

# MARION'S BRIGADE

By MAJOR J. H. ROBINSON

## CHAPTER I.

Charleston had fallen, and British partisan officers were devastating South Carolina with fire and sword. It was a season when might seemed to have achieved a victory over right. The most hopeful of the patriots began to despond and to feel that their cause was lost forever. Toryism prevailed unchecked. Peaceable citizens were slain without mercy, and their substance wasted. South Carolina was literally trodden under foot by a remorseless foe, and the sun arose upon burning houses and houseless fugitives. Many accepted royal protection, and as many rejected it with ineffable scorn.

Though dark and discouraging the period, opposition had not yet ceased; a few daring souls still contended for liberty and justice. At Williamsburg a small party of horsemen was collected. No two were dressed alike, if we except the covering for the head, each wearing a leathern cap, more substantial than ornamental. A few had rifles; some had fowling pieces; others had rude but heavy sabers fashioned by the skill of the neighboring blacksmith; and there were others who were armed with swords of the ordinary kind.

However shabby their apparel, and however indifferently they were armed, it was very certain that they were without exception well mounted, and men of high and stern determination. This little band of horsemen was commanded by Francis Marion—a man whose military career proved successful and brilliant. They fell into line. A commanding figure rode forward and addressed the men. It was Col. Horry, the friend and able supporter of Gen. Marion.

"Friends, neighbors and fellow soldiers," said the colonel, "I have a proposition to make—that you hereafter be distinguished as a body of men by the name of Marion's Brigade. As many as are in favor of this proposition will ride three paces to the front."

Without hesitation every horseman moved to the front, and the line remained unbroken.

"Here comes the general," said Ben Rowan, a man famous for his personal strength and daring.

"He is rather small in stature," remarked a recruit, who had joined the brigade that morning.

"He is quite large enough to unite in his own person great generalship, unflinching courage and indomitable perseverance," replied a young man whose name was Forstall.

"He's all of that," added Rowan, approvingly; "and he rides one of the best horses in the State. It's my opinion that Tarleton's cavalry can't keep in sight of him."

"So far as I am able to judge in the premises we are all pretty well mounted," said Forstall, glancing at his companions with evident pride.

"So we are," rejoined Ben Rowan; "and so we ought to be, for the brunt of the battle is coming upon us. We are almost alone in the field."

"Verily, I love not the sound of the trumpet, and the lifting up of the spear!" exclaimed Job Dawson, an athletic Quaker on the right of Rowan.

"Then what are you here for?" asked the latter, contentiously. "For one I came here to fight, and I'll follow that lion-hearted Marion as long as I can sit on a horse and wield any kind of a weapon."

"I came hither, friend Rowan," replied Dawson, quietly, "to prevent wanton cruelty and the shedding of blood. Verily, my soul hateth the neighing of steeds and the preparations of war."

"You'd better go home, then," answered Rowan, gruffly.

Francis Marion, mounted upon his renowned horse, rode leisurely to the front of the brigade, and every eye was fixed earnestly upon him.

"Men and soldiers, I have been sent here by Gen. Gates to be your leader. I shall endeavor to discharge my duty; but if I fail it will be because I lack ability and address, and not because I do not love my country as dearly as any other man. I have heard that you are all tried and true; and I rejoice that it is so, for it shall be my highest ambition to lead such against our haughty enemies. I have adopted for my motto, 'Liberty or Death,' and I solemnly assure you that I mean to abide by it. It is my firm and unalterable purpose never to abandon the field so long as there is one true soldier in South Carolina to go with me to battle. Our numbers are increasing hourly, and if you are brave, resolute and prudent, the whole country will hear of your achievements. Your sweethearts shall blush with pleasure when they hear your names spoken; your wives will weep pearly tears of joy and gratitude, and your children in after years will strive to emulate your noble deeds. I feel within me an assurance that this brigade will yet become the terror of British hirelings, and a word to make the Tory tremble even while the bayonets of Cornwallis gleam over his dastardly head. We will surprise our foes by sudden sallies; we will awe them with the exploits of men resolved to conquer or die; we will appear to them in unexpected places; we will cut off communication with their different military posts; we will, in short, harass them at all times, until they can feel no sense of security on the soil of South Carolina."

The general ceased, and the brigade cheered him to the echo.

"That's what I call the right kind of talk!" exclaimed Ben, enthusiastically.

"It may suit thee, friend Benjamin," replied Job Dawson, calmly.

Rowan looked disdainfully at the Quaker, but did not deign to reply. "The general wishes to see you," said Col. Horry, in a low voice to Dawson. "Follow me."

Job Dawson obeyed the summons, and in a few minutes his gigantic figure was seen towering up beside the smaller person of the brigadier.

"I have been informed by one of my men," said Marion, "that you can tell me something about the movements of Major Gauley, the Tory leader, who has done so much mischief of late."

"As thou seest, friend Francis, I belong to that peculiar sect called Quakers—a people who love peace, and abhor contention. Verily, I cannot fight with carnal weapons; but this much I will say—that man of Belial, whom they call Gauley, and who leadeth the disaffected of our countrymen to battle and vexeth this unhappy land not a little, is now resting on the work of slaughter on the banks of the Pedee, at a place called Britton's Neck. Hence, friend Francis, I would advise thee to keep out of the way of that man of blood, lest he should fall upon thee and smite thee with the edge of the sword."

"I thank you," said the general, with a smile.

"It was my duty to do this, to prevent the effusion of blood," resumed Dawson.

Marion did not reply immediately, but fixed his penetrating eyes searchingly upon the singular personage before him.

"There are men, friend Francis," continued Dawson, "bad enough to fall upon this Major Gauley in the night time and slay him, and those that are with him, without mercy, but I hope thou art a man of peace."

"I fight to procure peace, friend Dawson," returned the general; "and I shall certainly surprise Major Gauley to-night. His enormities are but too well known to me; he has filled to the brim the measure of his sins, and I will punish him if heaven will kindly endow my arm with accustomed strength for a few hours longer. As you appear to be well acquainted with the localities referred to, you must be my guide to the spot."

"You forget, friend Francis, that my conscience protests against such proceedings," replied Dawson.

"Your conscience is wrongly educated," answered the general, "and I must use my authority."

"Verily, thou hast the power, and I cannot resist thee," returned Job. "But if I go up with thee to battle, I can only look on and see the slaughter go on."

"Do as you please about fighting; all I require is that you conduct me to the camp of Major Gauley by the shortest route. When there you shall be at liberty to fight, or run away, just which your conscience may incline to dictate. I observe that you are not armed, Mr. Dawson. I advise you to wear some kind of a weapon to secure your own safety."

"If it is thy command, I must even obey," returned Job.

The general and Job Dawson rode slowly back toward the encampment. Suddenly Marion drew up his horse and asked abruptly:

"Is there a woman in this case, Mr. Dawson?"

The young Quaker's calm and handsome face was instantly suffused with a deep red.

"There is a certain damsel," he answered, "who is, indeed, somewhat interested in these matters."

"And you are, doubtless, judging from your confusion, interested in the damsel?"

"I like not thy trade," said Dawson evasively.

Gen. Marion motioned to Rowan and he approached.

"I do not wish Mr. Dawson to leave the camp," he said. "I confide him to your care until night. See that he has good treatment and a weapon if he desires one."

"You don't strike me as being just the right kind of a chap for these parts," remarked Ben.

"Why not, friend Benjamin?" asked Job, in those peculiarly gentle tones which were in such strange contrast with the excited voices that arose on every side.

"Because there is no fight in you!" retorted Rowan, energetically.

"All men are not alike," was the patient reply. "Friend Benjamin, your leader commanded me to wear a weapon, but I would fain be excused."

"But you can't be excused!" exclaimed Ben, glad of this opportunity to do violence to Dawson's feelings. "If the general has said so, you must come to it, and there's no use in hanging back."

"I cannot use a sword, friend Benjamin; but I have no power to resist. Do with me as seemeth good unto thee."

Full of the idea of having a little innocent sport at the expense of the unostentatious and honest Job Dawson, Ben Rowan conducted him to a shop not far from the camp, where two or three stout men were engaged in fashioning sabers for the brigade. Swords were at first wanting, but they stripped all the saw-mills of the neighborhood, and the saws were converted by rude blacksmiths into sabers for the men.

"You can now select a weapon," said Rowan, pointing to several rudely made sabers.

"If I must indeed be armed, good Benjamin, I will have such an implement of warfare as shall best suit my fancy. These are not heavy enough. I would

have one six inches longer, and several pounds heavier."

"That's rather rich!" exclaimed Rowan. "I suppose a common broomstick would answer just as well for all practical purposes?"

"I dare say thou art right; but I will, if it please all parties, have the weapon that those honest men are now smiting upon the anvil."

"Shall we cut off the end, or will you have it the whole length?" asked one of the workmen, with a smile.

"Verily, friend Vulcan, I will not have it any shorter. Fashion it according to thy best skill, and I will wear it, in obedience to the commands of Francis, the leader of this warlike people."

The sabre was made according to the instructions of Dawson, and occasioned no little merriment; for it was of such weight and length that it seemed to rival the famous weapon used by Wallace himself when he led the plaided warriors to battle. Wherever the Quaker appeared with the ponderous "utensil of war," as he quietly styled it, there was sure to be an outburst of ridiculous remarks, for Ben Rowan did not fail to call attention to his patient and uncomplaining friend.

But one thing could not be overlooked by the most facetious and fun-loving of the dragons; and that was that the figure of Job Dawson was a fine model of manly beauty and strength. Larger than any man in the brigade, of a pleasing countenance, and still young, despite all the disadvantages under which he labored in other respects, his personal appearance excited admiration and some envy. He moved about among the men, apparently unconscious that he was a subject of ridicule. When addressed, his answers were mild, and yet characterized by quiet dignity, and his calm voice never for a moment lost its tones of strong gentleness. Although the monstrous weapon hung at his side, no warlike fires gleamed from his eyes; they were as soft as a woman's in their expression, and a wondrous serenity seemed written in the singular repose of every feature.

## CHAPTER II.

There was one in Marion's brigade who was deeply interested in the contemplated movement against Major Gauley. The individual referred to was Frank Forstall. His home was on the Pedee river, not far from Britton's Neck; consequently his nearest and dearest friends were there—his parents and his fair and gentle sister Rose. Nor was this all; Ruth Strickland, a young and interesting maiden, who had awakened in his bosom the tenderest sentiments of friendship, resided in that vicinity, giving it, by her presence, an additional charm.

Mr. Strickland, Ruth's father, was at that time in the army of Gen. Gates, marching toward Camden. Major Gauley, the notorious Tory leader, had heard of the rare beauty and accomplishments of Ruth, and naturally felt a desire to see her; but the admiration was all on his side, for she had no sympathy with his cause, and shrank with horror from the rehearsal of his deeds.

Although they had met only by accident, the major had been very free in the expression of his admiration, and evidently desired to cultivate her acquaintance; but Ruth treated him with such coldness that he quickly perceived he had little or nothing to hope in that direction. He embraced various opportunities that chance threw in his way to endeavor to convince her of the justice of his cause; also to excite her fears, and to awe her into something like a reverence for himself and his authority.

This state of things was not unknown to Frank Forstall, and he had hoped, with Ruth, that her persecutions would cease after her return home. His anxiety may in some measure be imagined when he heard that Gauley and his ruffianly followers were encamped at Britton's Neck.

As young Forstall reflected upon this subject, his fears increased, and he waited with obvious impatience for the time to come when the brigade should be put in motion. He had been compelled to take the field by the stern necessity of the times. His innate love of truth and justice had induced him to side with the patriots, and he had joined Marion's brigade only the day before.

While the dragons under Marion were waiting so anxiously for the approach of night, Major Gauley and his men were making themselves quite at home at Britton's Neck. They were slaughtering the choicest heaves that they could find, without taking the trouble to consult owners; they plundered granaries, they entered peaceful dwellings, the only inmates of which were helpless women, and robbed them of their plate, money and watches; and, when these were not to be obtained, contented themselves by depriving them of their personal ornaments, such as rings, chains and bracelets. Transactions of this kind were not limited, however, to that particular locality; they were of common occurrence all over the country, and excited general indignation among the injured inhabitants.

Of all the enemies with whom the patriots had to contend, none were so eminently distinguished for cruelty and meanness as the Tories. To despoil and slay their Whig neighbors appeared to them a most agreeable employment; consequently there existed between the two parties feelings of animosity the most implacable. The royal cause being now in the ascendant in South Carolina, the numerous Tory bands that were sweeping through the country loved to show their power in acts of which no honorable foe would have been guilty. Major Gauley revealed in plenty at Britton's Neck, at the expense of the inhabitants. He triumphed over old men and defenseless women and children, and he meant that they should feel that he could have everything as he wished.

(To be continued.)

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