

# Adventures of an Iron Brigade Man

By CAPT. R. K. BEECHAM, 2d Wis.

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When I enlisted at Madison, Wis., in May, 1861, as a high private in Co. H, 2d Wis., I was all unaware of the wide and almost impassable gulf that yawns between the enlisted soldier and commissioned officer. My first introduction to real official dignity, or pomposity, as it appears in military life, came a few days later, and before I was mustered into the United States service. Lieut.-Col. Peck was temporarily in command of the regiment, and having business with him, I was admitted into his quarters, where I found him with his hat on his head and his feet perched upon the table (a very dignified position), luxuriating in a fragrant Havana. I was only a country boy of 23 years and imagined that no soldier of the Republic was a menial, and that I had no call to uncover while standing in his presence; but the noble Colonel, knowing that such unsoldierly conduct, if not at once rebuked and eradicated, would lead to the defeat of our arms in the field and the overthrow of the Republic, said to me very sternly, but with a withering sadness in his voice, which lingers in my ears even to this distant day:

"Take off your hat, sir, when you come into the presence of your superiors."

Well, Sumter had been fired upon, and the old flag that waved above the fort riddled and torn, and notwithstanding this, the first command I had ever received from a Colonel in uniform was a damper to the patriotism that filled my heart. I had started out to learn to fight, and to die for my National honor, and I took off my hat, but right there and then I vowed in my heart that if I ever succeeded in crossing the gulf, I would stand on the other shore adorned with gilt buttons and shoulder-straps, still retaining sufficient manhood and common sense to treat a private soldier as a gentleman and as an American citizen.

### MY FIRST PROMOTION.

Time passed. Promotion from the ranks in the American army is always rapid and uncertain. I was promoted to first sergeant and natural official dignity, and in the month of March, 1863—less than two years from date of enlistment—I rose to the rank of Eighth Corporal. I was then promoted to sergeant, and then to sergeant-major. I was then promoted to sergeant-major, and then to sergeant-major. I was then promoted to sergeant-major, and then to sergeant-major.

War Department was sufficient to govern in this case, without any monkeying with the "official channel" or "Corps Headquarters." but the Colonel promptly and decidedly overruled my attempt at argument, saying: "That won't pass you over this road, sir." I answered: "Surely you are mistaken; a permit from the War Department is not authority in Annapolis? It is all that is requisite anywhere in the Army of the Potomac." He replied: "The Army of the Potomac cuts no ice in my department. I tell you plainly that this permit, or whatever you call it, is of no use to you here. Why, look at its date, the 9th day of June last; if authority in the Army of the Potomac, why did you not use it while you were there?" I answered: "I had good and sufficient reasons for not using it, as I have for-



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My application for leave of absence having been approved by my company commander, I presented it in person to Col. Mansfield for his signature, which he refused to give. He then ordered me to go to the "regular official channel" to Brigade Headquarters, where they were approved by Gen. Sol. Meredith. Onward I passed through the "regular official channel" to the Headquarters of the Army, where my application was approved by Gen. Ly-sander Cutler. Still on I passed through the "regular official channel" up to the very front door of the Corps Commander, where I was met by the adjutant, who introduced me into the presence of Gen. Newton, but into the far more magnificent presence of Capt. C. Kingsbury, Jr., Gen. Newton's Adjutant-General. I approached him with my hat under my arm, and became an obedient soldier of the Great Republic, when addressing his superior officer, presenting my papers and requesting, in a modest and unassuming manner, that he would procure the necessary approval of the Commanding General to my leave of absence. The Captain examined the papers with a disdainful touch and a slight smile, and then he said: "You are a compositus was stirred to the very bottom of his august gizzard. Immediately he turned his withering gaze upon me and spoke as becomes an officer holding a high and honorable position:

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It would have lowered his official dignity in his own estimation to have said so. As the Colonel would not even hear my much less consider my opinion, my only course, without creating a rupture, was to apply for a leave of absence, and, believing that such application could pass through the "regular official channel" from Regimental to Corps Headquarters and return in 48 hours at most, and that this unnecessary proceeding would only delay my trip for a few days, I acted on the Colonel's order, and presented my application for a leave of absence, together with my permit from the War Department, were speeding through the "regular official channel" in a heavy marching order, was pursuing my way, as an obedient soldier, along a hot and dusty highway in the direction of Gettysburg.

Time rolled on. So did the Army of the Potomac. We traveled old, familiar paths, and paths that were not so familiar; we left our battlefields of previous years far in the rear as we pursued our march to the northward, and still my papers from the War Department, with my application for a leave of absence were pursuing that mysterious "official channel."

We reached and crossed the Potomac River, and marched over the borders of Maryland, My Maryland; before our eyes were the mountains, beneath our feet the valleys of the Keystone State; but from the "regular official channel" my papers were returned, and returned the morning of July 1 dawned upon us; over muddy roads, through drizzling rain we marched to the memorable field of Gettysburg, and when the battle was over, as a defeated army to the shelter of the Virginia hills beyond the Potomac, and later took a weary trip to Richmond. After basking for a season on sunny Belle Isle, I was again on the march, and returned to Annapolis some time in the month of August.

Immediately after my return from jail I wrote to the Commanding General of the Potomac, to learn if my papers from the War Department, etc., had been as fortunate as myself, and had returned from the "regular official channel," and, lo! to my surprise, which came in the season, came also my permit from the War Department and a leave of absence to visit Washington, bearing date July 15, 1863, officially approved from Corps Headquarters, and in compliance with the wishes of the Secretary of War. Thus, it will be seen, these documents traveled the "regular official channel" on their upward way to the Headquarters of the Army, in the short space of 34 days; but how long it took them to accomplish the home run I never learned. At last I held in my possession a leave of absence from the War Department, which I passed safely through the "regular official channel," and yet it was so much worthless paper, for I was then far removed from the power and influence of the Headquarters of the Army, and I still desired to visit Washington my only hope lay in this old permit from the War Department, which was just as good, but no better, than it was on the 12th of June, the day I first received it. Although by sad experience I had learned that the Secretary of War was inferior in rank to the Corps Commander of the Army of the Potomac, I still retained a lingering hope that he was superior in rank to the Commandant of Camp Parole. However, when I presented said permit to the gallant Major in command of the barracks where was our regiment, he handed me the oral statement that I proposed visiting Washington, the Major informed me that a permit of that kind from the War Department was of no use there, only as a recommendation to leave of absence, for which, if I desired, I could make application. That he, the Major, holding the Secretary of War in much esteem, would approve the application, and forward the same, together with my paper from the War Department, through the "regular official channel" to Col. Root, Commandant of Camp Parole, where it would in all probability be approved, and on its return I could visit Washington.

Greatly though I admired the expeditious manner with which documents of this kind traveled the "regular official channel," my late term in jail had added an impatient restlessness to my spirit quite foreign to my naturally long-suffering disposition, and without entering into an argument with the Major on the relative powers and authority of Col. Root, Commandant of Camp Parole, vs. E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War of the United States of America (the Major would surely have gotten the best of the argument in such a case), I concluded to play "hook-

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WORKING A BLUFF.

The following morning I purchased a ticket to Washington, and took my seat in the car, when directly I was accosted by an official of the provost department, who asked for my pass. With beating heart but bold front, I presented my worthless permit from the War Department, just as if the Secretary of War and the Adjutant-General were persons of authority. The said official examined the document with a critical eye, and remarked with a wise and confident look: "That won't pass you over this road, sir." I answered: "Surely you are mistaken; a permit from the War Department is not authority in Annapolis? It is all that is requisite anywhere in the Army of the Potomac." He replied: "The Army of the Potomac cuts no ice in my department. I tell you plainly that this permit, or whatever you call it, is of no use to you here. Why, look at its date, the 9th day of June last; if authority in the Army of the Potomac, why did you not use it while you were there?" I answered: "I had good and sufficient reasons for not using it, as I have for-

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The following morning I purchased a ticket to Washington, and took my seat in the car, when directly I was accosted by an official of the provost department, who asked for my pass. With beating heart but bold front, I presented my worthless permit from the War Department, just as if the Secretary of War and the Adjutant-General were persons of authority. The said official examined the document with a critical eye, and remarked with a wise and confident look: "That won't pass you over this road, sir." I answered: "Surely you are mistaken; a permit from the War Department is not authority in Annapolis? It is all that is requisite anywhere in the Army of the Potomac." He replied: "The Army of the Potomac cuts no ice in my department. I tell you plainly that this permit, or whatever you call it, is of no use to you here. Why, look at its date, the 9th day of June last; if authority in the Army of the Potomac, why did you not use it while you were there?" I answered: "I had good and sufficient reasons for not using it, as I have for-

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My application for leave of absence having been approved by my company commander, I presented it in person to Col. Mansfield for his signature, which he refused to give. He then ordered me to go to the "regular official channel" to Brigade Headquarters, where they were approved by Gen. Sol. Meredith. Onward I passed through the "regular official channel" to the Headquarters of the Army, where my application was approved by Gen. Ly-sander Cutler. Still on I passed through the "regular official channel" up to the very front door of the Corps Commander, where I was met by the adjutant, who introduced me into the presence of Gen. Newton, but into the far more magnificent presence of Capt. C. Kingsbury, Jr., Gen. Newton's Adjutant-General. I approached him with my hat under my arm, and became an obedient soldier of the Great Republic, when addressing his superior officer, presenting my papers and requesting, in a modest and unassuming manner, that he would procure the necessary approval of the Commanding General to my leave of absence. The Captain examined the papers with a disdainful touch and a slight smile, and then he said: "You are a compositus was stirred to the very bottom of his august gizzard. Immediately he turned his withering gaze upon me and spoke as becomes an officer holding a high and honorable position:

"This, sir, is not the way to conduct military business. You are carrying official papers from one General Headquarters to another? I am surprised that any such irregular proceedings should be tolerated at Annapolis and Brigade Headquarters. Go back to your company at once, sir, and forward your application through the 'regular official channel,' where I will receive attention when it reaches the Headquarters of the Army."

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"I beg your pardon, Captain. One of the orders from the War Department; for you have no business, Captain, and very likely the Secretary of War understands his." Then I tore the application for leave of absence, in his presence, and the pieces of paper, scattered on the ground, put my permit carefully in my breast-pocket, saluted the Captain and A. A.-G. and took my leave.

I did not return to my company, as the Captain had ordered me to do, but remembering that I had at Annapolis, Md., bluffed an official of the provost department with so simple a document as an order from the War Department, concluded that my only chance of success lay in my receiving a commission admitting me into the fraternity of military sword-wielders in accomplishing that same exploit again. I did not directly to the office of the Provost Marshal at the Headquarters of the Army, 100 yards distant, presented my permit from the War Department with the same assurance that I would have presented a pass, and he, who had triumphantly passed through the "regular official channel," and asked for transportation to Washington. The Provost Marshal glanced at the document, and without question wrote the transportation.

(To be continued.)

**Capt. Carter of Gen. Cox's Staff.**

EDITOR NATIONAL TRIBUNE: I see by the issue of Sept. 25, that Mrs. S. G. Lewis, of Charleston, has written me something about her father, who I do not belong to the 72d Ill., but frequently during the battle of Franklin, after dark, Capt. Carter was sent by Gen. Cox to Col. E. S. Bond, 112th Ill., with orders to move the regiment across the pike, following the stone fence in the rear of the Carter House and garden to the locust grove. At the west end of the garden, behind the temporary breastworks, were other regiments. Capt. Carter reached the 112th Ill., and delivered the orders to Col. Bond. The regiment was formed, and the Colonel gave the order to "march." The file left "march." At the word "march" the locust grove was lighted up by the firing of musketry. Capt. Carter at the time was on the breastworks, and Col. Bond and six of his men were close to Capt. Carter. Five of the men and the Colonel were shot. Capt. Carter and I reached the ditch at our breastworks. I saw that Capt. Carter had myself going to the ditch and we were shot. Just as I reached the ditch three rebels ran up and shot at me. All three of the rebels were hit, one passing through the rim on each side of my head, and the other cutting the crown of my hat. Capt. Carter and I crawled down the ditch to the pike to see if we could escape and return to the regiment, but we found no opportunity. We returned to where we had left my knapsack in the ditch. We had drawn rations that afternoon. The Captain and I ate raw bacon and hardtack; I ate the hardtack, and the Captain ate the bacon. We had better hide our money. He placed his in the lining of his trousers. I had three \$20 bills, two \$10 bills, four \$5 bills, and four \$1 bills, and I hid them in my hat. How much money the Captain had he did not state. Capt. Carter cut off his shoulder straps, so that the rebels would not know that he was an officer. We were shot, but we were not hurt. We did not find. Capt. Carter and I were together until we reached Columbia, Tenn. Any comrade or other person who is especially interested in the fate of Capt. Carter, or in the history of the 112th Ill., will find the information in my possession—T. E. MATTHEWS, Co. A, 112th Ill., Eagle Grove, Iowa.

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