

# WHEN BOYS WERE MEN

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

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE CHARGE OF THE THIRTY-EIGHTS.

"ATTENTION, company!" shouted our captain. "Draw sabers!"

"Flashed all their sabers bare," as Tennyson says in "The Charge of the Light Brigade," but I hope for the reputation of their drillmasters that Cardigan's troopers flashed their sabers more in unison. Had they not, some of them would not have been in condition to annoy the Russian gunners much. Ours was a sort of cumulative fiasco; it was literally a long drawn out effort. The boys had learned to draw their sabers quickly on foot drill or parade, where the scabbard was partly raised by the left hand as the right hand sought the grip, but the sabers of the mounted trooper have to be drawn as the straps will allow, and as we never had been drilled while mounted many of the men nearly fell from their saddles while leaning to the left in a frantic reach for their sword hilts.

"Captain Bright," roared our battalion's major, an officer in whom I had not previously taken any interest, not seeing through his usefulness came in, "why are some of your men's sabers undrawn?"

"You rascals!" screamed the captain, facing his horse toward the flank of the company, "why don't you draw your sabers?"

"I can't get down to mine," said Brainard, answering for himself. His arm, like the remainder of him, was quite short. "You're kidding me, I can reach it unless I turn a somersault."

"Take your bridle in your right hand; draw your saber with your left; now change hands; the rest of you do the same. There!" the captain yelled.

"Make haste, captain," said the major, "you're spending too much time between you and the company ahead of you by being so slow."

"Trot! March!" the captain ordered in a nervous shriek.

Off went the company, but not all of it went in the same direction, for at least one man in every section had never fit a horse trot under him, so two or three fell off their chargers before we had gone a hundred yards. Others retained their seats fairly by grasping the horn of the saddle with the bridle hand and trying to seize the pommel with the other. But a sword is as much a nuisance as a stone, and never several had to choose between giving up their rear and losing their sabers. Some did the latter, preferring present safety to future possibilities. Among these unfortunates was Brainard.

The major dropped back to the rear company, for which I was profoundly grateful. It wasn't pleasant to think of any one, even a member of our own regiment, observing all that was occurring in our company during those few moments. Men who were not accustomed to riding were bounding briskly in the saddles and looking as wreathed as the poor fellow who was wounded the day before. Mick McTewyn lost his temper, blamed his horse for everything and, turning to the roadside and halting, began to pound the poor animal with both fists and kick him with his boots as he scolded and cursed him much trampling on the breast by leaping suddenly forward and tumbling his rider into the road. The lieutenant, who had charged to look backward, turned and threatened to saber Mick then and there unless he got on his horse and acted like a soldier instead of a donkey, and Mick retorted the threat, upon which the lieutenant, using his sabre as a paddle, gave Mick a tremendous spank, and Mick swore an awful oath, which he swore to execute immediately by halting it, that he would get even with the lieutenant, and the lieutenant promised to give him a season of arrest in which to think up his vengeful plan.

Meanwhile another man bit the dust, for my horse stepped on the heels of his file leader, who had slackened his pace suddenly. The injured horse reared his hind quarters to kick, and over his head shot his rider, breaking his fall by rolling between two horses in front of him. A similar fate befell several other men, who, trying to brace themselves by holding their reins tightly, curbed their horses so severely that the animals halted suddenly and upbore their riders. It seemed to me they must be trampled to death, but it was impossible to halt and ask questions or offer any assistance.

During these scenes of humiliation my heart was strengthened somewhat by the demeanor of our couple of survivors of the historic charge at Balaklava. Each rode as steadily as if he and his horse were one. Neither man looked to the right or left, but straight ahead, and each carried his own company on parade. I afterward told Captain about this, and he said:

"Why not? They did nothing but drill from the time they first enlisted in England, and a charge isn't half as hard to go through as a regimental drill of mounted troops."

Soon the major was on our flank again, shouting:

"Captain Bright, what has become of your company? There's only about half of it in the ranks!"

The captain, who had ridden forward to close the gap between him and the company in front, fell back and looked along the column, which had lost all regularity of formation. Then he screamed:

"Lieutenant, why have you let so many men fall out, sir?"

The lieutenant, who had been commanding the rear platoon had been getting ahead of his proper position. He turned his horse, looked toward me and roared:

"Where's the sergeant of the left of the line?"

"You ordered him to remount several minutes ago, sir," I replied.

"And he hasn't returned to his post? Then 'twas your duty as a noncommissioned officer to keep the men from straggling to the rear."

This sudden and new load of responsibility seemed more than I and my horse could carry, but I afterward learned to bear similar inflictions better, for I found that we were in accordance with military custom. When any one goes wrong during a march, the highest officer with whom fault is found immediately unloads the blame upon the officer next below him in

rank, and so the scolding passes down ward until it reaches some lowly non-commissioned officer, who gets rid of it by giving it to a private soldier.

But I had no time to absorb this wisdom during my first charge, for the major suddenly ordered our captain to hurry along with such men as he had, leaving the stragglers to the tender mercies of the rear guard. It seemed strange that we had not yet closed the small distance between us and the troop ahead of us, but as we hurried we had the melancholy consolation of learning that ours was not the only new company whose men had come to grief through ignorance of their duties and by falling out had made many successful gaps in the column. Nor all the unfortunates were bad riders, but some of them had picked their horses well; their sabers during spasmodic endeavors to keep these weapons well in hand, and no self-respecting horse could be expected to be even tempered when prodded with a yard of steel with a sharp point at one end and 150 pounds of iron on the other.

Such as were left of us went faster and faster, the horses, becoming excited, unconsciously taking the gallop. This being a gait at which a child could keep the saddle, there was no more straggling. Assisted by some vigorous troopers, we were able to form new sets of fours and went along in really handsome style.

When our rush had lasted about a quarter of an hour, I began to wonder when we would strike the enemy. If we had already suffered so severely, what would be left of us after we had met the foe and been thrown into the confusion which always befalls a cavalry party at the instant of absolute clash? Well, if it must come, it was better that it should come while we and our horses were nerved up to fighting pitch.

There came a time in our mad rush when the road led through a bit of low, damp ground on which there was no dust, so we could look along the column. Dusty though we were, the spectacle was really inspiring, with its hundreds of flashing sword blades and its successive guidons—small flags, one at the head of each troop. We ascended a gentle slope toward the top of which and perhaps a quarter of a mile in advance rode a man with a broad flat hat and a very small horse. I asked the lieutenant who he was and was told:

"He's the reb we're chasing, I suppose."

"What! A reb that's out to catch one man—a man who was apparently going away? All the scare, the terror, the wild thoughts, the helplessness, the disorder, the suffering, merely to overtake one man? I felt angry enough to desert. I lost my temper and expressed my thoughts so loudly that the lieutenant who was riding next to me, looking angrily at me, said:

"Be quiet, you little fool. It's no better way of finding their main body than by chasing a man who is trying to get back to it, is there?"

"No, sir," I replied meekly as a flood of light descended upon my wits, and I began to shiver under the weight of what I could not but see. I did not long have to chew the bitter cud of reflection, however, for soon we heard some shots in the distance. Our pace was slackened; we became tightly packed in the road, breaking our formation and causing much trampling on the horses' hoofs, with the consequent kicking and swearing. Then down the column was passed in rapid succession the orders:

"Halt! Dismount!"

"Were you to fight on foot? Well, whatever it might be, the enemy, I was sure it would be far safer for us. Then came the orders:

"Loosen your saddle girths. Tie your horses to the fence. Stand by and prevent them from rolling, or your saddles will be broken."

I did not dare ask the lieutenant what it was, but he evidently saw I was curious, for he approached me and said:

"I guess the advance has provoked them. There's never more than a company of these fellows on the road at a time around here."

"That was better than I had expected, and I was wild to go forward and see the prisoners. Soon there was something else to look at, however, and I don't believe the prisoners could have presented as sorry a spectacle—it was the mass of stragglers being urged forward by the rear guard. There seemed no end to the dismal line of men without horses, horses without men. Some of the stragglers were asking where their companies were, and once in a while a member of our company would recognize his place by the letter which each of us wore on his cap. What astonished me most, however, was Mick McTewyn plodding along on foot and carrying little Brainard on his back. I was so astonished that it was some time before I could ask Charley what had happened, and he told me that something was biting his side awfully. When the surgeon, of whom we had three, reached our company, Brainard learned that in falling from his horse he had broken two ribs.

Soon the colonel came riding down the column, looking keenly to the right and left. I asked him about the engagement, but he stared coldly at me and did not answer. When, however, the captain saluted, the colonel told him that the enemy's entire party had been captured, being unaided and there-

fore unable to get away. He also volunteered the information that our dash had been worth more to the regiment than a month of battalion drill in camp and that if half of the new men had kept up with the procession they had done better than he expected.

This ended the first charge of the Thirty-eights, and it had been quite as successful in results as early cavalry dashes in general. But what would have happened had we with 600 or 700 raw men and only a third as many experienced and older, encountered a well-armed, well-trained regiment as large as our own? Well, either we would have run away or been badly whipped.

It is unlikely, however, that the colonel, who knew his business, would have led us against such a body, and it is less likely that he could have done it if he would, for he had not at that time a well-armed, well-trained cavalry regiment anywhere in the southern army. Greenhorn against greenhorn was the rule in those days, and not only in the cavalry service either.

## CHAPTER IX.

### BACK TO CAMP.

AFTER a long rest, followed by water for our horses, the regiment started on its way, though as to where we were going we knew no more than when we left camp.

I said to Cloyne that it would save a great deal of unnecessary worry if the colonel would post me to take Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery, and after I had taken the contents of the six bottles I was, I honestly believe, delivered from all my ailments. I am now a strong and hearty man.

Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets cleanse the clogged system from accumulated impurities.

Others biscuit or hoecake, while two or three mixed meal and water and made hoecakes in the frying pans which several of them carried; others had sweet potatoes, which they baked in the ashes.

"Oh, I'm hungry the smell of their cooking made me!" I understood for the first time why it was that some of the poorly fed children in our town used to stand around the bakery while the bread, cakes and pies were being taken from the great oven in the cellar. Some of the Johnnies asked us if we wouldn't eat with them, but Hamilton and I, half starved though we were, declined until I noticed that none of them was making coffee. Then a brilliant idea struck me. I asked one of them whether southernners never drank coffee at supper time.

"Oh, unless they can get it," said he, "which is mighty seldom."

I went to the servant of our officer's mess and borrowed some ground coffee and sugar, promising to repay him when we reached camp. Returning, I distributed it among the prisoners nearest me. I wish I might ever forget the look of longing the revolvers had robbed me of an entire night of rest. Now I was doomed to another. I had to tramp the muddy road to keep myself awake, but my head dropped asleep once in a while on its own account, and with wide open eyes I beheld many strange visions in the darkness and imagined many things ridiculous and impossible. It seemed that the night never would end, and my gratitude was unspeakable when at early dawn we were ordered to feed, mount and resume our march. I tried to feel happy when the prisoners were placed in charge of a new guard and my sense

of responsibility ended, but soon I found that sleepiness on horseback was more dreadful than on foot. No sooner would I drop into a doze than I would rouse with a start from an awful sensation of falling from my horse. Every body was cross, particularly the smokers, for all the fires were out, and few men carried matches.

Then it was that our captain leaped suddenly and securely into the affections of his men. Passing the word for smokers to fill their pipes, he tore a long, narrow strip from his handkerchief, moistened it the least bit, lit one end with a match, lighted his own pipe and then gave the smoldering rag to the first sergeant, from whom it passed down the entire troop. After the pipes were fairly started there was no more grumbling, except from nonsmokers.

How I wished myself a smoker! Often when in earlier days I had asked schoolmates why they took to smoking I was told, among other excuses, that a few whiffs of smoke would stop the craving of hunger when a fellow chanced to be playing truant for a day or of hunting or fishing and having no good luck to get home at mealtime. Well, had I learned smoking, the third day of our scout would have been a good time to test its remedial virtues, for my hunger was so intense that it drove everything else from my mind, and the memory of the bacon and hoecake of the night before almost made me scream with rage. It seemed to me the government was mean, despicable and standing in its own light to give me as three days' ration some food which I had eaten during the first 24 hours. If only I had brought that lump of fat pork which had seemed so loathsome when it was dealt me! I actually longed for that bit of adipose tissue, longed until I saw it on the ground just as if it had tossed it, saw it as distinctly as if it were really before my eyes.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## Buttered Eggs.

Every cook knows how to scramble or butter eggs, though possibly every cook does not give the attention to detail which alone can make them satisfactory. I left an ounce of butter into a saucpan, break into this three eggs and mix them with the butter gently, seasoning them to taste with pepper and salt; stir it all gently over a slack fire with a delicately clean wooden spoon, just as the eggs are beginning to set, work in from half to one ounce more butter, broken up very small, being careful only to add a piece when the previous one has been well amalgamated; now stir in half a gill of cream, milk or white sauce, as you please, pour the mixture at once into a hot, buttered toast and serve as soon as possible. This is the simple form of buttered eggs.

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## THE N. & W. RAILROAD.

### TIME TABLE.

Corrected to New York, 1st, 1901.

Station	AM	PM
Baltimore	2:00	10:00
Washington	2:30	10:30
Philadelphia	3:00	11:00
New York	3:30	11:30
Scranton	4:00	12:00
Pittston	4:30	12:30
Wilkes-Barre	5:00	1:00
Scranton	5:30	1:30
Scranton	6:00	2:00
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