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The background is a close-up photograph of a military uniform, likely a British officer's uniform, featuring a red jacket with gold braiding and a silver sword scabbard. The focus is on the intricate details of the uniform's hardware and fabric.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
The Adventures of
Brigadier Gerard

Read by **Rupert Degas**

1	<i>The Adventures of Brigadier Gerard</i> by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – Part One	4:52
2	It must be confessed, however...	5:09
3	Suchet's head-quarters at that time...	5:22
4	'Have you got him?' asked a voice, in Italian.	4:54
5	I shrank back, and in an instant my pursuers were on me.	4:38
6	They advanced upon me...	5:15
7	It was a long time in coming...	4:37
8	The young man who had been pleading...	5:05
9	'You must not care, Etienne.'	4:38
10	He shook me by the shoulder...	5:38
11	How The Brigadier Captured Saragossa	4:38
12	So far I admit that I was wrong...	4:55
13	'Your request is unusual,' said Major Olivier...	4:56
14	This was a cheerful beginning.	5:30
15	'It is an easy tree to climb,' said he.	5:48
16	As I had imagined, this broad boulevard...	4:48
17	'Good heavens! have you been hanging here for two days?'	5:10
18	I passed unquestioned down the broad boulevard...	4:22
19	Naturally, since an attack was about to be made...	4:39

20	When I came to my senses...	5:27
21	In all the great hosts of France there was only one officer...	2:23
22	How The Brigadier Slew The Fox	4:55
23	Ah, how my heart swelled with pride and joy...	4:58
24	I had never known it, but one of the bullets...	4:49
25	It is incredible the insolence of these English!	5:09
26	He was a dear creature upon whom I sat...	5:06
27	All thought of fear of discovery had vanished.	5:41
28	How The Brigadier Saved The Army	4:40
29	There were many difficulties in connection with a retreat...	4:57
30	'What you see,' said the Marshal...	3:51
31	Over that flat country there lay the inviting white road...	3:29
32	You remember I have mentioned...	4:17
33	I heard the crashing of the barrels...	5:02
34	When I had recovered my breath...	4:39
35	'Sir,' said I, 'in the name of France I thank you...'	4:22
36	This was a new light upon the situation.	4:41
37	Following the direction of his gesture, I turned...	4:27
38	The idea seemed to amuse him very much.	3:31
39	I stared in amazement at what he did.	3:39

40	How The Brigadier Triumphed in England	3:56
41	There is a game called cricket...	4:46
42	What the mawleys were I did not know...	4:58
43	From what I have told you of the Lady Jane...	4:33
44	A dusky red suffused his handsome face.	5:13
45	For some months he had indeed behaved well...	4:49
46	'When I've killed this swaggering Frenchman,' said Lord Dacre...	4:51
47	His hand opened and the handkerchief fell.	3:11
48	'Come, come, Colonel Berkeley,' said Lord Dacre...	3:19
49	How The Brigadier Rode to Minsk	4:20
50	Enough – a brave man can face age and fate...	4:29
51	But there came a time between Wilna and Smolensk...	4:27
52	These are the little precautions...	4:31
53	I stared at it, and I had to shake my head.	4:53
54	She looked at the writing with some surprise.	5:17
55	Poor Violette, looking as miserable as her master...	5:10
56	I looked at him with the contempt that I felt.	4:33
57	For an hour of utter misery, chilled in body and soul...	4:19
58	I stood for an instant with the key in my hand...	4:30
59	How The Brigadier Bore Himself at Waterloo	4:30

60	You have read how the Emperor gathered his forces...	4:45
61	We all followed the direction of his gaze...	3:54
62	In front of me lay the great wood...	5:05
63	She was shaken by this...	4:41
64	But an adventure came to break the monotony...	4:03
65	The roar of guns, much nearer than before...	4:07
66	Gneisenau, the Chief of the Staff, had lingered...	5:27
67	What a picture of surprise!	3:22
68	Part Two – The Story of The Nine Prussian Horsemen	5:21
69	‘General Bulow!’ I cried.	4:34
70	At first I was carried away in that wild rush...	5:18
71	The night was falling, and the Emperor’s haggard face...	4:10
72	They all started and stared.	5:05
73	So quick had been my impulse...	5:24
74	To retreat was impossible. I could hear the thunder...	4:12
75	‘Surrender, your Majesty, surrender!’ he yelled...	4:58
76	A single shot from a Prussian or an Austrian...	2:49
77	At that instant my eye fell upon something...	3:40
78	The Last Adventure of The Brigadier	4:54
79	There was one of these – the Sign of the Great Man...	5:24

80	He looked hard at me with his shrewd grey eyes...	3:48
81	Some three days after my arrival...	5:08
82	'Our hands have been forced...'	4:26
83	Every light had been extinguished aboard our ship...	4:57
84	My friends, I fell down upon the gravel walk...	5:07
85	The Marriage of The Brigadier	4:36
86	Now let me be precise for a moment.	3:40
87	I had nearly reached the middle of the field...	4:19
89	I walked across the field lost in thought...	4:36
90	It was for the house of the Ravons that I raced.	4:31

Total time: 6:53:20

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

(1859–1930)

The Adventures 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

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

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Rupert Degas, a versatile and charismatic audiobook reader, has read a substantial list of books for Naxos AudioBooks, notably Murakami's *A Wild Sheep Chase*, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* and *Dance Dance Dance*, Kafka's *The Trial*, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, Rose Tremain's *Restoration* and Tom McNab's *Flanagan's Run*. He is in considerable demand as a voice for cartoons, and is the voice of Pantalaimon in Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*; but he is also regularly seen in London's West End in plays as varied as *Stones in his Pockets* and *The 39 Steps*.

Credits

Produced and edited by Malcolm Blackmoor
Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London

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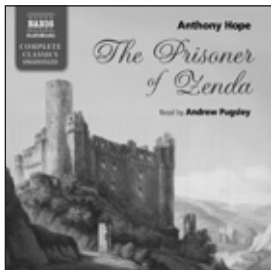
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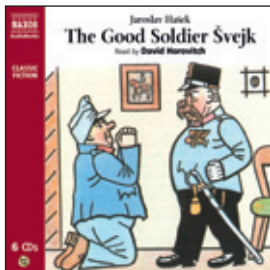
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Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

The Adventures 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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