

The Drummers and the Wolf

Napoleon's victories had set all France ablaze with military glory. Jean Potoir and Antoine Savary were French boys of the department of the Yonne. They shared everything—were nearly always together.

Just before the invasion of Russia by the emperor a number of recruits belonging to the village were allowed to return home for a visit, and the two boys heard their stories of the last campaign.

As Jean could beat the drum and Antoine was an excellent fifer, the recruits begged the parents of the boys to let them go to the army and share in the glory of taking the capital of the czar.

The parents agreed, and when the recruits went back the boys went, too, and were accepted by the mustering officer. He said he needed a good drummer and a fifer and was glad to see them. Long before they reached Moscow both had become prime favorites in the regiment.

It was a dreary time for the French army when it started away on that famous retreat from the city of the czar. Winter had set in, the earth was white with deep snows, the air was bitter and cold. Before they had gone far hundreds of soldiers froze to death.

At night the wolves would fill the frosty air with their howls, and when a man dropped out of the ranks they would rush down upon him and devour him before his comrades. They were large and fierce, and they came in great packs and sometimes could not be driven off, not even by a fusillade.

One evening near sundown Jean came to Antoine and said he had discovered a farmhouse near by. He thought they might get some warm milk for themselves by telling the people how exhausted they were.

The boys stole off, Jean with his drum and Antoine with a musket and some ammunition which had been given him by a soldier who had been transferred to one of the ambulances.

When they reached the place, instead of a farmhouse they found a hut nearly ready to crumble to pieces and no sign of any one near.

As they passed into the hut something rushed out with a snarl, and the boys found they had disturbed a large gray wolf.

Suddenly there entered the cabin a long, low howl that startled the young musicians.

"The wolves have come!" cried Antoine, springing up and running to the door, which they had shut.

On the snow stood a huge wolf whose sides shone like silver, showing that he wore a gray coat. He seemed to head the pack. He had brought them all on the boys' track.

Antoine was for firing at the wolf, but Jean said it would only precipitate an attack. They had hopes that some of Prince Murat's horsemen would come along and rescue them without further dangers.

By and by the wolves became bolder. The boys saw them come almost close enough to be struck with a stone. They had discovered the young musicians, and now they began to set up their long, peculiar howl.

Jean seized the drumsticks and beat the ratapan in hopes of frightening the beasts off, but the music made them howl the more.

"Here they come, Jean!" exclaimed Antoine. "Look to the door! If they throw themselves against it in a body, it will not keep them out."

The pack in front had risen and were rushing forward. Antoine thrust the muzzle of his musket through a crack and fired into the howling, struggling mass.

Several yelps of pain attested the power of the shot. The wolves drew off, carrying with them a dead comrade, and devoured him before the boys' eyes.

Antoine had reloaded. They stood against the door and awaited another attack.

Jean seized his drum. The little musician of the Yonne played as he had never played before. His drumsticks flew, warming his half frozen fingers and filling the old shanty with strange music, the roll call of Napoleon's army.

The hut was not high, and its roof was covered with heavy snow. Suddenly the boys saw several wolves leap up and disappear. They seemed to have bounded toward the roof, and when Jean cried out that he heard something overhead they both knew that the animals were on the hut.

Yes, the wolves were up there, trying to scratch the snow away, that they might leap down into the cabin and make short work of the young soldiers. For a moment Jean and Antoine shrank together in fright.

"Look! The door! The door!" shouted Jean, dropping his drumstick. "They are here again, Antoine."

Once more the boy with the musket fired at the lot outside to hear another howl and to see the pack devour a slain comrade.

But this time the wolves did not fall back. They continued to try to force the door while Antoine reloaded with half frozen hands and Jean held the barricade.

The animals on the housetop

made a good deal of noise, and the boys had begun to think the roof could not be forced, when Jean cried out that a pair of eyes were gleaming overhead, and the young soldiers looked, and both saw the head of a wolf.

"It is the big fellow," said Antoine, bringing his musket to bear on the apparition. "It is the head of the wolf we disturbed when we came to the hut."

The next moment the cabin was filled with smoke, and the boys saw the head vanish, and the stars only were seen through the hole in the roof.

The assaults of the ravenous beasts now began to tell on the strength of the door. Jean placed his body against it, and Antoine fired as often as he could, but the wolves appeared ten times fiercer.

"Listen!" said Jean suddenly, and he bent toward the door, making an ear trumpet with his hands.

The little fifer looked through a crack. He turned to his friend, crying out with joy:

"I see dark figures moving over the snow. They seem to be horsemen. Whatever they are, they are coming this way. They are too tall to be more wolves."

Jean picked up the drum and beat a wild tune, which went out over the snow. It was answered by shouts, and now both could see horsemen galloping forward.

"They are Cossacks," whispered Antoine, his shoulder to the door. "We shall never see the grand army again."

The wolves were making a final effort to force the door. Antoine mechanically met them, firing away his last charge and dropping his weapon.

In another moment a party of wild looking Cossacks swooped down upon the hut and surrounded it, while the wolves drew off.

"Come out!" cried the Cossacks. "Come out, you who are within! Surrender to the soldiers of the great czar!"

Jean and Antoine opened the door and walked forth. When the Cossacks saw the two boys, they set up a loud laugh, and their hetman, a fine looking fellow, satirically touched his cap in the way of a salute. They had expected to capture a number of men soldiers.

"Yes, there is the big wolf on the roof," said Jean to Antoine, and, sure enough, up there lay the big gray monster, the cause of all their trouble. One of the Cossacks pulled the carcass from the roof and threw it on the snow.

"Play for us," commanded the leader of the wild band.

Jean and Antoine drew up together in the snow, and in a moment the lively airs of France were wafted over the dreary waste. For awhile the faces of the Cossacks clouded.

But at last they swung their great caps over their heads and cheered the boys of the Yonne.

"You shall go back to your army," said the hetman. "You shall not be taken to prison. You have been brave. We like brave boys like our own."

The next day the rear guard of the grand army saw approaching them with a white flag a troop of wild horsemen of the steppes, and the regiment to which Jean and Antoine belonged was overjoyed to receive once more into the ranks the little musicians.

The boys endured the horrors of that retreat, and in after years, when they sat with old playmates under the spreading trees of the village and related stories of Napoleon's ill fated campaign, they never failed to tell how they fought the big wolf and his pack and their rescue by the Cossacks of the Don.

BEFORE THE SURRENDER.

General Lee's Refusal to Allow His Soldiers to Disperse.

General E. P. Alexander relates in The Century these interesting words of General Lee just before the surrender. General Alexander having proposed that the Confederate soldiers be authorized to disperse and report to General Johnston or to the governors of the states, General Lee asked:

"Suppose I were to adopt your suggestion, how many do you suppose would get away?"

General Alexander replied: "I think two-thirds of us could get away. We should be like rabbits and partridges in the bushes, and they could not scatter like that to catch us."

"Well," he said, "I have less than 16,000 infantry with arms in their hands. Even if two-thirds of these got away it would be too small a force to accomplish any useful result, either with Johnston or with the governors of the states. But few would go to Johnston, for their homes have been overrun by the enemy, and the men will want to go first and look after their families. As to any help from Europe, I have never believed in it. I appreciate that the surrender of this army is, indeed, the end of the Confederacy. But that result is now inevitable and must be faced. And as Christian men we have no right to choose a course from pride or personal feelings. We have simply to see what we can do best for our country and people. Now, if I should adopt your suggestion and order this army to disperse the men, going homeward, would be under no control and, moreover, would be without food. They are already demoralized by four years of war and would supply their wants by violence and plunder. They would soon become little better than bands of robbers. A state of society would result throughout the south from which it would require years to recover. The enemy's cavalry, too, would pursue to catch at least the general officers and would harass and devastate sections that otherwise they will never visit. Moreover," he said, "as to myself, I am too old to go to bushwhacking, and even if it were right to order the army to disperse the only course for me to pursue would be to surrender myself to General Grant. But," he added, "I can tell you for your comfort that Grant will not demand an 'unconditional surrender.' He will give us honorable and liberal terms, simply requiring us not to take up arms again until exchanged." He then went on to say that he was in correspondence with Grant and expected to meet him in our rear at 10 a. m., when he would accept the terms that had been indicated.

The Tables Neatly Turned.

There is a certain brilliant young lawyer in Brooklyn with a reputation for ability in "rattling" witnesses who had the tables neatly turned on him in a damage suit the other day. A prominent physician testified as to the character of the injuries sustained by the plaintiff, and the young lawyer was seeking to ridicule his testimony. The physician had said that the plaintiff's brain and spinal cord had been injured and that the injury to the brain was manifested by an increased knee jerk.

"Now, see here, doctor," said the lawyer, going through a series of physical contortions, chiefly with his knees, "what does this increased knee jerk of mine show?"

"Well," said the doctor slowly, "taking your exhibition of yourself before the jury and this knee jerk, I should say that you were suffering from serious brain trouble."—New York Times.

Wanted Lots of Love.

Librarians have some peculiar experiences, especially in the downtown districts, where the poor children are often sent by their elders to draw books. The other day a little chap of perhaps five and of some foreign extraction toddled into a downtown branch and, holding up a grimy card, said to the young woman in attendance:

"Please, my sister would like a book of love."

The librarian suppressed a smile and gave him "Children of the Abbey."

The next day he returned with the book tucked under his arm and remarked:

"Please, my sister would like another book with more love in it than this one has."—New York Times.

Won't Follow Advice After Paying For It.

In a recent article a prominent physician says, "It is next to impossible for the physician to get his patients to carry out any prescribed course of hygiene or diet to the smallest extent; he has but one resort left, namely, the drug treatment." When medicines are used for chronic constipation, the most mild and gentle obtainable, such as Chamberlain's Stomach and Liver Tablets, should be employed. Their use is not followed by constipation, as they leave the bowels in a natural and healthy condition. For sale by Orr-Gray Drug Co.

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Birds That Trap Snakes.

In the southern part of California there is a strange bird called the road runner. Few birds can fly better than this one, but rarely does he ever rise from the ground, and then only when hard pressed. He prefers to escape from man or beast by running, and as he can easily outrun the swiftest horse his speed saves him from all his enemies. The male bird is not larger than a common barnyard rooster, and his feathers are as gayly colored as those of the peacock. The hen is of a dark brown asparagus color.

The road-runner has one mortal enemy—the rattlesnake. This reptile is fond of devouring the road runner's eggs whenever it comes across a nest in the sagebrush. But the road runners often have opportunities of revenge themselves. Whenever they come across a sleeping rattlesnake, sunning himself on a warm rock, they immediately prepare a trap for his destruction. Prickly pears abound in these regions. The road runners, generally a pair, at once begin picking up the spiny covered leaves of this plant and piling them about the sleeping snake in a circle. When their work is completed they give their enemy a few pecks to awaken him, and then retire to watch the result. In vain the rattlesnake tries to escape. The ring of prickly leaves holds him a prisoner. At every move he makes the spines prick him, until at last in despair he turns, bites himself and dies.

Travelers often come across these circles of dried leaves, with the dead snake in the centre. At first no white man would believe the Indian tales of this strange method the road runners employed in killing their mortal enemy, but they have since been observed in the act by several eminent naturalists, who have corroborated the stories told by the Indians.

Reasons For Tardiness.

Teachers who require written excuses for tardiness from parents of pupils sometimes receive very amusing notes. Here are a few specimens from a number received sometime ago: "Dear Sir, please forgive Billy for lateness. I kneaded him after breakfast." A second note reads: "Please forgive Billy for tardiness. I was mending his coat." The third excuse goes more into details: "Mister sir, my Jason had to be late today. It is his bizness to milk our cow. She kicked Jase in the back today when he wasn't looking or thinkin' of her actin'; so he hot his back was broke but it ain't. But it is black and blue, and the pane kept him late. We would git rid of that cow if we could. This is the fourth time she kicked Jase, but never kicked him late before. So excuse him for me."

A girl absent for half a day brought the following excuse: "Miss teacher—My dotter's absents yesterday was unavoidable. Her shoes had to be half-soled and she had a sore-throat. Her konstitushun is delikit and if she is absent any more you can know that it is on account of unavoiable sickness or something else." A boy absent for half a day laid the following explanation on his master's desk: "Dear sir, please excuse Henry. He went to grandpapa's funeral with me this forenoon. I have been promising him for several weeks that he might if he was good, and he has been very good, so I kept my word."—Evening Wisconsin.

Paid For Supper.

Three men had been out on a spree, and on the way home late at night they made a wager that the one who did not do as his wife told him should pay for a champagne supper the following night.

The first one returned home, and his wife greeted him thus:

"Hullo, you beauty! That's right, knock all the ornaments off the mantelpiece!"

He knocked them all off.

The second returned, and on going into his house fell against the piano, whereupon his wife said:

"Go on, get the chopper and smash it up!"

He did so.

The third returned, and, on going up-stairs, his wife said:

"You miserable scamp, fall downstairs and break your neck!"

Needless to say, he paid for the supper.

Cause of his Troubles.

A youth with an open ingenious countenance rose in a Christian Endeavor convention the other evening and made the following speech:

"Dear friends—large ships that look sound—and good and—and—seaworthy are sometimes found to be, almost ruined—almost, yes—almost ruined by ship worms. They honeycomb the heavy timbers and—and—although the ship looks as if it might do great things for its masters—it cannot. It—it has ship worms."

"Dear friends, it is just so with some Christians. Outwardly a Christian may look like a fair ship. Dear friends I feel that often I am like the ship, and that I—too, have ship worms."

To Pick Cotton by Machinery.

Birmingham, Ala., April 28.—A special to the Birmingham News from Jackson, Miss., says:

The first regular contract ever made in the world to pick cotton by machinery was closed in Greenville a few days since, and the first experiment with the machine will be made on a plantation in Washington county next fall. A Pittsburg man is the inventor of the device and for the past ten years has been conducting experiments in the vicinity of Greenville. He now claims that the device has been modeled on a practical working basis and feels confident that he will revolutionize the cotton picking industry in the South. The machine, he admits, is valueless except on level uplands, low valleys and prairie grounds, but even if it should prove successful with this limit, its effect on the labor question in the South will be very marked.

New Way to Marry People.

An elderly minister is fond of telling of a "break" he once made at a double wedding of two sisters. It was arranged that the two couples should be married with one ceremony, the brides responding at the same time and the two bridegrooms doing the same. There had not been any previous rehearsal, as the minister had come a long distance and reached the church but a few minutes before the time for the ceremony.

All went well until it came time for the minister to say, "And now I pronounce you man and wife."

It suddenly became obvious to the minister that the usual formula would not do in the case of two men and two wives, and could not think of any way of making "man" and "wife" plural in the sentence. In his desperation and confusion he lifted his hands and solemnly:

"And now I pronounce you, one and, all husband wife!"—Lippincott's Magazine.

Swallowed a Frog.

A large frog was removed from a woman's stomach in St. Catherine's Hospital, in Williamsburg, N. Y., the other day. The woman is Mrs. Charles Burtis, of Hopwell Junction, near Mattewan, N. Y. She had been suffering from a trouble which baffled her physicians for some time. It was finally decided that an operation for appendicitis would be advisable and she was taken to the Williamsburg hospital. A Fishkill, N. Y., doctor performed the operation, which revealed that she was not suffering from appendicitis. But the doctors did discover and remove from her stomach a live frog, said to have been five inches long. It is supposed that she swallowed the frog when it was very small while she was drinking water.

What He Came For.

S. D. Faust, of Cleveland, while on a visit to this city a few days ago, in company with a Philadelphia, decided to go to Atlantic City. Before buying the tickets the Philadelphia proceeded to show his guest the improvements along Delaware avenue. Sitting on the edge of the wharf was a typical street arab, fishing. Just as they were about to leave they were startled by a splash, and discovered that the boy had tumbled overboard. After some trouble he was drawn out.

"How did you come to fall in?" inquired Faust.

"Ah, gwan," said the boy, "I didn't come to fall in. I come to fish."—Philadelphia Times.

—An estimator of more or less ability says there are 70,000,000 prairie dogs in the State of Kansas, and that they are multiplying at the rate of millions a year. Various devices have been tried in the hope of eradicating the little animals, but they grinningly bob up from below and go on increasing. Since the meat trust put up the price of beef, some Kansans have discovered that the prairie dog is not bad eating and have quit patronizing the butcher shops.

—Many a would-be jolly good fellow might be really so if he would only stop telling jokes.

—The more money a man has the harder it is for him to convince the world that he is a fool.

—Whether an evening gown is fashionable depends on how much neck and sleeves it hasn't got.

Pneumonia Chief Danger.

People are growing healthier and lives are becoming longer in this country, if medical statistics can be relied on. According to figures published in the last week life has been lengthened by an average of 4.1 years in the last decade.

In 1830 the average length of life in the United States was 31.1 years. In 1890 this mean average had risen to 35.2 years, chiefly by reason of the decrease in mortality among the very young.

The three diseases which have caused the most deaths in recent years are pneumonia, consumption and heart disease, in the order named. Deaths from the first cause have increased slightly, and medical science has made comparatively little progress in finding a specific treatment for it.

Pneumonia is an infectious disease like tuberculosis. Although it is not so contagious as are many other diseases, the sanitation of houses, shops, schools, factories, places of business and amusement, in medical opinion, undoubtedly determines to a great extent the vulnerability of the system to it.—New York Sun.

—When one man meets another that he is said to look like he usually swears.



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