



The MARSHAL

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SYNOPSIS.

Francois Beaupre, a peasant babe of three years, after an amusing incident in which Marshal Ney figures, is made a Chevalier of France by the Emperor Napoleon, in the hope of the lad's parents in the village of Vignoux, France, where the emperor had briefly stopped to hold a council of war. Napoleon prophesied that the boy might one day be a marshal of France under another Bonaparte. At the age of ten Francois meets a stranger who is astonished when the boy tells him of his ambition. Francois visits General Baron Gaspard Gourgaud, who with Alixe, his seven-year-old daughter, lives at the chateau. A soldier of the Empire under Napoleon he fires the boy's imagination with stories of his campaigns.

CHAPTER V—Continued.

"Tiens! We will play again for another bottle," he announced with a bit of swagger. He was conscious of a right to spend silver in treating his friends, with that fat purse in his pocket.

"No," spoke the stranger—Duplessis, he had said his name was. "No. I have drunk enough. However, if you feel sensitive at taking the small sum of money at La rams—let us play for the franc which the bottle would cost. Eh bien!"

Again they played, this time doubling the amount, and again Francois gained, and again and again, till he felt ashamed in carrying away all this money of a new acquaintance, and at the same time a cock-sureness that so lucky a devil as Beaupre might well lose a little and stop at the right amount. The excitement of cards and excitement of wine met in a heady mixture; Duplessis drank little, though Francois urged it on him. The luck began to change; now and then the stranger won, now and then Beaupre, yet more often now the stranger, till at length Francois was playing not with the desire to lose, but with a hope to gain back something at least of the considerable sum which he had lost. Before this he had gone into his pocket and brought out that honorable nine hundred francs, and had thrown one louis d'or after another on the black table, and lost one after another. Yet his confidence was still strong—luck would turn—this was his lucky day. And now he would not regret carrying away the stranger's money. He began to feel a fierce eagerness to get the better of this antagonist became so formidable. And a horrible nervousness was creeping over him at the dim vision of a thought—a thought kept resolutely on the confines of his consciousness, yet persistently pushing forward—the thought that it might be that he could not win the money back.

"Double!" he shouted promptly as he lost again. The nine hundred francs were gone; he gave a note now, on his stock, and again he lost. A deathly sickening sensation had gripped him and was holding him. In silence, with a crowd of silent men, who in some way had come to know what was happening; standing about them, the two played the last round. And Francois lost. In silence he signed the note which gave to the stranger his house and furniture and land, all that he had in the world.

CHAPTER VI.

Work and Hope.

The next day a sheriff and his clerk came and fixed red seals to the house and to everything in it which locked, and Claire watched in a deep quiet, the baby in her arms.

Something had been said already of



The Nine Hundred Francs Were Gone.

sending the children to this or that uncle or aunt—there would in a short time be no home and no living for them until the broken father could gather himself and begin again. Little Francois resolved that he would not go. He would stay with his father and prove that eleven was not too young to make money. As he stood watching the sheriff who moved gloomily about his unwelcome duty he was aware of a horse's hoofs beating down the road, and he turned. In the midst of his grief it was interesting to see the Baron-General Gourgaud coming on his bay mare Lesitte. The general drew up beside him and looked at him sternly.

"Where is your father?" he shot at him, and threw a leg over and vaulted off and flung the mare's reins to the lad, and swung into the great entry and through the open door into the cottage.

Francois, though broken-hearted, was but eleven, and it was a proud thing to hold the seigneur's horse and pleasant to see the spirited beast paw the earth as he held her. He was so entranced with this occupation that he forgot his bruised life and his lost career entirely. For fifteen minutes he forgot, and the other children gathered around him, and he ordered them away from the horse and felt himself its guardian and an important person, with complete satisfaction.

And at that, out of the house came the seigneur, big and black-browed and solid of tread, and with him that broken-hearted father whose face recalled all the tragedy.

"Francois," his father spoke, more gently than ever he had spoken before. "I have taken your future from you, my son. The seigneur wishes to give it back. He wishes to make you his child. Your mother consents—and I—consent." His father's arm was about his neck. The general's abrupt voice took up the statement.

"Will you come and live with me in the chateau, Monsieur the Marshal?" he demanded roughly, kindly. "I will treat you as a son—you shall learn to ride a horse and shoot a gun and be a soldier. You shall fit yourself for the part which we know must be played one day. Will you come?"

For a moment it seemed to Francois that heaven had opened and a miracle of joy come down; then it flashed to his mind that this dazzling gift had a price. With a whole soul Francois cast away the brilliant dream and hardly felt an effort.

"I thank you a thousand times, my seigneur," he answered with decision. "I cannot go with you. I must stay and work for my father and my mother."

There was silence for a minute in the sunshiny garden; the children had wandered away; the men did not speak; one heard only the more Lisette whom Francois held, who stamped her light forefoot and whinnied impatiently. Then the general's grave voice sounded, more gravely than ever.

"Francois Beaupre, you own a fine lad," he threw at the drooping peasant. "I would like to have him for mine. Since I cannot, I shall try at least to be his friend. Monsieur the Marshal, it must be as you say. But come to see me at the chateau soon. I shall have things to talk over with you."

On a morning Francois was busy at the new garden, digging beds for the plants which the neighbors had eagerly given them, and which, put in the ground now, in the autumn, would rise above them in brightness next spring.

Into this contentment came, galloping gloriously, hoof beats of a horse. The busy spade, several sizes too big, stopped, and Francois leaned his chin on the handle, the boy out of drawing for the tool. The general stopped, which was a heavenly surprise to Francois each time that it happened.

"Good morning, marshal. Will you ask your mother if I may speak to her?"

"Mother, mother, the seigneur wishes you," Francois whispered piercingly, but Claire was already on the little front walk by the new garden.

In a moment she stood at the gate in her fresh calico dress, with a white fichu over her head, and the big man towered and growled sentences friendly. Then the general trotted with jingling stirrup down the village street and Claire stood with eyes following for a moment.

"What did the seigneur say, my mother?" Francois demanded. "Did he say I might come to the chateau tomorrow? May I? Am I to know what the general said, my mother?"

After his father came home to dinner he knew. He was to go each morning to the chateau and do work in copying for the general. The general was writing a book, nothing less than a history of Napoleon himself. The boy's great dreamy eyes glowed.

So the little lad, in his clean, patched, peasant clothes, went up to the chateau the next morning serious and important, and was given a table and a corner in the library and words to copy which thrilled his soul.

Often the general talked to him. "Eh bien, there, the marshal!" would come thundering from the great table across the room; and the scribe would drop his pen and scuttle over the dim wide place.

"Yes, Monsieur the Seigneur. I am here."

"Listen then, my soldier. I am uncertain if this that I have written is of importance. It is interesting to me, because Gaspard Gourgaud was there, yet I do not wish to ram Gaspard Gourgaud down a reader's throat."

Francois squatted on a stool exactly in front of the general, with his knees together and his elbows on them, his chin in the hollow of his hands. His eyes were glued on the general's face. In a deep voice the general read. It was an account of that world-tragedy, the retreat from Moscow. First came a list of regiments and of officers, with

detailed accounts of early service in both; it was exact, accurate. For five minutes the general read this; then his black eyebrows lifted and he glared over the paper.

"You find it interesting?" he demanded.

Francois, lips compressed, shook his head firmly. "No, my Seigneur. Not at all."

"I agree with you," the general said, and sorted the papers over and laid some away. Selecting a sheet or two, he began to read again.

"Over the frozen roads the worn army still trudged; every form of misery trudged with them. Hunger was there, and cold, and suffering of wounds, and suffering of lack of clothing; more than this, there was the constant dread of attack from flying bands of Cossacks. From time to time frightful explosions made one turn one's head—it was the caissons exploding by order of the Emperor that they might no longer encumber us. The snow fell. The Emperor marched on foot with us. Staff in hand, wrapped in a large loose cloak, a furred Russian cap on his head, he walked in

from a Russian whom he had killed—it was most imprudent, especially in the dress he wore, which did not show the French uniform underneath. It was my turn then to play nurse. He was placed in one of the carriages of the Emperor, and I cared for him as my own brother, and he came through it all, and went back to Italy, to his home."

The general's deep-set eyes were gazing now above Francois' head out through the narrow window where the boy's table stood, across the mountain slope, to the blue distance.

"Alessandro, my friend," he spoke in his gruff tones, yet softly, "shall we see each other again? So close through that black time, so far apart now in the peace of our homes! Those warm hands which cared for me when I was freezing and dying in Russia—I shall touch them perhaps never again, never again!"

CHAPTER VII.

The Crown of Friendship.

In the claw-footed, carved, old mahogany desk of a Virginia house, in a drawer where are packets of yellowed letters tied up and labeled, is a letter written years later, referring to that earlier time in France. Perhaps this bit of the chronicle of Francois Beaupre could not be told so vividly as in these words of Francois written from his prison. He begins with the account of an adventure, of a ride for life.

"So, dear Alixe," he finishes this—the detailed story of his capture—"down went the poor horse, and over his head I spun into the ditch with a bump on the skull which dazed me. And when I came to there were the heavy Austrians around me, gazing to see the Prince. And only Francois Beaupre to see, which they found out pretty promptly, as I have told you before, and also how I defied them."

"In a great danger they say one thinks more clearly than usual—one's mind works with smoothness and at leisure. It was so during that ride. For I followed out as I dashed along, hearing the shouts of the men back of me, the whole train of circumstances from one of those mornings with Coq in the park, to this adventure of life and death. It was the morning—you will know before I say it—when Jean Philippe Moison, in his lovely purple clothes, came mincing down the gravelled drive, as if afraid of spoiling his good shoes—and I think he was—to the seigneur, who taught us to ride Coq. Do you remember how your father thundered at him?"

"A strange monsieur to see me? Impossible! I am engaged. Tell him I will not see him."

"And Jean Philippe smiling, for all of them understood the seigneur, and saying gently, 'Yes, my Seigneur,' turned away with the message. And your father shouted after him: 'Stop! Come back here! What do you mean by that? Bring the monsieur to me.' And the purple clothes disappeared and appeared again in a few minutes gleaming in the sun against the gray old walls—I can see it all now, Alixe—like a large violet blossom of a strange flower. And behind Jean Philippe was a tall man in a long traveling cloak, and behind him a tall little boy. And as they came the seigneur turned to go to meet them, and stopped and stared. And the monsieur in the cloak stopped and stared; and you, mounted on Coq,

"Keep up your courage, comrade; we are going to see our homes yet," he said. 'I shall take care of you Look—and I looked, and he had a sledge with fur robes on it. I never knew where he got it—from some deserted Russian house, I suppose. He put me on the sledge and wrapped me in the furs and gave me brandy from his flask. For Zappi had done a clever thing. He had made a bargain with some Jesuits near Polotsk, where he had camped for a while, that his men should cut and beat the wheat necessary on condition that he should have a part of the brandy for them. He had kept some of his share yet, and it saved my life that day, the brandy of the monks of Polotsk."

"There was a thick fog several days later, and out of it, and out of the wood we must pass, rushed with wild cries a cloud of mounted Cossacks across the road within twenty paces of the Emperor himself. But General Rapp dashed forward at the head of two mounted squadrons of chasseurs and grenadiers of the guard who always followed the Emperor, and the Cossacks were put to flight. I was in charge; I was serving temporarily in the place of one of Rapp's officers, because, on account of my late weakness, it was thought well that I should be on horseback. So it happened that, as the skirmish finished, I saw coming toward me a figure in a furred coat and cap, brandishing a Cossack lance—rushing toward the Emperor. I dashed down on the mad Cossack, as I thought him, and passed my great sabre through his body. And the man fell, and as he fell the fur cap went off and he groaned and looked up at me with dying eyes—it was Zappi."

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"May I live a moment?" the general inquired. "Till I explain. Zappi did not die."

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and I, holding Coq's bridle, watched curiously, because of the other child, and we saw how the seigneur suddenly began to shake as if ill, and then with a hoarse shout rushed to the tall man and threw his arms about him and held him, and sobbed aloud. That was a strange thing to see the seigneur do, and I never forgot it. And to think that the child who stood there, shy and unknown, was Pietro! It seems unreasonable that ever there was a time when you and Pietro and I did not know one another well.

"As I rode that day, with the Austrians after me, I thought out the whole chain of events; how Pietro had come and had stayed while his father, the marquis, went to America, and had

fitted into our life and become dear to us, the big, beautiful, silent lad. And how then, because of the death of the marquis, Pietro had come under the charge of your father, the seigneur, and how he and I went away together to the military school, always more and more like brothers and—all the rest. I need not recite those things to you, yet I like to do it. My thoughts, in that wild dangerous moment, seemed to go in detail through all, from the morning that the Marquis Zappi arrived with his little son at the chateau, through the ten years of our life together, to my coming into Italy as his secretary—and from that, by a rapid step, to this—castle prison."

The rest of the letter belongs to a later part of the story. That little Pietro Zappi should be led into the narrative by the hand of his closest friend was the object for which the letter was introduced, and, that accomplished, the course of history bends back to the quiet Valley of Delesmontes and the children growing up under the shadows of the castle towers.

The general, sitting in his library the morning after the arrival chronicled in the quoted letter, stared at his old friend under his heavy brows as if trying vigorously to convince himself of his presence. The marquis, an Italian of North Italy, tall and proud and quiet, had the air more of a student than of a soldier. A little the air, also, of an invalid, for he stooped and walked languidly, and a cough caught him at times. He was talking, on that morning in the library, while the general listened; it was not the usual order of things.

"So you see, Gaspard," the marquis went on in his quiet reticent way, "that I have believed in our old friendship. I have taken for granted a welcome for my boy—I could not have done it with another man. The voyage to America and my stay there will last, it may be a year. I have brought Pietro to leave him with you if you will have him."

This old officer of Napoleon had, after all his battles and killings, the simplicity and the heart of his own little girl. But he cleared his throat hurriedly with a bravado of carelessness, and before the marquis could do more than smile at him wistfully, he went on:

"It is all settled; there was no need of a word; Pietro is my son till you claim him from me, and glad enough I am to get him for as long as I may. I have a lien on a very good manner of boy already, young Francois Beaupre, whom I wished to adopt, but the lad would not give up his parents. And that makes me more eager for another. They will play better together and work better together, and they will be a good brace of brothers for my Alixe."

"Your Alixe," the marquis spoke reflectively. "She is a charming person, that little woman of yours."

"Alessandro, shall I tell you what flashed into my head before you and Pietro had been here an hour?"

"What then?"

"I saw the children—your boy and my girl—together as if lifelong playmates over the big books in the window-seat there, and it came to me that it would be a joy to crown one's life if—later on—"

He stopped and gazed inquiringly at the calm blue eyes which met his.

"Yes," the marquis answered quietly. "It would be that—the crown of our friendship, if some day they might love each other."

CHAPTER VIII.

For Always.

Claire listened with serious calm eyes as her son told his story when he came home on the day of the new arrival at the castle.

"The great gentleman has come who once saved our seigneur's life!" she repeated after Francois. "And the seigneur is glad. Of course he is glad, my Francois. And you ought to be glad, too, and grateful to that gentleman because of all the good things our seigneur has done for you and which would not have happened, assuredly, if Monsieur the Marquis had not saved him. You should do everything that is possible for Monsieur the Marquis to show your gratitude."

Next morning the little brown figure which trudged through the beech wood was brightened by a large and vivid bouquet held in his two hands. When the tap of Francois at the library door, where one heard men's voices talking, had brought the general's loud command of "Entrez," the little brown figure and the large bunch of flowers came in together and the boy marched straight to the stately Italian. Snapping his heels together as his mother had taught him he made a stiff deep bow, and presented his nosegay. The marquis, a little astonished at this attention, received it with grave courtesy but without much cordiality; it seemed to him rather an odd whim of Gourgaud's to have this peasant child about as one of his own family.

But Francois did not know that; to

him all the world was kindly, with different manners of kindness. The manner of the marquis was graver than other people's, perhaps—what then? The kindness was undoubtedly there below the gravity. And it was this monsieur who had saved the life of the seigneur; that, after all, was the whole matter. Francois wasted little time thinking of other people's feeling toward himself. He was much too busy with a joyful wonder of his own at the ever new goodness of his world. To the marquis, who hardly noticed him, he proceeded to constitute himself a shadow. At the first sign of a service to be done he was up and at it; always quicker, always more intelligent than the footman.

"You have thrown a charm over my boy Francois, Alessandro," the general said, well pleased. And the marquis answered thoughtfully:

"It is a boy out of the common, I believe, Gaspard. At first I thought it a mistake that you should raise a child of his class to the place you have given him, but I see that you understand what you are about. He is worthy of a good fate."

The day came when, on the next morning, the Marquis Zappi was due to start on his long journey to America. Out on the lawn, in the shadow of the beech trees he sat and watched his son playing ball with little Alixe. Then he was aware of Francois standing before him. The boy held something in his closed hand, and with that he opened his fingers and stretched it to the marquis. The marquis looked inquiringly at the yellow metal.

"What is this?" he asked; he was



"Yes, Monsieur, the Marquis, Always."

prepared now to be surprised by this boy about once in so often, so he simply suspended judgment at a thing unexpected.

"It is for you, Monsieur the Marquis," Francois smiled radiantly and continued to present the ten-franc piece. "It is my own; the seigneur gave it to me on my birthday, and my father said it was to be mine to do with as I chose. I choose to give it to you, Monsieur the Marquis. So that you may have plenty of money—I know well what it is not to have enough money."

The brown flat was outstretched, the gold piece glittering in it, and still the marquis stared speechless. Never in his life had any one presumed to offer him money. He looked up at the face of the little peasant; it shone with peace and good will; he put out his hand and took the gold piece and looked at it a long minute, and drew a leather case from his pocket and placed it within carefully, and put it away.

"Thank you, Francois," said the marquis. And then he considered again the shining little face. "Why have you done this, Francois?" he asked. "Why do you always—do so much for me?"

"That thing in Russia, for my seigneur. When you saved the life of my seigneur."

"Oh," said the marquis and stared down at the boy anxiously explaining.

"I have been afraid that I could never show you how I thanked you for the life of my seigneur. But I will do more. I will be a friend of Pietro. He is six months younger than I; I can teach him how to climb and how to fight and how to take care of himself. And I will, because of that thing you did. Because, too, I think well of Pietro and besides because of your kindness to me."

"My kindness to you?"

"Yes, Monsieur the Marquis—because you have been so kind to me."

And the marquis, in the silence of his soul, was ashamed.

The next day he went. As they stood, gathered in the big carved doorway, he told them all goodby and lifted his boy and held him without a word. As he set him down he turned toward the carriage, but in a flash he turned back as if by a sudden inspiration, and laid a hand on little Francois' shoulder.

"You will remember that you promised to be a friend to Pietro, Francois?"

"Yes, Monsieur the Marquis, always," the child answered gravely. (TO BE CONTINUED)



The Little Figure Had Sprung Up, and Stood, Threatening.

the midst of his household, encouraging with a word, with a smile, every one who came near him.

"There were many adventures which showed the souls of men shining through the nightmare of this horrible time. Many noble deeds were done, many heartbreaking ones. One which was both happened to me. There was an Italian officer in the corps under Prince Eugene, who had been my comrade when I was on the staff of Lannes; his name was Zappi—the Marquis Zappi. On the day after the dreadful passing of the Beresina River, I suddenly felt my strength go—I could walk no longer. A sick loathing seized me, and I groaned and dragged my heavy feet forward, to stay with my friends even a few steps more. And with that an arm was around me suddenly, and I heard Zappi's quiet voice.

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The Marquis Received It With Grave Courtesy.

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