

Dependent Veterans

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

DEPENDENT VETERANS.

Good Reasons Given Why the President
Should Have Signed the Pension
Bill.

The Arguments of the Stay-at-homes and
Defamers of Soldiers An-
alyzed.

What the Government Owes the Saviors of
the Republic, as Viewed from a Business
Stand-point.

FROM A VETERAN.

THE VETOED BILL.

CHICAGO, Feb. 13.—*To the Editor.*—The President has done the only thing it was possible for him to do consistently with his past record in vetoing what is known as the dependent pension bill. The veto rests on three fundamental ideas: First, that the soldier does not deserve it; second, that the country can not afford it; and, third, that it would be an insult to deserving pensioners, and even an affront to those to whom it is offered.

With regard to the first of these, there is no doubt that the President is entirely sincere, and there is no doubt that he represents in this matter a considerable element of both parties. There is no question that the man who sat quietly at home, pursuing his usual avocations and taking advantage of the opportunities which war and the absence of competitors offered, feels very naturally and almost universally a sense of shame and inferiority. He knows that many of his associates made greater pecuniary sacrifices than he would have been required to in order to fulfil a patriotic duty. He feels a certain chagrin when his grandchildren ask why he was not a soldier in the great conflict. If he is a truly brave and worthy man he tells them the specific duty which kept him from the tented field, or with a flush of manly shame confesses his error and weakness, and enjoins them not to follow his example under like circumstances. Such a man feels perhaps more keenly than any other the obligation of gratitude which the country owes to its defenders. He may feel a sort of envy of their fame, but it is of that noble sort, that

prompt only to emulation and honor, rather than to destruction and derision.

On smaller matters, however, this feeling exercises a directly contrary effect. To such anything favoring of honor, distinction or preference for the soldier, seems an explicit reflection on himself, and this feeling very often overcomes every sentiment of gratitude or recognition he may have felt in the result of the conflict. This feeling is of course exaggerated in the case of those who, like the President, had no interest whatever in the outcome of the struggle. A man who has labored after the most strenuous exertions, has never been able to show that he spoke a word, gave a dollar, did an act, or even breathed a prayer for the success of our armies, or muttered a curse against our enemies, very naturally and reasonably has a poor opinion of our soldiers. To him they were mere mercenaries. Greed for pay and bounty and pensions is what animated them. They are simply "dead-beats," whose only motive was to make money out of the necessities of the government and the distinction of their fellows to do military duty. All he knew of them was as a substitute-broker and a conscript who purchased a substitute rather than go himself.

FEELING OF THE STAY-AT-HOMES.

Such a man feels toward the soldier much as the farmer does toward the cattle and hogs he buys and sells. He does not realize that many of those who went as substitutes did so because the sum thus received was the means of relieving them from obligations which alone had restrained them before. "I would have come long ago, boys," said one whose comrades grieved him about his late arrival in the field, "but there was my mother and two sisters dependent on me, and they could not live on a soldier's wages."

It is easy for men of this stamp to talk about camp-followers, shirks, and the lazy and obese. To their minds the rank and file of the army, at least, was simply a rabble composed of the refuse and outpourings of the country. They are fond of declaring that two-thirds of them were "worthless foreigners who enlisted merely for the money," as a Southern paper not long since plainly stated. It would be the fact, were it that three-fourths were native Americans, and at least one-half the remainder thrifty, intelligent and

precious actualized citizens. To most people the soldier's perfection is necessarily a myth. They never felt it and are unable to conceive of its existence. The soldier is to them simply a man who was hired to kill and to take the chances of being killed. He enlisted either to avoid punishment for crime, to make money, to gain political advantage, or because he was too lazy to work. He was simply a necessary evil. The good citizens of the country hired him and paid him. They promised him a pension if he was wounded and one to his dependents if he was killed. To this they admit him to be entitled by virtue of the contract under which he risked his life. That is all he can claim and all he ought to have.

Because even the fulfillment of these conditions has cost large sums the country is treated to repeated harangues upon the "vicious" "idle" and "cowardly" who seek to get a portion of this bounty through the fraudulent cooperation of their fellow-survivors. It is little wonder that men entertaining these views are willing to impute collusion and perjury to the survivors of the 2,000,000 of soldiers whose chief animating impulse they deem to be a desire to make raids upon the public treasury and pillage of their country's fellow citizens.

No doubt there were unworthy soldiers, cowards, bounty-jumpers and camp-followers. There were also men who entered the service though really unable to stand in privation. There were men who were drunkards, thieves, and perjurers. The President himself is said to have sent a convicted criminal to represent him when the country made a specific call upon him for his individual services. The soldiers were not all idiots, though most of them were no doubt fools. They ought to have foreseen all that has since happened, and have made a better bargain with the country that clamored for their services.

Thus far the country has not only limited its "bounty" as called by the specific terms of the contract, but has made every applicant for a pension a guarantee of his own physical condition at the time of his enlistment, and required him to show against the active opposition of the government, and with its records clearly against his inspection, that he was actually in the line of duty and to have been discharged with honorable credentials for some specific act of service, and that his

own establishment or hospital, and no contribution therefrom.

The government prescribed its own standards concerning the very examination through its own medical officers. It is even today, if an applicant for pension can be shown to have had a predisposition to disease, he is not allowed to share this boasted bounty, no matter how well he may have served, or how greatly such inherited tendency may have been aggravated by exposure and privation, hunger and fatigue, and heroic discharge for nothing, unless there was precedent spontaneity. It is even in case of blood-poisoning and undecided wounds the scientific experts of the Pension Bureau go so far as to put the fault on the poor fellow's constitution or habits, unless and would happen to be traced to the character they prescribe. It is true that this injustice may be nullified by the efforts of the minister or the surgeon in the office and traveling doctor with their heads and hearts moderate who are at leastly more or less hostile to all such applications. It is the positive injustice of these methods of distributing pension which has created a such a general feeling among soldiers for a different one.

THE COUNTRY CAN NOT AFFORD IT.

Added to this loss that no soldier deserves recognition who can not trace his disability to some specific act of service is the sentiment to which the President makes his strongest appeal, to wit, that the country can not afford the expense required by the bill. There has been a good deal of arguing done under the present administration to show how much the soldier has cost the country. A certain vague portion of the force in each department seems to have been kept busy in estimating the cost of the war. The cost of guns and shells, horses and wagons, hospitals and their staffs, tents and transportation, pickets and forage, forage and firewood, pay and clothing, bounties and pensions has all been added up and the accounts have been handed to the country with the following exclamation: "I'll see what these soldiers have done for me." If it were not for the fact that the country will be impoverished by the money expended

This is all in the economical and financial view of the question. It is not in the view of the soldier's right to pension. It is not in the view of the government's obligation to the soldier. It is not in the view of the soldier's right to pension. It is not in the view of the government's obligation to the soldier. It is not in the view of the soldier's right to pension. It is not in the view of the government's obligation to the soldier.

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The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been elected to the office of Justice of the Peace for the year 1900. The names are given in alphabetical order of their surnames. The names of the persons who have been elected to the office of Justice of the Peace for the year 1900 are: [The text in this block is extremely dark and illegible due to the quality of the scan.]

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THE HISTORY OF CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY, NEW YORK
FROM 1792 TO 1892
BY
JAMES W. WELLS
NEW YORK: PUBLISHED BY
J. B. WOODS & COMPANY, 111 NASSAU ST.
1892



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