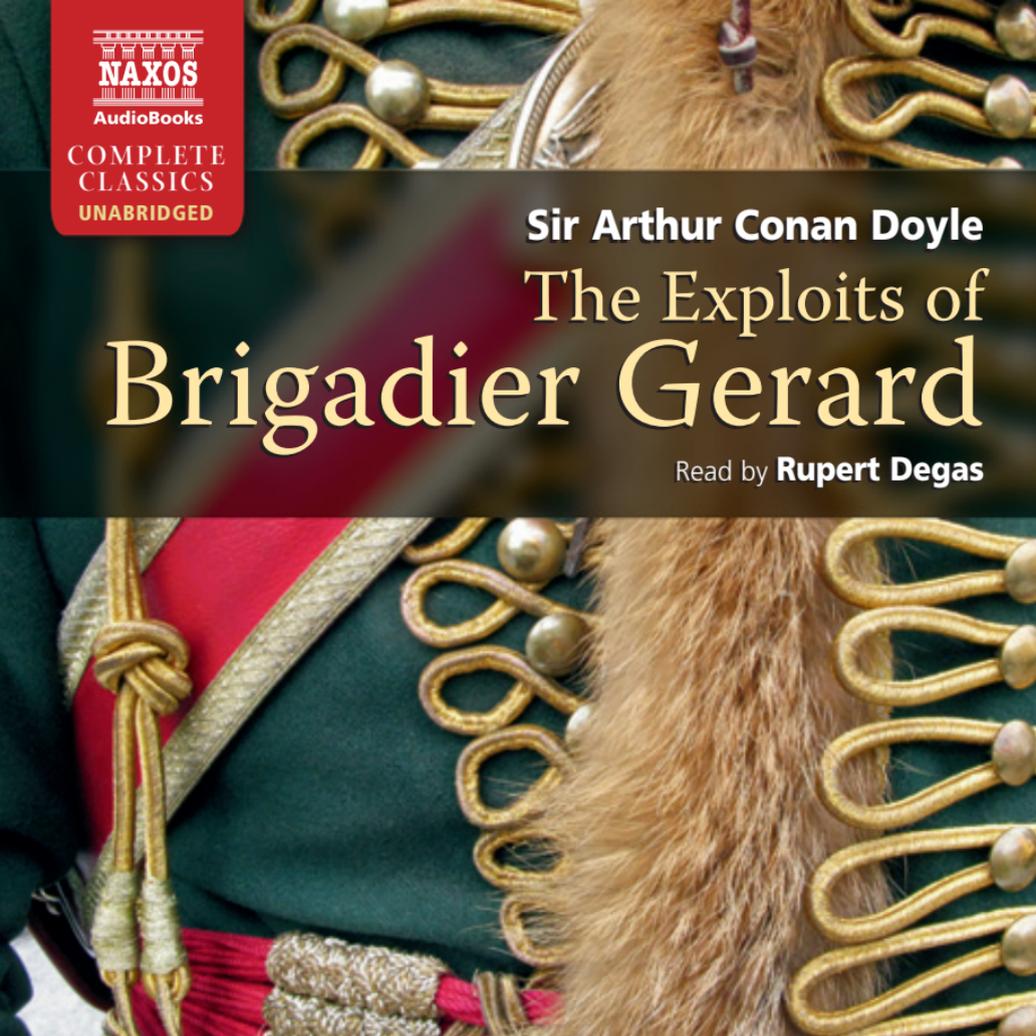




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Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
The Exploits of
Brigadier Gerard

Read by **Rupert Degas**

1	<i>The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard</i> by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – How the Brigadier Came to the Castle of Gloom	4:53
2	You must know, then, that in the February of 1807...	4:58
3	It was a bleak season to ride through the poorest...	5:53
4	For my own part I was endeavouring...	5:16
5	'I can explain it all in a few words,' said he.	5:18
6	The track which led to the Castle wound through...	4:59
7	'Well, my brave boys,' he hiccupped.	5:14
8	For a moment we could not realize it.	5:56
9	There had been a low sound at our little window...	5:50
10	There was no time for us to pause.	4:08
11	It was only afterwards that I had time to think...	4:13
12	How the Brigadier Slew the Brothers of Ajaccio	5:05
13	And all the time our little man, with his pale face...	5:26
14	'This is Monsieur Etienne Gerard...'	5:14
15	'That will do. You can go,' said the Emperor...	3:03
16	'I have need of your services, Monsieur Gerard,' said he.	3:26
17	My faith, I was right glad to get out of the room.	4:36
18	The Emperor had told me not to think...	5:04
19	We walked for rather more than a mile...	4:19
20	Ah, how I blessed the wisdom which had caused...	4:46

21	I believe that, if he had stood in silence...	4:49
22	'Ah, Monsieur Gerard,' said he...	4:28
23	How the Brigadier Held the King	4:04
24	'Halloa, comrade!' said I, as he came up to me.	5:04
25	'Well, we had been rolling and creaking on our way...'	5:08
26	I cannot tell you how frantic their rage was...	4:35
27	As the injured man still supported upon the barrel...	4:56
28	'You sleek hound!' I cried.	5:10
29	It was not a very cheering sight for me...	4:16
30	'If you will have the kindness to loosen these cords,' I answered...	5:27
31	'Fight for your skin, froggy,' said he.	5:19
32	'In another mile we shall be up with the outposts,' said he.	5:31
33	The first game I won right off, though I must confess...	3:29
34	Three men were standing quite close to us...	3:32
35	How the King Held the Brigadier	5:45
36	We officers, however, lived in a separate wing...	4:07
37	There was a single window in our cell...	4:57
38	Then another very important matter was the choice...	5:08
39	But a minute passed and yet another, with no sound...	5:17
40	But very soon I found that there was no cottage there.	4:51

41	And now I set myself to the task of putting as broad...	4:47
42	My pockets were filled with bread which I had saved...	5:17
43	'Blow my dickey,' said he, 'give it a name, guv'nor!'	4:41
44	'My friends,' said I, sitting up on my bed...	3:58
45	It was good advice, I thought, and I ran to the door...	3:39
46	How the Brigadier Took the Field Against the Marshal Millefleurs	5:40
47	'For which it is high time he was hanged,' said I...	4:59
48	'There are English across the valley, Colonel,' he cried...	3:56
49	There are two things in this world that I am very slow to forget...	4:42
50	And so, instead of fighting, we wheeled our half squadrons...	4:55
51	We bore two days' rations in our haversacks...	5:37
52	'There is only one thing that I would ask,' said he.	5:59
53	It may have been about two o'clock in the morning...	4:43
54	So we were left together, this murderous renegade and I...	4:15
55	'Luck always comes to the aid of a fool,' he answered...	5:26
56	'We have thirty-seven English dragoons in our hands,' said he.	5:26
57	How the Brigadier Played for a Kingdom	4:33
58	It is interesting, but it is also fatiguing...	5:13
59	While these thoughts were passing through my head...	4:30
60	I had reined up the mare and was looking at him...	5:05

61	It was a mad ride, that – a ride with a loose rein...	4:23
62	How she blossomed out in my presence, this woman...	5:15
63	But one thing was certain – all this affair of the fracas...	5:12
64	‘You brazen it admirably,’ said I.	5:45
65	You would have been proud of me, my friends...	4:50
66	‘By Heaven, Korner, this is rank mutiny,’ cried the captain.	3:15
67	‘But you took them, none the less.’	2:53
68	How the Brigadier Won His Medal	4:52
69	I am a rough soldier, but I have words and ideas.	5:06
70	When I heard that Blucher had been there for two days...	5:05
71	All this flashed on me as if by instinct, you understand.	4:58
72	Who should be at the head of the troop but old Bouvet...	5:30
73	Old Bouvet was waiting in the passage when I entered...	4:56
74	I have said that at the further end of the cellar...	5:24
75	‘Should I then take the uniform off?’	4:59
76	One or two officers spoke to me with an air of authority...	5:32
77	Well, the road was clear, and about three o’clock...	4:28
78	‘What the deuce are you doing here?’ he shouted.	3:42
79	How the Brigadier Was Tempted by the Devil	4:37
80	He had a suite of rooms at the end of the gallery...	5:34

81	I was so moved by my own words and by the fine position...	4:52
82	'And yet it was in the cause of France,' returned the Emperor.	4:38
83	'In the first place, I will tell you what these papers are.'	5:27
84	'We are the three officers of the Emperor, madame,' said I...	5:48
85	'There they are!' cried Despienne...	4:34
86	But it was the papers – always the papers – of which I thought.	4:38
87	'Tut,' said the Emperor. 'We have got the poor pawn...'	4:40
88	'May we all die as gallantly,' said the Emperor, as he rose...	4:34
89	In this way the Emperor and I – even after years it sends a flush.	5:32

Total time: 7:13:11

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

(1859–1930)

The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard

In 1894 Arthur Conan Doyle committed murder: he brutally killed off the famous detective Sherlock Holmes. A fictional ‘murder’, it’s true, but the outcry from the reading public was so enormous that Conan Doyle may well have thought he had done the deed in reality. Young men went into mourning for their hero, wearing black armbands, whilst women wrote abusively to the author, calling him ‘a savage’. Although Conan Doyle was later to realise he had killed the goose that laid the golden eggs, he was pleased at the time to have got rid of the troublesome detective, who had, in his opinion, kept him from his serious work: writing historical novels. He could not have known that before the year was out

he would create another hero, second only to Holmes but very different from him, a hero who would endure as one of his most popular creations, and not in a serious literary vein at all.

It was during a dinner conversation with the novelist George Meredith in 1894 that the seeds of Conan Doyle’s new creation were sown. Both men had a passionate interest in the Napoleonic era, Conan Doyle since boyhood, and Meredith drew his attention to *The Memoirs of General Baron de Marbot*. Marbot was a brave and fearless soldier in Napoleon’s army, and recalled, in one thrilling incident of many, how he volunteered for a dangerous mission: “‘I will go sir!’” I cried without hesitation. “I

will go; and, if I perish, I leave my mother to your Majesty's care." The Emperor pulled my ear to mark his satisfaction.' If Marbot were fictionalised, Meredith suggested, would he not make a most entertaining character?

Marbot was a man full of his own conceit, but Conan Doyle's creation, Brigadier Etienne Gerard, Colonel of the Hussars of Conflans, far surpasses the original. As he himself repeatedly tells us, he is the idol of the ladies, a superb swordsman without equal ('I fought the men and kissed the women in fourteen separate kingdoms'), heroically brave ('For the moment I was magnificent'), loves danger, and places honour above everything. At the same time, we perceive that he is inexpressibly vain about his appearance ('I give my moustache the old Marengo twist'), lacks any self-irony, sometimes misses the obvious when it is staring him in his handsome face, and is always splendidly ridiculous. However, his naivety, his constant good nature, even when he is under difficulties, his optimism ('Is not every hour a fresh point of view?'), his hearty patriotism and love

for his Emperor touch our hearts and in the end we cannot help but like him. 'Vive L'Empereur!' he cries with all his heart and soul, 'Vive Etienne Gerard!' we reply.

The Brigadier is part of a long tradition of heroic Gascons in French literature. D'Artagnan declares himself to be 'Proud as a Gascon', in Alexander Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*; and the legendary Gascon, Cyrano de Bergerac, in Edmond Rostand's romantic play, resembles Gerard, being a little ridiculous yet fearlessly brave. Gerard himself may have inspired the character of Flashman, created over 60 years later by George MacDonald Fraser.

True to form, before setting pen to paper Conan Doyle embarked on a course of meticulous research into the Napoleonic era. 'My military detail was, I think, very accurate,' he wrote proudly. The campaigns of Napoleon provided real events that Conan Doyle skilfully adapted to feature his hero. The *Exploits* and *Adventures* cover the period from Gerard's first meeting with his Emperor in 1807 to the death of Napoleon on St Helena in 1821. Most of the episodes deal with the Wars between the years of 1808 and their

culmination (the battle of Waterloo in 1815). But war is only the background to the feats of individual bravery performed by the Brigadier, who gallops through the pages on clandestine missions, assailing dark castles and fortified cities, inevitably getting caught by the enemy, and barely escaping with his life. He even gets apprehended by the Duke of Wellington, and is incarcerated in Dartmoor prison.

The discipline of the short-story genre worked to Conan Doyle's advantage. There is no space for reams of carefully researched historical detail to be included, which clogs up the action in his historical novels. In *Brigadier Gerard* the action comes first and the history second, and this streamlined effect has stopped these stories becoming stale for succeeding generations.

All the stories first appeared in *The Strand* magazine, the first eight between 1894 and 1895; these were subsequently published in book form as *The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard*. A further eight appeared in 1903, collected together as *The Adventures of Brigadier Gerard*.

The stories, whilst lampooning the

French national character, also display the idiosyncrasies of the English. Conan Doyle, despite always appearing to be an English gentleman, was by birth a Scot, and took the opportunity to settle the score with the English for jokes made at the expense of his countrymen. His English military characters, mostly from the upper classes, are charming, tender, heroic and eccentric. They treat war like a game, and will take any opportunity to lay a bet or back a wager: 'sport before war' seems to be their motto. Such a one is Bart in *How the Brigadier Held the King (Exploits)*: he captures Gerard, and then plays cards with him for the Brigadier's freedom. Elsewhere, Conan Doyle makes fun of the English obsession with cricket and boxing, two sports he actually enjoyed and took rather seriously himself.

But compared to the French *esprit de corps* epitomised by Gerard, the English are characterised as a bit dull and plodding. And it is in this contrast of nationalities that the humour lies.

Conan Doyle had intended to write a serious novel about the Napoleonic era, examining the Emperor. Instead he created

a comic masterpiece. Again (as with Holmes) the public seemed to prefer his less serious work. The irony was not lost on him. Conan Doyle wrote to his mother in 1895: 'I should not be at all surprised to see the Brigadier become quite a popular character – not so much as Holmes, but among a more discriminating public.' A year later, warming to his unexpected success, Conan Doyle wrote again to his mother: 'It is pleasant to see so many people fond of him – for I was a bit fond of him myself.'

Notes by David Timson

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Credits

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Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London

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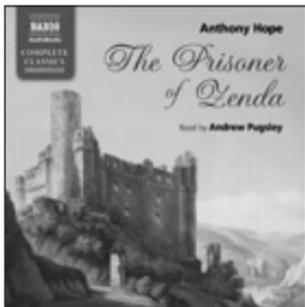
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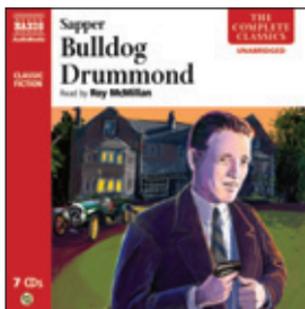
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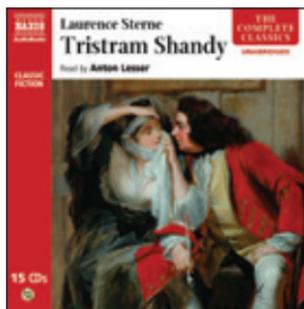
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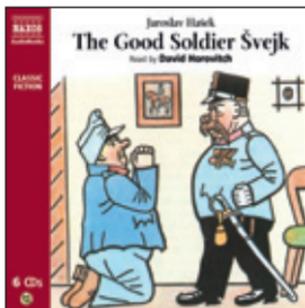
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Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard

Read by **Rupert Degas**

With a horse between his thighs and a weapon in his grip, the dashing Brigadier Etienne Gerard, Colonel of the Hussars of Conflans, gallops through the Napoleonic campaigns on secret missions for his beloved Emperor and his country. He encounters danger and hair-breadth escapes but never loses his bravado, his eye for a pretty girl, his boastfulness or his enormous vanity. Gerard is Conan Doyle's most lovable character. At times hilarious, at times touching, these stories are amongst Conan Doyle's most popular.



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