

# WHEN BOYS WERE MEN

By JOHN HABBERTON,  
Author of "Helen's Babies," "George Washington," Etc.

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Continued From Saturday Last.

## CHAPTER V. THINGS SLOW AND LIVELY.

WITHIN a few days our company was organized, and we recruits were gathered into tents of our own. But we continued to be thoroughly miserable. The cavalry camp seemed such a shiftless, do nothing place for all who were not recruits that I thought seriously of writing a private letter to President Lincoln suggesting that he should have this large and lazy body of men go out and kill some rebels or do something else that would help end the war. It seemed to me that the men I saw lounging about me could not possibly be the same who had been all the talk of the post when the Ninety-ninth was there.

We recruits did very little lounging. We were drilled pretty steadily in the use of a saber, a weapon which did not feel or act anything like we had supposed. For days it seemed too heavy and clumsy for me ever to use to any purpose, and I doubted whether I ever should be able to injure the Confederacy or defend myself by any of the



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thrusts, points or cuts of the manual of arms. I told Cloyne so one day, and he replied:

"That's the reason you're being taught. There'd be nonsense in teaching you if you already knew how."

The regiment—that is, the new companies—had no horses, and we Sumner boys would feel very dismal when we saw the older companies mount and go off on a scouting trip, as they did at least once a week, while we, instead, were marched out to drill or set to work on the stables, which were so many and large that it seemed they never would be finished. There were 12 of them, and each was more than 800 feet long and required 100 thick 10 foot posts, which had to be cut in the forest, besides hundreds of smaller ones for the roof and to divide the stalls. Many of the men made up their minds while this work was going on that a soldier's life was a dog's life, and they proved their sincerity by acting like dogs—growling, snarling, skulking and fighting.

During this wretched experience of cavalry life my spirits were strengthened frequently by observing the imperturbable manner of Hamilton, listening to Cloyne's sensible comments on whatever occurred and admiring the loyal spirit of little Brainerd, to whom whatever the government did through any of its officials seemed entirely right. Whenever my mind was troubled because I didn't understand the full meaning of everything that was done or left undone Brainerd would remind me that if I knew everything about the war I probably wouldn't be a private soldier, but general of the army or perhaps president of the United States.

"Leave something, a little something, to the colonel or the war department or at least the president," Brainerd would say. "If you could do and manage everything, as you seem to wish, the higher officials wouldn't have anything to do but draw their pay, don't you see?"

There was some truth in this, and such a remark would generally pacify me for a few hours. I think, however, that I got most comfort out of my spurs and the joy I anticipated for the time when I should have a horse and tickle his flanks. My father had never allowed one of his horses to be touched with a spur—my experience with old Rover was unknown to him—so there was a pleasure in store for me. And what spurs they were! I had brought them from New York. They were "Mexicans," the wheels nearly three inches in diameter, with points as long as a shingle nail, and they gave out a bell-like jingle as I walked, which was such sweet music to my ear that I never was without them. I even wore them to bed, for, as no one removed any of his clothing when lying down for the night on the floor of his tent, where was the use in taking off one's spurs?

One night this question was answered to some extent. Our tent was round, and the 15 men who lived in it slept with heads toward the outside and feet to the center. By early mo-

rember the nights were so cold that a man needed a blanket as well as his uniform to keep him warm. Several recruits who admired my spurs had purchased others as much like them as possible of the regimental sutler or storekeeper, and they wore them continually. One evening after our tentful had enjoyed a private supper of fricassee goose, purchased from a colored woman, we all lay down peacefully to sleep. Whether the geese—there were two of them—were underdone or too rich for men whose ordinary supper was dry bread and sauce of dried apples I don't know, but some of us were affected in our dreams very much like small children after Christmas dinner and unlimited candy. How the trouble began I do not know, but I awoke from a dream of being heavily shackled in a rebel dungeon to find a terrible uproar and struggle going on in the tent, which was as black as Egypt during the plague of darkness. To make matters worse, the most serious part of my dream seemed still in operation, for I could not liberate my feet when I tried to crawl away from the center.

"What blanked cuss has been tying our feet together?" roared one man.

"Let go of my blanket," shouted another, "or I'll break your head!"

"You're a nice one to talk," said a third, "when it's you that's making all the trouble!"

Meanwhile I, who had just awoke and didn't know anything about the difficulty, was being dragged one way and another by my feet, so I raised my own voice and complained of unfair treatment.

The din awoke the first sergeant, one of the only two noncommissioned officers yet appointed for our company, and he opened the tent flap and roared:

"Keep quiet here or I'll send you all to the guardhouse!"

"I'd be greatly obliged, sergeant," said Brainerd plaintively, "if you'd send me there right away, if only to get out of this frightful snarl!"

"Strike a light," said the sergeant. Hamilton, who always carried matches, scratched one and lighted the candle, which was in a socket on the tent pole; then, as I struggled to a sitting posture, I beheld an odd spectacle.

Nearly all the men in the tent seemed bound together by the feet by blankets or held down by blankets stretched tightly across their legs. After each man had investigated for himself a little while it appeared that the men with Mexican spurs, like all the others, had been tossing uneasily in their sleep, all on account of the goose supper, and had worked the point of their spurs through the blankets over their feet.

As the blankets greatly overlapped one another at the center, a spur as often as not had contracted an entangling alliance with some other fellow's blanket, and the harder the wearer tried in his sleep to free himself, tossing and straining, the worse became the misery.

"Unloose yourselves!" said the sergeant.

"Unloose thunder!" shouted a big ex-drayman from New York. "You can't unloose a tie till you find the end, and the ends of these blankets is all inside somewhere."

"Be jabbers," grunted an Irishman, "we believe some spalpeen has stole the ends and tuk 'em away."

We picked and pulled and tugged and lost our tempers, and the few men who weren't in the tangle drew out of the crowd and laughed and jeered. Finally one desperate man drew his pocket-knife and began to cut himself loose.

The others followed his example, and after five minutes of hard work we were free, with an immense heap of woolen rags in the center of the tent and a hard tuft on each spur to tell how the wretchedness began.

"No spurs in bed hereafter," said the captain, who had come over to see the fun and was nearly choking in an effort to keep down his laughter and his dignity. It took an hour of time next day to get the fragments of blanket from my spur wheels, and I wasn't helped by the fellows who sat around and said I was to blame for the whole row, for no one would have bought those infernal spurs if I hadn't set the example.

## CHAPTER VI. AT LAST.

ONE night as we were falling asleep just after caps the first sergeant came to our tent and said:

"All men turn out to draw revolvers and ammunition. The whole regiment starts on scout right after breakfast in the morning. The horses will reach camp tonight."

And that glorious, soul thrilling order was delivered in as careless tones as if the sergeant had merely come in for a man to carry wood for the cook. I made up my mind that the sergeant was not the man for his place and that the captain showed himself unfit for his business by appointing such a man.

Nevertheless I hurried to the sergeant's tent, and my soul thrilled with patriotic joy as I saw the great wooden box full of revolvers of the heaviest caliber. I knew something about revolvers, my father having invented one and allowed me to help him in

some of his experiments. I mentally made the calculation right there that if each man in the regiment fired only one shot at close quarters, which is all the revolver is fit for in war, there would be about 1,000 fewer effective men in the Confederate army by the time we returned.

Besides the revolver each man received a holster, to be worn at the belt, a cartridge box and a box for percussion caps, for this was before the days of metallic cartridges. When the sergeant began to issue ammunition, however, his language suddenly became unfit for publication, for the department quartermaster, who was 30 or 40 miles away, had by mistake sent carbine cartridges, which, of course, were far too large for revolvers.

The sergeant reported the fact to the captain, while big Pat Callahan, of whom I had seen as little as possible, recalled old times by saying it was "all the governor's fault, an' if the governor's brains was turned into gunpowder there wouldn't be enough to blow it to"—perdition. The captain used language which proved that he was not a member of the church, but suddenly he dived into the big box in which the pistols had come and drew forth a bullet mold.

"Does any one here know how to load revolvers with loose ammunition?" he asked.

"Aye, aye, sir," said Cloyne, touching his hat.

"I, too," said I.

"Good!" said the captain. "You three break up carbine cartridges, make a fire, remold the bullets and load all the pistols. Six shots apiece will be better than none. Sergeant, collect the revolvers."

Then the men returned to their tents, more than half of them joining big Pat Callahan in cursing the government. Hamilton and I began breaking cartridges, while Cloyne started a fire near the cookhouse and looked for something in which to melt the lead.

After much searching he settled on one of the cook's frying pans. Then he had to boil the bullets in water to get the grease from them, so an hour passed before we had any new bullets.

That job of loading pistols hung on amazingly. Some of the cylinders did not work well, so we had to "nurse" them, for it would never do for any man to be without a pistol in the face of the enemy. I became so sleepy that I had to place myself to keep awake. Once in awhile Cloyne did not close the mold tightly before pouring the lead, so the balls would be a little too

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"Cloyne, Hamilton and Frost," replied the first sergeant.

"And Brainerd," said I from the left. "Cloyne," said the captain, "you will act as sergeant; Hamilton, sergeant—and commissary; Frost?"

How did my jacket buttons succeed in holding in my heart during that glorious second of anticipation? I forgot every annoyance and disappointment of the past. Military ability, even if only displayed in loading revolvers, was to be recognized and rewarded. The captain was a splendid fellow. I wanted to order three cheers for him at once, but just then a familiar grating voice rose from the center of the line.

"I was promised to be sarjint meself. Didn't I recruit sixteen men?"

"So you did, McTwyne," said the captain, looking at the ruffian a moment before he spoke. "Well, you shall be the remaining sergeant. Frost, first corporal; Brainerd, second corporal!"

The captain continued through the list of corporals, and my heart sank. "I was better to be corporal than private, but to have had my expected honor snatched from me by some one else, and that somebody Mick McTwyne—to have Mick for my official superior! Oh, it put my spirits to flight, and some of my patriotism tried to go with them."

"Sergeant McTwyne to his post!" shouted the captain.

Down beside me came Mick McTwyne. Oh, if he had but been there when I first arrived and his leg instead of the other sergeant's had been broken by my horse! Still he was there now, and so was my horse. I could hope.

From the parade ground, where the colonel and adjutant sat mounted, a bugle blew the "assembly," the signal for forming line.

"Attention!" the captain roared. "Sergeant Cloyne, front! You will command the third platoon. From the right count fours."

"One, two, three, four; one, two, three, four," ran down the line in rapid succession.

"Forward!" blew the colonel's bugler. "Fours right, march!" shouted the captain. "To the left, march!"

We obeyed orders as well as we could according to the tactics in which we had been drilled on foot. Between the tops of the tents we could see the other companies filing out of their respective streets and forming column in the road in front of camp. There was some trouble and a great deal of profanity, which began to seem an army necessity, as different captains endeavored to take place in column according to seniority and were hindered by other captains whose lines of march crossed their own. Some of the men in the newer companies got dreadfully mixed up and made a lot of trouble before they were set to rights, for they were not accustomed to horses, much less to riding. Finally, however, the whole force was in columns of fours in the road, and when the adjutant, learning this by galloping down the flanks, signaled the colonel, the latter had his bugler once more sound "Forward!"

"Forward!" repeated the bugle of each of the 12 companies.

"Forward!" shouted each captain. With a confused trample of horses' hoofs, clank of sabers, rattle of carbines, jingle of spurs, a jumble of "Whoa!" "Git up!" "G'long!" and "Durn ye!" from the recruits and in a great halo of dust the regiment was off.

And yet—a regiment two-thirds of whose men had never seen their horses until that morning and half of whose recruits had never before been on horseback, who had to have their pistols loaded for them and who had never been drilled together nor taught even the simplest company movements on horseback!

Well, 'twas the way with hundreds of other regiments during the earlier years of the war, and 'twas nobody's fault apparently. As a nation we could bring men together faster than we could arm and drill them. Fortunately for us, our neighbors at the south were having the same ill luck.

Continued on Monday Next.

## CRUEL FATHER

"If these are the facts in the case—and I think they are, from the source I got them—there is every reason why the police should step in and make things as warm for the father as the father did for the son," remarked a citizen to a Planet reporter yesterday.

It seems a young lad on Harvey St. was found out by his father, through the truant officer, to be playing truant from school. The father took the young lad into a room apart from his mother and gave him a very severe thrashing, leaving many black and blue streaks. The lad was very vociferous and the neighborhood was alarmed, also the boy's mother, but when she attempted to stop the whipping her "better half" is said to have threatened to strike her.

The neighbors said nothing, but a few days later the boy again played hockey, and someone put him "next" that his father knew, and naturally the boy kept scarce of home.

The father intimated in the meantime that he'd half kill the boy when he did turn up. All the boy had for supper that night was a good appetite, and he couldn't stand it any longer, so got home in time to see his dad waiting for him. Before, however, there was time for anything to be doing in the fanning (not electric) line the neighbors, about 15 or 20 strong, stepped in, and if there was to be any whipping done they said they were going to be mixed up in it. "The boy was pardoned," concluded the speaker.

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