

# The MARSHAL

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SYNOPSIS.

Francois Beaupre, a peasant babe of three years, after an amusing incident in which Marshal New forces the Emperor Napoleon, who prophesied that the boy might one day be a marshal of France, under another Bonaparte. At the age of ten Francois visits General Baron Gaspard Gourgand, 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. The general offers Francois a home at the Chateau. The boy refuses to leave his parents, but in the end becomes a copyist for the general and learns of the friendship between the general and Marquis Zappi, who campaigned with the general under Napoleon. Marquis Zappi and his son, Pietro, arrive at the Chateau. The general agrees to care for the Marquis' son while the former goes to America. The Marquis before leaving for America asked Francois to be a friend of his son. The boy solemnly promises. Francois goes to the Chateau to live. Marquis Zappi dies leaving Pietro as a ward of the general. Alixe, Pietro and Francois meet a strange boy who proves to be Prince Louis Napoleon. Francois saves his life. The general discovers Francois loves Alixe, and extracts a promise from him that he will not interfere between the girl and Pietro. Francois goes to Italy as secretary to Pietro. Queen Hortense plans the escape of her son Louis Napoleon by disguising him and Marquis Zappi as her lackeys. Francois takes Marquis Zappi's place, who is ill, in the escape of Hortense and Louis. Dressed as Louis's brother Francois lures the Austrians from the hotel allowing the prince and his mother to escape. Francois is a prisoner of the Austrians for five years in the castle owned by Pietro in Italy. He discovers in his guard one of Pietro's old family servants, and through him sends word to his friends of his plight. The general, Alixe and Pietro hear from Francois and plan his rescue. Francois as a guest of the Austrian governor of the castle prison inspects the interior of the wine cellar of the Zappis.

CHAPTER XVII.—Continued.

"This is the way you are to get there. In the wine-cellar of the castle, which opens from the governor's room—in old times always the room of the lord—in that wine-cellar, on the north wall, is a square block of stone projecting slightly beyond the wall. If you press the lower corner on the left-hand side, of the stone under this, the big stone above will swing out and show an opening large enough for a man to pass. Going through, you close the door by pressing the same stone, and you then will find yourself in an underground passage which leads straight half a mile through the earth to Riders' Hollow. The passage is five hundred years old and only the family of the Zappis have ever known of it. I went through it once in my boyhood with my father, and it was in perfect condition, so I believe it will be now. It was built with solidity—as one may believe, for if the old Zappis wanted it at all they wanted it in working order. "Your part will be difficult, Francois, but I believe you can do it. You will have to get the key of the wine-cellar, or else force the lock. Can you do that? It is necessary to do it, Francois, for we cannot get on without you, and we shall from now live only to set you free. I send you something which may be useful."

Francois dropped the letter and picked up the long loaf and tore it apart. There was a file in the center. As if a powerful tonic had been infused into him he felt strength and calmness pour through him. He read the letters over and over till he had them by heart; then he concealed them carefully, with the file, in his mattress. After that he sat down and concentrated his mind with the new force working in it, on his plan.

The governor was almost certain to have him down to dinner again in two or three days; it was a pity that while he was there, all but on the spot, he could not possess himself of the key and escape. He thought over one or two plans on that basis, but they all shipwrecked on the fact that the guards were accustomed to take him back to his room at eleven, and that, falling notice from the governor, they would certainly come to find out why if they were not called. That would start the pursuit; he must have the night clear. So he unwillingly let go of the great advantage of his own presence in the governor's room, so near the scene of action, and planned otherwise. With infinite forethought, with an eye to every contingency possible to imagine, he planned, and when the notice came, two days later, that the Count von Gersdorf wished him to dine with him that night, Francois' heart leaped madly but exultantly, for he was ready.

Never had the young Frenchman been more entertaining, more winning to his tyrant than tonight, but the excitement of what was before him made it almost out of the question to eat the count's dinner. As before, the count prescribed old wine as a tonic, and took Francois with him to get it. Tonight there were three bottles brought up—the count was preparing to drink hard. And Francois had some trouble in not drinking with him; but he kept up his end with singing and acting, with a dance or two out of the peasant repertoire of the Jura, with a mock drill of an awkward squad at Saint-Cyr, with clever imitations of the few people whom he had seen about the castle, Battista's gruffness and mangled German words, and the sniffling mixed with grandiloquence of one of the guards; finally he grew daring and imitated the governor's superior officer who had visited the prison six months ago and had seen Francois among the others. Francois,

with his body bent out, and a fat waddle, and an improvised eye-glass and a puffy short-breathed manner, spoke of the governor severely, puffing at him between sentences, reproving him, among other things, for having prisoners dine with him.

And the governor roared with delight, for this man was his rival and it did his soul good to see him under ridicule. He roared, and drank to the imitation, and the imitation rebuked his levity throatily, till the governor roared and drank again and shouted for more. And Francois, excited, exhilarated, did more; and still the governor drank as he acted. And the vaudeville went on. So that when the guard came at eleven the count was lying across the sofa, too tipsy to get to bed alone, and Francois had to wait, pretending to be heavy with wine, while the two soldiers put the governor to bed.

At last he was taken upstairs between them, leaning on them limply; at last his door clanged shut; he listened to the footsteps of the two dying away down the stone hall, down the staircase; then swiftly he drew out the file and the letters from his mattress; he hid the papers, wrapped tight in their oilskin cover, in his coat lining; he set to work with the file to finish iron bars already three-quarters filed through. That was done and with fingers that seemed to work as fast, as intelligently as his brain, he tore the bedclothes into stout strips and tied them together with square knots which would not slip, and tied knots in the line at intervals of a few feet which might keep a man's fingers from slipping. He had to guess how long the rope must be, but the bedclothes were all used and the rope was many yards—it must serve. He put the file, with two candle ends which he had saved, in his pocket; he made one end of the strip fast to an untouched iron bar of his window; he weighted the other end, then he looked about a moment, half to see if all of his small resources had been remembered, half in a glance of farewell to a place where he had passed hours never to be forgotten.

With that he vaulted to the window-ledge and took the first knot in a firm grip and let himself out into the dark still night. His feet hung in the air, his hand slid fast—fast—down that poor ladder of torn stuff; the die was cast; he was going to things unknown; he had taken a desperate chance and might not go back. And he slipped down, down, from knot to knot. Suddenly he came to the last knot; he had fastened a bit of wood there so that he might know when he got to the end. What was this? It certainly was the last knot; the bit of wood scraped his hand as he held it; but his feet did not touch ground.

There he hung, swaying in blackness, not knowing how far he might be above the earth, not knowing what to do. Only a moment, for instantly he knew that in any case he could not go back, if he would, up that slight swinging rope; he must drop, whatever happened. He bent his knees ready for the fall and let go. With a shock he landed and rolled, bruised



He Must Drop, Whatever Happened.

and out of breath, but not injured; he looked up and in the dimness saw the last knot with its bit of wood swinging in air twelve feet or so from the ground.

But he had no time given him to consider this point, for at that second, at the far end of the closed yard a door opened, a blaze of light poured out, and a squad of six soldiers stepped from the castle, torches in the hands of the foremost. Francois dropped, crouching into the shadows against the wall, but his heart grew sick as he realized the futility of this. The soldiers were coming straight toward him.

With that, a gleam on a brighter surface than the ground met his sight, below the level of the ground. His eyes, searching the darkness, made out a great butt of water, sunken by the castle wall. Instantly he slid into it, up to his neck. It was not quite full, and his head did not show in the shadows of the inside. The blaze of the torches swept close, brighter, as

Francois, shivering in the cold water, glued himself to the dark side; the blaze of the torches waned, shadowy, gigantic, across the water and the castle wall; he heard the soldiers speak in short deep words; it was like an evil dream, and it slipped past, torches and dark-swinging shadows, and heavy tread of men and stern voices, like a dream. The heavy door shut, the lights were gone, everything was still.

More dead than alive, Francois dripped from the water-butt. The hardest part of his night's job, the part that needed all his strength of body and brain, was immediately before him, and he stood nerveless, with clinking teeth, as limp as the traditional drowned rat. A moment he stood so, utterly discouraged, without confidence, without hope. Then with his trembling lips he framed words, words familiar to him for years, and with that, in a shock, he felt strength and courage rising in him like a slow calm flood. It was not less a miracle because there was no sign in the heavens, no earthquake or lightning; it was not less a miracle because many people living now might tell of a like help in fearful need. As it was once a long time ago, the water of his blood was changed into wine. So the prisoner stood in the courtyard in the blackness of midnight and found himself ready.

He groped his way to the shed he had seen from the governor's window; with his old boyish agility he scrambled up its sloping roof and felt for the coping he had noticed—the coping wide enough for a man's foot; he had found it; he had found a water pipe above to help him stand on it; he was on the coping, face flat to the wall, working his way with infinite delicate care to the window of the governor. He never knew how long that part took; it seemed a great while, though not many feet lay between the shed and the window. Then he felt the stone sill of the window; his hand crept up; it was open—wide open. With a strong pull he had swung himself over and stood in the dark, in the governor's bedroom.

Stood and listened, hardly daring for the first instant to draw the long breath he sorely needed. Then he smiled. No necessity for that caution at least. The governor was snoring; a heavy aggressive snore which would have drowned most noises. Francois stood quiet till his eyes had grown accustomed to the shadows, and then they searched about quickly. Ah! there they were, the governor's clothes. On a chair by his bed. With wary steps he stole across. He lifted off one or two things and suddenly there was a jingle.

"Ah!" growled the governor and flung out his hand, and the snore came to a full stop.

The hand searched the darkness a second; all but touched that of Francois, then fell limply, the head turned away, with a deep sigh. Like a statue Francois stood, frozen to the floor, and dared not look at the figure stirring in the bed, for fear his gaze might awake the sleeper. For he slept; the sound of the keys had only jarred some chord in his uneasy dream. Long minutes after the snoring was in full progress again Francois waited, and then with careful fingers he clasped the entire bunch of keys softly and carried them into the next room.

There was a low light there, on the writing-table. Francois slipped the thin, old, brass key which he knew off from the bunch; he glanced about quickly and found the flint and steel on its table and put them in his pocket; he took down that small saber, and buckled it about himself; then a thought came to him. A sheet of paper lay on the governor's writing-table as if he had been about to write a letter; pen and ink were ready. The prisoner dropped into the governor's chair and wrote:

"My dear count, I cannot run away without leaving a good-by for you and a word of thanks for the kindness you have shown me. Be sure I shall not forget our evenings together and shall be glad when I hear of your promotion, as I am sure I shall hear. I heartily hope I am not going to make trouble for you. But I have to go—you will understand that. With a thousand thanks again I am, count, your grateful prisoner—Francois Beaupre."

Still the count snored. Francois, alert, stood and listened as he folded the note carefully and laid it under a weight on the table. Then he tempted Providence no longer. He slid the battered, bright, old, brass key softly into the lock, let himself into the dark stairway, relocked the door on the inside, groped his way painfully down the steep stairs into the wine-cellar, and when he felt a level floor under his feet struck a light with the governor's flint and steel. He lighted one of his candle ends. The wine-cellar, which he had left only two hours before, seemed almost homelike; it lacked the governor, that was all. He crossed to the projecting stone in the north wall, and pressed the corner of the stone below. Nothing happened. Hurriedly he pressed it again, harder, but the cold even surface of the wall

stared him blankly in the face. Again he pushed—with no result. A sickness came over him. Was all his labor and peril to go for nothing? Was he to be caught again and thrust back, this time into some far worse dungeon? How had he dared to hope! The entrance was closed, overgrown, the masonry had grown solid with years and dampness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Peasant Guide.

He flashed out the saber and desperately he slid it this way and that about the great stone, trying to find a crack, something to loosen, something that would give. And while he worked in a fever, in a chill, he remembered Pietro's letter.

Then he set down the candle end on a shelf and with trembling fingers drew off his coat and drew out the hidden papers. The wet from his bath in the water-butt had staled them a little, but only a little, for they were carefully wrapped in the bit of oilskin in which they had come. He unfolded the letter.

"If you will press the lower corner on the left-hand side," Pietro said—"the lower corner!"

And he had been concentrating all his efforts, all his despair, on the upper corner. When it is a question of life and death a man is superhumanly strong and quick sometimes, but he is also sometimes forgetful. It is an exciting and confusing thing, likely, to be working for life and liberty after five years of imprisonment. Francois pushed the lower left-hand corner and like magic the great block above swung out. With his lighted candle end in his hand he slipped through and turned and swung back the door into place and turned again and faced blackness. Narrow, low, cold blackness. Quickly enough, however, with good courage, with his heart thumping out a song of hope, which he had kept down sternly till now, he walked, at times stooping low as he must because of the descent, down the secret road of the old Zappis. His candle held forward, he could see a few feet ahead, but all he could see was huge blocks of rough stone, green with mold, water dripping between them. The air he breathed was heavy and thick; through his wet clothes he felt a chill as of the grave. But what mattered the road, when the road led to freedom?

Suddenly it came to him that the passage might be blocked. It was years since Pietro had been through it; some of the stones might have fallen—it would take very little to close so narrow a way. With an anxiety which was physical pain, with breathless eagerness now, he hurried on. He had to stop to light his second candle; again he hurried on. Would the end never come? Was any mistake possible? With that he stumbled against something and fell, and the candle flew from his hand and was put out; with a hoarse groan he threw out an arm to steady himself, to rise; his hand went through a yielding, prickly mass; a glimmer came in past it—light—the end!

Pushing, crashing, staggering through, he came into a strange place. It was as if a giant had taken a huge spoon and scooped out the top of the earth deep, very deep. All of this great hollow was filled with trees and tangled undergrowth. It was full of vague shadows in the glimmer of the earliest dawn. Francois, standing there sobbing, ghastly with paleness, with matted hair and wild-staring eyes and gasping mouth and wet torn clothes, was a fit demon for the haunted spot. He saw nothing, no one; with that there was a soft snapping of twigs and a movement in the darkness farthest from him; a movement toward him. Tottering he crawled to meet it; in another second the shadows had shaped into figures—a peasant boy on a horse, leading another horse.

Then he stood close to them, and the boy, leaning over without a word put something into his hand, and Francois, swaying with exhaustion, saw that it was a flask. He took a long swallow of cognac and his chilled blood leaped, and with that he had caught the bridle from the lad and was in the saddle.

In the shadows of trees, in a lonely lane, the peasant boy stopped his horse suddenly and made a short gesture toward the flask sticking out of Francois' coat pocket. His strength was going again; it was exactly the right moment. Another swallow of brandy and he rode on with fresh courage. But something in the gesture of the peasant boy; something about his seat in the saddle, about the touch of his hands on the rein, gave Francois a curious undefined shock. In the growing daylight he turned toward the silent rider. The coat collar was up and the broad-brimmed soft hat drawn down. The slim figure, outlined against the cool pink vastness of the morning sky was clad like an ordinary young peasant—yet! There was a poise, sure grace, which seemed unlike a peasant, which seemed like—

"Have we far to go?" Francois demanded suddenly in French. The head turned swiftly; black ex-

aggerated lashes lifted and under them were the blue eyes he knew.

"Alixe."

He cried it out loud, reckless, forgetting everything. But she did not forget. In an instant her hand was on his mouth, and she was whispering in terror.

"Francois, dear Francois, be careful. We are not safe yet. We have a village to ride through—see, there is a house. It is almost time for them to be awake. Ride fast. It is two miles yet."

They were racing again over the soft ground, the horses' unshod feet making little noise, and Francois' heart was playing mad music. No need now of cognac. Then they were galloping down the sand of a lonely beach, and with that there was a little group of people and a boat drawn up; and they had pulled in the horses, and Francois felt himself lifted off like a child and lying like a very little, worn-out child in the general's arms; and the general was crying, swearing, hugging him without shame. Pietro was there; Pietro was rubbing the thin hands in a futile useless sort of way, and holding them by turns to his face. Alixe, her peasant hat off now, bent over them, lovelier than ever before, not minding her boy's dress, and smiled at him, wordless. There was a huge man also who took the horses, and Francois wondered if he had heard aright that Alixe called him "Little Battista." Wondering very much at everything, the voices grew far away and the faces uncertain, and he decided that it was without doubt a dream and that Battista would unlock the door shortly and bring in his breakfast. And with that he knew nothing more till he awoke in a boat.

And it was with a new feeling; with a desire and a hope to live. Pietro sat watching him and brought him warm milk and held his head up as he drank it, like a woman. Then, in quiet, slow tones, he explained all the puzzle which Francois had by now begun to wonder over. It seemed that just before Little Battista had brought Francois' letter to Vicques, Pietro had received another unexpected letter, from a Colonel Hampton in Virginia, whose estate lay next the six thousand acres of land which the Marquis Zappi had bought fifteen years before. Colonel Hampton wrote two requests. The first was that the Marquis Zappi should come to Virginia, or send some one with authority to look after his property. The land was going to rack and ruin for want of management; the uncontrolled slaves on the place were demoralizing to the neighborhood. Colonel Hampton had done what he could, but he had not the power of a master, and moreover he was busy with his own large estate. The marquis should come or send a qualified agent at once.

The next object of the letter was to ask that the marquis should receive and entertain the nephew of Colonel Hampton, Mr. Henry Hampton, who, sailing on Colonel Hampton's ship, the Lovely Lucy, would bring this letter to the marquis. The ship would go first to England and discharge there her cargo of tobacco, and after that it was to be at the service of young Mr. Hampton, to visit such countries of



He Cried It Out Loud, Reckless.

Europe as he might choose, for six months. Mr. Hampton had many letters to people in England, but none elsewhere, and Colonel Hampton would be obliged if the marquis would receive him at his estate of Castelforte and let him see something of Italy from that point of vantage. The marquis might then, if he thought good, return to Virginia in the Lovely Lucy, and either set matters on a firm enough footing to be left, or else— which the colonel considered the better plan—stay with them and become a country gentleman of Virginia. The colonel had heard that there had been political trouble in Italy, but hoped that at this time the country was at peace and the marquis comfortably established in his own castle.

All this the young marquis, an exile of five years from his native land, had read at the chateau of Vicques. He had considered deeply as to what he might do about Carnifax, his estate in

Virginia. He could not go himself, for he was in close connection with the work of Italian patriots outside and inside of Italy; with Mazzini in London; with others in other places. And he did not know anyone whom he could send.

So the matter stood when the big little Battista had brought Francois' letter to Vicques. And when Alixe had appealed to him to take Francois' liberation on his shoulders, with the thought of the secret passage and the vaguely outlined plan of escape had come to him the recollection of Colonel Hampton's letter and the long sea voyage to Virginia.

So when Mr. Henry Hampton landed at Calais, a tall and very handsome and very silent young man took quiet possession of him and told him that he was the Marquis Zappi and that Mr. Hampton was to go with him to the chateau of Vicques in the Jura. There was a certain gentle force about this young marquis which made opposition to his expressed wish something like banging one's head against a stone wall. Mr. Henry Hampton had planned going direct to Paris, but he went to Vicques. And on the journey down the Marquis Zappi opened out a plan which richly rewarded him for his pliability. Mr. Hampton had somewhat clearer ideas on Italian politics than his uncle; he knew enough to detest the Austrians and to have a keen sympathy for the long, heroic, losing fight—so far losing—of those devoted men who were counting their lives as nothing for a united Italy. The scheme of helping to rescue a prisoner out of an Austrian fortress was an adventure such as made his eyes dance. Mr. Hampton was twenty-one and full of romance, romance as yet ungratified. So, Pietro told Francois, this long explanation over, the Lovely Lucy was anchored at an unimportant island outside the port for which they were bound, and Francois and the others were to go on board and set sail promptly for some port of France. There the general, Alixe, Pietro and Little Battista were to be put ashore, and Francois was to sail across to Virginia with Mr. Hampton and take possession for Pietro of his American estates.

Francois, lying in bed with his eyes glowing like lanterns, listened. But as his friend finished he broke out, with a sharp pain in his voice.

"Pietro! I want to see my mother."

And Pietro was silent, laying a quiet hand over the unsteady one. Without a word he sat so and let the sick man think. The line of red which came into the pale cheeks told that he was thinking intensely, and at last, with a shivering sigh which went to the other's heart:

"You are right, Pietro," he said. "It is a wonderful plan for a broken man. It is like you to do everything right without a word said. The sea voyage, the healthy life in Virginia—that ought to make a man of me again soon, ought it not, Pietro?"

Pietro could not speak as he looked at the wrecked figure, but he nodded cheerfully.

"As for your place, I'll have that in order in a month, and in a year it will be a model for Virginia; and then I'll come home."

Pietro smiled.

"Come home and fight for the prince—for our Prince Louis. Do you remember that afternoon at the chateau, Pietro, and the strange boy, and how he fascinated us and how—" the weak voice stopped at every syllable, but slipped on again cheerfully. The familiar charm of the boy Francois was strong as he talked. "And how he was not to be frightened by any danger of an old wall—" and Francois stopped, smiling.

"And how you saved him," Pietro added.

"That was a chance," said Francois quickly. "But, Pietro, do you remember how Alixe turned on you, because I had done it? Droll little Alixe!"

"She always scorned me because I was not wonderful like you, Francois. You were always the hero," Pietro said gently, and pressed the skeleton hand under his own.

Francois' eyes blazed up at him then as they had done so often in boyhood. "Not that, Pietro. You do not understand. It was because Alixe wished always to see you first. I was older and had a certain quickness—she wanted you to have my poor facility as well as all of your own gifts."

Pietro smiled his kind quiet smile. "My Francois, I have no gifts. And if Alixe is more proud of you it is right, for you are a pride to all of us and I am the last to grudge one particle of honor or love to you. Francois—Pietro's deep voice stopped, and then he went on in his straightforward, simple way—"Francois, it is not possible for me to tell you how glad I am to have you, my brother, back from the dead."

And weak, nerve-wrecked Francois, holding tight to Pietro's hand, turned his face to the wall and cried.

Now that the end of effort was over, the strain of the long years showed their effects in a collapse; the stretched chord had fallen loose, relaxed as if it might never make music again. When the time came to leave the salloot of 'Luigi and go aboard the Lovely Lucy, the effort was too much for the man who, two nights before, had shown the nerve and agility of an acrobat. When he must leave the boat and make the change, he fainted, and, wrapped in a blanket, ghastly white, unconscious, the little Battista carried his light weight up the ladder of the American ship.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Stand-Off.

Nagging Wife—drinking husband. Which is cause and which is effect? Sociologists and temperance lecturers may think they know but they don't.—Philadelphia Record.