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CUSTOMS OF THE SERVICE,

A PAPER

READ BEFORE THE OFFICERS OF THE BRIGADE
RHODE ISLAND MILITIA, DEC. 5. 1887.

BY

FRANK A. COOK,

CAPTAIN COMD'G Co. A, 1ST REG. INFANTRY R. I. M., LATE SECOND LIEUT.
4TH CAV., U. S. A.

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CUSTOMS OF THE SERVICE.

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The phrase "Customs of the Service" has a technical meaning. It refers to those military customs which, from long usage in the regular service, have become unwritten laws. Being unwritten, these laws are little known by militia officers or men. In this article I have not strictly confined myself to these unwritten laws, but have touched upon certain written laws that are also little known in the militia.

The most important of all military duties are those of sentinels, and they are the least understood by militiamen, simply because there is no written authority by which to be guided in every case. In the absence of written authority, familiarity with Customs of the Service is necessary. The following principles for the guidance of sentinels have been gathered partly from Army Regulations, partly from orders in force at West Point, and partly from Customs.

A sentinel should carry his piece either at a support, a right shoulder, or a corresponding position on the left shoulder, except in rainy weather when he may and should carry his piece at a secure, unless occupying a sentry-box. While in a sentry-box his piece is habitually at an order. Having reached the end of his post, instead of halting and facing about, a sentinel should execute "to the rear." As a rule he should not halt on his post except to call or to salute.

His orders for saluting should be as follows: That from the discharge of the morning gun to the discharge of the evening gun, he salutes all those entitled to the compliment that cross his post or pass within saluting distance in front of him. To officers passing within saluting distance in rear of him, he should simply stand at attention and not salute. These rules are laid down in Army Regulations; but as saluting distance is not defined,

various interpretations of it are liable to be made. The words are explained in orders from West Point as being the distance at which individuals and the insignia of rank can be readily recognized; and this distance should not be less than thirty paces. As soon then as an officer arrives within saluting distance of a sentinel, the latter should stand at attention no matter from what direction the officer approaches. Should the officer cross the post, the "present arms" or "sergeants' salute" should be given just before he crosses. If he approach along the post, or in front of it and parallel to it, he should be saluted when about six paces from the sentinel's flank.

If a sergeant's salute be given, there should be a pause after the first motion, and the salute should not be terminated until it is acknowledged. If the salute be a present, the sentinel should come to a carry as soon as the salute is acknowledged; and in either case after the salute is returned the sentinel should stand at attention as long as the officer is on or near his post.

Whenever a sentinel stands at attention he should face outward, thus paying a delicate compliment to the officer saluted by turning his back on the property guarded.

When calling for any purpose, or while holding communication with any person, except when challenging, a sentinel stands with his piece at "arms port;" from that position he can readily come to "charge bayonets," or to an aim. Of course in case of emergency he need not execute the manual as prescribed in tactics.

As to the kind of salute to be given:

The following are entitled to "present arms:" All officers above the rank of captain, the commanding officer of the camp, the officer of the day, the national and regimental colors, armed parties commanded by an officer, and the remains of a deceased officer or soldier.

All officers below the rank of major and the officer of the guard are entitled to a sergeant's salute.

A sentinel stands at attention to an armed party commanded by a non-commissioned officer.

A sentinel in a sentry-box salutes by bringing his left hand briskly to his piece as high as the right shoulder.

Officers in civilian dress are saluted as when in uniform.

A sentinel in communication with an officer should not interrupt his communication for the purpose of saluting a junior officer, unless directed to do so by the senior.

All guards turn out under arms when armed parties approach the guard-house or guard-tents, and to parties commanded by officers they present arms. It is the duty of the sentinel on No. 1, when an armed party approaches, to come to "arms port" and call out: "Turn out the Guard, a body of armed men."

Also when the Officer of the Day, or the Commanding Officer of the Camp approaches, No. 1 should face towards the approaching officer, come to "arms port" and call: "Turn out the Guard, the Officer of the Day," or "the Brigadier-General (or other officer) commanding." Should either of these officers not desire to inspect the guard he should touch or raise his hat, and the sentinel should then call, "Never mind the Guard."

The above salutes and compliments are given only between reveillé and retreat. From retreat until taps, sentinels stand at attention to all officers but do not salute, and the Guard is not turned out.

From taps until broad daylight a sentinel challenges. He uses the words, "Who comes there?" "Who goes there?" or "Who stands there?" as the case may be, and on receiving a reply to the challenge he should do one of three things, viz., advance them with the countersign, advance them for recognition, or halt them and call for the corporal of the guard.

The sentinel's piece should remain at "charge bayonets" from the time of challenging until the countersign is given. He should require the countersign to be given at the point of the bayonet.

The commander of the camp, the officer of the day and the officers and non-commissioned officers of the guard are entitled to the countersign. If then the reply to a sentinel's challenge indicate any one of these, the sentinel calls, "Advance Officer of the Day (or otherwise as the case may be) with the countersign." If the countersign be correctly given the sentinel simply answers, "Advance Officer of the Day." It is not the custom in the service for the sentinel to say, "The countersign is right (or correct), advance Officer of the Day." The first sentence, being entirely unnecessary, is not used except in one case to be mentioned farther on.

The following formulæ for advancing should be used, word for word:

"Who comes there?" "Friend with the countersign." "Advance, friend, with the countersign." "Advance, friend."

"Grand Rounds." "Halt, Grand Rounds! Advance, sergeant, with the countersign." "Advance, Rounds."

"Relief." "Halt, Relief! Advance, corporal, with the countersign." "Advance, Relief."

"Patrol." "Halt, Patrol! Advance, non-commissioned officer, with the countersign." "Advance, Patrol."

"Friend." "Halt, friend, corporal of the guard, No. 2" (or whatever may be the number of the post.) Similarly, if any person not officially entrusted with the countersign answer a challenge, he should be halted and the corporal of the guard called, the sentinel remaining at "charge bayonets" until after he has advanced the corporal of the guard. The latter should answer all calls as promptly as possible. Sentinels should repeat all calls from posts more distant from the guard than their own.

A sentinel should require all mounted parties to dismount after receiving their reply to his challenge. He should permit no mounted person to approach to give the countersign. For instance, "Who comes there?" "Detachment of cavalry." "Halt, detachment! Commanding officer dismount the detachment and advance with the countersign." "Advance, detachment."

Sentinels should not permit more than one person to approach until the countersign has been correctly given. If the answer to a challenge indicate two or more persons of different rank who are together, the senior should be halted and the junior advanced, the principle being that the junior should be required to do the work of establishing the identity of the party.

Example: "Who comes there?" "Officer of the Day and Corporal of the Guard." "Halt, Officer of the Day, advance, Corporal of the Guard, with the countersign." "Advance, Officer of the Day and Corporal of the Guard."

If several persons simultaneously approach from different directions they should be challenged and halted in succession. The answers will determine which person is to be advanced first, the principle being that a senior should not be kept waiting for a junior, nor an officer or non-commissioned officer on duty be kept waiting for a person not on duty.

Example: "Who comes there?" "Officer of the Day." "Halt, Officer of the Day!" "Who goes there?" "Corporal of the Guard." "Halt, Corporal of the Guard!" "Advance, Officer of the Day, with the countersign." "Advance, Officer of the Day."

Example 2: "Who comes there?" "Corporal of the Guard."

"Halt, Corporal of the Guard!" "Who stands there?" "Friend with the countersign." "Halt, friend!" "Advance, Corporal of the Guard, with the countersign." "Advance, Corporal of the Guard."

The senior having been advanced and being in communication with a sentinel, the other persons should be advanced in succession after the senior has left.

If a sentinel be in communication with any person he will nevertheless challenge anyone approaching. If the answer indicate a person senior to the one already on his post, he will be advanced at once. If junior, he will be halted.

If the answer indicate a person officially entrusted with the countersign in company with others who are not, the formula is as follows: "Who comes there?" "Officer of the Day and friends." "Halt, friends! Advance, Officer of the Day, with the countersign." "Advance, Officer of the Day and friends."

These rules for advancing do not apply to the sentinel on No. 1. He is not given the countersign. He challenges the same as other sentinels, but on receiving a reply to the challenge, he halts the person and calls for the corporal of the guard. This rule holds in all cases but one, which will be mentioned subsequently. No. 1's formula for advancing is, then, as follows: "Who comes there?" "Relief." "Halt, Relief! Corporal of the Guard, Relief." The corporal approaches at "charge bayonets" to within a few paces of the person challenged, and he then advances the person as a sentinel would, except in case of the Officer of the Day or other person entitled to inspect the guard.

In these exceptional cases the corporal after receiving the countersign calls out, "Turn out the Guard." The guard falls in promptly, and when formed, facing to the front and at a carry, the commander calls, "Advance, Officer of the Day" (or whatever officer it may be.) The Officer of the Guard meets him half way and demands the parole before allowing the guard to be inspected.

The parole is a different word from the countersign, and is known only by the Officer of the Guard and persons authorized to inspect the guard.

The exception referred to above is in case of Grand Rounds. If that be the reply to a challenge, No. 1 calls, "Halt, Grand Rounds! Turn out the guard, Grand Rounds." The guard being formed, the Officer of the Guard sends a non-commissioned

officer and two privates to advance the rounds. The non-commissioned officer challenges, "Who stands there?" And on receiving the reply Grand Rounds, he calls, "Advance, sergeant, with the countersign," and having received it, the non-commissioned officer calls to the Officer of the Guard, "The countersign is right;" and the Officer of the Guard then calls, "Advance Rounds." The officer of the rounds advances alone, and is met half way by the Officer of the Guard who demands the parole. The parole should be demanded also of any other officer authorized to inspect the guard.

This concludes the subject of sentinels' salutes and challenges.

We will next consider the subject of salutes in general, an important subject and one to which but little attention is paid in the militia. A salute is a mark of courtesy to a military superior. Respect and courtesy to superiors should not be confined to obedience on duty, but should be extended on all occasions, no matter what may be the social position of two military men, or what degree of intimacy may exist between them.

The principles of saluting are laid down in Army Regulations and in Tactics. There are, however, a few modifications of these principles that are sanctioned by customs, and there are also some articles not clearly explained,

All officers salute each other, the junior making the first salute.

All officers are saluted by non-commissioned officers and privates, and the salute should always be returned.

Non-commissioned officers and privates do not exchange salutes, with the single exception that at guard-mounting the sergeant-major is saluted by the sergeants marching on details.

National and regimental colors are always saluted. The sentinel on the color-line should enforce this custom, requiring all who cross his post to salute the colors.

Salutes should be given within the distance at which personal acquaintance would be recognized, and this distance should not be considered less than fifty paces.

Regulations are not exact as to the time the salute should be given. Convenience and courtesy, however, require the salute to be commenced and completed within easy view of the officer saluted. If the parties meet the salute should be begun at not less than five paces distance; if they cross each other's path the junior should begin the salute at not less than five paces from the line of approach of the senior.

Officers with sword drawn salute with the sword; otherwise

with the hand: in either case according to tactics. It should be remembered that the first position of a salute with the sword is with the sword in a *vertical* position, the hand at the height of the chin, and six inches in front of it. If an officer salute carelessly, a soldier will do the same; and a careless salute from a soldier is no more a mark of courtesy than no salute at all.

A non-commissioned officer armed with a sword salutes with the sword if drawn, otherwise with the hand.

A non-commissioned officer or soldier armed with a musket gives a sergeant's salute. If unarmed he salutes with the hand, using the one farthest from the officer.

A non-commissioned officer or private in command of a detachment without arms salutes all officers with the hand. If the detachment be armed, the one in command gives a sergeant's salute.

Soldiers in ranks should never salute. All the necessary saluting is done by the one in command. Whenever he salutes, his men should be at attention. If armed, their pieces should be brought to a carry.

No salutes are rendered when marching in double time. The commands "Quick time, March," and "Carry Arms" should first be given.

On the same principle a soldier should never run by an officer. On approaching an officer he should come down to quick time and salute.

Officers, non-commissioned officers and privates if unarmed, or with sword in scabbard, salute the colors by removing the hat. Otherwise they salute with the sword or musket, as prescribed for saluting officers.

A mounted soldier in passing an officer salutes with the sabre, if drawn; otherwise with the hand. If the officer is not mounted the soldier dismounts and salutes before addressing him, but does not dismount to simply salute him.

An officer mounted also dismounts before addressing a superior not mounted.

Juniors always salute seniors before addressing them; and they salute again after receiving a reply.

A non-commissioned officer or soldier being seated and without particular occupation, rises on the approach of an officer, stands at attention facing towards the officer and salutes. He should also button his coat upon the approach of an officer, and always before addressing an officer he should see that his own coat is

buttoned throughout. If actually at work, a soldier need not stop his work and salute.

Officers in citizens' dress are saluted as when in uniform.

When several officers in company are saluted, all those that are entitled to the salute return it.

Salutes are never given when the head is uncovered. Juniors simply stand at attention to seniors.

When in-doors, unarmed, salutes are not exchanged. Juniors uncover and stand at attention to seniors.

On official occasions in-doors, officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers when under arms do not uncover but salute as when out-of-doors. This article of tactics does not forbid a man's removing his hat to acknowledge a lady's bow. Neither would he be expected to keep his hat on if partaking of refreshment at a table. The hat should also always be removed in the presence of death and while taking an oath, or during prayers. At any other time during official occasions in-doors the head is not uncovered.

When out-of-doors in full dress, the same rule and exceptions hold. But the hat is removed by certain officers during certain ceremonies, as specially prescribed in tactics.

This concludes the subject of saluting.

We will next run through the tactics, and mention some of the customs in connection with tactics, not generally known in the militia, and refer also to certain customs of the militia not authorized by tactics nor by anything else whatsoever.

In the beginning of tactics is the sentence: The command of execution is pronounced in a tone firm and brief. Militia officers follow strictly the words of the tactics. Regular officers make exception of the "attention." In the militia it is pronounced "ten-shun!"—brief, as prescribed. The regulars say "atten-sho-o-o-n!"—long drawn out. The militia way will do very well in-doors, or for a small squad out-of-doors. But how is the adjutant of an eight-company regiment to make himself heard on the left of the line if he says "ten-shun!"? But if the last syllable be pronounced with a long "o" it can be heard a long distance. Therefore, as it is better suited for commands, and as it is so used in the regular service, the long "o" should be adopted in the militia.

For the same reasons the word "oblique" should be pronounced "ob-like," and not "ob-leek."

Under the school of the soldier: There is no such thing as "left trail arms." There is no command "left shoulder arms," but a sentinel may carry his piece on the left shoulder.

SCHOOL OF THE COMPANY.

It should be remembered that companies of the left wing fall in with the shortest men in front.

At the command "fall in," the file-closers as well as the men fall in facing to the right.

There is no necessity, nor is it customary to give the command, "Attention to roll-call" before calling the roll.

In ordering fours to be counted the command should be "Count fours," and not "From the right, count fours." It is, of course, never proper to count fours from the left.

The 1st sergeant when reporting should see that the pieces are at a carry. The captain returns the salute of the sergeant, but says nothing; the sergeant, after reporting, takes his post without command. The captain draws sword before giving any command to the company. In general, officers armed draw swords before giving any commands.

In drilling his company, a captain should be brisk in all his movements, and should give his commands promptly. He should keep the men constantly at work, giving commands for a new movement as soon as one is completed. If necessary to explain a movement or points in the manual, it should be done if possible while the men are marching, in order to utilize every minute allowed for the drill. If anything is explained at a halt, the men's pieces should be at an order if the explanation is long. The men should never be required to hold their pieces at a carry for a long time.

Captains should be especially prompt in giving the commands for dressing. Much time is wasted at battalion drills by the slowness of captains in giving the command "front." They should not wait until a perfect alignment is made, but should command "front" when most of the men are aligned, and afterwards direct such as may be out of dress to move up or back. It is surprising how much time is saved by following this tactical rule.

The command "To the rear, March" in column of fours is not authorized by tactics nor custom. In fact the Lieutenant-General decided in 1883 that the movement should not be executed.

There is no such command or movement as "Right forward, twos right." Though convenient, it is not authorized.

It is unmilitary for anyone to pass between the file-closers and the company, or between the first sergeant and the company, or between any officer and his command.

The captain should always face his company when giving a command. So should all officers when giving orders to their commands

In forming "on right or left into line," or "right or left front into line," the guide moves in front of the leading four and not in rear of it to place himself on the flank; and while conducting the four his piece is at a "carry."

The captain gives the command, "Dismiss the company," when it is in line at a halt. The first sergeant salutes the captain, takes a step forward, faces to the left, and commands, "Arms port, break ranks, March." It is improper for him to give the command "Right face" before dismissing it. The captain returns the salute of the sergeant. Captains are authorized by custom to dismiss their companies while marching in column of fours by the command, "Trail arms, break ranks, March." This is generally done when the company has been drilled longer than the time allowed.

The supernumeraries of a guard are usually dismissed by the first sergeant in this way.

SKIRMISH DRILL.

The guide of a line of skirmishers inverts his piece.

The same man is right skirmisher when marching to the rear as when marching forward.

Deployments forward are always made on number four of the front rank, whether intervals are taken from the right four, the left four, or the center four.

An interval is the space between two men in line. Distance, between two men in column. This distinction is made throughout tactics.

While on the skirmish line, pieces are habitually at an order. It is not necessary to order "carry arms" before putting the line in motion, for the pieces are carried at will.

SCHOOL OF THE BATTALION.

The adjutant of a battalion, or regiment, should be carefully selected. In *all* respects he should be a military man as his

position is ornamental as well as important. The ideal adjutant is of fine physique, well set-up, military and brisk in all his movements, possessed of a powerful voice, and thoroughly conversant with all his duties. If much deficient in any one of these qualities, an adjutant should be requested to resign.

A battalion should always be equalized for battalion drills and for reviews. It should not be equalized for dress parade, nor for inspection. In equalizing the battalion, after the officers and guides have moved to the front and center, the adjutant assigns them to companies as follows: Beginning on the right of the line of officers, he points with his sword to each officer in succession, moving rapidly along the line. He should say, "Captains 1st, 8th, 4th, 5th, 2d, 7th, 3d, 6th. 1st Lieutenants, 1st, 8th, etc. 2d Lieutenants, 1st, 8th, etc. He should then pass in rear of the line of officers to the right of the guides and assign them in the same manner. Right guides, 1st, 8th, etc. Left guides, 1st, 8th, etc., and then passing in rear of the guides, he should take his place in front from the right.

In "rear open order" the left guide and left file-closer of a battalion invert their pieces but remain facing to the front. They resume the carry at the command "front"

In a general alignment guides do not invert their pieces.

It is a custom of the service for first sergeants to execute the about face prescribed for officers.

DRESS PARADE OF A BATTALION.

In ordering the battalion to parade rest, the adjutant uses the words: "First captain, bring his company to parade rest."

In moving to the front and center for the purpose of presenting the battalion, the adjutant executes "by the right flank" instead of halting, facing to the right, and then moving forward, and this rule holds for all officers making similar movements.

The non-commissioned staff-officers execute "present sword" at the command "arms" and not at the command "present."

When the commanding officer is exercising the battalion in the manual, officers execute only the "order" and "carry."

When the commanding officer orders the adjutant "Receive the reports," no salutes are exchanged.

If the adjutant has written orders to publish, and his sword is provided with the sword-knot, he drops the point of his sword as at "order arms" and lets go the gripe. If his sword is not provided with the knot, he returns his sword before publishing the

orders. While reading the orders his head should be erect. To resume the carry, he should bring his sword to the proper position with a snap, and in one motion. It is quite common for a militia officer to place his sword on his shoulder and slide it from there down to a carry. That looks slovenly.

To march off the companies, the 1st sergeants take posts six yards in front of the centers of their respective companies.

The sergeant-major returns sword when the officers break ranks.

BATTALION INSPECTION.

The adjutant gives the necessary commands for the inspection of the color-guard. After it has been inspected, he brings it to close order, and orders the color-sergeant to march off the colors. He then rejoins the inspector.

GUARD-MOUNTING.

At guard-mounting after the inspection, the officers of the guard after drawing swords come to an order at once. They can then execute "parade rest," the next command.

There is one other custom of the service not generally known in the militia, and with that custom I shall close. A lieutenant is called Mr. So-and-so when orally addressed by an officer or civilian. If spoken to by a non-commissioned officer or private, the military title is used. Or if addressed in writing, lieutenant and not "mister" is the proper title. A lieutenant also writes his proper rank after his name in signing official documents. But socially and when spoken to, or of, by another officer, he is "mister" and not lieutenant.