

OUR DISABLED SOLDIERS.

Projects for their Employment as Messengers, and Why they Failed—The Soldiers' Business Messenger and Dispatch Company—Its Plans and Promises.

Since the close of the war, and the consequent return to their homes of those who had fought their country's fight and lived to tell the story, public sympathy has been appealed to in a hundred ways for the maimed or wounded soldier, unfitted by the accident of battle to renew his labors. Whatever shape these appeals have taken, they have always been warmly received. Very many of those whose wounds did not unfit them for light labor, whose records were good ones, and who were able to read and write, were employed by our merchants as light porters and the like; the disposition everywhere, where employment of this kind was to be given, being clearly to give the soldier the preference. So far as it went this worked well, but it only reached a tithe of those with equal claims on the popular sympathy.

The feasibility of affording remunerative employment to a large number as messengers throughout the City was soon canvassed, and several projects set on foot with a view to organize reliable messenger-corps. Each of these seems to have failed in securing public confidence, the essential element to its success, and but few of the institutions, so called, lived a year. Those who could have secured the successful working of an organization of this kind, having business ability and position in the community as their philanthropy cooled off, lent the management to other and less disinterested hands, who killed the projects, as fungi kill young trees, by tapping their vitality. Then again there were two or three other institutions who were honest enough to ask no credit for philanthropy at all, but who went into the thing to make the most of it—for themselves. One of this class eighteen months ago, had its headquarters at No. 4 New Chambers-street. Here employment and a red cap were given to all who sought them and brought two sureties along, who bound themselves in \$15 for the honesty of the employee. Each evening the veteran made a return of his earnings for the day, which amount was placed to his credit, and at the end of the month he received the aggregate returns, less *twenty-five per cent.*, the modest commission of his employers.

The tariff of prices was one cent per block, not too much for very short distances, but as may be easily estimated, a most exorbitant charge for long ones. In spite of the overcharge, however, such was the public desire to help the one-armed soldier, the affair worked well enough for a while to support half a dozen gentlemen in dignified idleness in the office in New Chambers-street. But their mode of doing business soon got wind, the public confidence and support died out, and the red caps gradually disappeared. Possibly had this Company adopted a reasonable tariff and contented themselves with a fair commission, they would eventually have wormed themselves into stability. But anxious to do too well for themselves, from the outset, they over-estimated public sympathy and support in their charges, as they did its appreciation of the unselfish commission of the 25 per cent.

The red caps, however, have not altogether disappeared. Without an organized head, many of them continued to haunt the best paying localities, and none of them, as far as we have heard, have at any time abused the trust the confiding public continues to place in them. They of course do business solely on their own account, and are unsecured in any way beyond the honorable discharge they carry in their pockets, the wounds they bear, or the guarantee given by the empty sleeve.

SOLDIERS' BUSINESS MESSENGER AND DESPATCH COMPANY.

At last there seems to be a fair promise that we shall have an institution which will at the same time give employment to the maimed soldiers of our City, and prove itself of value to citizens, without pressing heavily, if at all, upon their charity. A company with the above title obtained its charter of the Legislature on the 15th of April last, and therein pledges itself to furnish employment, so far as practicable, to worthy disabled soldiers and orphan sons of soldiers who lost their lives or became disabled while serving in the volunteer army of the United States, in regiments raised in and accredited to the State of New-York; and to provide this employment they have established a Bureau and are now perfecting the organization, which will enable them to receive and deliver property, packages and messages in any manner, within the territory known as the Metropolitan Police District, and to take and hold any package, bundle or substance entrusted them, to be delivered at a time and place to be designated; and to receive and deliver messages by sealed envelope, magnetic telegraph or otherwise.

The President of the Company is Major-Gen. ALEXANDER SHALES, President of the Fire Commissioners; its Vice-President, Major-Gen. HENRY A. BAILEY; its Treasurer, Brig.-Gen. J. HENRY LIEBENAU, and its Secretary, Col. S. TRUEDELL. The Board of Directors is composed of gentlemen of equally high standing.

Thus, to begin with, there is every possible guarantee of good faith to the public and to the soldier in the irreproachable names at the head of affairs; while the General Manager, Col. S. W. WILSON, already exhibits that tact, energy and knowledge of discipline which are necessary elements in the success of all comprehensive projects.

The headquarters of the new company are at No. 2 Park-place. What it proposes to do is set out above, and at first glance it would seem that to properly organize a corps of messengers to fulfill all promises guaranteed in that proposition would be no difficult affair. This was the error clearly made by one organization which attempted the scheme, with purely philanthropic purposes, before. To set on foot an organization to carry messages throughout the City is not a trifling matter, but one that demands at the very outset a large expenditure of money and care in its outlay, and to sustain it the sole attention of competent and experienced managers, and it must be a paying affair to all concerned in it, if it is to continue to exist. This new company proposes to place, at certain points, in certain districts, into which they will divide this City and Brooklyn, booths to the number of 300. Each of these will be used as an advertising medium, and as a shop for the sale of newspapers, magazines, stationery, cutlery and the like. In each will be placed a maimed soldier as custodian and salesman, with the rank of corporal, preference being given to those who are unable to do messenger duty. These booths will be depots for the reception of parcels, letters or other messages. Between these the messengers will pass as they patrol their district, taking up the messages or packages *en route*, where their receipt has been duly recorded beforehand by the Corporal in charge. When a patrolman who is on his way from booth to booth is stopped by a citizen and receives a message to deliver on his route, he will report its nature at his first stopping place, where the record will be made. If the delivery is not in his direction he will leave it there, to be given to its proper carrier, and so on. As messengers in this way will constantly patrol their district, they will always be in reach of citizens who require their services, and who may wish to save themselves walking to the nearest booth. With three hundred booths throughout the Metropolitan District, and a sufficient number of men constantly patrolling every portion of the City, the Company claims that it will do good service to the City, give employment to those best deserving it, and establish an institution which will long survive its projectors. This carrying of parcels and messages is not all. Special wagons are to be used upon the railroad tracks, to run hourly or semi-hourly, as it may be found desirable. These will carry heavy packages, grocers' supplies, and the like, to the extreme end of the island or to intermediate points, and telegraphic wires will be laid, so that messages may be sent in this way from certain points designated to any other within the district. Arrangements have been or are about being made with a telegraph company to use their poles throughout the City to this end.

Thus it will be seen that the plan of the Company is comprehensive enough, and if carried out, as we hope it will be, in spirit and in letter, it cannot fail in securing a paying public patronage. Now the question naturally arises at what rate is the public to pay for this service, and the answer is given in a "message, package and freight tariff" just published and

now before us. We learn that a message or telegram will be delivered ten blocks distant for 10 cents; 15, 12 cents; 20, 15 cents; 25, 17 cents; 30, 20 cents; 35, 22 cents; 40, 24 cents; 45 to 140 blocks, 25 cents. Packages under 5 pounds, ten blocks distant for 12 cents; 140 blocks 35 cents, and the intermediate distances at proportionate rates. So on with packages, bundles or boxes, a gradual increase of tariff with weight until they reach 75 to 100 pounds; this will be carried 10 blocks for 30 cents; 140 blocks for 62 cents, and intermediate distances in proportion. Ferry crossings will be rated as ten blocks each. This tariff is much below the rates charged by the deceased organization.

No doubt it must be several months before a plan so comprehensive can be, in all its parts, a successful operation; enough is being done, however, at this moment to show that all concerned in the project are in earnest. Booths are now standing in Abingdon-square, Jackson-square, corner of East Broadway and Grand-street, corner of Hester and Division, corner of Houston and Second streets, and one in Park-place, opposite the Headquarters, and twenty-six others will be placed this week. Applications are upon the books of 3,500 soldiers with their war record duly set forth. Already a number of men are handsomely uniformed, true military style, with blue caps and red band, bearing the letters S. B. M. and D. Co., and the number of the messenger. Each man in addition carries a shield suspended from a broad band of tri-color ribbon. This also bears his number and its design is copyrighted, so that it cannot be used by unauthorized persons without subjecting them to the penalty of the law provided for such misrepresentation—as in the case of the Constabulary. Rigid discipline is to be preserved throughout, the men being held to a strict accountability for their time as well as for the property intrusted to them, thus securing the rapidity of delivery, next important, in preserving public confidence and satisfaction, to honesty in the messenger. In the meantime, while the affair is being organized, the messengers now employed are paid \$35 per month, and the corporals at the booths are allowed the profits of their sales there, and should these not reach the \$35, that sum will be made up to them. This, however, is not the fixed rate of wages, but a temporary rate during organization.

Ten new booths were to be placed yesterday. Permission has been obtained to place these depots at all steamboat landings, railroad depots, and at all the principal hotels; and in placing them there or elsewhere, the Company disclaims having any desire whatever to interfere with the rights of citizens, or that they shall be obstacles in the way of pedestrians, the desire being the institution of a great public convenience, not a nuisance.

We shall watch with interest the development of the plans of this institution, and hope to see it realize its promise to the full in giving to New-York a messenger and dispatch system rapid and punctual in its labors, an honest worker in all directions, and a field of respectable and fairly remunerative labor for the disabled soldiers of our City.