

**WHAT A NEW  
YORK TROOPER  
SAW OF THE WAR**

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What a New York Trooper Saw of the War by Charles Fuller

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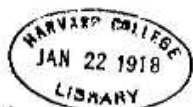
BY  
CHARLES FULLER

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## What a New York Trooper Saw of the War.

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WELL, now that it's all over, I suppose we can look backward and call it fun! Some of it was, most of it wasn't, but at least it was an experience, and one a little out of the ordinary; and, after all, what is life if not a collection of experiences, and I, for one, prefer to have them as varied as possible.

When the clouds of war began to gather in April last, I happened to be a member of Squadron "A," and, like all the boys, I had visions of orders to the front, gallant service and the victor's crown, etc. But, unfortunately, the Government did not agree with my views on the subject; and in the distribution of troops to be furnished by various States and organizations Squadron "A," N. G. N. Y., was ordered to send but one troop instead of three. Of course, disappointment; some would certainly have to remain at home, and the all-absorbing topic of interest was, who will be the lucky ones chosen to uphold the honor of organization and country? How I did worry! But for once worry was rewarded, and I happened to be among the chosen ones; I know not why, but the fact remained, and that was enough.

In the course of a week or so we received orders to



report at our Armory on Monday morning, May 2d, at half-past six o'clock.

Well, I got there on time; everything was in a state of bustle and turmoil. In the various troop rooms men were rolling and strapping and tugging at packs and saddle-bags, in a desperate and futile attempt to insert enough useless material to fill them many times over—a mistake we very soon learned to correct.

Below, in the stables and saddle-rooms, were other individuals dashing hither and thither in search of a horse, a bridle or a saddle, while the ring somewhat resembled a Western corral, save perhaps the incongruity of a dock-tail riding school horse standing with an insulted air beside a beast which looked as if its last occupation had been at the pole of a Fifth Avenue stage. The Government had tried to supply us with the necessary mounts on two days' notice, but, in spite of gallant efforts, had failed, and we had to content ourselves, for the present at least, with anything that could be pressed into service.

After a while orders were given to saddle up, and then some of the fun began; many of the animals had never felt or seen a saddle, judging from their actions, but as we had no time just then to respect feelings of man or beast, the job was done despite the rather annoying and untimely remonstrances of our equine friends. When "Prepare to mount!" and "Mount!" were blown, another impromptu circus was the result. Still, in spite of these trifles, we moved from the Armory absolutely to the minute of schedule time, and this, after all, was not a bad beginning.

As we emerged from the building we were cheered most enthusiastically by the crowd, who had, through

windows and doors, been interested spectators of the morning's preparations, and were it not for the presence of our heavily packed saddles and the absence of band and full dress uniform, we would have thought ourselves once more on the ever-familiar parade. We marched across Ninety-fourth Street to Fifth Avenue and then turned south. Although it was still very early, a considerable crowd had collected along the line of march, and every block or so some one would shout "Good-by!" and rush out to give a parting hand-shake.

Down the familiar and fashionable Avenue we rode, with palaces to the left of us and the soft verdure of the Park to the right of us, down past the swell clubhouses, the milliners' shops, and the Art Galleries, as far as Thirty-fourth Street, and then turned east to the Long Island Ferry. On the East Side we received a most enthusiastic ovation, which only ended as the ferry-boat swept out into the stream. Twenty-six miles is not much of a ride, especially if you have all day to do it in; but that first twenty-six miles seemed long enough to reach anywhere by the time we touched our destination at Hempstead Plains.

To improve matters, the weather had changed, and the bright sunshine of the morning had given way to a cold, drizzling rain; in fact, few places ever looked more uninviting, than did Camp Black on the night of our arrival.

Then began the interesting occupation of picketing and caring for our horses, and when that was done, of pitching our tents and getting supper.

It was done at last, and I was about to compose myself for well-merited repose, when my too sanguine hopes were most unceremoniously dashed by that very inter-

esting individual commonly known as the Sergeant of the Guard, who, with spiteful pleasure, informed me that I was chosen as one of his assistants on the weary vigils which he superintends but never keeps.

My post was the picket line, and my duty to prevent unseemly disturbances among the horses, who had never known, judging by their actions, what it was to stay out all night, much less when attached to a picket line in a drizzling rain; armed with a balestick I would sprint from one end of the line to the other, dealing unceremonious blows and untying those beasts whose enthusiasm had brought them to grief. This would last for two hours, and then for four weary hours I would try in vain to sleep and keep warm at the same time, the rain all the while trickling down my back with aggravating persistency.

But even guard duty on a cold and rainy night must end at some time or other; daylight finally came, and with it some relief. Although I know it is past, and I have doubtless had harder knocks since, my first night of guard duty in "Uncle Sam's" service is the most disagreeable recollection I have of the late war, and one of the few I take no pleasure in recalling.

The next morning, after getting something which was called breakfast, some of us thought that perhaps it might not be a bad idea to remove a little of the accumulated dirt of two days, and under ordinary circumstances this doubtless would have been reasonable enough, but it did not take long to convince us that walking half a mile, waiting for your turn at a horse-pail, and then removing water and dirt simultaneously with your pocket handkerchief is a profitless way of spending one's time in camp.