

How the Boy Won: General McArthur's First Victory

By Major J. A. Watrous, U. S. A.

ENLIST him, Captain. Sure there is the making of a second Lieutenant-General Winfield Scott in the lad."

Big Harry Dunn, of our company, who made the remark, was known for his wit and keen sarcasm, and as he spoke a dozen soldiers who had seen the pale-faced boy, long, lean and slim, as he walked by the side of the Captain, earnestly begging to go to the war in his company, laughed loudly at Private Dunn's outburst. I didn't laugh, probably because I had heard the boy's earnest appeal to the Captain, and also, probably, because I saw a tear on his cheek when the Captain said: "No, my boy; you are not old and strong enough for a soldier in my company."

"Then you will not take me?"

"No; you would not last a month."

It was at this point that Harry Dunn made his sarcastic remark.

The incident occurred when the Sixth—the blessed old Sixth—was making its last parade in Milwaukee before boarding the train for Washington, in July, 1861, the week after the disaster at Bull Run.

That schoolboy, a stripling under sixteen, undismayed by our Captain, slipped to the side of each company commander and besought him for a place in his ranks. The other nine replies were enough like the first to make the boy leave the station, crying. As he passed Company B, Captain Dill called to him with a word of encouragement, saying, among other things, "You would better be a scholar than a soldier, anyway."

"I propose to be both, sir," was the quick reply.

Other regiments that passed through the city that year imitated the Sixth in its lack of encouragement to the spindling schoolboy, and though he made many visits to the recruiting office, he was each time turned away as poor material for a soldier.

The great war had been in progress over a year when the boy and his father had a long talk about the lad's enlisting.

"My son," said the Judge, "you are too young, and not strong enough, for a soldier. Besides, I want you to get an education and adopt my profession, the law."

"Please do not refuse me," pleaded the boy. "I must go. I have wanted to go so badly ever since the war began that I have made a failure in school, and I cannot fix my mind on studies while others are going to fight for the country. Lots of my friends are going in the Twenty-fourth, and some of them are no older nor stronger than I am. I wish you knew how my heart is set on becoming a soldier. I simply can't give up the idea."

"But suppose I refuse to give my consent? Would you try to run away and enlist, as you did last year?"

"Don't make me run away, father. Let me join the Twenty-fourth."

"Wait two or three days."

"Then may I go?"

"Wait."

"He is determined to go and I shall surrender," said the Judge to himself.

The next morning the Judge left for Madison, returning that night. He went out to see the Governor.

"Certainly, Judge," said Governor Salomon. "By the way, how old is your son?"

planned to be a private to begin with. He understood enough about military matters to know that the Adjutant of a regiment was an important officer.

"Well, I'll do my best; and if I fail, why, I can go in the ranks, and that is all I have wanted."

The next day he reported to the pompous Colonel as his Adjutant.

"You are too young, sir—far too young for so responsible a position. I shall ask the Governor to give me a *man* for Adjutant of this regiment—a qualified man, sir."

The pompous Colonel put a hot telegram over the wire an hour later, and in another hour the Governor returned his answer. It consisted of two words: "Try him."

Before night the boy took the oath and was a full-fledged Adjutant.

"Oh, yes, I'll try him," said the Colonel, as he directed an orderly to request the Adjutant to call at his tent.

When the youthful officer reported to his commander, the Colonel, with a frown and a voice harsher than usual, addressed him thus:

"Adjutant, this regiment will have a dress parade—its first—next Saturday evening. Get your uniform and be ready to officiate."

That was Tuesday—not much time in which to have a uniform made. But by much urging and an extra price the outfit was ready, and so were the sword and sash. In the meantime the boy Adjutant burned more than midnight oil in looking up and studying the duties of his office. By Saturday morning he was sure of his footing in all respects save one. His voice—well, it was like all boys' voices at a certain stage—a good mate for that of the young rooster at its first crowing.

The Twenty-fourth was formed for its initial dress parade. Fifteen thousand people were present to witness the event. At the proper time the Adjutant stepped to the front and faced to the left. His "Attention, Battalion!" was heard about three companies down the line, and "Shoulder, arms!" no greater distance, but the companies which could not hear did as those which heard and brought their pieces to a shoulder. "Prepare to open ranks, to the rear; open order, march!" was squeakier than the others, but the Twenty-fourth got around to execute the order in its own chosen time and way. When the command "Front!" was given, and the stripling, with long strides, his sword more on his shoulder than at his side, had forged to the centre, made a bad half circle to the right and advanced toward the Colonel until it was time to stop and about face—in doing which he nearly tripped by tangling his legs with his scabbard—the officers and men of the regiment who were not too mad to do so were laughing. After the First Sergeants had been called to the "Front and Centre," had reported and to their "Posts, marched," and the regiment was brought to a "Present," the poor fellow had to pass through another ordeal—to about face, salute the Colonel and report the parade formed, and then pass around that officer and take his place to his left and rear. While the Adjutant was making this movement the Colonel, with a contemptuous look, followed the boy, and was so noticeably disgusted that the whole regiment was aware of the fact.

"Not yet seventeen."
"Rather young, but so were Alexander Hamilton and Napoleon when they received their first commission."

At the breakfast table the following morning the Judge handed a large envelope to his son.

Seeing his father's name on the envelope and that he was addressed as Adjutant, the boy enthusiastically exclaimed: "Now I know you will let me go, for as Adjutant you can look after me."

"But I am not to be Adjutant of the Twenty-fourth, child; can't you see the 'Jr.' after the name?"

The boy's appetite was gone when it finally dawned upon him that his greatest desire was to be gratified—that he was to become a soldier. But his face soon sobered after reading the commission as First Lieutenant and Adjutant. He had only

That first dress parade was not by any means a success, and when it was dismissed the Colonel took pains to let his officers know that he was going to demand of the Governor the appointment of a grown man for Adjutant in place of that "white-faced, chicken-voiced boy."

The Adjutant's heart was well-nigh broken that night when he sought rest. Immediately after dress parade he had heard many of the officers make uncomplimentary remarks touching his chicken-voice and awkward appearance. As if that was not enough, he strolled through the company streets after dark. In nearly every tent he heard the men talking about the Adjutant, and in nearly every tent there was one or more who tried to imitate his dress-parade commands. From every street came such commands as these, in the most boyish voices possible: "First Sergeants to the front and

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centre, march!" "Present, arms!" followed by cat-calls and remarks like these: "Who's got a baby Adjutant?" "The Twenty-fourth Milwaukee." "Colonel Larrabee has bought a new milch cow." "What for?" "For the nurse who will have charge of our Adjutant."

Kindly old Captain B., who knew of the Adjutant's efforts to get into the service, and was full of sympathy for him, saw him wandering through the streets with head bowed and sighs that told of mental distress, approached him and told him not to mind what he had seen and heard, but to go right on doing the very best he could, and in time those who made fun of him would praise and applaud instead.

It is quite safe to say that no would-be soldier ever had a harder struggle to enlist than the little Adjutant. I have endeavored to make plain a few of the obstacles he encountered and how heroically he tried to overcome them. I particularly want the reader to keep in mind the young fellow's many struggles to enlist, for they will look well with what follows.

Twenty-fourth. No place of danger was too perilous for him to ride to. His bravery was so conspicuous that he attracted the attention of both brigade and division commander. After that battle every soldier in the Twenty-fourth was the boy Adjutant's sworn friend, admirer and defender.

At Missionary Ridge the color-bearer of the Twenty-fourth fell. The Adjutant was bending over him in an instant. Picking up the flag, he sprang to the front of the line and shouted: "Now for their line of works, boys!" With a yell the Twenty-fourth made a new rush, but they couldn't outsprint the Adjutant, who was the first man on the works, and as he waved Old Glory a mighty shout went up on the right and left. Both officers and men hugged the boy Adjutant after the battle, and I do not blame them.

A few weeks after that famous battle the Twenty-fourth was to have a new Major. The rank and file wanted their boy Adjutant, and so did many of the officers. Phil Sheridan, in whose division the Twenty-fourth had often fought, asked that the Adjutant be made Major, and it was done.



DRAWN BY WILL CRAWFORD

Picking up the flag, he sprang to the front of the line and shouted: "Now for their line of works, boys!"

The Twenty-fourth had no more dress parades in Milwaukee. It was soon hurried to the front to assist in preventing General Braxton Bragg and his large army of Confederates from sweeping into Louisville and invading the North. Within two or three weeks the big regiment of poorly drilled men was marched headlong into the battle of Perryville, Kentucky. It was halted in a hollow. From the front came shell, shot and bullets which made terrible music for a new regiment. The officers could not tell how much of a force there was in their front, or how far away it was. The boy Adjutant heard the Colonel say he would give a horse to know just what was coming at his command. Without waiting for an order, the little fellow put spurs to his horse, and in a minute was on the brow of the hill, coolly taking in the situation and drawing a furious fire from the enemy he saw in large force rapidly advancing. ~~He~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~Colonel~~, he reported and suggested that the Twenty-fourth quickly advance to the hill from whence he had come so as to have a chance to strike back, instead of remaining in that hollow to be cut to pieces, with little opportunity to harm the enemy. The suggestion was heeded, and the regiment had a prominent part in checking the Confederate advance. When the brigade commander thanked the Colonel that night for his command's good work, old Captain B. nudged the boy Adjutant and gently said: "I'll see that the General hears who it was that opened the way for the regiment to win praise. Keep on, my boy; you are on the up grade. The officers who sneered at you back in Wisconsin are already ashamed of themselves."

At Stone River, the last day of 1862 and the first day of 1863, the Adjutant proved to be a real hero, an inspiration to the men, and of great assistance to the officers of the

The gold leaves of a Major looked odd on the shoulders of the beardless boy, just turned eighteen, but they were not misplaced. During most of the following year the young Major commanded the Twenty-fourth, and none of Sherman's regiments did better work from Chattanooga to Atlanta, and surely none of General Thomas' regiments fought more heroically at Franklin and Nashville.

When the Twenty-fourth went back to Wisconsin, after the war, it was commanded by the youngest Colonel on either side of the great struggle.

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Later, when the young Colonel, not yet a voter, was mustered out, he exchanged the eagles on his shoulders for the straps of a Second Lieutenant in the Regular Army, and not long after that was a Captain. When the new war came he was a Lieutenant Colonel on the staff, but in June, 1898, he went to San Francisco with a silver star on each shoulder, to take command of a brigade on the way to the Philippines. It was his brigade that first scaled the walls of Manila the following August. The succeeding week I read the name of the boy Adjutant of the long ago in the list of newly appointed Major-Generals. Ever since then he has been conspicuous for his good service in subduing the insurgents. No one has done better.

Now please recall the sarcastic remark of Big Harry Dunn when the Sixth was marching through Milwaukee, in July, 1861.

If Big Harry Dunn will come a little closer I will whisper in his ear something like this: "You were right, Harry; there *was* the making of a second Lieutenant-General Winfield Scott in that lad; in a few months he will be a Brigadier-General in the Regular Army, and not so very long after that two Regular stars will shine on the shoulders of General Arthur McArthur.