



FROM
HEADQUARTERS

BY

James Albert Hoge

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ODD TALES

PICKED UP IN THE VOLUNTEER SERVICE

BY

JAMES ALBERT FRYE

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ESTES AND LAURIAT

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JAMES ALBERT FRYE

TO THE
FIRST INFANTRY
M.V.M.

P R E F A C E.



I N the odd though truthful tales here brought together — of which, by the way, some already have been in print — there is not the slightest attempt at pen portraiture, nor is there any pretence to the accuracy of the military historian; in other words, this is a collection of chance yarns, and not a portrait gallery — and no one is asked to believe that either the Nineteenth Army Corps or the “Old Regiment” ever were found in any situations like those in which they here find themselves placed.

This book, perhaps, may fall into the hands of one of those — and they are far too many — whose habit it is to scoff at the volunteer service, and to look askance at all

who enter it. I sincerely trust that it may, for I wish to say — and in all earnestness — that the militia of today is not the militia of thirty, twenty, or even ten years ago; that nowadays the incompetent and the vicious are allowed to remain in civil life, and are not given places in the ranks of the volunteers; and that those who take the solemn oath of enlistment do so with the full understanding that they will be required to devote their time, their money, and their best energies to the service, and that they have assumed an obligation to fit themselves carefully and intelligently for the duties of a soldier.

The volunteer service of the present time means, to those who find themselves enrolled in it, something more than a mere pastime; and if those who hold it in small esteem could but know of the faithful, conscientious, and untiring work that, from year's end to year's end, is being done in armory and camp, they would leave unsaid, it seems

to me, the half-contemptuous words that too often come to the ears of the hard-working, long-suffering, and unrewarded citizen-soldier.

It has been said that the best is none too good for the service of the Commonwealth. If this be true, — and who can question it? — the stigma of whatever blemishes have been found in the militia must be borne by those men of ability and position who, while ever ready to point out weaknesses and faults, negligently have left to hands less competent, or, it may be, less worthy, the work which they themselves were in honor bound to do.

J. A. F.

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THE PLUCK
OF
CAPTAIN PENDER, C.S.N.

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WELL up town, something above quarter of a mile beyond the massive, battlemented armory in which we of the Third Infantry have our headquarters, a side street, branching off from one of the main thoroughfares, ambitiously stretches away until it finds its farther progress barred by a high, stone-capped, brick wall. There it stops. Beyond lie the quadruple tracks of a railway, over which, all day long—and, for that matter, all night, too—thunder the coming and going trains, with such an outpouring of smoke and downpouring of cinders that it is small wonder that a quiet street, such as this one pretends to be, should have lost all desire to continue its course in that direction.

A few paces from the end of the *cul-de-sac* formed by the halting street and the obstructing wall, and facing a lamp-post which awkwardly rears itself up from the curbstone to present for inspection a glass panel lettered "Battery Court," there is—in one of the long row of houses—an opening which looks like the entrance to a tunnel.

In point of fact, it *is* the entrance to a tunnel, for, in order to reach the court which lies hidden beyond, one has to grope through fifty feet of brick-bound darkness. And even when that venture has been made, the change from shade to light is not a startling one, for the court is small and entirely surrounded by lofty buildings, so that one standing in it and looking up at the patch of blue sky overhead feels much as if he had landed at the bottom of a well, and instinctively glances about in search of a rope by which to climb up and out again.

It is an odd corner—and oddly utilized. All around it stretch streets of dwellings, but in this silent and dim court the few structures are plainly and solidly built, and heavily shuttered with iron, for they all are devoted to storage. It was the lack of

breathing space, I dare say, and the close proximity of the railway that made this nook undesirable for any other purpose; and in all probability "Battery Court" would be unknown to-day if we had not happened to stumble upon it in our search for a place where we could pitch our tent, without being forced to pitch after it a king's ransom in the shape of rent.

Facing the dark passageway which offers the only avenue for escape to the street beyond, and entirely filling one end of the court, there looms up a five-storied warehouse. For four stories it bears a perfect family resemblance to its companions on either hand, and up to that height its dull, red bricks and rusty, red iron entitle it to no distinction whatever. But the *fifth* story is altogether another story, and though from an architect's point of view it might seem wofully incongruous, yet to our eyes it is supremely satisfying — *for we did it.*

Yes, the fifth story of that old warehouse asserts itself like a diamond pin in a soiled and rumpled scarf, for the mansard roof with its galvanized-iron trimmings, which once

made it appear no more respectable than it ought to be, has given place to a long, well-glazed, dormer window, finished on the outside with heavy timbering and rough plaster work, and fitted with swinging sashes through whose many panes the southern sun may shine without let or hinderance, save when, in summer months, a wide, striped awning parries the hottest rays. In every sense of the word it is a great window, and — as I and many another officer of the Third can testify — the comfortable, cushioned seat which runs its entire length has many attractions for a lazy, tobacco-loving man. Above the window, and crowning glory of all, a straight and slender spar points skyward, from which, on sunny days, floats a great, white flag, bearing in mid-field the blue Maltese cross, on which the figure “3” is displayed: for the present Third is the successor of a “fighting regiment,” and we proudly preserve the old corps’ device and the traditions that go with it.

So much for the *outside* of our nightly gathering-place.

Within-doors the effect is even more surprising, for the four long and dusty flights of

dimly-lighted stairs give no hint of the cheery quarters up to which they lead the way. Once they had their termination in a loft—a bare, rough, unfinished loft; but we have changed all that, and now it would be hard to find at any club in town a cosier spot. Thirty feet from side to side the great room stretches, and twice that from front to rear; ample room, yet none too much for our needs, for our friends are many, and the times are not infrequent when we find even these quarters crowded. At the southern end, almost from wall to wall, extends the long window, with its softly cushioned seat—a vantage point that never lacks for tenants. Midway of one side wall the great fireplace yawns, waiting for the sharp, cold nights when the load of logs upon its iron fire-dogs shall be called upon to send the smoke wreathing and curling up the chimney's broad and blackened throat.

Above the wide mantel-shelf are crossed two faded colors, hanging motionless from their staves, save when some stray current of air idly stirs their tarnished, golden fringes: "Old Glory," with its stripes and star-sown field, is one; the other, the white banner of

the Commonwealth, beneath whose crest the ever-watchful Indian stands guard. In a long, glittering row, below the mantel, hang the polished pewter mugs, swinging expectantly, each upon its hook, and seeming to say — as they flash back the sunbeams, or reflect the light of the fire below — “Come, fill us, empty us: and have done with the worries of the day!”

Furniture? Yes, there's a plenty. Fronting the hospitable fireplace a long, oaken table stands sturdily upon its solid legs, as indeed it *must* — for often and often, when the fire is crackling, it has to bear a load of lazy soldiers, who delight to roost along its edge and match the logs in smoking: chairs enough there are to be sure, but somehow there comes a greater sense of comfort and ease to one who perches on a table's edge. Beneath a trophy of Arab swords and spears stands the bookcase, on whose shelves the literature ranges from Tibdall, Upton, and the long and ever-lengthening series of solemn black “Reports,” to the crazy yarns of Lever, and the books whose backs bear the names of Captain King and Kipling. In one corner the upright piano, in its ebony case, has its

station — and here our lieutenant-colonel holds command undisputed, for his touch upon the ivory keys can make the rafters ring with the airs that we all know and like the best ; not far away, a pillowed lounge stands waiting for an occupant ; and all about are scattered small tables, ready for the whist players. A few rugs and half a dozen deer-skins litter the floor ; while here and there, along the walls, are fixed the heads and horns of elk and mountain sheep — for there are two among us who spend their leaves each year far in the West, amid the big game. Everywhere there are pictures : engravings, etchings, colored prints, and, last and most of all, photographs by the dozen, and almost by the hundred — for we of the Third always have borne a reputation for unflinchingly facing the camera.

This is “The Battery.”

Yes, this is The Battery, and here you may drop in on any night with the certainty of finding a pipe and a mug, and good fellows in plenty with whom to pass the time of day and pick to bits the latest thing in the way of general orders.

What gave it the name? I cannot tell.

I only know that we always have spoken of it thus, perhaps because of the shining brass howitzers that stand on end, one on either side of the chimney-piece. At odd times, to be sure, we have talked of giving the old sky-parlor some more high-sounding title, but the years have gone by without ever our getting to it, and the name which first was thrown at the place has stuck to it. And now, since Pollard, our junior major, has used his influence in municipal politics to have the name of the court changed to correspond, the chances are that "The Battery" it will be, so long as the Third stands *first* in the service — which, we fondly hope, will be always.

One night in December we had been having a battalion drill at the armory, and — an occurrence by no means uncommon — a goodly array of officers from other regiments had come over to see our work, and openly congratulate us upon the beauty of it, while secretly hugging to their hearts the conviction that *they* could do the same things twice as well. When the armory part of the programme had been put out of the way, we all adjourned to The Battery, and there — after Sam had relieved the visitors of their heavy,

military coats, which he folded and stacked upon a chair, like so many cheap ulsters in a ready-made clothing store — our guests went 'round the room on the usual tour of inspection, while those of us who had not detailed ourselves to act as guides helped Sam to load the long table with pewters.

Presently all the mugs had been filled with beer, and at a glance from the colonel we gathered about him. "Gentlemen of the Third," he said, raising his froth-capped mug, "our guests!" — and upon this hint we drank heartily, and very willingly indeed, to the visiting officers whom we had with us. Then Major Wilson, the senior of our guests, proposed *our* healths, and with the conclusion of this simple ceremony we laid aside all formality, and scattered ourselves over the room, while Sam passed around the tray of pipes and the great Japanese jar of cut-plug.

Each equipped with corn-cob and mug — for our tastes are not luxurious, and beer and tobacco amply satisfy them — we split up into groups, and as the smoke-cloud became more dense the talk grew louder, until the clatter of mugs, the humming monotone of many voices, and the frequent bursts of

laughter combined to drown the sound of the hissing and crackling logs in the fireplace.

"Is that one of your trophies, Major?" asked Kenryek, of the brigade staff, speaking to Sawin, our surgeon, and nodding up at a huge pair of moose horns upon the wall above the mantel.

"No, that's a contribution from the colonel," replied Sawin, *alias* "Bones," setting down his mug and wiping his mustache as he spoke. "Langforth and I plead guilty to the slaughter of most of these horns and hides, for we're the 'mighty hunters' of this aggregation, but *that* pair of antlers fell to someone else's rifle. Splendid pair, eh? There's a sort of story goes with 'em, too. Ask the colonel."

"Yes, there *is* a story connected with that pair," said Colonel Elliott, who, from his side of the table, overheard the doctor's suggestion. He rose, transferred his chair and mug to a position next Kenryek, and continued: "In fact, when we began to fit up this place, we made it a rule not to admit among the decorations anything which didn't have a history of some sort. So, you see, The Bat-

tery is rather an interesting establishment, and if any of us had time or taste for that sort of thing we could get up a good-sized book without having to go outside these walls to hunt for material."

"It's a mighty interesting outfit—the whole of it," said Kenryck, glancing up and down the long room, and noting the collection of odds and ends upon the walls and in every nook and corner. "We're pretty well fixed, up at *our* headquarters, but we've nothing so homelike as this. The general often says that he enjoys nothing more than an inspection of the Third, with a 'wind-up' afterwards up here. Possibly you've noticed that, on occasions of that sort, his whole staff is apt to come with him."

"Yes," said the colonel dryly, remembering the extra cases of beer which have to be laid in against such emergencies as an official visit from the brigade staff; "yes, I've noticed it. It's very flattering to us, I'm sure."

Kenryck must have been aware of something in the colonel's tone, for he promptly drew upon his reserve supply of tact and said, "Do you mind telling me the story of those