

OPEN LETTERS.

Union Veterans and their Pensions.

THERE are two national associations, having organized support throughout the North and West, which are engaged in advocating a service pension for every Union survivor of the civil war, and the Grand Army of the Republic, the largest and the strongest society of veterans, has an extensive machinery at work agitating for the support of pension measures both at the polls and at Washington. It is true that this machinery of the Grand Army is not strictly representative, but the State and national conventions of the order, made up of delegates elected annually, are in the habit of discussing and voting upon measures which are expected to be presented to Congress by a committee acting under authority of the whole body.¹ Some of the measures indorsed by the Grand Army in the past have become laws. The Dependent Pension Bill, which was vetoed in 1887, originated in the pension committee representing the National Encampment.

With a view to presenting the pension question as it stands, both as regards the allowances drawn at this time and the additional allowances to be asked for in the near future, I give below an abstract of the provisions already made for survivors of the service, and also the provisions of the bills proposed, and an approximate of the cost of these new measures.

According to the report for 1888 of the Commissioner of Pensions, there were then on the rolls 326,835 survivors of the war of 1861-65, 217,580 of the number receiving allowances not exceeding \$8 a month.² The 109,255 reported as receiving an excess of \$8 a month include nearly all of the officers drawing invalid pensions (some of them are on the roll at a lower rate), and all of the enlisted men having extra disability, such as the loss of limbs, or eyesight, or hearing, or the equivalent. Out of the 217,580 reported at \$8 or less, there are 32,007 at \$2 or less, 103,556 at \$4 or less, and 153,177 at \$6 or less. Only 64,403 of the 217,580 in this class, and mainly those technically known as the fully disabled, receive over \$6 a month, and the remaining 153,177 are on at an average of \$3.50 a month. Since \$8 was deemed a fair rate to support a dependent veteran in the simple times of the first half of the century, when that rate was fixed, the present allowance as it comes to individuals in the large class here considered is not much more than a pittance. The aggregate annual value of the entire list at \$8 and under, as it stood in 1888, is about \$13,888,000.

The following table of ratings and of the number pensioned at each rate shows how the allowance is distributed among invalid survivors (war of 1861-65) on the rolls June 30, 1888:

Rates.	No.	Rates.	No.
\$1.00	283	\$13.75	16
1.87	2	14.00	6,555
2.00	31,722	14.25	35
2.12½	3	14.50	10
2.25	4	14.75	14
2.50	3	14.87½	1
2.66	7	15.00	2,334
2.66%	38	15.25	2
3.00	1,935	15.50	8
3.12	1	15.75	9
3.75	348	16.00	11,868
4.00	69,210	16.25	13
4.25	426	16.50	18
5.00	1,462	16.75	21
5.25	2	17.00	2,656
5.33	13	17.25	3
5.33½	35	17.50	31
5.66%	6	17.75	7
5.75	16	18.00	2,538
6.00	47,661	18.25	5
6.25	76	18.50	15
6.37	2	18.75	130
6.37½	2	19.00	174
6.66%	2	19.25	11
6.75	3	19.50	2
7.00	215	20.00	1,652
7.25	14	20.75	3
7.50	925	21.00	7
7.66%	1	21.25	2
7.75	21	21.87	1
8.00	63,142	22.00	1
8.12½	1	22.50	92
8.25	24	23.25	3
8.50	1,134	23.50	1
8.66	1	23.75	3
8.75	10	24.00	13,522
9.00	375	24.50	2
9.25	22	25.00	388
9.50	35	25.25	1
9.75	14	26.25	1
10.00	19,046	26.75	3
10.25	18	27.50	6
10.50	37	30.00	11,257
10.66	1	30.75	2
10.75	15	31.25	88
11.00	62	32.00	3
11.25	483	32.50	3
11.33	1	35.00	4
11.33½	9	35.50	2
11.50	25	36.00	2,927
11.75	25	38.50	1
12.00	25,078	40.00	24
12.12½	6	40.25	1
12.25	15	42.00	1
12.50	211	45.00	2,540
12.75	707	46.00	1
13.00	328	49.00	1
13.12	1	50.00	1,430
13.25	19	53.00	1
13.33	6	72.00	1,053
13.33½	1	100.00	2
13.50	40		
			326,835

Rates of Monthly Allowance according to Rank for Injuries incurred in Service amounting to Total Disability.

Rank of lieutenant-colonel	\$30.00
" " major	25.00
" " captain	20.00
" " first lieutenant	17.00
" " second	15.00
" " cadets, etc	10.00
Privates and non-commissioned officers (except warrant officers in the navy)	8.00

Rates established by Law according to Disability.

Loss of both hands or feet	72.00
Total disability in both hands	50.00
Total disability in both feet	31.25
Loss of sight of both eyes	72.00
Loss of one hand and one foot	36.00
Loss of a hand or foot	30.00
Any disability equivalent to loss of hand or foot	24.00
Amputation at or above elbow or knee, or total disability of the arm or leg	36.00

¹ The National Pension Committee of the Grand Army is appointed by the Commander-in-Chief, who is elected annually. The committee serves one year.

² Eight dollars a month is the total for the rank of an enlisted man whose disability, with respect to the part affected, incapacitates for manual labor. This rate was established in 1818, and has not been increased except for special disabilities.

Amputation at or near hip or shoulder joint.....	\$45.00
Inability to perform manual labor.....	30.00
Disability requiring regular attendance by another person.....	50.00
Total deafness.....	30.00

The rates for other disabilities are fixed by the Commissioner of Pensions.

The law assumes that these beneficiaries received permanent injuries incident to service during the war, or, if the injury be not permanent, that the allowance is suspended whenever the effects of the injury disappear. There is justification for this enormous pension list of survivors, in the record of casualties and diseases. There were over 250,000 wounds treated in hospitals, and in all about 6,000,000 cases of wounds and diseases. Aside from the dead on the field over 200,000 cases proved fatal.

Any reduction of this invalid list, which aggregated in 1888 an annual value of over \$37,000,000, must be made by scaling the allowances of one or both of the two classes which I have distinguished, namely: the numerous class, which includes nearly all of the enlisted men, and where the average is \$5.31+ a month, and the aggregate annual value is not quite \$14,000,000 for over 217,000 beneficiaries, or the class where the average is greater and the number of pensioners less, the beneficiaries being 109,255, the annual value about \$24,182,000, and the average \$18.42+ a month. This higher class of pensioners, however, includes nearly all of the disabled officers, and all of the enlisted men who are severely maimed.

Assuming that these pensions will remain as they are during the lifetime of the beneficiaries, what other classes of survivors, who are deserving, are unprovided for?

First. Those who by reason of the hardships of service and old age combined are not able to labor, and who have no case under the invalid laws.

Second. Those who are disabled by reason of injuries received in service, and who cannot prove their claims.

Third. Those who have become disabled since the war, and whose faithful services entitle them to the gratitude of the nation.

The number of these cannot be computed, but doubtless there are many thousands. Every Grand Army post has some cases of the kind on its relief list. The average age of survivors is about fifty years, and there must be a large number who have passed the age of activity. Very many who received permanent injuries in service, but were young and hopeful when the war closed, did not make application and secure evidence while the proper witnesses could be obtained, and cannot at this date prove their invalid claims. Still others had no well-defined disease when they were discharged, but have become disabled since and are now in want, and have no case under present laws.

It was to benefit, ostensibly, the three classes not now on the list that the Dependent Pension Bill, which failed to become a law, was framed by the Grand Army committee. Immediately after the veto the committee prepared a modified bill called a Disability Bill, providing for veterans as follows:

SEC. 2. That all persons who served three months or more in the military or naval service of the United States during the late war of the rebellion, and who have been honorably discharged therefrom, and who are now or

who may hereafter be suffering from mental or physical disability, not the result of their own vicious habits, which totally incapacitates them for the performance of manual labor, shall, upon making due proof of the fact according to such rules and regulations as the Secretary of the Interior may provide, be placed upon the list of invalid pensioners of the United States, and be entitled to receive twelve dollars per month; and such pension shall commence from the date of the filing of the application in the Pension Office, after the passage of this act, upon proof that the disability then existed, and shall continue during the existence of the same in the degree herein specified: *Provided*, That persons who are now receiving pensions under existing laws, or whose claims are pending in the Pension Office, may, by application to the Commissioner of Pensions, in such form as he may prescribe, receive the benefits of this act; and nothing herein contained shall be so construed as to prevent any pensioner thereunder from prosecuting his claim and receiving his pension under any other general or special act: *Provided, however*, That no person shall receive more than one pension for the same period: *And provided further*, That rank in the service shall not be considered in applications filed thereunder.

This section was left unchanged in a bill passed by the Senate at the last session. Meanwhile there had been introduced in both houses a bill known as the Per Diem Service Pension Bill (given in full, below), a measure which its advocates declared would benefit the three classes considered above, as being unprovided for, and the House committee of the last Congress reported the Grand Army Disability Bill, with Section 2 changed to provide as follows:

A pension at the rate per month of one cent for each day's service in the military or naval service of the United States during any of the wars in which the United States have been engaged, and all persons who have served as aforesaid, and have been honorably discharged as aforesaid, and are now sixty-two years of age, shall also be entitled, etc.

Further provision grants the same pension to all who attain the age of sixty-two. In this bill the three classes above considered are recognized as deserving, but the rate to be allowed is graded according to length of service. The bill was not voted upon.

During the discussion of the Dependent Bill before and after the veto, a measure, known as the Loring, or Eight Dollar Service Pension Bill, providing eight dollars a month to every survivor who had served sixty days or more, was brought before Congress.

This bill would benefit the deserving classes to the extent of eight dollars a month; but as it makes only a slight distinction with regard to length of service, several rated service pension bills were discussed by the veterans, and finally the Per Diem Bill was formulated. It was introduced early in the session of 1887-88, and is as follows:

A Bill to grant Pensions for Service in the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps of the United States.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that the Secretary of the Interior is hereby authorized and directed to place on the pension roll of the United States the names of all persons specified in the following section, upon making due proof that they performed the service specified in said section.

SEC. 2. That persons entitled as beneficiaries under the preceding sections are as follows: Any officer or enlisted man who shall have served in the army, navy, or marine corps of the United States, including regulars and volunteers, subsequent to the fourth day of March, 1861, and prior to the first day of July, 1866.

SEC. 3. That the rate of pension for such service shall be at the rate per month of one cent for each day's

service rendered in the said army, navy, or marine corps of the United States.¹

SEC. 4. That the period of service shall be computed from the date of muster into the United States service to the date of discharge, but no pension shall be granted under this act to or on account of any person who deserted prior to July 1, 1865, until he shall have obtained a discharge from the service from which he deserted, and no discharge which was given to any person by reason of réenlistment as a veteran volunteer, or to enable him to accept a promotion, shall be deemed a discharge from the services within the meaning of this act.

SEC. 5. That pension under this act shall be at the rate specified in section three, and shall be paid to the persons entitled thereto for the term of their lives from and after the passage of this bill.

SEC. 6. This bill is intended as a service pension bill, and is intended as an addition to all invalid pensions which have been or may hereafter be granted for disability.

The three bills, the Dependent or Disability Bill, the Eight Dollar Bill, and the Per Diem Bill, were before Congress when the national encampment of the Grand Army (Columbus, Ohio, 1888) was again called upon to meet the question. The committee on pensions reiterated the claims of the Disability Bill, and finally a resolution was adopted almost unanimously favoring a service pension of eight dollars a month for every survivor who served sixty days or more, and an additional amount of one cent a month for each day's service exceeding eight hundred.

The bill has not yet been presented, but the Grand Army committee has been active in pushing the Disability Bill. However, the resolution of the encampment is an approval of the principle of service pensions, and is in harmony with the action of many of the State departments of the order.

Upon the question of service pensions, the veterans in and out of the Grand Army are divided as to the following points: *First.* Shall the pension begin at once, or at sixty-two years of age? *Second.* Shall it be rated according to length of service, or be uniform? *Third.* Shall it be in addition to the invalid pension allowance in cases already on the roll? *Fourth.* Shall it continue to the widows or other dependent heirs?

The number of survivors is estimated, in the departments at Washington, at about 1,350,000. It is asserted by the Per Diem Service Pension Association that the average term of service is about one year, and that the Per Diem Bill would allow an average pension of \$3.65 a month. If 1,000,000 survivors called for the allowance, the cost would be less than \$50,000,000 a year. The Eight Dollar Bill would cost \$96,000,000 a year if 1,000,000 men should receive it. The Grand Army Service Pension Bill would cost, on the same basis, \$96,000,000 a year, and an additional sum to every veteran who served over 800 days; that is, for three years' service, or 1095 days, \$10.95 a month; for four years, or 1460 days, \$14.60 a month; and at that rate for all terms of service of over 800 days.²

For more than twenty years the Grand Army of the Republic throughout the Union has engaged in a vast and peculiar system of relief to needy comrades, and

the veterans have original knowledge which should make them competent advocates and judges in claims made on the ground of service. But with this knowledge and influence there is also responsibility, and it is to be hoped that the pension measures presented on behalf of the order will be based wholly upon justice for all concerned,—the interests of the country as well as that of the soldiers,—and not upon the mere fact of approval by an accidental majority in the ranks of the veterans.

George L. Kilmer.

"The Use of Oil to Still the Waves."

I HAVE just read with much interest the article in the March number of THE CENTURY on "The Use of Oil to Still the Waves." It so happens that lately a large ship laden with petroleum was run into by a steamer off the Owers lightship which carried away a part of her cutwater and made a huge hole in her bows. It was blowing pretty fresh from the southwest at the time, and there was a good sea on. The casks began to roll out through the hole in the bows of the *Vandalia* of New Brunswick, and the vessel to settle down forward. The crew took to the boats and abandoned her, and she drifted up channel and finally grounded off Hove, about three hundred yards from shore. Two thousand or more casks of petroleum drifted to land, and I was curious to see what effect the oil had upon the waves. To my surprise, I came to the conclusion that the effect was almost entirely negative; and I made the remark to some friends that, whatever effect other kinds of oil may have, petroleum is evidently of no use. I now find that this experience is in strict accordance with the statement of Lieutenant Beehler, "that mineral oil is not suitable, especially if refined." The cargo of the *Vandalia* consisted, I presume, of refined oil, for on observing some flow from a cask, the head of which was started, it was evidently a very limpid and perfectly clear oil, having a faint bluish tinge very similar to that observable in fluorescent liquids. Several of the casks were stove in and came to shore empty of their contents, so that a large quantity of oil had mingled with the sea water. To such an extent was this the case that the sea along the length of the shore for two miles or more presented a thin milk-and-water appearance. It appeared to me, so far as I could judge, that the heavy sea churned the oil up into minute globules, which were dispersed throughout the water and so rendered it turbid. I quite satisfied myself that the oil did not spread out into a continuous film over the surface of the water, but broke up into little patches. The surface motion of the sea seemed unappreciably affected. It broke over the bows of the *Vandalia*, and came up in heavy breakers upon the beach, but there seemed much less foam than is usually created when the big rollers break.

George Gladstone.

Hove, SUSSEX, ENGLAND.

¹ Two years is a fair term of service in a long war, and \$8 is the full pension established. But a soldier's service is not recorded in full years; it is from the day of actual enlistment to that of discharge. Therefore a rate of one cent a day, which would give \$7.30 for a two-years' term, would give a proportionate sum for any length of service.

² The total disbursement for pensions for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1888, was \$78,775,861.92, and nearly one-third of the amount was used in payment of arrears on new claims. The

annual value of all the pensions on the roll was \$56,707,220.92, and out of this \$18,648,373.50 was for pensions to the widows and other dependents of three wars, and the survivors of 1812 and the Mexican War. On the basis of the amount on the rolls for 1888 the estimates for the Per Diem Bill would increase the annual value of all pensions to something over \$100,000,000, the Eight Dollar Bill would swell it to over \$150,000,000, and the Grand Army Service Pension measure to a still higher sum.