

Notes of Interview with W.C. Bickford, 2511 K. St. N.W.
Washington, D. C.

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Mr. M. E. Ailes arranges interview at Treasury Department with Mr. Bickford, a messenger of the Department. Mr. Bickford was an Ohio soldier, wounded at Fredericksburg, treated in Washington hospitals and put into the Veteran's Reserve Corps. He first acted as a guard at War Department. While there he used to see Mr. Lincoln going at all hours of the day and night between the White House and the Department. Says that one night while he was on duty Lincoln stopped and asked him if he was not tired of being a soldier. "No," he said, "I don't want to stop soldiering until this cursed rebellion is put down." Said the President, "That's the way I like to hear my boys talk. The President stopped with him some fifteen minutes or more, chatting, asking his name, etc. Mr. Bickford was very much set up by this and told his companions but he found there was not one of the sentries who had not some similar experience to relate. He told of the first time he saw Lincoln; it was in the first year of the war and he was in camp beyond Arlington. He came into town with a message; as he rode by the White House he saw that there was a reception going on and determined to enter with the crowd. He was covered with dust, his trousers in his boot-legs, gauntlets on, but he said "Old Abe" shook my hand as heartily as if I was the biggest man there.

B. was advanced and became a messenger in the War Department, serving Stanton. When the telegram came announcing the fall of Richmond Billy Kettles called, "Bickford, here is the most important message you ever carried. Deliver it to the President at once. B. did not know what was in it but made his way to the President's office. The War Department messengers wore a badge which admitted them anywhere. He laid it before the President, who, looking up, said with a such a smile, "said Mr. Bickford, as I never saw before on his face, "This is glorious!" and he immediately arose and went to the War Department. By the time B. had gotten back the news was out and he

for the first time learned what was in the dispatch. A great crowd gathered in a few minutes about the War Department. Nobody knew how the news spread so rapidly. It was then that Stanton, beside himself with joy, picked up Billy Kettles and holding him out the window to the crowd, said " Here is the young man that received the message."

B. says that there never was a man who was so loved as Lincoln by soldiers. I asked him about Stanton . He declares he was a man of tender heart but forced to be gruff by the demands of his position