

# The Philatelic Advocate.

A MONTHLY FOR STAMP COLLECTORS.

VOL. 9. NO. 3.

BERLIN, ONT., SEPTEMBER, 1900.

WHOLE NO. 49

## The Postal Service During the Civil War.

BY A LLOYD JONES

In a recent issue of the *Advocate* there appeared an excellent article by A. R. Butler about the U. S postal service during the Spanish-American war. It showed how nearly perfect a system was organized amid the chaos and havoc of war, and of the patriotism of the postal officials on service there. This gave me the idea of interviewing an old "vet" on the condition of the post office system during the Civil War. I expected to bring out a strong contrast between conditions then and those in the late "Yanko-Spanko" war, but judge of my surprise when he said, and it has since been corroborated by others, that the postal system during the Civil War worked perfectly.

"We didn't give much thought to the postal or baggage system while we were in the army but accepted the promptness and completeness as a matter of course. Looking back at it now I wonder at the patience, energy and alertness of those who organized the plan and carried it out. Letters were addressed to the company and regiment and often by people who were careless in writing names and in giving the number of the regiment, but in some way the letters came to hand. Often letters sent from Germany, England or France were a puzzle in direction, but the army

postal authorities made it a point to have them reach their destination.

The custom then was for the soldier's letters to be franked and for the postage to be paid at the receiving office. Before this was generally understood our sutler received letters from the boys, each one paying the postage and he guaranteeing that they would go forward postage paid. Some one discovered that the sutler would take every night thirty or forty letters to the Colonel's tent, have them franked and send them forward without stamps. When the scheme was exposed, the Colonel issued an order asking the men of the regiment to send their letters to his headquarters and not to the sutler. I have scores of the old envelopes bearing the signature of the Colonel or the regimental adjutant.

Most of the men when paid, retained part of their money and at once mailed the balance home, and it was usually in the form of paper money. All this was well known by all the soldier and headquarter attaches, there was never a case reported in which letters containing money were tampered with at the regimental, brigade or division headquarters. No money was lost in transit, except when trains were captured by General Joe Wheeler, General Forrest or General Morgan. When there was indisputable proof of the capture of such letters the government made the loss good."