

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 McIlraith 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 Swinton 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 course 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
Area, Peter	Caton, John	Gray, James
Adams, Andrew	Clements, John	Galloway, Thomas
Anderson, Matthew	Cade, William	Green, Daniel
Allan, John Peter	Cox, Robert	George, Edward
Andrews, Enoch	Chavis, John	Gaspey, James
Barnett, Noble	Chandelby, William	Green, Dickerson
Burtell, John	Clark, James	Godbolt, John
Book, Enoch	Cook, William	Going, Rapcs
Baker, Richard	Cade, William	Gunter, Needham
Brown, Levi	Cade, John M.	Goodson, Thomas
Brown, Samuel	Clark, William	Gowan, Frederick
Brewton, George	Carrick, George	Grubbs, James
Bearslick, Abraham	Conner, John	Gainey, Edward
Booth, Benjamin	Chaney, William	Grover, James
Benhoist, Jacob	Carter, John	Groom, Moses
Bentley, Charles	Colson, Arthur	Gamble, Robert
Berteau, Abraham	Clay, William	Gamond, Christopher
Burbridge, William	Cowen, Thomas	Green, Timothy
Blackford, Samuel	Calcott, Blake	Gunter, William
Burbridge, Thomas	Caves, Charlie	Gallington, Christopher
Burbridge, John	Cantey, General	Gordon (?)
Burbridge, Jonathan	Dunbar, Thomas	Green, John T.
Bridges, Francis	Dewitt, Reuben	Hume, Alexander
Barger, Nicholas	Dewitt, Harris	Hall, Thomas
Brain, Barnsby	Dubose, John	Hart, John
Baggett, Abraham	Davis, John	Harvey, William
Bewly, John	Downing, Timothy	Henderson, William
Bambrick, Edward	Domas, Lewis	Hankins, John
Bowan, Thomas	Dishes, Henry	Hughes, George
Bray, Ambrose	Davis, Thomas	Hughes, Frederick
Bentley, John	Deviney, Peter	Harper, John
Butler, John	Davis, Joseph	How, Samuel
Brown, William	Dines, John	Hagarthy, Thomas
Butler, Samuel	Derberry, Hugh	Huggins, Benjamin
Burnham, Charles	Dalton, William	Hackle, Oswald
Breeler, Benjamin	Davis, Hugh	Haines, Humphrey
Breeler, John	Debrandy, Abraham	Hall, Joshua
Beard, James	Ethridge, Marmaduke	Hughes, William
Brown, Edward	Easton, William	Hutton, Charles
Brownfield, Dr.	Enochs, William	Hyrne, John
Bentley (?)	Elliott, Thomas	Hasemon, William
Baxter, Maj. John	Ervin, Col. John	Holland, Hugh
Benson (?)	Feast, James	Hain, James
Capers, William	Fry, Philip	Henderson, Samuel
Clatworthy, James	Fitner, Conrad	Houston, James
Crapps, William	Foissin, Peter	Harris, Aaron
Chinners, Isaac	Fenwick, John	Hensen, William
Cortney, Samuel	Fitzsimmons, James	Hampton, John
Caddy, John	Farrell, Francis	Holmes, John
Clyatt, Robert	Ferguson, Alexander	Heath, Hezekiah
Connell, William	Fry, Edward	Hollisman, Kindred
Castello, James	Faulder, Thomas	Hughes, Joseph
Collins, Jonathan	Fitzpatrick, James	Herring, Isaac
Constantine, Cornelius	Friday, John	Hinds, Timothy
Cooper, Joseph	Ford, James	Hyde, William
Clark, Richard	Flinn, Nicholas	Heigle, Jacob
Campbell, John	Francis, John	Horry, Col. Peter
Childs, Moses	George, Jacob	Horry, Col. Hugh
Croford, John	Gibson, Silas	Ingram, Ralph

Irons, Stephen
Jones, William
Jasper, William
Johnston, William
Jones, Thomas
Hordan, Daniel
Jones, James
Jones, Barrell
Jones, William F.
James, Maj. John
James, Robert
Kolb, Josiah
Kidwell, Thomas
Kalkoffer, Jacob
Kinney, Samuel
Kiler, Hendrick
Kennedy, Matthew
Kieth, John
Long, Solomon
Lyon, William
Lamb, Frederick
Logan, James
Logan, Robert
Leaton, William
Launce, Robert
Linsey, William
Lamb, Archibald
Lackey, Richard
Leaton, James
Logan, Captain George
Motte, Charles
Murphy, William
McDowell, John
McClandall, Louis
Minor, Reuben
Moultrie, Thomas
Mauley, David
Murray, Samuel
McDonald, Alexander
Manning, William
Martin, Jesse
Mason, Richard
Mazyck, David
Martin, John
McCullough, William
McMillan, Samuel
Matthews, Robert
Miller, John
McDaniel, James
McDaniel, Archie
Mace, Moses
Meek, Adam
Morgan, Joshua
McFarlan, Malcom
McCormack, George
Mills, Thomas
Maroni, Vincent
Martin, Henry
Martin, William
McFarling, Daniel
Mitchell, Solomon
Moet, Samuel
Marlow, John

McAllister, William
McCall, Henry
McGowan (?)
Murphy, Edward
Mimm, William
Newton, James
Newton, Moses
Norman, William
Newman, Hugh
Nute, Thomas
Newton, Philip
Oliver, William
O'Neill, Douglas
Ogier, George
Owens, Benjamin
Oldfield, Dempfer
Oliver, Thomas
Ogier, Lewis
Oscar (Gen. Marion's
servant)
Petice, Alexander
Provenaux, Adian
Perry, John
Patrick, Lewis
Phillips, William
Penhorn, Robert
Powell, Lewis
Paine, Joseph
Proby, John
Peters, Jeremiah
Peters, Michael
Poston, Thomas
Palmer, Captain John
Postell, Major John
Potts (?)
Roux, Albert
Rogers, Christopher
Raine, Robert
Roberts, Stephen
Rogers, William
Robertson, Archibald
Robinson, John
Roberts, John
Rawlins, Rolly
Ratford, John
Richardson, John
Russell, James
Rodgers, Nathaniel
Riley, John
Reed, James
Russell, William
Richardson, Richard
Reeves, Joseph
Rawlins, Thomas
Rosman, Peter
Ryan, William
Raybold, Thomas
Rawling, William
Rowland, Frederick
Sparrow, James
Stone, Benjamin
Stewart, Alexander
Stapleton, Solomon
Swobb, Nathaniel

Stanton, James
Slime, Barthlomew
Simmons, Jesse
Skipper, Charles
Skipper, William
Stone, Benjamin
Simson, Francis
Stugenor, Benjamin
Steel, John
Simmons, Frederick
Scurry, James
Stuart, David
Smith, John
Sparrow, John
Stafford, Thomas
Skipper, Matthew
Smith, Adam
Savage, Henry
Smith, John
Smith, Drury
Skipper, John
Scott (?)
Swaican (?)
Swinton, Maj. Alexander
Turner, Joseph
Taylor, John
Thompson, John
Thomas, Philip
Tubbs, Amos
Thompson, Walkinsheer
Taylor, Henry
Taylor, George
Taylor, John
Tomplatt, Elisha
Thompson, John
Teague, John
Valley, George
Van Vleeland, Cornelius
Vaughn, David
Wickom, John
Webb, Henry
Warley, Paul
Wood, William
Wilkins, Joseph
White, John
Webster, Benjamin
Waits, William
Willis, William
Withersford, Isaac
Winford, William
Wales, Reuben
Welch, Thomas
Watt, Nehemiah
Wainwright, Edward
Whiley, Robert
Wilkinson, William
Whiley, David
Whitely, John
Windsor, Thomas
Walker, Rowland
Waites, Hon. Thomas
Withuspoon, Garin
Withuspoon, Robert

MARION Family

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