

WHEN BOYS WERE MEN

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

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(CONTINUED.)

"Because," said Hamilton between his teeth, "most members of the better classes are trying to become officers, instead of first enlisting as privates, like several fools with whom I am acquainted."

"But they can't all become officers," I argued. "There are too many of them."

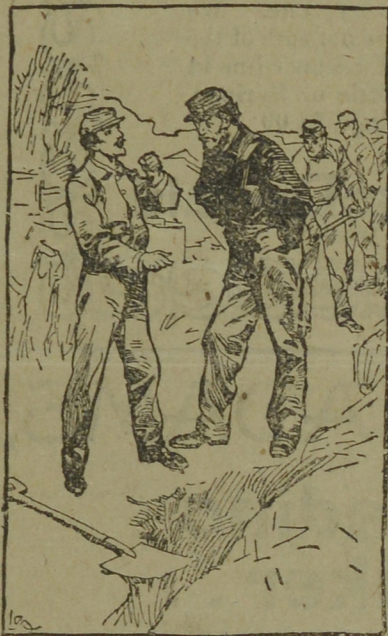
"None of them will become a private soldier until there is a conscription," said Cloyne, who stood by. "It's the only way that men of the better classes ever get into the armies of other nations."

"But we are different," said I, with rising American pride. "Our better classes know they have more to be thankful for than the people of other nations, so they have more patriotism."

"They do, eh? From the appearance of this car and such others on this train I have gone through, I must say their patriotism is not hurrying them into the military service."

Then I had to change the subject of conversation.

Before reaching camp we became acquainted with some of the recruits for our own regiment and found enough varieties of human nature to interest us and to justify Cloyne's remark that it takes a net or an army to catch all sorts of queer fish. Hamilton, who had a head for statistics, took the trouble to ask each recruit for the Thirty-eighth what was his business



"Ah, you wants glory, eh?"

before he enlisted. There were only 52 recruits, but 45 different trades and professions were named. Indeed, there was but one business or calling which more than one man designated. It was "soldier." Hamilton, Cloyne and I were three of the five who made this statement. The others were two stalwart Englishmen, almost middle aged. I engaged these successively in conversation and was almost paralyzed at learning that they were survivors of the famous "Six Hundred" who formed the "Light Brigade" that charged at Balaklava and was immortalized by Tennyson in a poem which I and every other boy in our school had declaimed on "speech day."

It was long before I could tear myself away from these fine fellows and tell Hamilton and Cloyne what an acquisition our regiment had made. Hamilton was as much surprised and delighted as I, but Cloyne twitched his face, looked out the car window in an absentminded sort of way and remarked:

"They'll make about 1,200 survivors of that 'Six Hundred,' whom I have

personally met, yet I haven't been a great traveler."

"Perhaps," said I, "Lord Cardigan didn't carefully count his men before riding at the Russian guns, or perhaps Tennyson took poetic license as to number."

Cloyne laughed as he tried a pun. "Somebody somewhere has ventured more lie than sense on the subject."

I thought this was very cynical of Cloyne. Of course there are impostors everywhere, but splendid, straight, manly looking fellows like our own regiment's share of the "Six Hundred" could not be suspected of anything unfair or pretentious. They were superbly cool and composed, as great soldiers always are, and neither of them seemed to take ordinary interest in any

one around him until I chanced to mention one of them to the other. To my great surprise, they were not even acquaintances. This fact or some other seemed to surprise the one I spoke to, and when I brought them together and introduced them they did not look and act at all as I imagined old comrades in a historic battle would. Thinking perhaps they preferred to review old associations in private, I left them, after which they began to chat quite freely, and when next I met one of them he told me they had identified each other at last, and glad they were to find they were old friends. It was a long time before I could get Cloyne to take the slightest interest in them, but he finally eyed them, first carelessly, then curiously. Later I saw him in earnest conversation with one of them, and when I joked with him about it he put on a queer smile and patted me on the shoulder in a patronizing manner that exasperated me.

Our reception at the camp of the Thirty-eighth was not what I had expected. The veterans of the regiment did not turn out to cheer the brave youths who had come to help them put down the rebellion. They did not even offer us something to eat, although it was long after breakfast time and our haversacks had been empty since the night before. A few sauntered over to the adjutant's tent, to which we had been marched, and looked at us as if in search of familiar faces, but no one took special interest in us except the orderly sergeants of the various companies, whom the adjutant had the sergeant major summon by bugle call. The company in which we had enlisted had not yet been organized, so we were allotted temporarily among the older companies, and the orderly sergeants swore frightfully, as they marched us off, at the trouble they would have to squeeze an extra man or two into every tent of a lot already well filled. The men in the tents did not do much to make us feel at home, although one or two put on some appearance of friendliness as they asked us if we had brought down anything in pocket flasks.

We Summerton boys were not made any more comfortable by being separated, as we chanced to be. No three of us were assigned to the same company, much less to the same tent. There seemed nothing for us to do or see either, for no drill was ordered during the morning. Before dinner call was sounded I had lost all interest in the service and the war. I could think of nothing but our farm at Summerton and the people who occupied it. My father had promised to visit me in camp before winter if the authorities would permit. How I hoped he would not do it! I should have been glad to have him see the camp of the Ninety-ninth, but the cavalry camp was very different. There seemed no end of detached tents and huts, with no particular purpose that I could dis-

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cover. Nothing was as I had expected.

After dinner we boys had an opportunity to see each other again. We enjoyed the meeting, but not its purpose, for each new recruit was given a shovel and set to digging post holes and ditches for some new stables that were to be built. I could have had plenty of digging without coming several hundred miles from home, for my father had long intended to set a new fence. An excitable young Frenchman among the recruits seemed somewhat of my way of thinking, for he suddenly dropped his shovel and shouted:

"I will not dig ze hole! I enlist for la gloire, not for dirty work like zis."

"Ah, you wants glory, eh?" said the German sergeant who seemed engineer in chief. "Den better it is you go back to your own country, vere dey ain't got no sense."

The Frenchman said something between his teeth and thrust out his fist. The sergeant collared the Frenchman and kicked him all the way to the guardhouse. There were no protests after that. Post holes and ditches increased rapidly, and I was somewhat astonished to discover that the short ditch dug by Phil Hamilton was the most shapely of the lot.

We recruits got some comfort after supper in criticising the movements of the cavalry at dress parade. They marched with less style than the most awkward company of the Ninety-ninth, and looked shabby by the lack of resemblance in their hats, no two of which set alike, although all were of black felt.

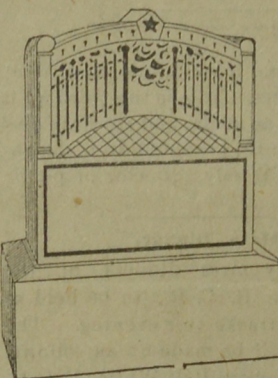
Signs of hospitality continuing to be invisible, some of us Summerton recruits concluded to spend the night on the quartermaster's hay pile. Virginia dew, however, had grown cooler in the month that had elapsed since the Ninety-ninth went north, and we had to arise in the middle of the night and indulge in violent exercise to warm our blood. We talked a great lot, too, so much that the sergeant of the guard came over to see what was the matter. When we told him why we were there and how uncomfortable we were, he said:

"Serves you right. Men who've been in the service once before and got out and hadn't sense enough to stay out deserve all the bad luck they can find."

I was angry and miserable enough to believe for the moment that he was nearly half right.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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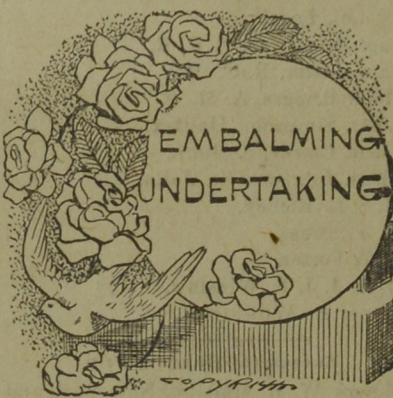
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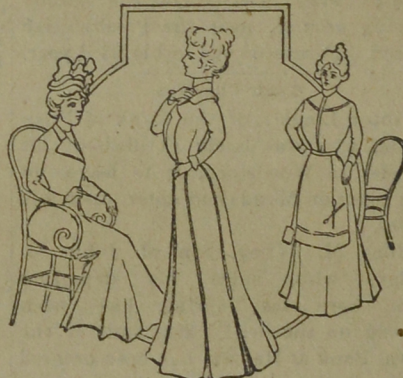
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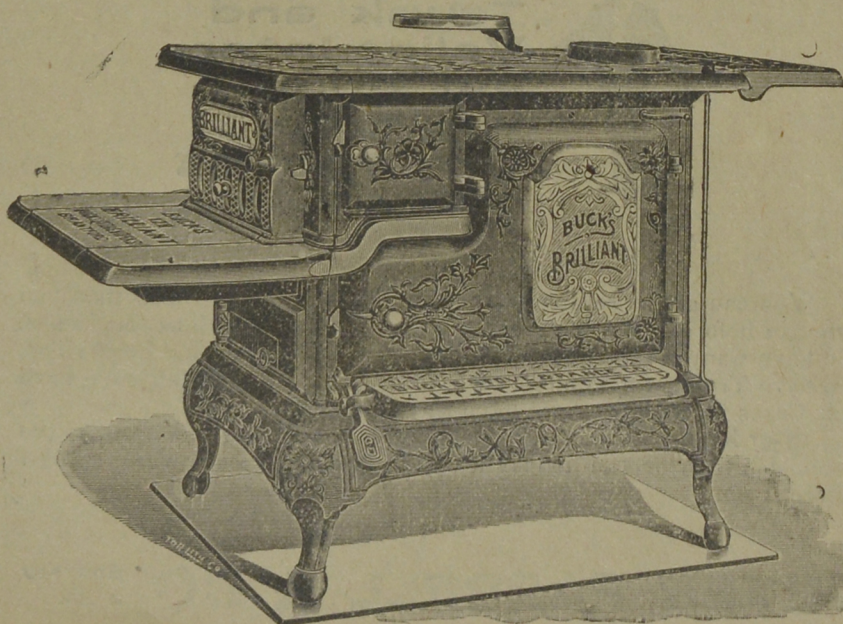
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