

WHEN BOYS WERE MEN

By JOHN HABBERTON.

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

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I entered the camp without being fired at, and the captain was as glad to see me and hear the story as I had been his own son. I told everybody the news, got them all on the river bank as a reception committee and got Hamilton to propose "three cheers for Brainerd." Charley himself loosed the bonds of the Johnnies as our boys crowded around. My own special Johnny no sooner found his hands free than he whispered something to Brainerd.

"Yes, certainly. Thank you for reminding me." Then he shook the captain's canteen inquiringly and handed it to the prisoner, who swallowed some of its contents and passed the remainder to the sergeant, saying as he pointed indignantly to the third prisoner: "Don't leave none for him, darn him!" "You've done handsomely, corporal," said the captain to Brainerd.

"Wasn't I, captain?" Charley replied with a salute, "was your whisky that did the business?"

There was at least one duty of the expedition remaining in which Brainerd shouldn't get ahead of me. I took those prisoners under guard down to the brush but where our company cook had been installed I provided them with a big breakfast. To my delight, they enjoyed our white bread and cold corned beef as heartily as I had enjoyed their bacon and corn bread three months before. As to coffee, they nearly emptied the half kettle that had been standing since our own boys had been served half an hour before. When he could drink no more, my own special prisoner caressed the place where he had put the coffee, gazed contemplatively at the kettle and remarked:

"There's always some good luck that can be dug out of trouble of you'll look at it right. Here I am a prisoner again; but, on 'other hand, I'll have genuine, sure 'nough coffee twice a day till I'm exchanged again. Um-m-m!"

CHAPTER XVII.
ON PICKETS.

THE mature deliberation upon samples of all sorts of military service that falls to the lot of cavalry soldiers are recruits agreed that picket duty had been the best of anything else. To be an actual picket was not pleasant when one's turn of duty came during a driving rain or in the middle of a dark night, but in ordinary weather and at decent hours it was quite pleasant to sit on horseback at crossroads, look about the country and chat with such farmers as had passed enabling them to visit the town. Northern and southern farmers were radically unlike each other in some respects during the war, but they were exactly alike in their willingness to win up and have a long chat with a stranger. I found the average Virginia farmer had quite as large a bump of curiosity as his northern brother, and generally he was able to absorb all the family history that a Yankee soldier had to offer.

It was great fun for me to be on post on a prominent road at daybreak, for the chances were that a large detachment of fugitive slaves would come in. How these people managed to travel 50 or 60 miles without being seen and hounded back by the enemy's scouts I never could understand, for instead of coming singly they would travel in large bodies, all the men, women and children leaving a plantation together and not separating during the trip. Any one who had been a fugitive and had discovered, for they always dressed in their best when they started toward us, and the colors of some of their clothing were as startling as the plumage of a tropical bird, besides being more variegated, but they never complained of having been annoyed while on route. Another mystery was their knowledge as to where to find our lines and just where to halt to wait for daylight. They were not at all ignorant of the spirit of the emancipation proclamation. Some of our fellows were in their feet of "nigger equality," so they would order the fugitives to return to their masters.

"Yes," would be the usual reply, and the entire gang would retrace their steps until they reached a friendly screen of trees. No sooner would the man on post be changed than the crowd would come plodding back. As one old leader told me one day:

"We've been tole ter keep a-stridin', 'cause some sojer or udder would let us in some time or udder."

There was nothing funny about these colored people unless it was their extreme gravity. They weren't over-excitabile. They didn't throw up their hands and thank the Lord that at last they were on freedom's soil. They seldom laughed, and as for joking, one could get as much response from an oak stump as from their faces. They were much more dignified than we. They apparently knew just where to come and just what to expect. In fact, I afterward learned from one of them that for 50 miles around us the slaves were thoroughly informed about each picket station and treatment of contrabands. They said there were plenty of colored news carriers and

THE PRISONER

Who escapes from jail is by no means free. He is under the ban of the law and punishment is written over against his name. Soon or late he will be caught again and bear added punishment for his desertion from his duty.



Those who by the use of palliative powders and tablets escape for a time from the sufferings of dyspepsia are in the end made more miserable than the escaped prisoner. Soon or late they will go back to the condition that caused their escape and pay an added penalty for temporary release.

Dr. H. C. Gold's Golden Medical Discovery cures dyspepsia and other diseases of the stomach and organs of digestion and nutrition. Its cures are lasting.

I suffered from a very obstinate case of dyspepsia. I tried all the remedies of the day, but to no avail. I finally had recourse to Dr. H. C. Gold's Golden Medical Discovery. I had been told that it was a good remedy for dyspepsia. I bought a bottle and took it as directed. I had not taken three bottles and my stomach was completely relieved. I had been told that it was a good remedy for dyspepsia. I bought a bottle and took it as directed. I had not taken three bottles and my stomach was completely relieved.

Accept no substitute for "Golden Medical Discovery." There is nothing "just as good" for diseases of the stomach, blood and lungs.

Pierce's Pleasant Pellets stimulate the liver.

the chase, the battle perhaps, but no standing around under fire after we were done shooting.

Well, we had gained the information for which we had gone in search, but it didn't please us at all. It forebode a change of habit for us. Up to that time we had been able to keep a single battalion to send flying back to their camps any force that had approached the town. We could scarcely expect to do so with the newcomers.

A single Confederate corps numbered more than 20,000 men; the entire force at our post numbered less than 8,000. There was nothing to joke about. Men spoke to one another about the situation and reasoned about it, but in sentences no longer or more sensible than those above. Every one seemed to be waiting for a sense of personal affront which he was unable to resent.

We went to camp, and the enemy went to fortifying, as we soon afterward learned when on one reconnaissance or another we stumbled upon forts and strong works where once there had been clear roadway and fields. Weeks afterward we learned from Richmond papers that Longstreet had been in our neighborhood for forage and food for Lee's army. Had General Longstreet explained his purpose to us when he came here, we would have known that he had a great lot of unprepared men to the river the work had to be done over again. The bridge crossing the river had been burned just in time to prevent a dash of Confederate cavalry into town the day of the surprise, but it had not been needed again, and timber for it had been within easy range of the enemy's guns.

THE PRISONER

conclusion seemed to be that if they were to leave their forests shorn and their land turned upside down it didn't matter whether they might do it—Yank or Johnny.

Few colored people who lived outside the lines had grievances now. They had been able to lard some cows, pigs, chickens and turkeys from occasional Union soldiers who prowled about alone, but against a few thousand hungry men who were fully informed on the secretive ways of the Union it was useless to contend. They followed us when we returned to camp and became part of the colony of which Possum Ben was a bright and shining light.

For some weeks after Longstreet's departure we spent most of our time in the field. The general commanding preferred that Longstreet should have as few excuses as possible for coming back again on the plea of looking for forage, so he proceeded to take up 20 miles of railroad track on each of the two roads leading from our post. It was a tedious job, but as we troopers and little to do but look on and occasionally be killed while repelling inquisitive Johnnies we rather enjoyed it. A large force of infantry and light artillery was with us. So were some hundreds of contrabands, and while we kept the enemy on the river too busy to come across in a body and visit us the contrabands raised the rails, loaded them on platform cars and burned the ties. We worried General Lee's overburdened heart a good deal for two or three weeks, but that was one of the jobs for which we had enlisted. We made so many feints at attempting to cross the stream and advance in force on Richmond from the south that he had to send some of his men down to watch us.

We worried the natives too. Our soldiers cut the grass, hay and fodder behind breastworks and in the assurance that the owners would be paid could they prove that they were good Union men did not seem to concern them. We worried General Lee's overburdened heart a good deal for two or three weeks, but that was one of the jobs for which we had enlisted. We made so many feints at attempting to cross the stream and advance in force on Richmond from the south that he had to send some of his men down to watch us.

Immediately after belching such a sentence or hearing of them a man who had a heart under his jacket would a little rather be shot than not, but there were some stubborn fellows who were not to be deterred. I was delighted to be assigned to very dangerous duty. It was to carry a dispatch to the general commanding a brigade on our extreme left. We felt so secure in our superior strength that the right, left and center were isolated companies rather than parts of a line. I started an hour or two after dark and was told that another man who had been sent on the same errand returned with the report that there was Confederate cavalry in the woods. I had been selected because I had a fast horse which would enable me to dash through any ordinary line before an alarm could be given, and the chances of a single rider being fired upon and killed in the dark were not very serious. I could not miss the road, for it had no forks or branches.

There seemed enough risk in all this to insure my remaining awake. I stuffed the dispatches inside my shirt, put fresh percussion caps on my revolvers and started. Nothing unusual occurred for a quarter of an hour or so after leaving the post. I was in a great deal of unpreparedness for the river the work had to be done over again. The bridge crossing the river had been burned just in time to prevent a dash of Confederate cavalry into town the day of the surprise, but it had not been needed again, and timber for it had been within easy range of the enemy's guns.

Oh, there was plenty of work for everybody—except the cavalry. We included in an occasional reconnaissance just to let the enemy know we hadn't been captured one of our pickets. For the rest of the time, however, we enjoyed more leisure than we could have had at home. It became tiresome, then it became absolutely wearing.

After the works on both sides had been making faces at each other for several weeks, and a great lot of powder had been burned without hurting many people, and thousands of men had been kept awake at night when they wanted to be asleep, the work was passed through our camp one evening that General Longstreet was to be made to feel very sick next morning and that we were to assist at the operation. Between dark and dawn the bridge was secretly repaired, right under the enemy's military nose. The most difficult part of the work, that of repairing the frame, was done silently. Then an army of contrabands went down in couples, each couple carrying a young pine log to be used as planking. When these had been laid, other contrabands packed the cracks with straw, and still others carried dirt bags and boxes of dirt and strewed over all, so the bridge should be noiseless under footfall of man and horse. Eight hundred Africans were kept awake all night by that job, and I do not believe the occasion would have been favorable in which to interview them on the blessings of freedom. Just before dawn several companies of our regiment passed over and learned that the enemy had not expected them. Close behind came a large body of infantry, which prolonged the surprise we had caused and prepared to make it permanent. Then some of our light artillery took a hand. We struck the enemy's line near its center and behaved so disagreeably to the Johnnies that General Longstreet took them back to General Lee.

CHAPTER XVII.
AFTER THE SIEGE.

AS I am told that General Lee sent us cavalry back to the river the work had to be done over again. The bridge crossing the river had been burned just in time to prevent a dash of Confederate cavalry into town the day of the surprise, but it had not been needed again, and timber for it had been within easy range of the enemy's guns.

CHAPTER XVII.
SOME NEW NEIGHBORS.

THE morning there came as a picket station where I had charge of six men and one colored woman, bent, twisted, perching and wild-eyed, who exclaimed, "Good Lawd, boss, dey's two strings of rob sojers ober yander. Dey's so loud

O. L. & W. RAILROAD.

TIME TABLE.
Corrected to May 1, 1901.

NEW YORK	AM	PM
Barclays St.	7:00	10:30
Chambers St.	7:10	10:40
Hudson St.	7:20	10:50
South St.	7:30	11:00
City Hall	7:40	11:10
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