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The Life
of
FRANCIS MARION

BY D. W. STOKES

*Being a brief account of the deeds of the "Swamp Fox"
and a list of Marion's Men.*

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by

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THE career of Francis Marion began in those days 150 years ago when events were marching rapidly toward a Declaration of Independence, when leaders of thought and action were being developed in each of the thirteen colonies. No one of these leaders shone more picturesquely than Francis Marion of South Carolina.

His ancestors were French Huguenots, who came to America between 1680 and 1690. His grandfather, Benjamin Marion, was a descendant of John Marion and Perrine Battignon, who lived in the province of Vendee, France, the scene of the Revolution recorded so wonderfully by Victor Hugo in his book "Ninety-three". Benjamin Marion married Judith Baluet and settled in the Goose Creek district near Charleston. Three children were the offspring of this marriage—Esther, Gabriel and Benjamin.

Gabriel Marion married Esther Cordes and lived in St. John's Parish, Berkeley County. Early records show their residence at a place on the west branch of the Cooper river. They had six children—Esther, Gabriel, Isaac, Benjamin, Job and Francis.

There is some confusion as to the birthplace of Francis Marion, but the best evidence seems to locate it at "Goatfield," near Chachan. As a boy he is said to have been physically frail. Ambitious to go to sea, he shipped at sixteen on a sailing vessel. The ship was wrecked and many perished. Francis drifted with several companions for six days in a small boat. After his rescue no further seafaring adventures are recorded.

He turned to farming and the outdoor life built up his health. Enlisting some years later in the Cherokee war, he gained in early life a knowledge of practical woodcraft.

Marion's schooling was probably as good as could be obtained in a frontier community of that time, but his letters show some odd mistakes of spelling. He was probably better read than the average pioneer. With this advantage, plus a wide practical experience and an unusual store of common sense, he took a leading part in the loosely-formed organizations of the time, which met frequently here and there to engage in heated debates for and against the Colonial governors, their edicts and the taxes and regulations of the British crown.

About thirty days after the battle of Lexington, a courier brought the tidings to Isaac Marion, brother of Francis, at Georgetown, as one of the patriot leaders of the time. It is related that Isaac was taken by the British soon after and was made to ride backwards around the streets of Georgetown while his captors plied him with questions as to where his brother Francis might be found. It was during this ride that Isaac is said to have exclaimed, "I cannot tell

you where he is, but you will hear of him ere long", a prediction which soon came true.

Francis Marion had been some time in service at Fort Dorchester on the banks of the Ashley, ruins of which still exist, about five miles out of Summerville.

This fort must have been of some importance at the time, as General Moultrie is known to have served there, and during the war the fort was held alternately by British and Americans.

Marion was also stationed for a time at Fort Moultrie, Charleston, and General Moultrie had referred to him as "an active, brave and hardy soldier and an excellent partisan officer."

By a providential mishap, Francis Marion was away from Charleston when it was taken by the British. The story is that while attending a social gathering at the home of Alexander McQueen in Tradd street, he decided, for some reason, to eliminate himself quietly from the party and dropped from an upstairs window. The fall sprained his ankle, whereupon he was carried to his home out of the city.

This accident enabled Marion to take active service while his many friends were imprisoned or paroled within the walls of Charleston. When he recovered the use of his leg, Governor Rutledge put him in command of the detachment at Lynch's Creek. He was accompanied there by his old friend Peter Horry. He at once commanded his men to wear white cockades so that in the absence of regular uniforms they might be distinguished from the Tories.

The number of men in Marion's brigade varied. Sometimes there were as few as sixty; at other times he had in his command as many as several hundred. A list of those known to have served in the brigade appears in the last pages of this book.

Understanding thoroughly that constant action is necessary to keep up the morale of a fighting force, Marion began a series of skirmishes, battles and raids on the regular British troops or their Tory allies and his name soon became a terror to the enemy. Usually outnumbered, it was necessary to guard against surprise attack, and so headquarters were made at Snow's Island, at the confluence of Lynch's Creek and Pee Dee River, a place almost inaccessible except to men willing and able to endure hardships and well versed in woodcraft. It was from this camp that most of his rapid marches and surprise attacks were made. Often the troops would march sixty or seventy miles in a day to strike an unexpected blow. The hardships of the life were incredible. Food was scarce, salt considered a luxury. But these very hardships kept the men alert, hardy and ever ready for a "little brush with the enemy."

Marion kept his men well in hand. A splendid disciplinarian, he was nevertheless habitually in the thick of the fight himself and inspired enthusiasm and undying loyalty in his men.

Engagements in which Marion's brigade took part are so numerous that only a few of them can be mentioned here and without any wealth of detail. However, there is appended hereto a list of books and magazine articles covering all these engagements.

Marion's principal battles were at Britton's Neck, Biggin's Church, Black Mingo, Battle of the Oak, Fort Motte, Bacon's Bridge and Eutawville.

At the battle of Black Mingo losses were heavy on both sides. It is related of Captain George Logan, of Charleston, who died in this action, that he arose from a sick-bed and rode 80 miles to join the brigade. Here it was, too, that Major Ball, British commander, was taken and his mount fell to General Marion, who named it "Ball" and rode it thereafter.

At the Battle of the Oak Major McLraith challenged Marion to fight in the open. Marion promptly agreed to send twenty picked men out if the British would do the same. He called out twenty names. Not a man declined the issue. Forward toward the British lines they marched in Indian file. Upon arriving within firing distance, the British broke and fled amid the "huzzas" of the American troops.

Marion surprised the enemy at Nelson's Ferry, releasing thereby 150 American prisoners who were being brought to Charleston.

At Page's Point, five hundred British soldiers laid down their arms to Marion. Bacon's Bridge and some other points along the Cooper river were so hotly contested that they were alternately in the hands of either side.

Marion's movements were so rapid and so numerous that the British never felt secure. Cornwallis who used to visit frequently at Kensington, a plantation near Charleston, would never enter the house, but sat by the hour on the piazza or under the oaks, ever in fear of a surprise attack.

Marion had an important part in the battles of Eutaw and Fort Motte. It was in the latter engagement that the famous Sergeant McDonald was killed.

During one of his marches, Marion's camp at Snow's Island was attacked and taken with all its stores of food and ammunition. Marion was in desperate straits. He called an officer's council. Regardless of consequences, all agreed to stand by him. Colonels Peter Horry, Hugh Horry, James Postell and John Ervin and Majors John James, John Baxter and Alexander Svinton were among those who supported him at this time. They reorganized, continued the

fighting and carried on what seemed at the time to be an almost hopeless cause.

Robert James, one of the general's right-hand men, was asked after the war how it was that Marion secured such accurate information on the British movements. He said, "Just in the outskirts of Georgetown there is a pond full of bushes, and in the middle of it a large gum tree with a thick top and branches that reach to the thicket below. This tree overlooked the garrison and both roads leading out of town. I used to climb it and watch for days together, and if I saw anything important, immediately came down, mounted my horse, hid in a neighboring swamp, and told it to the general myself, or sent the only other person we trusted."

Marion retired to private life after the surrender of Cornwallis. In 1783 the State Senate gave him a vote of thanks and ordered a gold medal to be struck in honor of his "great, glorious and meritorious conduct." This medal was never made. In 1786 he married Miss Esther Videau, a relative, said by historians to have borne him a close resemblance.

Marion's counsel and advice were much sought in state affairs, but he did not long survive the war. He passed away peacefully in 1795 and was buried at Belle Isle, a plantation near St. Stephens, owned by his brother Gabriel. Here a tablet still marks his grave.

Marion's own plantation was at Pond Bluff and he was permitted by his brother to cultivate also Hampton Hill, a part of Belle Isle. When Gabriel died, in 1779, Francis was named as executor of the estate. Another brother passed away at about the same time. His sister, Esther, married John Alston and later Thomas Mitchell.

Marion was described by those who knew him well, as being below middle stature, lean and swarthy, his body well set upon limbs awkwardly formed. His eyes were piercing black, his nose aquiline. He had a large, round forehead, projecting chin and somewhat hollow cheeks. He dressed habitually in a close, round-bodied jacket of a coarse texture, and wore a leather cap, part of the uniform of the Second Regiment, upon which was affixed a silver crescent, inscribed with the words "Liberty or Death." This is the man celebrated in the famous Bryant poem. "The Song of Marion's Men." His fame will live forever in the history of our country as a man of high ideals, a brave and hardy soldier, a beloved commander, a man who did most valiant service for his country under the most trying of conditions. He is honored particularly in South Carolina, where he was lovingly and familiarly known as the "Swamp Fox."

LIST OF NAMES OF OFFICERS AND MEN KNOWN TO
HAVE BEEN IN MARION'S BRIGADE

Andrews, Daniel	Crozer, Thomas	Gray, Peter	Irons, Stephen	McAllister, William	Stanton, James
Area, Peter	Caton, John	Gray, James	Jones, William	McCall, Henry	Sline, Bartholomew
Adams, Andrew	Clements, John	Galloway, Thomas	Jasper, William	McGowan (?)	Simmons, Jesse
Anderson, Matthew	Cade, William	Green, Daniel	Johnston, William	Murphy, Edward	Skipper, Charles
Allan, John Peter	Cox, Robert	George, Edward	Jones, Thomas	Mimm, William	Simpson, William
Andrews, Enoch	Chavis, John	Caspey, James	Horlan, Daniel	Newton, James	Stone, Benjamin
Barnett, Noble	Chandelby, William	Green, Dickerson	Jones, James	Newton, Moses	Simson, Francis
Burtell, John	Clark, James	Codbott, John	Jones, Barrell	Norman, William	Sugenor, Benjamin
Book, Enoch	Cook, William	Going, Rapas	Jones, William F.	Newman, Hugh	Steel, John
Baker, Richard	Cade, William	Gunter, Needham	James, Maj. John	Nute, Thomas	Simmons, Frederick
Brown, Levi	Cade, John M.	Goodson, Thomas	James, Robert	Newton, Philip	Scurry, James
Brown, Samuel	Clark, William	Gowan, Frederick	Kolb, Josiah	Oliver, William	Stuart, David
Brewton, George	Carrick, George	Grubbs, James	Kidwell, Thomas	O'Neill, Douglas	Smith, John
Bearslick, Abraham	Conner, John	Gainey, Edward	Kalkoffer, Jacob	Ogier, George	Kalkoff, John
Booth, Benjamin	Chaney, William	Grover, James	Kinney, Samuel	Owens, Benjamin	Stafford, Thomas
Benhoist, Jacob	Carter, John	Groom, Moses	Kiler, Hendrick	Oldfield, Dempher	Skipper, Matthew
Bentley, Charles	Colson, Arthur	Gamble, Robert	Kennedy, Matthew	Oliver, Thomas	Smith, Adam
Berteau, Abraham	Clay, William	Gamond, Christopher	Kieth, John	Ogier, Lewis	Savage, Henry
Burbridge, William	Cowen, Thomas	Green, Timothy	Long, Solomon	Oscar (Gen. Marion's servant)	Smith, John
Blackford, Samuel	Calcott, Blake	Gunter, William	Lyon, William	Petice, Alexander	Smith, Drury
Burbridge, Thomas	Caves, Charlie	Gallington, Christopher	Lamb, Frederick	Provenaux, Adian	Skipper, John
Burbridge, John	Cantey, General	Gordon (?)	Logan, James	Perry, John	Scott (?)
Burbridge, Jonathan	Dunbar, Thomas	Green, John T.	Logan, Robert	Patrick, Lewis	Swaican (?)
Bridges, Francis	Dewitt, Reuben	Hume, Alexander	Leaton, William	Phillips, William	Swinton, Maj. Alexander
Barger, Nicholas	Dewitt, Harris	Hall, Thomas	Launce, Robert	Penhorn, Robert	Turner, Joseph
Brain, Barnsby	Dubose, John	Hart, John	Linsey, William	Powell, Lewis	Taylor, John
Baggett, Abraham	Davis, John	Harvey, William	Lamb, Archibald	Paine, Joseph	Thompson, John
Bewly, John	Downing, Timothy	Henderson, William	Lackey, Richard	Proby, John	Thomas, Philip
Bambrick, Edward	Domas, Lewis	Hankins, John	Leaton, James	Peters, Jeremiah	Tubbs, Amos
Bowan, Thomas	Dishes, Henry	Hughes, George	Logan, Captain George	Peters, Michael	Thompson, Walkinsheer
Bray, Ambrose	Davis, Thomas	Hughes, Frederick	Motte, Charles	Poston, Thomas	Taylor, Henry
Bentley, John	Deviney, Peter	Harper, John	Murphy, William	Palmer, Captain John	Taylor, George
Butler, John	Davis, Joseph	How, Samuel	McDowell, John	Postell, Major John	Taylor, John
Brown, William	Dines, John	Hagarthy, Thomas	McClandall, Louis	Potts (?)	Tomplatt, Elisha
Butler, Samuel	Derberry, Hugh	Huggins, Benjamin	Minor, Reuben	Roux, Albert	Thompson, John
Burnham, Charles	Dalton, William	Hackle, Oswald	Moultrie, Thomas	Rogers, Christopher	Teague, John
Brecher, Benjamin	Davis, Hugh	Haines, Humphrey	Mauley, David	Rogers, Robert	Valley, George
Breeler, John	Debrandy, Abraham	Hall, Joshua	Murray, Samuel	Raine, Robert	Van Vleeland, Cornelius
Beard, James	Ethridge, Marmaduke	Hughes, William	McDonald, Alexander	Roberts, Stephen	Vaughn, David
Brown, Edward	Easton, William	Hutton, Charles	Manning, William	Rogers, William	Wickom, John
Brownfield, Dr.	Enochs, William	Hyrne, John	Martin, Jesse	Robertson, Archibald	Webb, Henry
Bentley (?)	Elliott, Thomas	Hasemon, William	Mason, Richard	Robinson, John	Warley, Paul
Baxter, Maj. John	Ervin, Col. John	Holland, Hugh	Mazyck, David	Roberts, John	Wood, William
Benson (?)	Feast, James	Hain, James	Martin, John	Rawlins, Rolly	Wilkins, Joseph
Capers, William	Fry, Philip	Henderson, Samuel	McCullough, William	Ratford, John	White, John
Clatworthy, James	Fitner, Conrad	Houston, James	McMillan, Samuel	Richardson, John	Webster, Benjamin
Crapps, William	Foissin, Peter	Harris, Aaron	Matthews, Robert	Russell, James	Waits, William
Chinners, Isaac	Fenwick, John	Hensen, William	Miller, John	Rodgers, Nathaniel	Willis, William
Cortney, Samuel	Fitzsimmons, James	Hampton, John	McDaniel, James	Riley, John	Withersford, Isaac
Caddy, John	Farrell, Francis	Holmes, John	McDaniel, Archie	Reed, James	Winford, William
Clyatt, Robert	Ferguson, Alexander	Heath, Hezekiah	Mace, Moses	Russell, William	Wales, Reuben
Connell, William	Fry, Edward	Hollisman, Kindred	Meek, Adam	Richardson, Richard	Welch, Thomas
Castello, James	Faulder, Thomas	Hughes, Joseph	Morgan, Joshua	Reeves, Joseph	Watt, Nehemiah
Collins, Jonathan	Fitzpatrick, James	Herring, Isaac	McFarlan, Malcom	Rawlins, Thomas	Wainwright, Edward
Constantine, Cornelius	Friday, John	Hinds, Timothy	McCormack, George	Rosman, Peter	Whiley, Robert
Cooper, Joseph	Ford, James	Hyde, William	Mills, Thomas	Ryan, William	Wilkinson, William
Clark, Richard	Flinn, Nicholas	Heigle, Jacob	Maroni, Vincent	Raybold, Thomas	Whiley, David
Campbell, John	Francis, John	Horry, Col. Peter	Martin, Henry	Rawling, William	Whitely, John
Childs, Moses	George, Jacob	Horry, Col. Hugh	Martin, William	Rowland, Frederick	Windsor, Thomas
Croford, John	Gibson, Silas	Ingram, Ralph	McFarling, Daniel	Sparrow, James	Walker, Rowland
			Mitchell, Solomon	Stone, Benjamin	Waites, Hon. Thomas
			Moet, Samuel	Stewart, Alexander	Withuspoon, Garin
			Marlow, John	Stapleton, Solomon	Withuspoon, Robert
				Swobb, Nathaniel	