

ALBION W. TOURGEE,

Attorney,

AND

U. S. PENSION AGENT.

Raleigh, N. C.,

Jan. 15th 1876.

To the Chairman of the Senate Committee  
on Pensions:

Sir:

I desire to call the attention of Congress to what seems to me a very crying evil in connection with the operation of the pension laws and I know of no more effective method of doing so than by addressing you -

In very many instances where pensions are paid to guardians, for the benefit of minor heirs of soldiers or pensioners the pension so received is regarded both by the guardian and by the Courts of probate to which he is accountable as an irreducible fund of which only the interest can be used for the support, maintenance and education of the wards.

The result of this is that in very many instances where the pension allowed by government for the benefit of minor children under sixteen years of age is amply sufficient to support and educate them fairly and comfortably, the money is held by the guardian and the wards are required to support themselves by their own labor and grow up in absolute ignorance -

This is notably the case in many

2133

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instances upon the Roll of this agency -  
- more especially in cases of the chil-  
dren of colored soldiers - Perhaps, I might  
better show this by an instance -

A. B. - is the guardian of two col-  
ored wards and has been drawing their  
pension from the ages of three and five  
years respectively, at \$8 - per mo. and \$2 - each  
per mo additional - making \$12 - per mo -  
This, until the age of sixteen is reached by  
the intended beneficiaries would amount  
to - \$1824. This fund is amply sufficient to main-  
tain and educate the wards well in this sec-  
tion and in their station in life - Instead  
of receiving such support and education  
they get the benefit of the interest only  
which is barely sufficient to pay costs, com-  
missions of guardian and decent clothing.  
Their own labor must procure the other  
necessaries of life and they grow up in  
absolute ignorance to receive at their  
majority a fund which they were then  
almost as incapable <sup>of making</sup> ~~to~~ beneficial  
to them ~~as if they had received it when babes~~ <sup>if it had been paid into their hands</sup>

This <sup>too</sup> is upon the hypothesis that the  
guardianship is thoroughly honest and fair

2133

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The further fact remains to be considered - What if the guardianship is not honest and fair?

The Commissioner can't it is true refuse to allow payment to be made in certain cases and the law imposes a severe penalty for criminal mismanagement. This is all very well but there is no means of knowing how the words are carried out and whether the bounty of the government is well or ~~it~~ <sup>itly</sup> applied - Why not require the guardian to report yearly to the Pension Agent the manner in which he has executed the trust the government imposes on him for the benefit of the wards and require the Pension Agent to report a summary of this to the Commissioner? -

In order to make my proposition tangible I enclose a draft of a bill designed to remedy the evil, I have endeavored <sup>briefly</sup> to set forth - and beg to submit for your consideration also, a copy of a letter addressed <sup>by me</sup> to the Hon. Com. of Pensions, upon the subject and a copy of his answer thereto. <sup>It will be seen by the latter</sup> and frequent occurrence and <sup>not explained by the</sup> ~~belief~~ <sup>belief</sup> that the plan suggested or some similar measure would

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Receive the hearty endorsement of the eminently practical and humane gentleman now occupying that position - I doubt not too that if his mind had been as frequently directed to the evil as has mine by a more direct and immediate relation with the beneficiaries of the nation's bounty, it would have found a place in his annual report -

On behalf of the most worthy - because the most helpless - of the recipients of national aid and favor I presume to ask of your Committee and of the body of which it is a part - the consideration of this evil and the application of such remedy as may be deemed sufficient and effective -

Very respectfully,

Yours Obd Servant  
W. W. Tourgee

Copy of letter addressed to Hon. J. J. Ingalls - Chin. Senate Committee on Pensions

ALBION W. TENNESSEE  
JAN 27 1877  
RALEIGH, N. C.



*[Faint, mostly illegible handwritten text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]*