

THE MOLLIECODDLES

By FREDERICK WALWORTH BROWN



They needed a scapegoat and they pitched on us.

In the camp of the Molliecoddles, at the rear with the baggage-wagons, men sat silent about the fires and avoided one another's eyes. Now and then one cursed bitterly and the others would turn his way for an instant and then come back to their vacant staring. Boredom seemed to be their attitude, utter blind bewilderment.

"We never had a chance," muttered one. "We never had a chance."

Another suddenly flung down a paper he had been reading in the red light, cursed like a driver for a moment, and fell silent again.

In his tent the colonel spoke bitterly to his adjutant.

"They needed a scapegoat, and they've pitched on us," he said.

A common sentiment ran from the head of the regiment to the meanest private in the ranks. It was, moreover, a perfectly legitimate, well-founded sentiment, and the facts upon which it was based were these: The Molliecoddles were a brand-new regiment. Most of them had been

clerks and small business men in a certain well-known city. Their hands were white and soft and their chests not astonishing either for length or breadth.

Therefore, because the spirit is less easily discerned than the flesh, their comrades-in-arms, veterans of two campaigns, dubbed them the Molliecoddles on their first appearance.

The regiment suffered the label with only a mild resentment. Individually, they knew they were not cowards, and they trusted confidently in the future to justify their presence in arms.

As a regiment they had not yet found themselves. They had no esprit de corps. They were a collection of units instead of the single and particular entity a regiment should be. Then came the catastrophe.

The army was facing the enemy with a river in the rear, and it so happened that the Molliecoddles held the extreme right wing. Here the general commanding made his initial mistake.

There being no natural defenses to protect this wing, it should in common prudence have been fanned back to rest upon the river and thus present a line of fire in the event of a flanking movement by the enemy.

This was not done, and the Molliecoddles were left strung out in air. Not even the colonel, who had been a successful merchant, understood the perilous insecurity of their position, and the regiment calmly laid itself down to sleep that night, expecting battle on the morrow and confident of acquitting itself well, but feeling itself secure for the immediate future.

Anon came a heavy column of the enemy, driving in the pickets, and itself arriving on their heels. The line of battle faced south. The attack fell from the west.

Two companies succeeded in forming, facing about on the new line, and firing a round or two before they were overwhelmed. Then the regiment, and after it the brigade, was rolled up, telescoped, crushed, with hardly a chance to fire a shot.

It was not their fault. The best and most seasoned regiment in the army could have done no better under the circumstances.

But when the major-general had collected the shattered remnant of his forces on the safe side of the river, he felt the need of a scapegoat, as the colonel had divined, and recognized the Molliecoddles as the logical and helpless candidates for the position.

He nominated them accordingly in his report, and the army, bitter over defeat and not at all understanding, instantly elected them unanimously.

In two days the whole country knew, beyond hope of refutation, that the Molliecoddles had brought disaster on the division by conspicuous cowardice in the face of the enemy.

The Molliecoddles, battered and still dazed, reviewed the situation with a sort of savage bewilderment. Individually, they knew they were not cowards. Collectively they were inarticulate, uncertain, perplexed.

Consequently they suffered many things, though by no means with meekness. There were black eyes and broken heads in neighboring regiments, and a lively lust for blood and slaughter in the minds of the Molliecoddles.

In the meantime they were detailed to the rear to guard the baggage-train, and the cup of their humiliation overflowed in bitter murmurs against their lot. But Fate had her eye upon them, and while they were in the mood to kick out viciously at the touch of a feather, she sent them a golden opportunity.

Having hurled his opponent back

across the river, the enemy proceeded to take the offensive. By a rapid march in the night a long column crossed the river some miles above, aiming by a wide detour to fall suddenly and unexpectedly upon the rear of the demoralized force.

So silently and swiftly was this maneuver accomplished that no word of it reached the rival general till his communications had been cut and a frightened crowd of teamsters and camp-followers came streaming up the road.

Close on their heels appeared the van of the eager enemy. In their way stood only the despised and rejected Molliecoddles.

At the first sign of trouble the colonel of the regiment deployed his men across the road and prepared to hold that line "till the cows came home."

A stone fence afforded excellent protection and the Molliecoddles spread themselves along this breast-work with the hot blood humming in their veins. Cowards, eh?

They would show what sort of cowards they were. They ceased that moment to be a collection of units, and were in a way to become a regiment.

They were madmen, most of them, ready to go red-eyed and homicidal at a pin-prick. They had been goaded and buffeted with no chance to reply. They had read ironical newspaper comments by men who had never smelled powder till their nerves were strung like hair-triggers.

Almost to a man, they yearned for slaughter with the primitive thirst of savagery. They wanted to get square. They wanted to clear themselves. They wanted to show up their critics for the blatant liars they were.

Across a field in front of them came a line of hurrying men, followed by another and another. They were overlapped on either flank. What matter? An aide galloped up to the colonel.

"Hold them for twenty minutes!" was his cry, almost despairing. "Hold them if you lose every man."

"I'll hold 'em," said the colonel grimly.

He knew the temper of his men. It was identical with his own.

Directly a battery whirled up and unlimbered in the road. That would help. The staff officer had gone to hurry up the support. The colonel stalked along his line.

Across the open ground in front of the enemy neared rapidly. They came almost recklessly, expecting little opposition. The only task they saw before them was to drive their foe into the river.

They made for the stone wall with a yell. At sight of the guns in the road

a shout of triumph broke out. These should be the first fruits of their victory. The colonel, crouching now behind the wall, surveyed them coming, only his head projecting above the coping.

The impatient privates fingered their weapons and cursed beneath their breath. Would they never get the word to fire? Were they to be run over again and trampled on without a chance?

A hundred yards away a compact line of men was toiling up the slope. In the road a column swung forward full in the face of the silent guns. Then when men's nerves were fairly snapping with the tension, the colonel gave the word.

The front of the stone wall burst into flame, and above the rattle of musketry came the bursting roar of the guns in the road, as the gunners leaped from concealment. Out on the grassy slope the first line of hurrying, eager men melted into shapeless masses on the ground.

In the road the grape and canister tore great holes in the compact column. The front ranks recoiled, shattered out of all semblance to formation.

But the attack was delayed for only a moment. Behind that foremost rank was another which came steadily on, leaving a man now and then sprawling out or writhing in the grass, but driving straight forward notwithstanding. Down the line behind the stone wall went the command, "Cease firing."

It almost caused a mutiny, but the officers persuaded the madmen to obey. The enemy came on with a yell then. Evidently it was but an insignificant force in their front. They were minded to run over them.

Telling like fends, they rushed across the open. It was Bunker Hill repeated. Again the colonel let them come within a hundred yards before he gave the command to fire, and again when the order came and the sheet of flame burst forth the advancing line withered as before the breath from a blazing blast-furnace.

Flesh and blood could not face it. They were men who would go unflinchingly where there was one chance of coming through.

Here there was none. It was death, bald and certain. Those who could recoiled down the slope. Many stayed silent in the grass.

Meanwhile the carnage in the road was fearful. The steady plying of the guns loaded with grape and canister had piled the advancing column in a mass of dead and dying till the order came to halt and deploy across the adjoining field.

This added to the labors of the devoted Molliecoddles. The next ad-

vance was in skirmish formation and far more difficult to stop.

Men began to fall behind the breast-work. Bullets sang over their heads and spat viciously into the wall in front of them.

But fifteen of the needed twenty minutes had elapsed. If they could hang on for five more!

They were firing at will now. The volleys had ceased, but there was a steady, continuous rattle of musketry. The colonel walked back and forth behind his line, fiercely chewing his mustache, pausing to glance at the cloud of skirmishers coming steadily on, or noting with a groan that his left was overlapped for a quarter of a mile and must speedily be turned.

It could not be helped. He was holding what he could, but his line was woefully thin, and every moment becoming thinner. The sniping bullets took a steady toll.

Down the slope before the stone wall a mass of men pressed forward yelling. The thin line behind the wall concentrated all its fire upon them, but it no longer availed. On they came, dogged, determined.

Men dropped steadily, but still they came on. The twenty minutes were up. Where were the reinforcements? The colonel glanced about. Woods behind him shut out all view of the regiments and brigades hurrying breakneck to the rear that had become the front.

All he knew was that he was alone, protecting the army from overwhelming defeat. Cowards, were they?

Even in that red, fiery moment he had time for an instant of bitter pride and exultation as he viewed his dead behind the stone wall.

The rushing mass in front was close up now. He knew he could not stop them. He lacked the men. He had held them back for more than the time demanded of him.

Should he order his men to fall back? The regiment had done its work. More could not reasonably be asked of them.

They were outflanked on either hand, and about to be overwhelmed. Should he order them back?

There came to him another thought. "They called us cowards," and with that he hurried along the line with the command, "Fix bayonets."

He would stay there and meet them, if it cost him every man. "They called us cowards, boys," he shouted. "This is our chance!"

On came that yelling wave in front. Loading and firing as fast as they could, the remnant of the regiment could not stop it. But not a man behind the stone wall flinched before it.

The inevitable weaklings that are in every regiment had long since sought the rear. Those who stayed would stay to the end.

They were lamentably few, but those few were bad men to face. At their colonel's call they rose, gripping their weapons, whole men, men with bleeding heads, men with limp arms, men who rose only to fall again and again struggle to rise.

With a yell the wave broke over the stone wall, and in an instant the Molliecoddles were overwhelmed. Fighting like demons, madmen, or heroes, they went down before superior numbers, but not before they had taken full toll for their defeat.

Through his glasses the general in command saw their heroic stand. The regiments breaking from the woods behind saw it and burst into cheers. A sudden wave of firing broke out on either flank, and then the conquering enemy reeled before the charge of the advancing regiments.

A moment of fighting hand to hand. A moment of fighting hand to hand. The bayonet to bayonet, and then the fresh troops dropped behind the stone wall and poured a pulling fire into the retreating foe. The day was won, the army was saved, and it was the Molliecoddles who had done it.

In the camp of the Molliecoddles that evening men sat weary and dejected about the fires. Their attitude seemed much the same as on that other evening. There were gaps in every group, and men's voices were low and awestruck.

They discussed their casualties with an appearance of wonderment. "Bunker's gone, eh?" "Billy Aken's got it in the head." "They've took 'em of Morton's leg," and so forth.

"How's the Old Man to-night?" asked one. "Heard anything?"

"They say he's doin' well. If he pulls through, I reckon they'll make him a brigadier."

"Too bad they got him. He hadn't ought to have stood up."

"Well, anyway, we held 'em."

That was the snail always. No matter what had come to pass, no matter who had died, or who was wounded, or who was missing: "Well, we held 'em."

A battery came past, the trace-chains rattling, the wheels clanking in the ruts.

"What regiment is that?" called an officer.

"The Molliecoddles," came the defiant answer.

"Oh!" said the officer, and the battery moved on.

But every gunner's eyes turned suddenly toward the camp-fires, and the Molliecoddles returned the gaze with erect heads. It was as though they asked: "If it wasn't for us, where would you be?"

And from the faces of the gunners one understood that they had no adequate answer.

BIRTHDAY OF COL. ROOSEVELT WILL BE CELEBRATED

New York, Sept. 26.—The birthday of Theodore Roosevelt will be celebrated as "Founders Day" in honor of the founding of the Progressive party by women in all parts of the country who are working in behalf of the new party, according to an announcement today at Progressive national headquarters. Senator Dixon, of Montana, authorized Mrs. Medill McCormick of Chicago to begin a country-wide movement for the formal observance on Oct. 28. The colonel's birthday is Oct. 27, but this year it falls on Sunday.

SEARCH MOUNTAINS WITHOUT SUCCESS

Charleston, W. Va., Sept. 26.—Surrounded in the mountains by soldiers, the persons who fired last night on the outpost at Keifer, W. Va., succeeded in breaking through the lines. Bloodhounds reached the scene early today and followed the train farther into the mountains, but reports offer no encouragement of capture.

MARRIAGE FIGURES GIVEN TO CONGRESS

Washington, Sept. 25.—American statistics of marriage and divorce was the subject of chief attraction at today's program of the Congress of Hygiene and Demography. Child conservation, public and private, and need of community planning in child welfare work, were other subjects discussed.

There will be a meeting of the dramatic section of the Columbian club tomorrow afternoon at 3 o'clock at the residence of the chairman, Mrs. G. Davis, Third and Jefferson streets.

Samuel B. Taylor of Glenns Ferry and Miss Martha C. Biehl of Boise were quietly married late yesterday afternoon at the Baptist church by Rev. C. L. Trawin. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor have gone to Glenns Ferry where they will make their home.

Governor Hawley today declined an invitation to attend the National Irrigation congress, due to the fact he is conducting his campaign. He was also invited to visit Driggs on Oct. 1.

YEAR'S RECORD OF THE LAND OFFICE

Washington, D. C., Sept. 26.—The general land office rolled up a net surplus of \$5,638,555 during the fiscal year just closed. Homesteaders secured patent to 5,611,948 acres. Commissioner Dennett in his annual report will announce that the office received in cash from the sale of public lands and from all other sources \$9,973,048 or \$1,116,880 less than the previous year. The aggregate expenditures and liabilities were \$3,572,693. During the year 14,574,689 acres of public and Indian land were entered and 10,135,475 acres patented, a decrease of 3,964,411 and 2,137,920 respectively.

NARROW ESCAPE FROM DEATH OR INJURY

H. F. Dicke, general manager of the Idaho Traction company, M. L. Cline, bookkeeper for the company, and a lineman in the employ of the Mountain States Telephone & Telegraph company, had a narrow escape from injury yesterday afternoon, when a telephone pole on which the lineman was at work toppled over and struck the rear seat of the Ford car in which Mr. Dicke and Mr. Cline were driving. The rear seat of the car was torn completely off by the pole and the lineman was rendered insensible by the fall, but was not otherwise injured. The accident happened on the bench near Morris Hill and a passer-by who witnessed it states that all three of the men had a very close call, the pole not missing the men in the machine more than a foot, while one of the cross-arms struck the seat in which they were riding. He is of the opinion that had the machine not broken the fall of the pole the man on top would have been killed.

Argument was heard in the supreme court today in the case of the Merchants' Protective association versus J. Jacobson and Charles F. Lee, et al, versus the Sixth Judicial district.

The supreme court today handed down an opinion in the case of Clara Powell, et al, versus Ethel Powell, applicant from the Seventh judicial district for Canyon county, in which it reverses Judge Ed. L. Bryan of that court. The case represents an action upon an agreed case for the purpose of determining the title to certain real estate, a desert entry. It was held by the lower court the land was subject to the administration of the probate court. The supreme court reverses and remands the case with orders to modify the judgment. Justice Allshie wrote the opinion.

BOND ISSUE FOR PAVING OF STREETS

The city administration has agreed to submit an improvement bond issue of \$195,000 to the citizens of Boise for the purpose of paving certain streets, building a storm sewer in care for the water in the business district and also the waters of Sand creek and Hull's gulch.

The paving district as planned takes in several sections of the city connecting up a number of paved streets and extending others. State street is to be paved from Eighth street to the city limits, connecting with the county paving and from State street out Sixteenth to Hays street and thence to Harrison boulevard, which will be paved to Heron street. The Eighth street paving is to be extended to Union street, a block will be paved on Grove street between Fifth and Sixth streets and also a block on Fifth from Main to Grove streets.

The city engineer has not yet the place completed for the storm sewer nor all the details worked out for carrying for the water from Hull's gulch and Sand creek, but has gone over the work and made estimates on the cost.

The resolution creating the districts to be improved and calling for the bond issue will be introduced soon and if carried, the work will be started early in the spring.

UNVEIL A TABLET TO MAJOR BUTTS

Nashville, Tenn., Sept. 26.—A bronze tablet to commemorate the noble life and heroic death of Major Archibald Willingham Butt, U. S. A., was unveiled in All Saints chapel, University of the South at Sewanee today. Major Butt was a Sewanee alumnus and the unveiling ceremonies were under the auspices of his fraternity, the Del Tau Delta. Had Major Butt lived he would have been 46 years old today.

WAITED 19 YEARS FOR BRIDE TO GROW UP

Los Angeles, Sept. 26.—After waiting 19 years for the girl he said he handed on his knee, to grow up, John C. Driver, 70 years old, came here to wed Miss Naomi Tarwater and taking her back today as his bride to Elden. Mr. Driver is reputed as a millionaire and his bride, whom he has known since babyhood, said he promised to build her the finest house in town.

BREVITIES

The Woman's Alliance of the Unitarian church will meet tomorrow afternoon at 2:30 o'clock at the home of Mrs. C. O. Ballou, 1011 Washington street. The meeting is the first since the church closed and all members are urged to be present.

At the Presbyterian manse yesterday afternoon at 3:30 Rev. Charles L. Chaffant united in marriage Frank C. Lynch of Parma and Miss Pearl F. Russell of Caldwell. Mr. and Mrs. Lynch will make their home in Parma.

Lawrence Earle, aged nine years, son of Mr. and Mrs. L. H. Shepherd, whose home is near Eagle, died last evening of inflammatory rheumatism. The body was brought to Boise and was forwarded this afternoon to Carlock, Ill., for burial.

O. W. Allen, the contractor and builder, today sold his handsome 7-room bungalow located on Harrison boulevard near Irene street, to Mrs. L. E. MacArthur, a recent arrival from Mexico, for \$6,750 cash. The residence was one of the fine ones located on the boulevard and is modern in every respect. Mrs. MacArthur purchased the place for a home.

The home of Mr. and Mrs. M. P. Melhoin on Franklin street was the scene of a pretty wedding last night at 8:30 o'clock when their daughter, Miss Mabelle Maurine became the bride of Chester Francis Scott, the ceremony being performed by Rev. A. J. Sullens, pastor of the Congregational church. A large number of relatives and friends were in attendance and following the ceremony a sumptuous wedding supper was served. Mr. and Mrs. Scott left last night for southern California on their wedding trip.

Rally day exercises will be held at the First Baptist church next Sunday and a special committee is working hard to make the event a memorial one. A joint meeting of the church and Sunday school will be held at 10:30. Special music, addresses on Bible study and the organization of a home department, an illustrated lecture on important events in the life of Christ, hymns on the screen and illustrated songs, comprise the program. After the smaller children are dismissed a consecration address by Dr. C. A. Woody of Portland will close the meeting.

Andy Laber, the tailor, arrested upon the charge of petit larceny upon complaint of Angelos Callis, was dismissed by Judge Bower this morning, there being no evidence upon which a conviction could be secured. The case was the outgrowth of a disagreement of the men after they became partners in business which resulted in a division of the property, the junior member of the firm declaring that Laber took property which he had purchased and therefore had him arrested. After an investigation Judge Bower decided that the case was one which should be settled by a board of arbitration, but Callis would not consent to such a settlement and walked out of court.

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