

sioner) shall deem it for the interest of the Government."

The bill does not state whether such examination shall be at the "post," or at the home of the pensioner, but the fair inference from section 2 is that it either must be at the "post" or else at the expense of the pensioner. More travel fees are thus provided for, to an extent only limited by the notions of the Commissioner.

This section is careful to make provisions for reducing pensions on examination, but makes none for raising where the rate of disability is too low.

Section 5 is simply an enormity. It provides that if the Commissioner shall "suspect" that a pension has been procured through fraud or misrepresentation, he may "suspend payment," and on suspension shall cause it to be examined by the commission, or some clerk detailed for that purpose, and that if he shall "suspect" that a fraud under the pension laws has been attempted or perpetrated, he shall also examine.

Now it unfortunately appears that Mr. Bentley "suspects" everybody—he "suspects" examining surgeons, he "suspects" witnesses, he "suspects" pensioners, he "suspects" his own proposed pension surgeons, he "suspects" every one but the honorable Secretary of the Interior and himself.

It will not do to allow anybody on "suspicion" merely to take the bread out the mouth of an invalid pensioner, or the widow and orphan. Suspicions are not always true. Condemnation before trial and judgment is outrageous, and it is far better to let punishment come when the case is proven than to do a great wrong, impose a cruel hardship upon one whose title is apparently good and whose innocence may be finally established.

No such dangerous power ever ought to be vested in any man—it is in its nature perilous, inhuman, and unjust.

Section 6 provides that this new force of peripatetic surgeons and clerks shall be allowed, in addition to their salaries, "their actual and necessary expenses," on bills to be "approved by the Commissioner."

In this section again the "one man" power looms up.

"Actual and necessary." Who can define them? Nobody but the Commissioner, and his decision is final. A commission which can begin anywhere and travel everywhere, to be appointed, assigned to duty, and expenses allowed by the one man.

It is the neatest, most compact, and best arranged contrivance for favoritism and jobbing ever yet presented in form of law and as the foretaste of economical administration. It builds up a force of official flunkies, dominated and controlled by a single will; and the only thing needed to complete the organization would be to uniform the force in some attractive way, buttons to represent a death's head and cross bones, with *P. O.* in solid letters, helmet after the fashion of a mortar, whose pestle should be the wand of office, the baton of these marshals of the Pension Bureau. The motto of the corps might be—"We starve the soldier to save the bureau." Or this—"If we 'suspect,' he starves."

To bring about this result, to establish this corps of sixty surgeons, everything vital to the true meaning of the pension law is thrown overboard.

The burden of travelling to the places of meeting, the hunting up of witnesses and taking them to the commission, the waiting for a turn for hearing, the expense of living in a strange place, all these things are cast upon the claimant. And this bill proceeds upon the theory that the claimant's witnesses always reside near him and within his reach, when every

man of any experience knows that the rule is that they are scattered all over the country, and yet there is no provision made for taking the testimony of witnesses residing in another district from that in which the claimant resides. There is no process given by which witnesses can be compelled to appear and testify. No means are provided by which an examination commenced in one district can be continued in another, when it is found that material witnesses reside elsewhere.

Take the probable progress of affairs in one district, say that 500 cases are to come before the commission. In what order are they to come; how long must No. 499 wait before his turn comes, after he has traveled 100 miles to the place of meeting. He gets into court at last in the first year's session or the second or the third, puts in his case and finds that he needs the testimony of a comrade or officer a thousand miles away. How is he to get it under this bill? The whole scheme is hedged about with thorny impossibilities, and its operation can bring nothing but disaster. It can only postpone still further "the hope deferred that maketh the heart sick," and bar the door in the face of honest claimants by the difficulties it creates.

It is wrong in principle, wrong in detail. It seeks a chimerical object and uses fatal means.

We do not need to refer to any other section of this bill except the 9th, which, in substance, forbids any contract for fees in pension cases to be made hereafter, and thus abolishes all attorneys in such cases in Washington or elsewhere, and thus commits the whole right of the claimants into the hands of the bureau and its officers. There is a certain degree of clap-trap about this which is scarcely worthy of serious comment:

There are attorneys good, bad and indifferent, but as long as the world stands and a man cannot personally attend to his own business will have the right to employ, and will employ, an attorney to do it for him. If, as the Commissioner seems to think, it is his duty to watch attorneys, so it is the duty of attorneys to watch the Commissioner. If he makes himself, as he has, the attorney of the Government as against the pensioner, so much greater the need of the pensioner for an attorney to represent his interest.

But the whole bill is of one piece, and that is against the rights of individuals, to build up a special dominion in the Pension Bureau.

#### What They Say of Us.

The following are specimens of letters coming to us by the hundred from all parts of the United States:

WILMURT, HERKIMER CO., NEW YORK,  
January 26, 1878.

For the inclosed \$1 please send the NATIONAL TRIBUNE the following year to the two undersigned soldiers of the War of the Rebellion.

We sincerely wish you God-speed in your good, great, and noble work for the soldiers of the Union and its battle-scarred veterans, and the mothers and orphans of the dear ones who have fallen in the conflict, a sacrifice to the dear old flag. While they are silently sleeping in the soldiers' grave, let the good work go on for the relief of all sufferers by the war, and God bless you.

H. C. & G. W. P.

MEDINA, N. Y., February 4, 1878.

I wish you would send me a copy of your TRIBUNE for one year, as I plainly see you elucidate matters pertaining to soldiers better than any other journal I have perused on the same subject. Enclosed find money.

S. F. M.

VIRGINIA CITY,  
MADISON CO., MONTANA TERRITORY,  
January 26, 1878.

From what I have seen of one number, I deem it valuable to every soldier and sailor.

F. C. D.

HORNELLSVILLE, N. Y., Feb. 5, 1878.

A friend sent me the December number, and, as I was a soldier and being interested in what is being done in Congress for the soldier, I send for your paper, which I am much pleased with, and which contains information which the soldier can get in no other way.

A. M. P.

We are having prepared at large expense, a wood cut of Libby Prison, for our next number.

The following Bill has been aged to by the Committee on Pensions in the House of Representatives:

A BILL to regulate the granting of pensions on account of death, wounds, or injuries received, or disease contracted in the service of the United States, since the fourth day of March, 1861, and for the payment of arrears of pensions; also, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to restore to the roll the names of invalid pensioners stricken therefrom on account of disloyalty, and to repeal sections 4709, 4716, and 4717, of the Revised Statutes of the United States.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That all pensions which may have been, or may hereafter be granted, in consequence of death occurring from a cause which originated in the service of the United States since the fourth day of March, eighteen hundred and sixty-one, shall commence from the death of the person on whose account the claim has been, or may hereafter be granted, or from the termination of the right of the party having prior title to such pension.

SEC. 2. That all pensions which have been, or may hereafter be granted, in consequence of wounds, or injuries received in the service of the United States, since the fourth day of March, eighteen hundred and sixty-one, shall commence from the discharge of the person on whose account the claim has been, or may hereafter be granted; *Provided*, the application for such pension has been, or shall hereafter be filed with the Commissioner of Pensions, within five years after the right thereto has accrued; otherwise, the pension shall commence from the time of the development of the disability resulting from such wounds or injuries, but not previous to the discharge.

SEC. 3. That all pensions which have been, or may hereafter be granted, in consequence of disease contracted in the service of the United States since the 4th day of March, 1861, shall commence from the discharge of the person on whose account the claim has been or may hereafter be granted; *Provided*, the application for such pension has been or shall hereafter be filed with the Commissioner of Pensions, within five years after the right thereto has accrued, otherwise the pension shall commence from the date of application; *Provided*, that the limitation herein prescribed shall not apply to claims by, or in behalf of, insane persons or minor children of deceased soldiers.

SEC. 4. No arrearages arising from the provisions of this act shall be paid at a greater rate than provided for in the original certificate, and no arrearages shall be paid to any widow who has remarried or child who has attained the age of sixteen; and if the pensioner shall have died, no arrearages of pension accrued prior to his death and granted by this act shall be paid or allowed; *Provided*, that nothing contained in this section shall be construed to affect in any way section 4718 of the Revised Statutes of the United States.

SEC. 5. That it shall be the duty of the Secretary of the Interior to pay or cause to be paid all arrearages of pensions to such persons who may be entitled thereto under the provisions of this act, and he is hereby authorized to prescribe such rules and regulations as, in his judgment, are necessary to carry out the provisions of the same.

SEC. 6. That nothing contained in this act shall be construed to repeal or in any way amend Section 4710 of the Revised Statutes of the United States.

SEC. 7. That the Secretary of the Interior be, and he is hereby, authorized and required to restore to the pension rolls the names of all invalid pensioners now living, who were stricken therefrom on account of disloyalty, and pay them pensions from the 25th day of December, 1868, at the rate which they would have been entitled to had they not have been dropped from the pension roll; *Provided*, That the provisions of this section shall not apply to any person while under the political disabilities imposed by the fourteenth amendment of the Constitution of the United States, and, after such removal, the pension of such person shall be paid only from the date of his application for the same.

SEC. 8. That sections 4709, 4716, 4717 are hereby repealed; *Provided*, That the repeal of Section 4716 of the Revised Statutes shall not be construed to authorize any payment on account of pension to any person previous to December 25, 1868, nor to any person not alive at the date of the passage of this act, his widow, heirs, or representatives.

#### Reforms Needed in the Pension Office.

We again call attention to the following, from former numbers of THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE:

We use the word "Reforms" advisedly. We do not mean economize—we do not mean reduction of salaries; we mean such judicious increase of pay and positions as shall secure more accuracy, more educated talent, more efficient work by the officers in Washington and their local employees.

We mean that the Commissioner shall be placed on an equality with the Commissioner of Patents; that the Medical Referee shall have the full pay and emoluments of a full army surgeon of ten years' standing. That the grade of examiners and assistant examiners be created and maintained in the Pension Office as in the Patent Office, with equal pay; that the examining surgeons shall be paid three dollars for each examination and five dollars in obscure and difficult cases; that the board to be ordered by the Commissioner shall receive each the same pay; in short, the time, labor, and responsibility actually given to the service of the Government be remunerated in fair proportion.

We propose to demand and require good, efficient, scientific work, and to pay for it what it is worth; and we commend these views to the Committee on Pensions in the two Houses as the decent and proper solution of the embarrassments which are now alleged to involve the administration of the Pension Office.

#### Retain Your Discharges.

Do not go to the trouble and expense of executing applications for bounty under the equalization bill until it has become a law. As soon as there seems to be a chance of its passage, hordes of sharpers will be trying to get the claims of soldiers into their control. As soon as the bill has been passed by both Houses of Congress and signed by the President, a proper form of application will be adopted by the accounting officers of the Treasury Department. Any other form than this will be valueless. Keep your discharge papers and other documents in your own hand. When the bill is passed the subscribers to THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE will be immediately notified, and informed as to the best course to pursue to obtain its benefits.