

UP FROM THE RANKS

A LONG JOURNEY FOR THE MAN WHO STARTS AS A PRIVATE.

Few British Privates Ever Attain a Higher Commission Than Major—None Has Ever Begun the Toilsome Way and Completed it With Field Marshal—The Steps in the Upward Career.

The man who starts at the bottom rung of the army ladder with the intention of climbing to the top has in front of him a long journey. Indeed, so long is it that up till now no soldier has accomplished it in its entirety. In other words, no Briton, living or dead, has been endowed with sufficient vim, grit and luck to start as a private and end a field marshal. ... The first step which the budding major-general takes when emerging from his original status of full private is to lance corporal. The life of a lance corporal is not a happy one. Indeed, so little rest does he get that he is popularly supposed to sleep with one eye open. He is at every one's beck and call; his duties are novel and trying, and, worst of all, his late comrades keep a keen eye on his movements, and are not slow to remind him of any lapses. In some corps 95 per cent. of all lance corporals appointed revert sooner or later to the rank of private. Those who survive the ordeal are in due course promoted to corporal, wear two white cotton stripes on the arm instead of one, and receive a higher rate of pay. A corporal is regarded as fairly on the road to regimental success, and the duties that fall to his lot are neither so wearisome nor so multifarious as formerly.

The next step—that to lance sergeant—is, like the first an "appointment," not a promotion. This is a distinction with a difference. A commanding officer can order a lance corporal to revert to private, and he forthwith reverts. So, also, he can in the same way deprive a lance sergeant of his lance stripe and bid him revert to corporal or a sergeant, but he cannot degrade a corporal or a sergeant, for these are promotions to actual ranks, and, once conferred, can only be taken away by sentence of court-martial. After serving his probation as lance sergeant for a period varying between two or three months and a couple of years, the rising young "non-com." finds himself one day "in orders" for his gold stripes, which is to say, he is promoted full sergeant. He is now an important unit in that great family, the regiment, and takes a more or less prominent part in the social life that centres round the sergeants' mess. It is, however, conceded on all hands that the man who marries while yet a mere "non-com." forfeits all future hopes of a combatant commission, so our typical ranker resists the blandishments of the fair daughters of the regiment, sticks tight to his bachelor quarters and in due course becomes color sergeant. ... From among the eight color sergeants of a battalion is selected, as a general rule, the regimental sergeant-major, the chief non-commissioned officer of a corps, and the man, who, in conjunction with the adjutant, is mainly responsible for the maintenance of that strict internal discipline without which a regiment is worse than useless as a fighting machine. In his own realm the sergeant-major is absolute. The next step, that from sergeant-major to second lieutenant, is the most important of all, for it is here that the soldier passes that mysterious barrier which separates the non-commissioned from the commissioned ranks. To many, too, it is a terrible trial, for it is the custom nowadays to gazette the newly-fledged officer to some regiment other than his own. As major most rankers finish their services; but a few, a very few, add a star to the crown upon the shoulder straps and become lieutenant-colonels; fewer still become full colonels, while those who have actually served as major-generals can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

One word in conclusion as to the pay of the higher commissioned

rank of the service. The figures given are approximately correct, but there are numerous extra payments—or "allowances," as they are termed in army parlance—which occasionally more than double the nominal daily rate. Thus, in time of peace a colonel may be drawing forage allowance, fuel and light allowance, lodging allowance, the allowance in lieu of rations, etc., while in time of war many more similar "extras" are tacked on:

Rank.	£	s.	d.
Private	0	1	0 a day
Lance corporal	0	1	3 a day
Corporal	0	1	8 a day
Lance sergeant	0	2	0 a day
Sergeant	0	2	4 a day
Color sergeant	0	3	0 a day
Sergeant-major	0	5	0 a day
Sec. Lieutenant	0	5	3 a day
Lieutenant	6s	6d.	0 7 6 a day
Captain	0	11	7 a day
Major	13s.	0	a day
Lieut.-Colonel	0	18	0 a day
Colonel	2	0	0 a day
Brig.-General	2	10	0 a day
Major-General	3	0	0 a day
Lieut.-General	5	0	10 a day
General	8	5	0 a day
Field marshal	16	0	0 a day

—South African Magazine.

Drop Your Accent.

A correspondent, writing to London Truth, says: A military instructor at Aldershot the other day was instructing five young colonials from Canada. He called them up in a bunch and told them that the first thing they must do was to drop their accent before they could hope to be satisfactory officers.

"They are very indignant about this, for they naturally consider that a Canadian accent is just as good as a London one; and, whether it is or not, the way a man speaks his mother tongue cannot have anything to do with his fitness for soldiering. It strikes me that if an English officer talks to Canadian cadets in this fashion, we are not likely to get many more of them from Canada."

Telling Tales of Ourselves.

A man should be careful never to tell tales of himself to his own disadvantage. People may be amused and laugh at the time, but they will be remembered and brought out against him upon some subsequent occasion.—Dr. Samuel Johnson.

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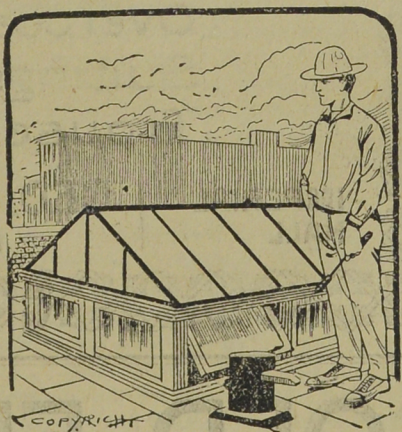
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Dec 21, 1900, dwalyr.