idea. Honour will not let him attempt escape. Honour prevents the Englishman from setting him free. Perhaps, a sporting game of Ecarte can decide the issue and Gerard's fate.

Eagerly, Sir Bart agrees. The two men dismount and begin to play. Back and forth. First one has the upper hand. Then, the other.

Finally, everything rests on the last hand. Gerard looks at his cards. There! The King of trumps. He is about to lay the card down when Sir Bart scrambles to his feet and salutes. Gerard turns and sees three riders, the middle one is none other than the English Commander of the field, Lord Wellington.

Demanding to know what Sir Bart is doing fraternising with a French prisoner, Gerard springs to his feet and tells the Duke he was playing Ecarte for his freedom and he has won. Here, in his hand he holds the King! Wellington smiles coldly and informs Gerard that although he may hold a King, his King holds Gerard.

Thus begins the lowest period in Gerard's life. That of a prisoner of war.

EPISODE FIVE: HOW THE BRIGADIER TOOK THE FIELD AGAINST THE MARSHALL MILLEFLEURS

The war in Spain reached a stalemate after the English breached the French lines at Torres Vedras. Marshall Massena, busy arranging the withdrawal of his troops from Santarem, summoned Gerard to his command post and ordered him to undertake an important assignment.

A rogue British officer and deserter, Alexis Morgan, known as the infamous Marshal Millefleurs, together with five hundred other deserters from the English, French and Portuguese armies, along with some Spanish brigands had seized the nearby Abbey of Almeixal. From their mountain stronghold, they terrorised the countryside, raiding villages and towns, carrying off supplies and hostages.

One such captive was the Dowager Countess of La Ronda, the richest woman in Spain. Gerard's orders were to retake the Abbey, rescue the Countess and if possible arrest the Marshal Millefleurs and destroy his rag-tag army of cutthroats. To accomplish this, Gerard was assigned half a squadron, a task that would test a full regiment. Undaunted, Gerard accepted the assignment with enthusiasm. Anything was better than sitting around the camp training raw recruits.

After selecting fifty of the most battle-hardened veterans from his Hussars of Conflans, Gerard and his men rode off, following a river that wound through the valley, toward the Abbey of Almeixal. As the troop searched for a shallow ford to cross, they saw on the other side of the river, a detachment of English cavalry. As the two groups converged at a narrow part of the river, an English officer dashed across and galloped toward Gerard's detachment, yelling and waving his cockaded hat in the air. The officer was none other than Milor the Hon. Sir Russell, Bart!

Gerard spurred his war steed Rataplan and raced forward to meet his English friend and enemy. Delighted that Gerard was no longer a prisoner of the British, but back in the field, Bart, still a sporting gentleman, challenged Gerard to an old-fashioned cavalry charge. His troop of men against Gerard's. Eager to respond, because this was a chivalrous challenge and a true test of honour between friendly foes, Gerard sadly declined. When he explained that he was on an assignment to destroy Marshal Millefleurs, Bart was exultant. He too, was on the same mission! Seeing fate had brought them together once again, why not break all the rules, join forces and teach this renegade outlaw a lesson. Even by banding together, both officers realised the task at hand was a most formidable one, a challenge that would earn honour and glory for one and all!

Gerard, being the senior officer, took charge of the enterprise. After some grumbling and aggressive posturing on both sides, the troops, seeing how famously their officers got along, settled down and accepted the fact that in the battle to come, they would fight side by side against a common foe. As the troops rode into a deserted village, they could see on a craggy mountain ahead of them, the Abbey of Almeixal. To storm the position and successfully gain entry would be a formidable task, if not an impossible one. As Gerard and Bart cantered ahead to investigate the town, they came upon a Capuchin monk and the landlord of the town inn.

The monk, who had managed to escape from the Abbey, told Gerard and Bart that the walls were well fortified and guarded. Inside, there were over five hundred fighting men and several dozen hostages, including women and children, as well as the Dowager Countess. All of whom would be sacrificed if an attack looked like it might succeed. But, the monk suggested, there just might be a way of gaining entry. Almost every day, deserters arrived at the mountain redoubt and were taken in. Suppose Gerard and Bart divided their forces. One half pretending to be deserters? Once inside, they could storm the gates and hold them long enough for the others to force their way inside. Audacious as the plan sounded, Gerard and Bart agreed that it could work. It was decided that Bart and his English force would play the role of deserters and Gerard and his Hussars would make the assault on the gates.

That evening, Bart and his men were admitted into the Abbey without incident. At dawn, Gerard would attack.

With nothing to do until morning, Gerard decided to catch some sleep. Around three a.m., Gerard awoke, feeling like he was suffocating. Imagine his surprise when he found himself bound and gagged, unable to move or utter a sound. Standing over him, grinning wickedly was the Capuchin monk, beside him, the innkeeper, holding a long, vicious looking knife. The monk introduced himself as Captain Alexis Morgan, the notorious Marshal Millefleurs. His companion, Sergeant Chenier.

He then informed Gerard that the English detachment had been taken prisoner, except for fourteen men who had been killed resisting capture and their officer, who died bravely after dispatching five of the Marshal's men. Now, it was time for the Marshal to return to the Abbey and his wedding bed. The Countess and he had just married!

Gerard was astounded. Not only was Millefleurs a brigand, thief and murderer, he was a cad and a bounder, seducing and marrying a woman over twice his age! Leaving Chenier to guard Gerard, Alexis left to collect their horses.

Minutes later, the door to Gerard's room crashes open and in rushes Gerard's sub-officer, Papilette. With one swing of his big sabre, Chenier's head is severed from his body. Quickly, Gerard is untied. Motioning Papilette to take up a position at the door, Gerard waits for Alexis to return. When he does, Papilette grabs him from behind and holds him in a fierce bear hug.

Now, the tables are reversed. With Alexis now his prisoner, Gerard sends an ultimatum to the Abbey. Release the English prisoners and all the hostages, or else their Marshal will hang!

After a series of negotiations, the prisoners are released and Gerard, against his better judgement allows the Marshal to be freed.

Before leaving, Alexis extends an invitation. If Gerard ever tires of serving in the French army, he will be welcomed with open arms and offered a handsome commission in the service of Marshal Millefleurs. With distaste and revulsion, Gerard declines the offers and vows if he ever comes across Alexis again, one of them will die!

EPISODE SIX: HOW THE BRIGADIER SLEW THE FOX

Of all the exploits and daring acts of bravery attributed to Etienne Gerard, none brought greater anger or calls of "foul" amongst the British, than the event which occurred on the Peninsula of Portugal in the year 1810. Forever after, Gerard was the most hated enemy of the men in Wellington's army.

It began when Marshal Massena summoned the Colonel of the Hussars of Conflan to his headquarters at Torres Vedras. Stalled from advancing on Wellington's retreating army by a forbidding line of forts, barricades and well-dug trenches, Napoleon's army could do nothing more than sit in frustration. With the English controlling the ocean lanes, Wellington's forces were gradually being withdrawn to the beaches. Napoleon's only hope was to breach the British defences and smash them before they could embark and sail away.

But no one knew how deep the English forces were, or how they were employed. That was what Colonel Gerard was going to find out. Marshal Massena surmised if any man could accomplish this mission, Gerard was the man. His orders were simple. On Massena's own magnificent war-horse, Voltigeur, Gerard would out-flank the British lines and under darkness, cross over. Then, on the swiftest steed in the French Cavalry, he would race across the centre of the countryside, marking positions as he came upon them, then, crossing the English lines on the other flank, he would return and report.

That night, Gerard crossed into enemy territory unseen. But, instead of two lines of defence, there was a third, five miles behind the other two. At daybreak, a sentry spotted Gerard and a line of riflemen opened fire. Bullets whizzed by, one or two grazing Gerard's cloak, another pinging against his saddle.

Racing out of range, Gerard began to reign in Voltigeur, when the horse suddenly collapsed dead. A bullet had passed through the horse's chest, but the gallant steed had driven on until he could run no further.

Saddened and knowing a search party would be upon him shortly, Gerard stripped the dead horse and concealed the saddle and bridle amongst some thorny bushes. He then set out on foot, looking for some place to hide until nightfall, when he could attempt to make it back to his own lines.

After a few miles, Gerard came upon an Inn and stable. Slowly he snuck closer until he could make a quick dash across a courtyard into a stable. Up into the hayloft Gerard climbed and settled down to wait out the day. Through a small window he could look across the courtyard at the Inn. Gerard, unknowingly, had sought shelter in a British headquarters. Brilliant actually! No one would consider searching for him here, in the middle of a British command post.

The morning wore on and Gerard dozed, only to be awoken by the furious barking and baying of dozens of dogs. Peeking through the window, Gerard saw an amazing sight. Milling around below and out in the fields were hundreds of officers astride their horses, yelling and carrying on like madmen. Suddenly, Gerard understood. He had heard tales of how mad the English were for their beloved fox hunts. This had to be one! A fact confirmed when a young officer leaned out

an Inn window and asked a groom to saddle his hunting horse and bring it around front. This might be Gerard's chance.

He watched and waited until the groom led a high-spirited gelding out front. The animal was magnificent! Gerard left his hiding place, raced outside and in one motion bounded into the saddle. With one dig of his spurs the animal was off and running.

Before anyone could react, Gerard had jumped a fence, raced across a field and disappeared into a forest grove. As he made for the high ground, Gerard heard the "Yo, Yo, Yo" call of the foxhunt. The horse, trained to be a hunter, could hardly be restrained. Gerard managed long enough however, to imprint in his mind the disposition of Wellington's troops, whose camps extended for miles along the valley below.

Suddenly, hounds flashed by on the hillside below, followed by a long line of huntsmen in all types and styles of military uniforms. Gerard's horse could not be held back any longer and it surged ahead, almost throwing Gerard out of the saddle.

As Gerard and his mount galloped into the middle of the pack, he stretched out low over the horse's neck to avoid detection. But no one seemed to notice, they were all too intent upon the hunt. Gerard realised that his uniform hadn't caused any suspicion amongst so many others and he began to immerse himself into the thrill of the chase.

Gradually, Gerard overtook the field, until he was right in the forefront with four other riders. The dogs criss-crossing in front of them were slowing them down however. Feeling his blood surging and never one to shun a challenge, Gerard gave his mount free rein. The horse plunged straight through the dog pack, leaving everyone behind. Ahead, the fox swerved and turned. Gerard drew his sabre and after a couple of swipes and misses, he managed to connect, separating the head of the fox from its tail.

Behind him, hunters yelled their approval. Gerard waved his arm in recognition and continued galloping onward, toward the French lines only a mile or two away. Realising they had been duped and the man ahead of them was a Frenchie, the English took chase. But Gerard's lead was too great and he trotted across the French lines as the English riders reined in their horses. Gerard waved at them merrily and watched as the English shook their fists in the air and shouted curses. To Gerard, their yells were like roars of approval for a man who had proven himself courageous, resourceful and very, very French.

EPISODE SEVEN: HOW THE BRIGADIER SAVED AN ARMY

After his exhilarating English "fox hunt," Colonel Gerard was the darling of the brigade, his exploits of dashing, derring-do the talk of cavalryman and infantryman alike for weeks afterwards.

But for Gerard, life as one of three aides-de-camp serving Marshal Massena was a boring, routine affair. In March, 1811, after bottling up Wellington's forces for six months, the French army had to make a momentous decision. Launch an all-out attack, which most of the high command were convinced would end in failure. Or, withdraw to new positions on the Portuguese-French border. With the countryside picked clean by scavenging troopers and with no forage for the horses, Massena made the painful decision to retreat.

But the task was doubly difficult, because the French forces were divided in two. Massena's army on the right flank and that of Clausel some fifteen miles away on the left flank. Messengers sent to co-ordinate withdrawal between the two never made it, due to the surrounding countryside being under the control of a marauding band of guerrillas led by the notorious chief, Manuêlo, known as "the smiler." Anyone falling into his hands was sure to suffer a painful, cruel death.

Between the two camps lay two small mountains. On top of both were two mounds of timber, ready to act as beacons when ignited. When the one closest to Massena's encampment was lit at the hour of midnight, it meant immediate withdrawal for Clausel and his troops. Back to the main French lines. To acknowledge compliance, the beacon on Clausel's mountain peak would be lit in reply.

With no other way to inform Clausel about the forthcoming retreat, Massena decided to send one of his aides to ignite the beacon. When Captain Cortex did not return and the mountaintop was still dark at midnight, Massena cursing sent for another aide, Captain Duplessis. That night at midnight, the mountaintop was still dark.

Finally, Massena summoned Colonel Gerard and told him it was imperative that the beacon be lit tonight. If not, the French army would begin their evacuation and the troops of Clausel would be left behind, surrounded by the English army and Manuêlo's Portuguese brigands.

Gerard, after much evaluation, decided the safest way to cover the distance between the camp and the mountain, would be on foot.

At dawn, Gerard passed through the French picket lines into groves of vineyards and made his way to a small village. There he observed three peasants loading wine casks onto a wagon. He noticed some of the barrels were empty, which gave him an idea.

Once the wagon was loaded, the peasants went inside the Inn to eat and drink. Stealthily, Gerard crept up to the wagon, sprang onto the deck and concealed himself inside an empty cask. Now, all he had to do was wait until the wagon reached the woods at the foot of the mountain, jump off and disappear into the trees.

After what seemed like an eternity, the wagon creaked to a stop. Gerard, doubled-over and stiff in

every joint gently began to massage his calves and legs. Outside, he could hear men laughing and joking and the sounds of casks being unloaded.

Suddenly, his cask was dragged to the tailgate of the wagon and dropped to the ground. Looking up, Gerard found himself staring at a gun barrel and the face of a very ugly brigand. Slowly, Gerard stood up. He was surrounded by guerrillas, on a narrow mountain trail. Instantly, Gerard reacted. He pushed on the barrel until it toppled over and rolled off the trail. Down he bounced, crashing over rocks, bullets whizzing past and pinging off the cask. Then, he was flying through the air. Finally, the cask smashed into a tree and flew apart, flinging Gerard further down the slope, until he crashed to a halt amidst a thicket of bushes.

Scrambling to his feet, Gerard ran until he could run no further. Resting and trying to catch his breath, Gerard heard moaning and groaning. On the other side of a rock formation, lay someone in pain, mumbling in French. Gerard crept closer. The person lying there was none other than Duplessis, mortally wounded.

As Gerard held his fellow officer in his arms, Duplessis told him Cortex had been captured and tortured by Manuelo. He had escaped thanks to the help of a guerilla named De Pombal. But, his wound was fatal and here he would die. With one final shudder and sigh, Duplessis fell back dead. As Gerard lowered him to the ground, a figure appeared. It was De Pombal. To reassure Gerard that he was not an enemy of the French, but an avowed enemy of the accursed Manuelo, De Pombal lifted his shirt. His back was oozing with blood, criss-crossed by whip marks, a gift from the guerrilla leader. One of Manuelo's most trusted lieutenants, he had been lashed for an insignificant infraction of camp rules and to satisfy the guerrilla leader's penchant for cruelty. But he had punished the wrong man! No one could do this to a Portuguese grandee without paying the price!

If Gerard would help him and eight other disenchanting men reach French lines, he would assist Gerard in lighting the beacon.

Suddenly, De Pombal's demeanour changed. Striking him with the barrel of his gun, he ordered Gerard to rise, just as several well armed and vicious looking brigands emerged from the woods. Picking up the dead officer Duplessis, and prodding Gerard forward, the group headed for the rebel encampment.

Manuelo, "The Smiler," had a huge grin on his face when he saw Gerard being led into camp. This was his third captive French officer in as many days. Gerard looked around and the first thing that caught his attention was the signal pyre in the centre of the camp. So close and yet so far. Somehow, he must contrive a way to set it afire, even if it meant his life.

Brought before Manuelo, Gerard was offered an easy death. The death of his choice, if he told the rebel leader the disposition of the French army's positions. Gerard now knew what he must do.

He told Manuelo he would tell him everything he wanted to know, if he would be allowed to be burned alive, on the wooden mound in the centre of the camp, precisely at midnight.

An incredulous Manuelo, delighted at the Frenchman's bravado, readily agreed. Long into the night, Gerard divulged everything he knew about the French army's dispositions and intentions, including their preparations for a general retreat. Satisfied, Manuelo ordered Gerard taken to a hut where he was given food and wine and the opportunity to make peace with God before being led to his fiery death.

Minutes before the hour of midnight, De Pombal and several of his men entered the hut. They took off Gerard's coat and placed it on the dead Duplessis. Then, they tied him to a stake and wound a tight bandage around his face. Motioning Gerard to remain inside, they carried the body to the pyre and stood it upright.

Exactly at midnight, the beacon was lit. As the fire raged and licked at the body of his dead comrade, De Pombal returned and tossed Gerard some clothes. Now dressed as one of the brigands, Gerard, De Pombal and his men slipped out of camp and into the woods. After hours of slipping silently between guard posts the group emerged onto the grassy plain within sight of the French lines.

As Gerard looked back he shouted in triumph. Not one, but two fires burned brightly in the night. Clause's answering beacon was a glowing tribute to the success of Gerard's most trying mission.

EPISODE EIGHT: HOW THE KING HELD THE BRIGADIER

After his capture at Oporto, Gerard and other French prisoners were sent by boat to spend their internment in the notorious English prison at Dartmore, affectionately called by the inmates, "Hotel France."

From the moment he arrived, Gerard began planning his escape and eventual reunion with his beloved Hussars.

Always amiable and full of good cheer, Gerard was less than thrilled with his cellmate, a dour officer of the Flying Artillery squadron, Beaumont. Reticent and stiff-necked as he was, Gerard enlisted him in his escape plan. Many before him had tried and failed and were then confined below ground in dismal dungeon cells.

This however, was not something Gerard entertained for a moment. His plan was based on simplicity, dash and derring do.

For weeks, with a digging tool fashioned from a metal bar taken from his bed frame, Gerard dug away at the concrete of a bar that divided the small window of their cell in half. Then, he spent another week, enlarging the window, until it was big enough to squeeze through. To get over the wall, Gerard meant to stand on Beaumont's shoulders, who stood over six-foot tall, then propel himself to the top of the spiked wall. Then, Gerard proposed to help Beaumont up and over.

On the night of their escape, a welcome English storm blew in with sheets of rain and howling wind. As Gerard began to crawl out the window, his cellmate began screaming for the guards! Gerard froze for a moment, but when there was no answer to his cellmate's cries for help, Gerard dropped back into the cell and laid the man out cold with the metal bar. Gerard was shocked. How could a fellow Frenchman act in such a dastardly, cowardly manner?

Seeing no movement from Beaumont, Gerard bound and gagged him, then laid him out on his cot. Next, he took the sheets off the bed, tore them into lengths and made a rope sufficient for the task at hand.

Once again, Gerard squirmed through the window opening, dropped to the ground and raced for the wall. Luckily, with one attempt, he secured the rope to the spikes on the top and climbed up, dropping down onto the other side. Now, all that lay between Gerard and freedom was a second, somewhat lower wall. At that moment, a guard with a musket appeared. Gerard didn't wait to be discovered. He raced for the second wall, leaped up, scrambled over, hit the ground on the outside and raced for the wild moor beyond.

Many miles later, Gerard saw two lights glowing in the dark. They belonged to a coach that had lost a wheel. Boldly, Gerard approached the carriage. Inside was a beautiful young lady, the wife of Sir Charles Meredith. He had set off in the storm to find help, leaving his lady alone, luckily for Gerard. Being a gallant and a defender of the weaker sex, Gerard offered his assistance. But one look at his dishevelled appearance and unkempt prison garb, the lady became frightened and withdrew into a corner of the coach.

On the seat was her husband's cloak. Not wanting to frighten her further, Gerard commandeered the coat, promising to return it by boat-post when he arrived back in France. With a bow and a flourish and kiss on the hand, Gerard melted away into the night.

Knowing the wind blew from the North, Gerard walked into it, surmising that his pursuers would assume he had travelled South to the Coast. Gerard intended to walk at least twenty miles inland, then break east and head for the coast on the Irish Sea. There he could hire, or steal a fishing boat and make for the coast of Ireland. Once on Irish soil he could wait for a French frigate patrolling the coast, get aboard and sail home.

When dawn broke, Gerard sought shelter on a wooded knoll. As he peered over the crest to get his bearings, his heart sank. There was Dartmoor Prison, right before his eyes. Sometime, during the night, the wind must have changed and he had travelled south, right back to where he'd started. Discouraged, but not defeated, Gerard hunkered down, covered himself with his cloak and tried to sleep, figuring he was probably as safe here as anywhere. After all, no one would expect him to be hiding so close to the prison. Hungry and thirsty, Gerard searched the pockets of Sir Charles' coat. Inside he found some rolled up buns, a flask of brandy and a letter addressed to the Governor of Dartmouth Prison. Being discreet, Gerard decided to leave the letter unopened and mail it at the first possible opportunity. After all, a gentleman's personal correspondence is sacrosanct.

That night, with the stars to guide him on his journey North, Gerard set out once more.

About mid-day and fifteen or so miles later, Gerard came upon an isolated cottage. Hiding in the tall grass he observed the place for over an hour. The cottage door opened and out came two men. One was wearing an immense overcoat that dwarfed his already small stature. The other watched as the coat-draped man went running up the hill, towards Gerard's hiding place.

Gerard decided to intercept the small fellow, take his greatcoat and be on his way. But, when he accosted the fellow on the path the man went into the famous English boxer's stance. Gerard kicked out his foot to trip him and was felled with a single blow to the head.

When he awoke, Gerard was surprised to find himself lying on a cot. Seeing he was conscious, the elder of the two offered him some soup and told him he had just been knocked out by England's most promising young lightweight fighter. But, alas. Gerard had managed to connect with his foot and had injured the fellow's ankle. Already it was swollen and turning black and blue. Not good, since the lad was supposed to fight for the championship and a portion of a huge purse in just two days. But, all was not lost. Knowing Gerard was an escaped prisoner, the elder man had sent a boy from the nearby village to report his capture. The reward was a respectable twenty pounds.

Gerard offered to triple the reward if they would just let him be on his way. He promised on his honour and word as a gentleman to have the money sent to them from France. As the two contemplate Gerard's offer, horsemen pull up at the cottage door. There in front of Gerard was the Governor of Dartmoor prison with six mounted warders. Knowing his great gamble had failed, but still the gentleman with his sense of humour intact, Gerard reaches into his coat, pulls out the letter and hands it to the Governor.

Surprised to find the letter addressed to him, but curious, the Governor breaks the seal, reads intently and breaks into hilarious guffaws of laughter.

An amazed Gerard stands there and is stunned to discover that he is a free man. The letter states that he is to be exchanged for an English officer held in France. Overcome with the preposterous hilarity of the situation, Gerard breaks into gales of laughter and falls to the ground holding his sides in disbelief.

In only a few days, Colonel Gerard will be back in France once again, leading the charge at the head of his beloved regiment of Conflans.

Lord George Dacre. The couple had been separated for months because of Dacre's immoral behaviour and debauched lifestyle. Shocked to discover that Lady Jane was not a blushing virgin, but a married woman, Gerard, ever the gallant, told Jane her secret was safe and if she ever needed a protector, he would be honoured to act as her champion.

Several days after the encounter with Lord Dacre, Lord Rufton burst into Gerard's bedroom. His sister was missing and it was Rufton's belief that none other than Dacre had kidnaped her. Requesting Gerard's assistance to act as his second, the two rode off to Dacre's estate.

When they arrived, Dacre was calm, composed and very sure of himself. He admitted that he had abducted Lady Jane. However, under English law he had every right to do so and any interference from her brother was totally unjustified and illegal.

Gerard, concerned for Jane's safety and under no obligations not to intervene took matters into his own hands. With his riding glove, Gerard slapped Dacre's face. The insult was too much and Dacre demanded immediate satisfaction. Stepping to a side-table, he withdrew a case of duelling pistols and placed them on the dining room table. Calling for his butler to act as his second, Dacre laid out the rules. Both men would reach across the table for a pistol and fire when ready.

Gerard nodded, calmly and coldly. Lord Rufton however, refused to be a participant. With no second to back him, the duel, under English law would be construed as a simple act of murder.

Dacre, not to be denied, asked his butler to summon Colonel Berkeley, a retired guardsman. When the situation was explained, the Colonel agreed to act as Gerard's second.

Both men took positions at either end of the table. The Colonel raised a handkerchief and let it fall. Both men reached across the table for their pistols. Gerard, being the shorter of the two could not reach his gun in time. Dacre aimed and fired. The shot creased Gerard's forehead. Dacre sat back calmly and waited for Gerard to fire.

At that moment, Lady Jane rushed into the study. She implored Gerard not to fire and kill her husband. All between them had been forgiven and forgotten. She loved Lord Dacre with all her heart and he loved her. Dismissing his wife's pleadings with a wave of his hand, Dacre demanded Gerard take his shot as honour dictated.

Gerard aimed and at the last moment, turned the gun aside and fired. The shot blew the cigar out of Colonel Berkeley's mouth. Gerard hurried to apologise. He only meant to knock the ash off the end of his cigar and didn't mean to blacken the Colonel's whiskers. Bowing to Lady Jane and her husband, Gerard turned and walked out of the room. Honour had been satisfied.

Years later, Gerard learned that the Dacres were one of the happiest families in all of England and had named their eldest son Etienne, an honour that pleased Gerard immensely.

EPISODE TEN: HOW THE BRIGADIER LOST HIS EAR

During the Italian campaign, Napoleon's army occupied the city of Venice. One of the first things Napoleon ordered was the confiscation and transportation of the best Venetian art pieces to Paris, including works by Titians and Angelus. Unfortunately, the common soldier destroyed many famous statues, icons and church tapestries. This angered the Venetians to such a degree, they organised a secret society that murdered many soldiers and officers. Many of their bodies were found floating in the canals, or never found at all.

It was during this period of "revenge killings" that Colonel Gerard was transferred to Venice to act as aide-de-camp to General Suchet, whose infantry division held the city.

Upon arrival, Gerard settled in and made the acquaintance of a very beautiful woman, Lucia, whose grandfather had once been the Doge of Venice. Even though she was promised in marriage to a young nobleman, Lorenzo, Gerard's seductive charms soon had her falling helplessly into his arms. One evening, Gerard received a letter from his darling, imploring him to come to her. She was in trouble and only he could save her.

Always the gentleman and protector of women, especially young, well-formed ones, Gerard boarded the gondola that had been sent for him and was rowed off into the night. Lulled by the motion of the lapping waves, Gerard began to doze off, when suddenly, he was seized from behind, in a vice-like grip. Unable to move, with excruciating pressure being applied to his chest, Gerard blacked out.

When he awoke, he found himself in a dank, dripping, underground cell. Feeling like his ribs had been crushed, Gerard took stock of his situation. With no way out, Gerard's only hope was to overpower the guards when they opened the cell door. After what seemed like hours, the cell door opened. Without waiting to see how many men were outside in the corridor, Gerard propelled himself through the opening, knocking men aside. He raced down the corridor, up some stairs and burst into a huge room. Gerard realised immediately he was in some Venetian palace and began looking for an exit. Avoiding those guards searching for him, Gerard raced up and down hallways, until he found himself facing two, immense double doors. With guards racing toward him, Gerard pushed a door open and found himself facing a tribune of twelve mask-clad judges. Before them stood a young officer, Captain Auret. Demanding to know why he had been seized and on what charges, Gerard advanced toward the tribunal.

The chief judge ordered him seized and taken back to his cell. If he resisted, he was to be instantly killed and his body thrown into the canal.

Back in his cell, Gerard re-evaluated his position. One wall was made of planks, rather than stone. Furiously, Gerard set to work. Finally, he pried off two planks and squeezed through, only to find himself in another cell. This one with four stone walls. Disappointed, Gerard returned to his own cell, replaced the wooden boards and waited.

Later that night, the cell next door was opened and someone thrust inside. Gerard could hear weeping and moaning. The sounds were that of a woman!

Carefully, Gerard removed the planks and squeezed through into the next cell. Before him, huddled in a corner was Lucia!

After a tearful embrace, Lucia told Gerard that she hadn't summoned him. It was all a trick to lure him to his death. He was to be executed for having loved her and being one of the accursed, occupying Frenchman. She was to be punished for having dallied with the enemy. But, being the granddaughter of a Doge, her punishment wasn't death, but the mark of shame. One of her lovely ears was to be severed! They would be coming for her soon, to carry out the mutilation.

Suddenly, Gerard had an inspiration. Taking off Lucia's cloak, he placed her in his cell, then wrapping himself up, he returned to her cell. If he could surprise the guards, Gerard could possibly fight his way out. But then, how would that help Lucia? Gerard decided to wait and seize whatever chance was offered.

The door opened and a burly guard entered. Behind him in the corridor were several others, heavily armed. Gerard curled up even tighter into Lucia's cloak. A hand reached out and grabbed him by the hair. A quick jolt of pain, then blood coursed down his cheek. The guard had sliced off the top of Gerard's ear! Realising his subterfuge had worked, Gerard just lay there. Giving the tip of an ear to protect his love didn't seem like too great a sacrifice. But, when he escaped, the man who had disfigured him would lose more than just an ear.

Tensing himself and coiling his body to strike, Gerard heard screams and yells from the corridor. French soldiers had arrived. Unfortunately, as far as Gerard was concerned, not in the nick of time. As his guards raced out the door, Gerard lunged through the wooden partition into Lucia's cell and clasped her in his arms.

Later that night, with his wounded ear being attended to, Gerard learned that Lucia's fiancée, Lorenzo, who had denounced them both to the tribunal had a change of heart. When he discovered she was going to be marked for life, he appealed to the French authorities to save her.

Thus ended Gerard's brief, but passionate affair with Lucia, who retired to a convent when the body of her betrothed, Lorenzo, was found floating in a Venetian canal. For Gerard, the loss of a portion of his ear on behalf of a lady, only made him more endearing and desirable to the gentler sex.

EPISODE ELEVEN: HOW THE BRIGADIER PLAYED FOR A KINGDOM

After six months of a weary, foot slogging march through the vast, frozen wastes of Russia, Napoleon's defeated, rag-tag Grand Army re-crossed the borders of their once friendly ally, Germany.

Now, however, a different mood prevailed throughout the German states, as Colonel Gerard was about to discover. Summoned by his superior, Gerard is ordered to leave the remnants of his beloved Hussar regiment and ride ahead to take delivery of new mounts and replacements being sent to replenish Napoleon's near-starving army.

Fighting congested traffic along clogged roads, Gerard decided to take a longer, but quicker route at the Altenburg junction and ride across country. Letting his mare Violette have free rein, the two tore up the miles. Along the way, Gerard experienced something he never had before, sullen resentment and antagonism from the peasant villagers and farmers in their fields. Gerard also noticed the letter "T" displayed on signs, burned into tree trunks and hanging from banners in windows.

As he cantered along a wooded trail, a figure staggered out of the forest, bleeding profusely from a jagged wound in his neck. It was a fellow officer, the Marquis of Chateau St. Arnaud. The man, knowing he was dying, removed a sealed letter from his coat pocket. He implored Gerard to deliver this letter, a message from Napoleon himself, in person to the Prince of Saxe-Felstein at his castle in Hof.

The Marquis told Gerard a group of German knights and nobles were trying to organise a rebellion against Napoleon, under the "T" banner, a reference to the Teutonic Knights of old. The Prince of Saxe-Felstein, still loyal to the Emperor must be warned so he could rally his men to Napoleon's banner. The Marquis pressed the letter into Gerard's hand, pleaded with his eyes, and died.

Mounting his mare, Gerard rode off at break-neck speed. But, only a few miles away, near the small village of Lobenstein, his horse threw a shoe. Leading his limping horse, Gerard entered the village and approached the village smithy. While waiting for his horse to be re-shod, Gerard walked toward the village tavern. As he approached, he was appalled to see a young woman, incredibly beautiful, obviously of highborn status, being surrounded and manhandled by a group of local townsfolk. Immediately, Gerard went to her rescue, dispatching the crowd simply by drawing his rapier.

The woman, grateful to Gerard for his timely rescue, told him she was the Polish Countess Palotta, a friend of the French, which was why the people were abusing her. In this part of the country, they have no love for the French and are avid supporters of the secret "T" society.

Comforting the woman as best he can, Gerard leaves her and goes to find food and wine. When he returns, the Countess has miraculously disappeared and worse. She has stolen his letter! Cursing his stupidity, Gerard, with no letter, or proof of his mission decides to hurry on to the castle anyway, and demand a personal audience with the Prince.

Upon his arrival, he is refused admittance to the Prince. Drawing his sword, Gerard is about to fight his way inside when a beautiful woman appears in the doorway to the great hall. It is none other than the Countess Palotta, who in reality is the Princess of Saxe-Felstein. Angered by the woman's chicanery and duplicity, Gerard pushes past her and enters the great hall. There at the head of the table sits the Prince, with a roomful of nobles, soldiers, statesmen and advisors.

Without further ado, Gerard addresses the Prince, relaying the Emperor's message. The Prince listened and then responded. "We have heard the voice of France. Now let someone speak for Germany." At that request, a young poet-soldier leaped onto the table and began to recite in song and verse, the glorious legend of the Teutonic Knights. The room resounded with applause. Obviously the Prince was no longer an ally of France. With heavy heart, Gerard took leave.

Outside the stable however, Gerard is grabbed, trussed and about to be strung up, when the poet-soldier and the Princess intervene.

They demand Gerard's release and are enraged that an envoy of Napoleon, even though he is now their enemy, should be treated in such an uncavalier manner.

As he mounts his horse, the Princess returns Napoleon's letter, with the seal broken, to Gerard. Now he can prove the mission was accomplished, even though the end result was not in favour of the Empire. From that moment on, there would be no welcome place for a Frenchman on the German side of the Rhine. As he rode away, Gerard realised that a terrible price would have to be paid if France were to occupy and rule the German kingdoms.

EPISODE TWELVE: HOW THE BRIGADIER RODE TO MINSK

During Napoleon's retreat from Moscow and the Grand Army's trek across the steppes of Russia, they were attacked and harried night and day by marauding groups of mounted Cossacks and Uhlans.

The columns of men, horses and equipment stretched for over twenty miles. The snowbanks on either side were littered with the dead and dying. Like wolves nipping at the heels of a wounded stag, Russian guerrillas tore off chunks of the retreating columns and it was Gerard's duty with his surviving Hussars of Conflans to protect Marshal Ney's rear-guard forces.

One evening, Ney summoned Gerard to his command post. He ordered Gerard to take a detachment of hand picked cavalymen and ride to Minsk. There, he was to capture the grain reserves, gather whatever wagons were available and bring the food supplies back to the army. If he failed in his mission, thousands of soldiers would die from starvation.

After a furious all-night ride, avoiding skirmishes with roving bands of Cossacks, Gerard and his men came upon a small farmhouse on the outskirts of a village. In the distance, the church spires of Minsk could be clearly seen. As they rode out of the woods, Gerard caught sight of an Uhlan officer, racing away on a huge horse.

Spurring Violette, Gerard and his troops gave chase. No match for his fleet mare, Gerard soon gained on the fleeing Russian. As the officer turned and fired, the bullet grazing Gerard's cheek, he knocked the man off his horse with the guard of his sword.

As the officer tumbled to the ground, Sergeant Oudin jumped from his horse, ran to the fallen man and seized him by the throat, preventing him from swallowing a piece of paper.

The note was addressed to a Hetman Platoff, but being written in Russian, the message was indecipherable. No one in the troop could translate it and the Russian officer refused. Gerard decided to seek assistance at the farmhouse. Surely someone there could tell him what the message said.

Sure enough. The farmer's daughter, a lovely lass named Sophie told Gerard she would translate the message if he would set the Russian prisoner free. If he was taken back to the French army, he would surely starve or freeze to death. Gerard, never one to turn down a lady's request agreed, on one condition. The officer, Captain Barakoff was asked to give his word of honour that he would stay confined in the farmhouse for the next twenty-four hours and not notify anyone of the company's passing and to show gratitude to the first Frenchman who falls into his hands. Barakoff immediately gave his word. Then Sophie translated the message. "If the French come to Minsk, all is lost!"

Upon hearing that, Gerard and his troop, believing Minsk was lightly defended, rode off at a gallop. As they entered the outskirts of Minsk, they found no resistance. But, when they rode into the Town Square, a volley of fire erupted. Hussars, riddled with bullets fell from their horses. Gerard himself was nearly killed, but managed to wheel Violette around. As he dashed out of the square, a

huge Cossack leapt onto his back and hurled him to the ground.

When he gained consciousness, Gerard found himself prisoner with the other survivors of his troop. Over half his men had been slaughtered, all because he had trusted the lies of a young Russian woman. Never in his life had Gerard felt so foolish, or betrayed.

Sergine, the Cossack leader, a brute of a man, had Gerard tied to his horse and his men tethered together behind. As they stumbled through the snow, Sergine took great delight in lashing the Hussars with his riding quirt. Once, he lashed out at Gerard, who caught the whip in his free hand. As he stared into the giant's eyes with a look of pure hatred, the man laughed, but something he saw in Gerard made him back away.

Eventually, the Cossacks and their prisoners approached the farmhouse. Sophie and the Russian officer greeted Sergine. Gerard was overcome with anger at the duplicity of women.

As he sat with his men, shivering in the snow, Seregine came over and informed him that the young lady had interceded on his behalf.

She told him Gerard had released Captain Barakoff on his own parole and saved him from certain death. She implored Seregine to allow Gerard to be billeted inside the farmhouse, as a courtesy for his kind action. Seregine was willing to comply, if Gerard would give him word that he would not attempt to escape. Gerard refused.

Just then, Barakoff and Sophie interceded. The Russian Captain asked Gerard to pledge his word to him. Once again, Gerard refused. Finally, Sophie asked to have a private word with the prisoner. As Gerard listened with cold indifference, Sophie told him that Captain Barakoff was her fiancée and as a Russian patriot she had no choice but to misinterpret the message. She begged for his forgiveness and pleaded with him to accept their offer of hospitality. Gerard, moved by Sophie's entreaty and honesty agreed, if he could pledge his word to her. Reluctantly, Seregine agreed and Gerard was moved into the cellar of the house.

Just before dawn, Barakoff entered the cellar with a bottle of wine and a steaming-hot bowl of stew. He told Gerard to make himself ready and departed.

A little later, Sophie arrived and handed Gerard a key. This would open a small door in the back of the cellar. Outside, Violette was saddled and ready. Gerard thanked her but refused. He was under her parole and honour would not allow him to break it. Sophie kissed him on the cheek and told him she released him from his word. Placing the key in his hand, Sophie left.

Not wasting any time, Gerard unlocked the door, crept along a stone corridor, opened a grating and climbed out. There was Violette and Captain Barakoff. As Gerard swung onto Violette, Barakoff gave him the password, "Poltava," that would enable him to pass through the Russian lines.

It was fortunate that he did, for twice Gerard had to pass through Russian pickets. Finally, he was through and in the distance he could see the long Russian column winding through the snow.

Suddenly, Gerard heard the thundering sounds of hoofbeats. Closing on him from behind was the hated Cossack, Seregine. Gerard waited until the Cossack had ridden alongside. Angry at Gerard's escape and accusing him of not being a man of honour, Seregine drew his long-bladed cutlass and charged. Gerard waited until the last second, swung under Seregine's slashing attack and drove his sword point into his throat. Seregine tumbled from his horse and lay dying on the snow, snapping his teeth like a savage wolf.

Gerard rejoined the column and reported his failure to Marshal Ney. Ney just shrugged and dismissed Gerard's failure as just one amongst many that had befallen the once proud Grand Army.

EPISODE THIRTEEN: HOW THE BRIGADIER WON HIS MEDAL

With Paris under siege and the major body of the French army regrouping at Rheims, Napoleon entrusted Brigadier Gerard of the Hussars and Major Charpentier of the Horse Grenadiers with the mission of their lives. Both men were to travel through enemy lines, by alternate routes, with a letter to Napoleon's brother, the King of Spain, outlining the proposed plan of attack to relieve the siege. With one hundred thousand men already in Paris, it was imperative for Joseph Buonaparte to hold on for forty-eight hours, until Napoleon's reinforcements could arrive.

Because time was of the essence, both messengers were forbidden to deviate from their routes, a straight-line dash through heavily held enemy territory. If one, or the other, or both, managed to succeed, a medal of honour would be their reward.

At Bazoches, the two messengers were to separate. Charpentier to make for Paris through the towns of Oulchy and Neuilly. Gerard by a Northern route via Braine, Soissons and Senlis.

At the juncture, both men went their separate ways. Gerard, on his fleet mare Violette had the more difficult assignment of the two. In his path were 80,000 elite, battle-tested Prussian cavalymen, reinforced by 50,000 fierce, barbaric Cossacks, the scourge of Western Europe.

On the outskirts of Soissons, Gerard learned from a peasant woman that the town was heavily occupied by Prussians. After resting his mare, Gerard decided to make a run through the centre of town, believing the enemy would never consider such a bold manoeuvre.

Gerard and Violette galloped like the wind through Soissons, leaving surprised Prussians in their wake. Those horsemen bold enough to give chase were soon dispatched by Gerard's sword, or outrun by the swift Violette.

Outside Senlis, Gerard came upon a detachment of Polish Lancers, being led by none other than his old friend, Bouvet. They were on a reconnoitring mission and had learned that a squadron of Cossacks was looting the town. Upon hearing that, Gerard challenged the Polish detachment to follow him into Senlis and teach the Cossack devils a lesson they would never forget. The Poles, who hated the Cossacks with a vengeance, were eager to attack and shed some Cossack blood.

Into Senlis they rode, hacking down and lancing every Cossack they saw, most of them too drunk to offer more than token resistance. Except for a group who had occupied the Mayor's house. They fought like devils and for a time repulsed the Polish Lancers. But eventually, they were worn down and slaughtered.

After the battle, inside the Mayor's house, Bouvet discovered a wine cellar. Gerard, after rubbing down and feeding Violette joined him for a victory celebration. That was a fatal mistake and almost proved Gerard's undoing. As the two drank and caught up on old times, they heard musket shots ring out from the streets above. In a matter of minutes, Prussian Dragoons killed the Polish Lancers to a man. It would only be a matter of time before Bouvet and Gerard were discovered in the wine cellar. Looking for another way out, Gerard spied a small door, hidden by wine casks. As he pried the door open, Prussian soldiers started down the stairs. Bouvet leapt to the attack and

fought them off long enough for Gerard to squeeze himself through the opening. Pushing the door closed behind him, Gerard, with tears streaming down his face cursed himself for not being able to go to his friend's aid. But the Emperor's commission had to come first. Finally, silence. The Prussians had raided the cellar and gone back upstairs to drink and rest.

Suddenly, Gerard heard a scurrying sound. Someone else was hiding in the storage room. Slowly, Gerard crept forward, until he heard breathing. He lunged and his sword point came to rest on the chest of a very frightened, very young Cossack officer.

The fellow turned out to be Count Boutkine, a member of the Russian aristocracy, assigned as a liaison officer with the Cossacks. Gerard, weighing the possibilities of getting out of this situation alive, had a brilliant idea. Instructing the officer to undress, Gerard exchanged uniforms. Then, binding and gagging the Count, Gerard made ready to initiate a desperate plan. If he could pretend to be a drunken Cossack officer, maybe he could reach his horse and simply ride out of town, before anyone discovered the deception.

Hoisting a sack of grain onto his shoulder and carrying a small cask of wine under his arm, Gerard climbed up the stairs, staggered into the room above and out the door into the street.

Drinking from the open cask, Gerard weaved his way toward his horse Violette. But instead of mounting her, Gerard threw his sack over the saddle, swung up onto a shaggy Cossack horse and with Violette in tow, trotted down the street toward the outskirts of town.

At the town crossroads, Gerard came face to face with a group of Cossacks riding towards him. One huge, hairy Cossack, realising Gerard was an impostor, charged forward. Quick to react, Gerard leaped from the Cossack horse onto the back of Violette, hurling the sack into the path of the Uhlan rider. His horse stumbled and Gerard raced past, with a detachment of Cossacks hot on his trail.

But none of their horses were any match for the swiftness of Violette and Gerard soon out-paced them. Before him lay an open road to Paris. It was with great relief when Gerard came upon the first detachment of French dragoons. Against all odds, he had managed to realise the impossible.

Upon delivery of Napoleon's letter to Joseph and Talleyrand, both men were astounded, but applauded Gerard for his astounding accomplishment. Then, Joseph gave Gerard a letter to take back to the Emperor. This time, he returned by a more circuitous, safer route. Upon presentation to Napoleon, Gerard was taken aback by the Emperor's fury and anger. Napoleon couldn't believe that Gerard had successfully made his way through occupied territory and was enraged. Gerard didn't know what he'd done to cause his Emperor to be so disgusted. Until, softening, Napoleon gently explained to Gerard that the message he was sent to deliver was a subterfuge, a lie about his battle plans. Little did anyone believe that any officer could deliver it safely. However, all was not lost. Charpentier had been captured and the enemy was now in possession of Napoleon's misleading battle strategy. So, all was well and Gerard, even though he succeeded when he should have failed, would not be punished. Instead, he would be rewarded with the nation's highest honour, the Medal of Honour.

EPISODE FOURTEEN: HOW THE BRIGADIER WAS TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL

It was during the Campaign of France, a mere six months before the defeat of Napoleon's forces and his exile to Elba, that Brigadier Etienne Gerard was given his most important assignment, by the Emperor himself.

Surrounded on all sides by enemies and turncoats and amidst the desertions of soldiers, officers, even Marshals, Napoleon turned to one of his most loyal, steadfast and true campaigners for assistance.

Together with Colonel Despienne and Captain Tremeau, Gerard was summoned to an audience with the Prince of Neufchatel, one of Napoleon's oldest friends and confidantes.

Upon admittance into the Prince's chambers, Gerard was sworn to secrecy and offered the most distasteful proposal. The Prince begged Gerard to help bring the civil war to an end by betraying the Emperor, assisting in his capture and turning him over to the allies. Coldly, Gerard refused and was told to wait in an anteroom. Minutes later, he was joined by Despienne, who was angry and agitated to such a degree, he could not even speak. Suddenly, a roar of anger and a resounding crash emanated from the council room.

Gerard and Despienne rushed in, to find Tremeau strangling the Prince. As Gerard and Despienne tried to pull Tremeau off before he killed him, Napoleon came striding into the room. "Bravo" he yelled! "Well done." All action ceased as Napoleon congratulated his three officers for their loyalty and devotion. He explained that they had just passed the severest test and were not found lacking. This subterfuge was necessary because Napoleon needed men he could trust for a most delicate, top-secret mission.

The three officers were to travel to the first signpost outside Paris and await the arrival by coach of Countess Walewski. She would hand over a sealed packet, containing personal documents that would ensure the succession of Napoleon's son and heir, the King of Rome, to the French throne. The packet also included bank drafts in the amount of forty million francs and a legal document offering proof of Napoleon's divorce from Josephine.

Taking Gerard aside, the Emperor gave him instructions to take this packet to the ruins of Colombier and bury them deep, in a spot near the northeastern wall. Upon completion, Gerard would report back to the Emperor at his palace.

The three loyalists set off at once, Gerard riding his prized mare Violette. After a considerable wait at the crossroads' signpost, Countess Walewski's coach came into view.

At once, Gerard rode up and presented her with an amethyst ring as a sign of recognition. A look of grief and horror contorted her face. She had already entrusted the packet to another group of horsemen she mistook for the Emperor's emissaries.

With an oath on his lips, Gerard and his two companions raced down the road, hoping to overtake the impostors and retrieve the Emperor's papers.

Eventually, they caught up to the traitors. Shots were exchanged and Despienne fell from his horse, mortally wounded. Tremeau and one of the impostors engaged in a fierce cut and thrust broadsword duel, while Gerard raced after the third man.

As he gained ground, Gerard recognised the man as Colonel de Montluc, a fellow-officer who had killed Gerard's closest friend, Treville, in a duel outside Warsaw. Rumour abounded that Montluc had fired a second before the white flag was dropped, a cowardly, unmanly act that Gerard could now avenge.

Twisting in his saddle, Montluc fired several shots, wounding Violette. But the plucky mare raced on, until Gerard could draw close enough to place a bullet between the man's shoulder blades. Montluc dropped to the ground. Gerard dismounted and searched everywhere. No papers! Discouraged, Gerard, riding Montluc's steed with Violette trotting alongside, turned back. Along the way he saw Montluc's hat lying off the road. Picking it up, Gerard was exultant. Inside the headband was the Emperor's precious packet.

Spurring his horse, Gerard raced down the road to where his fallen companions lay dying. Kneeling beside Tremeau was none other than Napoleon. Gerard, with tears in his eyes, knelt down also, just as Tremeau sighed and tried to salute his Emperor.

Napoleon beckoned Gerard to his feet and asked whether he had retrieved the papers. Without a word, Gerard handed them over.

Napoleon swung onto his horse and beckoning Gerard to follow, the two rode off into the forest and the ruins of Columbier. Together, they buried the secret papers and departed. Napoleon swore Gerard to life-long secrecy and a promise that he would retrieve and return the papers to his Emperor, when summoned to do so.

Alas, the summons never came and even unto death, Gerard, the loyal soldier never revealed the existence of Napoleon's secret papers.

EPISODE FIFTEEN: HOW THE BRIGADIER BORE HIMSELF AT WATERLOO

During the battle of Waterloo, Brigadier Gerard was assigned to Napoleon's general staff as his personal aide-de-camp. With the battle about to be engaged, Gerard was both frustrated and anxious. His beloved Hussars of Conflans, without himself in command was about to attack the English cavalry on Wellington's right flank. If they were successful and broke through, Wellington's forces would be cut in two.

As Napoleon and his general staff looked on, an excited Marshal Soult rode up. Off in the distance, in a field between two forest stands, Soult had seen a column of soldiers marching behind the English lines. Napoleon studied the movement of men through his telescope. Exultant he motioned for Gerard. Pointing to the column, he instructed Gerard to mount his fastest horse and take a message to the commander of the on-coming force, Marshal Grouchy.

Gerard was to inform Grouchy to fall upon the English left flank and rear while Napoleon attacked from the front. Between them, they would crush and grind Wellington to pieces.

Instantly, Gerard was off and racing through the French lines on his swift steed, Violette. For a moment, Gerard considered running the gauntlet, straight through the English troops. Realising however that the success of his mission could result in a rout of the English army, he decided to act prudently and skirt the lines by riding through the forest. Mile after mile he rode, until at last he came upon the vanguard of Grouchy's forces. Just as he was about to intercept the out-riders a man came running out of an inn waving his arms for Gerard to stop. As he reined in, the innkeeper urged him to get out of sight until the horsemen had passed. The approaching riders were Prussians, not Frenchmen!

An astonished Gerard let the innkeeper guide his horse into the barn and then followed him inside the inn. The man, a Polish veteran who had fought with Napoleon's army in Russia and Poland had no love for Prussians. He urged Gerard to hide in their upstairs attic until the column passed by.

Peering through broken slats, Gerard had an unobstructed view of the road. For the next two hours, column after column of cavalry, infantry and cannon thundered by. This was the head of the Prussian General Blucher's army, supposedly defeated and routed two days ago by Marshal Ney. Somehow, they had regrouped and were fast marching to reinforce Wellington's rear.

As he watched and waited, several wounded officers and a surgeon took over the inn, accompanied by General Blucher and several aides.

An English officer, with blood and mud all over his tunic, staggered into the room with a message for the General. Wellington had turned the tide and the French forces were being beaten back. If Blucher could attack quickly, Napoleon's army would be annihilated. With a shout of joy, Blucher ordered his officers to rejoin their regiments and press on with all speed. Then, Blucher turned to a young dragoon, Count Stein. He ordered the Count to handpick eight of the best troopers in the Prussian army and set out at once to capture Napoleon.

With his army in disarray, Napoleon would leave the field and make for Paris, along the Charleroi

road. Capturing him would mean the collapse of the Grand Army and the end of any French resistance. As Stein left, Gerard knew he had to act - and act fast. Every minute was precious. Knowing no one was aware of his presence, Gerard relied on the element of surprise. He leaped out of the attic onto the floor below and before anyone could react, he tore out the door, into the stable and flung himself on Violette's back. Then, he charged straight through a line of marching infantry, into the woods and galloped away.

As he emerged from the woods, Gerard found himself in the middle of the battlefield. General Blucher was right. The French forces were in flight, men running everywhere. Small skirmishes were still being fought with total ferocity. As Violette raced across the field, Gerard hacked and slashed his way through English infantry, jumped over cannon emplacements and out-ran cavalry. With tears streaming down his face and outrage at what had become of the Grand Army, Gerard raced on until he found himself alone on the road to Charleroi. Ahead of him, Gerard saw the Royal Carriage.

Spurring on Violette, he pulled alongside the carriage and reined in. But before he could report the failure of his mission to Napoleon, Gerard saw Count Stein and a company of men coming down the road toward them. Knowing there was only one chance, Gerard leapt off his horse, swung into Napoleon's carriage and stripped him of his coat and hat. Then, without a word, Gerard leapt onto the Emperor's white stallion, waved his hat in the air and raced away.

Exactly as he had planned, Count Stein and his men swerved off the road, into the field and chased after Gerard. Two dragoons rode on toward the royal carriage. But Gerard knew they wouldn't be a match for Napoleon's personal guardsman, an old grenadier named Bertrand.

Now, Gerard had to lead the others away and keep them thinking they were chasing the Emperor himself.

Keeping a respectful distance between himself and the Prussians, Gerard raced on until he came to the river Sambre. Unless he could find a way across, Gerard would be caught and his deception unmasked. As the Prussians gained ground, Gerard saw a house on one side of the river and another on the other side. Surmising that the river was fordable between the two, Gerard urged the stallion into the river. With the water up to the saddle, the horse plunged on and scrambled up the opposite slope. Gunfire erupted and bullets pinged past. The horse flinched, struck in the side, but continued on, blood spurting from the wound.

Count Stein and three others forded the river and galloped after Gerard. Knowing his horse would soon bleed to death, Gerard raced toward a group of buildings in the distance. As the Prussians closed ground, Gerard was about to turn and fight when he saw a familiar standard blowing in the breeze. Ahead of him were the remnants of his beloved Hussars of Conflan. When they saw the Emperor charging towards them, being chased by the enemy, a mighty war cry erupted and twelve hussars, swords drawn, charged to the rescue.

At that moment, Gerard's horse dropped dead and he was thrown to the ground. When he regained consciousness, he was informed that his heroic act had saved the Emperor from capture and he was now safe in his palace in Paris.

Alas, the victory was short lived. Three weeks later, on July 15th, Napoleon surrendered to the English and the Empire was no more. For Brigadier Gerard, the war was over, except for one final adventure.

EPISODE SIXTEEN: THE LAST ADVENTURE OF THE BRIGADIER

After the Bourbons came to power, Gerard and many officers like him resigned their commissions and refused to serve under the white flag, or to take an oath which might turn their sabres against the man they still loved. For many of them believed that Napoleon's exile was only temporary and that he would return in triumph and restore the glory of the empire.

Six years passed since Napoleon's banishment to the island of St. Helena. Gerard and his fellow officers had almost given up hope of ever serving the Emperor again. Without work and with very little money, these loyal hussars gathered in various establishments, like the Sign of the Great Man in the Rue Varennes, where they regaled one another with stories of past grandeurs, drink, gamble and now and then, pick a quarrel with one of the Garde de Corps, leaving his body in an alley for the gendarmes to find in the morning.

One blustery night in February, a seafarer arrived at the tavern and introduced himself as Captain Fourneau, formerly of the Emperor's navy. He had a letter of introduction and a special message for Etienne Gerard from the Empress herself.

The message entreated Gerard to obey Fourneau without question. The service he would provide could very well change the destiny of France. Recognising the signature as that of Marie Louise, Gerard offered his services and his sword without reservation.

Fourneau asked Gerard if he could speak English. When Gerard replied in the affirmative, the captain told him to meet him in Southampton in one week. Go to the docks and look for the "Black Swan." After provisioning had been complete, the "Black Swan" would leave the harbour and sail for the Guinea coast. Once aboard the brig and safely out to sea, Fourneau would reveal all. With that he gave Gerard a knotted canvas bag containing a hundred pounds of gold.

For the remainder of the week before his departure to England, Gerard wine and dined his fellow officers and when he left he did so with a light step and a joyous heart. Once again, he was off on an unknown adventure in the service of his beloved Emperor.

But after leaving Southampton and sailing on the open sea, Gerard wished he had stayed home. Seasick as a dog for four days and nights, he only left his bunk to retch helplessly over the side.

Eventually, he found his sea legs and was able to do light work and play ecarte with the captain at night.

Once the "Black Swan" had crossed the equator, Fourneau changed course and headed in a southwesterly direction, away from the African coast.

His first mate, an Englishman named Burns, demanded to know why the captain had changed direction. As he bent over a map to show the captain that he was degrees off course, Fourneau knocked him on the noggin with a belaying pin. Binding him tight, he ordered the bosun, a fellow Breton to throw him in the brig and to immobilise the other five English crewmen.

Now, with the "Black Swan" entirely in French hands, Fourneau revealed his mission to Gerard. They were going to St. Helena and rescue the Emperor. At least, Gerard was going to be the one to affect the rescue. How he accomplished the feat was entirely in his hands. The "Black Swan" would remain hidden in a bay. All Gerard had to do was get the Emperor safely to the longboat and then they would sail away to freedom.

After six year's of captivity on the island, and relying on the navy to repel any rescue attempt, Napoleon was guarded with only a token force.

With rain sleeting down and waves bursting on the beach, Gerard was landed just below Napoleon's house. Exhilarated at the prospect of seeing his beloved Emperor once more, Gerard scaled the cliff like a goat, crept up to the house and peered inside. Candles brilliantly lighted one room and Gerard could see a priest performing some kind of service. Then he realised what it was. The last rites. The Emperor lay in bed, looking composed, serene and quite, quite dead!

Gerard's heart almost broke. His last adventure had come to naught. The only service he could provide was as a silent witness at the funeral service of the greatest Frenchman who ever lived.

Gerard retraced his steps down to the beach and discovered the longboat broken to pieces. The "Black Swan" nowhere in sight. With nowhere to go, Gerard returned to Napoleon's cottage and turned himself in, claiming to be the survivor of a shipwreck.

Months later, Gerard returned to his native Gascony and became a simple cabbage farmer, living on a half pension and his memories. Glorious memories of heroism, loyalty and comradeship, shared with those who fought in Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Russia and France. Auzterlitz, Borodino, Moscow, Waterloo. Soldiers die, but the memories of those great battles would live forever.