National Tribune.

"TO CARE FOR HIM WHO HAS BORNE THE BATTLE, AND FOR HIS WIDOW AND ORPHANS."

ESTABLISHED 1877—NEW SERIES. WASHINGTON, D. C., THURSDAY, AUGUST 5, 1886. VOL. V—NO. 52.—WHOLE NO. 260.

THE ANNUAL MUSTER.

The Commander-in-Chief Calls the Roll and Makes Report.

AN ELOQUENT ADDRESS.

The History of the Year Told in Splendid Periods.

299,087 IN THE G.A.R.

Glorious Comrades Who Have Gone Over to the Majority.

The following is the full text of the address of Gen. S. S. Burdett, Commander-in-Chief:

COMRADES: Our last gathering place was upon the shores of that ocean across whose heaving breast there yet gleams the wake of the Mayflower, of immortal name, which brought through stormy seas to an inhospitable coast the seed of men, and of faith and purpose, whose antithesis armed for fight under the flag of the rebellion, and whose high noon of fruition came at Appomattox. We partook of the hospitality of a people who remain within call of the "manor house" of the Pilgrim Estate; we were glad in the presence of the daughters of a race who rocked the cradles out of which have stepped that throng of Godfearing and liberty-loving men whose peaceful arms have within the compass of little more than a century subdued a continental wilderness, and within it set up the peerless Nation whose citizens we are.

Threading a continent in our this year's march, we pitch the tents of the 20th National Encampment on this our further shore, salute the glory of the mountains which to our fathers were nameless shadows in a foreign land, and hear with gladness the music of the waves which sing our anthem where yesterday the starry flag was but a strange device. It has been the lot of the Grand Army to compass the land it helped to save. Our fect, whilst yet "shod with the lightnings of war," knew by toilsome march the highways and byways of the South; our peaceful progress has led by pleasant paths to the eastern shore, to the northern border, through the loyal center to the mountain slope, and now at length beside the "peaceful seas," having seen of all its greatness, whilst yet our strength remains, with united voice we salute again our dear country, and bless the God of the fathers that it was his good pleasure to privilege us to stand in the battle for its unity, and to preserve so many of us to be partakers of its later glories.

REPORTS.

I commend to you the careful perusal of the reports of the staff officers. They exhibit in detail the state of all the principal business and other concerns of the Grand Army, and will evidence the faithfulness with which you have been served. Not because it is matter of custom or courtesy, but because I am sensible of the obligations I am under to them, I take pleasure in referring specially to the faithful and efficient labors of the Adjutant, the Quartermaster, the Inspector, and the Judge-Advocate-General, and the Assistant Adjutant-General. The volume of business transacted through National Headquarters has been very great, far greater than in any preceding year; the burden of it has fallen on them. I may say with some degree of pride, and in justice to them, that the records of their offices will be found in good condition as to lighten the burdens of their successors.

MEMBERSHIP.

There were, as reported by my predecessor, on the 31st day of March, 1885, 38 Departments, 5,026 Posts, and 269,094 members. On March 31, 1886, the official returns showed 38 Departments, 5,765 Posts, and a membership in good standing of 295,337. This is a net gain during the year of 739 Posts and 25,643 comrades. Distinguishing between those actually suspended for non-payment of dues, and the aggregate membership of Posts noted as suspended for failure to make report, as our system of returns now enables us to do, and counting as in good standing in delinquent Posts the number so appearing by their last return, gives a membership on March 31 last of 290,087.

The number of comrades remaining members of the Grand Army of the Republic is 326,499. There is abundant reason for congratulation to be found in the exhibit. The time has come when the sinking cause of the growing weight of years sufficiently excuses many thousands of our comrades from seeking our association, yet out of the diminished and constantly diminishing number of comrades eligible to our ranks, we gathered in by muster alone during the last year a new membership of 60,653. This is a greater number than constituted our whole membership up to and at the close of the year 1880.

SUSPENDED AND DROPPED MEMBERS.

The problem presented by the large number of comrades reported as suspended or dropped calls for some solution.

Under the head of suspended the Adjutant-General have reported as follows:

For year ending March 31, 1884	28,801
" " " 1885	54,292
" " " 1886	54,146

The causes leading to this unwelcome state of facts are various. Undoubtedly there are some who join our ranks looking for immediate and purely mercenary and selfish benefits, and who, finding their expectation slow of realization, property and rank naturally fall out. There are others who, so soon as the novelty of their experiences have worn off, lapse into carelessness, and for lack of a little "shepherding" by their more earnest comrades are lost to us; but there are others whose falling away is of more grave concern. Some there are faithful of purpose and warm in their allegiance to our Order, to whom the small sum required for payment of annual dues is yet a burden. It represents so much of self-denial, or of diminished comfort for some dependent one. Then, again, the summit of life has been reached by us all, and some are far down the westward slope. To these attendance upon our meetings and upon our other duties has come to be a burden. No longer able to report for active duty, and, finding no place provided by our system for honorable retirement, not without a pang of regret, no doubt, they suffer the account to be closed by the operation of our harsh rule under its inelastic interpretation. The situation has come to be the Organized as never, among other things, for purposes of benificence toward each other, we yet withdraw our organized comradeship from such as must leave our society for causes which should call into active play the duty of charity in its larger sense to which we stand pledged. The fact is that the Grand Army of the Republic fashioned its rules and limitations upon the plan of societies whose clientage is the ever-widening stream of newly-made souls. Its originators, rejoicing in the day of their own strength, did not look beyond, but we are face to face with the fact that the fountain had ceased to run ere our musters began, and that the sons of a quaker of a century have drank of the waters of an stream until its diminished flow admonishes us to have a care against waste. I hold to the usefulness of the Grand Army as an institution. I believe as you do that when its last muster shall have been celebrated, and all the doors of its Posts closed, that the greatest school of patriotism our world has known will have ceased to be. I am therefore clear that it is our duty now to begin the taking of steps to the end that the badge of our Order may be lawfully worn to the latest possible hour. The consideration this subject has received in many of the Departments during the past year indicates that it is one lying near to the heart of comrades who would that the time be far distant for action. I submit that your Rules and Regulations ought to be amended.

Instead of comrades in arrears for dues being summarily dropped at a specific period by mere operation of the law itself, there should be notice to open Post and due action had; and before the final act of dropping is consummated there should again be notice to open Post, a period of warning, and then formal action by ballot on each case at a regular meeting.

But I think that the time has arrived when we may well consider whether our rules should not provide some other alternative than the absolute severance of relations with the Order on failure of payment of dues.

True there is now the condition that dues may be remitted for reason of "sickness or misfortune," but the inadequacy of this provision is apparent. I commend to your consideration the propriety of instituting in connection with our Posts a retired list, call it if you please a roll of honor, upon which the Posts may place their veteran members, relieving them of the payment of dues and of active duty generally, but leaving them the right of attendance at Post meetings, of participating in and enjoyment of the honors and benefits incident to our association, and testifying our full comradeship by continuing to them the right of participating in the election of new members and in the decision of all questions relative to the standing of comrades.

First in the trinity of our aims we name "Fraternity." I am making a crude suggestion only, but I am asking you out of your greater wisdom to fashion some plan that shall enable us, having once grasped the hand of a worthy comrade, to hold it in friendly embrace until in God's good time we must cross it on his own breast in token of the final peace.

FINANCES.

The account current of the Quartermaster-General shows balance of cash on hand June 30, 1885, $23,864.09. There was on hand June 30, 1885, $12,006.46. The net receipts for the year are therefore $11,857.63.

The presence of this very considerable surplus fund, and the stability and present certainty of our sources of revenue, raises two important questions:

1. Should we cut off or limit some or any of the charges out of which our income is derived?

2. What shall be done with present and future accumulations to insure their safety and get from them some interest return?

Upon the first question your attention is invited to the recommendation of the Quartermaster-General, that the price of the membership badge be reduced to 35 cents, which, on the basis of last year's issue, would reduce the receipts of the Department of $3,500, and would to that extent curtail our revenue.

It is my judgment that we may safely make this reduction, and that it should be done; but in every question of this character it is always to be borne in mind that we are on the high level now; that our direction is fixed; that beyond and in our path to the sunset we ought to have in view not the provision for that day when only a few will contribute to the funds, but when, as we hope and believe, the fading few will still assemble in National Encampment and find in their own funds the means to do so until the end comes.

The second question was dealt with by the last National Encampment, so far as the surplus then reported was concerned, but without result.

The incoming Commander-in-Chief and Council of Administration were authorized to invest $10,000 of the amount then on hand in mortgages on real estate worth not less than three times the amount thus loaned, "exclusively of any improvements thereon." At the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Council, held Nov. 19, 1885, the matter was carefully considered, and it was determined that under the restrictions imposed it would be impossible to safely place the funds. In view of the fact that we are not an incorporated society, that we could enforce no remedy against a delinquent borrower except through some cumbersome and unsatisfactory process of foreclosure, with great deference to your better judgment, I think it my duty to suggest that, as safety is much the more to be regarded than the mere matter of interest, the bonds of the United States are the best security known to the business world.

CHARITY AND RELIEF FUND.

The report of the Adjutant-General shows amount expended for charity for the year to be $176,259.87, but the report of the Inspector-General shows an expenditure under this head, for the same period, by but 4,916 Posts out of the 5,765 now in existence, of $205,675.90, and as remaining in the relief fund $301,012.76. I refer to these figures both for congratulation and complaint—congratulation in that our great principles of fraternity and charity still have exemplification, and complaint that the proper officers of many of the Posts fail to make due record and report on this head. This neglect is an injustice to their Posts and to the whole fraternity, now and for the future. The explanation of the much smaller sum reported by the Adjutant-General, must be that the Inspector, being present in the Posts by his Assistant, found the facts he reports, whilst Post officers carelessly omitted them from their returns.

DEPARTMENTS.

Except in one instance there is nothing in the condition of the Departments which requires special remark. Unfortunately, and, as we shall most of us agree, unwisely, certain alleged delinquencies occurring in the Department of New York were made the subject of general newspaper allegation and surmise. The specific allegations concerned the funds and were calculated to seriously impair the prosperity of that great Department and our good name beyond its borders. Under these circumstances it seemed to me to be the part of wisdom to order special inspection of the Department records. The Comrade Inspector-General performed that duty in person thoroughly and conscientiously. It is my proper that I express any opinion or now give publicity to that part of his report which deals with past delinquencies; they have been made the subject of proper charges and specifications, and will be brought to trial in due time. But it is just to us all that I say that the report finds that, under the present administration, known frauds have been corrected, system and economy introduced, and that confidence ought to be restored, and prosperity again abound.

BADGES.

This is a subject to which attention of a special kind has been called in the reports of your retiring Commanders-in-Chief on more than one occasion. At the 18th annual session your attention was called to certain allegations involving the integrity of the manufacture of the badges then in use, and to inuendoes in connection therewith involving not only the good name of the then national officers of the Grand Army of the Republic, but that of their predecessors for many years. The author of these slanders was not singled out by name, but he was understood to be one who had sought large contracts for the manufacture of badges and as the editor of a paper professedly published in the interest of the Grand Army. In view of these charges, or rather of the fact that they had found their way into reputable newspapers, the Executive Committee of the Council of Administration made a thorough investigation at the date of Sept. 14, 1885, and published as a result thereof, covering the whole history of the question, left no room for doubt that you had been served with faithfulness and fidelity in that regard, and that the charges made had no better foundation than the interested malice of their author.

My predecessor, in his address at Portland, invited attention to the large revenue derived from the sale of badges, which by so much prevented the increase of the per capita tax; to the just pride a comrade should feel in wearing a badge manufactured from captured cannon, and recalled to the attention of all "the resolution of the 18th National Encampment, especially prohibiting comrades from wearing any other membership badge than that supplied by National Headquarters."

The committee to whom this address was referred reported upon the subject that "unless made of captured rebel cannon a badge is a lie, and the Post officer or other comrade who procures them from any other source than through National Headquarters merits court-martial and prompt dismissal. * * * In this connection it is recommended that during the coming year the Commander-in-Chief be requested to give this matter his individual attention, to the end that the manufacture of spurious badges be stopped, and that the parties now engaged in obtaining money under false pretenses by their sale be properly dealt with under the law"; and the following resolution was reported and adopted:

"*Resolved*, That the Commander-in-Chief be requested to ascertain who are manufacturers and sellers of spurious badges, and to take such steps to secure the suppression of the same as he may deem proper."

Under this mandate I proceeded to the discharge of the duty involved. Examination disclosed that the patent obtained upon the design of the badge in 1869 expired by limitation on the 28th day of December, 1876. There was no machinery of the law, therefore, that could be invoked in my aid. But, considering that without the active aid or connivance at least of a considerable number of the officers and members of the Grand Army, no outside manufacturer could profitably prosecute the business, and, believing that there could not be found within the membership of our Posts a comrade so lost to honor or greedy of spoil as to persist, after due notice of the will of his comrades in the matter, in defrauding their funds, and in mocking their faith and just pride, by imposing on them, in place of a genuine badge, what the Encampment had aptly described as a lie, under date of Sept. 14, 1885, I issued General Order, No. 6, current series, in which, without note or comment, I set out at large the resolution of the 17th (Denver) National Encampment and the report of the committee on the address of Commander-in-Chief Kountz at Portland, above alluded to, which I did not doubt would effectually compass your purposes. My attention was soon after directed to the October number of the *Grand Army Gazette and National Guardsman*, so called, edited and published by J. A. Joel, at 32 and 34 Nassau street, New York, in which, under the heading of "Another Wasteful Basket Order," he revived the slanders denounced at Minneapolis, declared his purpose to manufacture and sell "badges guaranteed to contain captured cannon metal," and characterized the action of the two National Encampments embodied in the Order as "the style of an autocrat."

He declared the price too high, and, referring to the fact that the patent on the design in use had expired, denied the right of the Grand Army, through its laws or otherwise, to control the action of its membership on the matter of sale or purchase of badges.

The article concluded with a deliberate false attempt to discredit the authenticity of the action of the National Encampment as published in the order referred to.

Advised now that a campaign against your funds, National, Departmental, and Post, as well against the honor of the whole great fraternity involved in its pledge as to the material of which its insignia of honor is composed, was fully determined upon, I again addressed the Grand Army on the subject, through Headquarters' Circular, No. 2, and through the medium of letters to the Department Commanders invoked their personal aid. In several succeeding numbers of the journal referred to the determination to continue the sale of the spurious article was asserted by its editor, and the declaration reiterated that his manufacture contained captured cannon metal, and the fact that the property rights of his comrades in the badge were no longer protected by a patent, was reasserted as his justification for invading them.

If but one of the genuine badges issued from Headquarters were dropped into the melting pot, an assertion that its issue contained "captured cannon metal" would be true in form, but would remain a false pretense in fact. However, one not a member of the Grand Army undertaking to manufacture our badge might, if pressed to desist, fall back on our want of protection by patent; for a member of the Grand Army, bound to duty to his comrades by the pledge of his honor, to so shelter himself is but to resurrect the rejected plea of Shylock: "It is not so nominated in the bond." I am happy to say that my efforts to discharge this duty were seconded by my comrades, the Department Commanders, almost unanimously, with great heartiness, and that close scrutiny and comparison of the legitimate demands of the year with the actual issue from National Headquarters, indicate that but few of the spurious badges found their way into the ranks.

Under the circumstances it is just that I should say that from no reputable source, and indeed from no source whatever, save only that to which I have already alluded, has any complaint or even criticism reached Headquarters with respect to any matter connected with the manufacture or supply of badges, or their cost or material. That you have been served in this respect with absolute fidelity I have no doubt.

The number of badges issued during the year is 66,393. I found on assuming office that there was an outstanding badge contract properly entered into by my predecessor, under which there remained for delivery 60,760. The balance of the year's supply has been furnished by the manufacturer at the last contract price of 27 cents each. There is now no outstanding contract.

Of the 12 bronze guns obtained from the New York Arsenal in August, 1881, six, weighing 5,230 pounds, are yet on hand. There is, in addition, upwards of 2,000 pounds of this gun metal, which has been reduced to the form of pigs.

OMITTED CORPS MARKS, NEW DESIGNS, PATENTED.

The subject of corps marks omitted from the group of emblems on the reverse of the star of the badge was before the last Encampment on a resolution reciting that the Castle, the emblem of the Engineer Corps, had been omitted therefrom; and in a resolution coming in from the Department of Nebraska, asking, on behalf of members of the Thirteenth Corps residing in that State, that the National Encampment adopt for it a badge after a form suggested. It seems that no badge or emblem was ever adopted for that corps. The whole subject was referred to the Council of Administration with power to act. Upon consideration of the question the Executive Committee declined to take action on the last-named matter.

It seemed to the committee that such action would be without adequate authority; that no action it or the National Encampment could take would be anywhere binding, and that subject was therefore referred back to this body. The committee found further inducement for this action on learning that at a meeting of members of this corps at Chicago, in 1866, action had been taken, and a form of badge recommended different from that selected by the Nebraska comrades.

Upon the other subject, "the emblem of the Engineer Corps," it was found that the authorized form of the emblem, as promulgated by the War Department, was not the castle alone, but the castle in combination with the crossed oars and anchor, and that in this form it was in its proper place in the group of emblems.

But examination disclosed that three of the authorized corps marks, viz., Hancock's First Corps, Veteran's Second Corps and Wilson's Cavalry Corps, were omitted. It seemed to the committee that these ought to be added, and especially so as their addition would, by change of design, admit of a patent being obtained for future protection.

Comrade Davison, the manufacturer of our badges, took charge of the matter, obtained, and holds the patent. He has also, with the concurrence of National Headquarters in order to your further protection, secured a design patent upon the upper part of the badge by adding to its reverse side a suitable design.

These patents are at the service of the National Encampment. I strongly recommend that you, by formal resolution, adopt the designs they cover. They do not change the general form of the badge as now prescribed; they simply add certain details properly belonging upon it, and will serve for your future protection against any Shylock to whom the law of honor is without preventive force.

OFFICIAL DECISIONS.

I have approved, adopted, and promulgated as my decisions the opinion of the Judge Advocate-General in the 18 cases of which the following is an abstract:

No. 1. A comrade is not subject to suspension because of non-payment of so-called dues to a Relief Fund established by a By-Law of his Post. Such a payment is purely a matter of individual conscience and patriotism.

No. 2. A member of the National Encampment, a Past Department Commander, can only be tried by court-martial convened by order of the Commander-in-Chief. (Sec. 3, Art. 6, Chap. 5.)

No. 3. In this case a comrade was dropped from the rolls of his Post under the law, on the ground that he was ineligible, and should not have been mustered in. Held, that a Post cannot properly drop a member from its rolls who appears in good standing until the contrary is shown after proper and legal proceedings, as provided by the Rules and Regulations.

No. 4. Any comrade against whom no charges exist, and who has paid his dues, may demand, orally or in writing, at a meeting of his Post, a transfer card; and a failure on the part of the officers of the Post to perform their duty and issue such transfer card could not operate to defeat a comrade's transfer to another newly-organized Post, to which (in the case in question) a comrade was entitled. Held, that the Department Commander, who possessed full knowledge of all the facts in the case,

No. 5. The resignation of a Post Commander does not operate to make a vacancy until his successor has been elected and actually qualified; consequently, it is proper for the officer so resigning to preside at any meeting of his Post until his successor is so elected and qualified.

No. 6. There is no territorial limitation upon the power of the Commander-in-Chief to authorize the organization of Posts of the Grand Army of the Republic. He may sanction their organization within a foreign country, and attach them to any Department he may select.

No. 7. In this case an applicant is reported as having "borne arms" (in the enlarged sense of the term) in the service of the Confederacy while he was a slave. He afterward enlisted in and was honorably discharged from the Union army. Held that the applicant must have the benefit of the fact that at a time he was still stripped of the power and exercise of volition, and hence relieved from the consequences of an act which was not his, but that of his master. He is therefore eligible.

No. 8. It is not fraud—in any necessary sense—for a comrade to have enlisted under an assumed name. If he received an honorable discharge, he is eligible. A Post admitting such comrade with a full knowledge of the facts, conveyed by his own statement, is estopped from denying the validity of his muster-in.

No. 9. Whenever anything is to be done or refused by the action of the Post, by approval of the Post or by order of the Post, or any terms of similar import, the term "Post" in that connection means a legal Post meeting, where a majority of those present and voting (a constitutional quorum being actually in session) have voted in favor of or against a proposition, whatever it may be.

No. 10. Comrades cannot be dropped because of non-payment of dues other than those prescribed by Sec. 3, Art. 3, Chap. 5, of the Rules and Regulations. A Post may appeal from and reverse the decision of its Commander, as well upon a question relative to the Rules and Regulations as upon questions arising upon the proper construction of the By-Laws of the Post.

A Post Commander may refuse to entertain a motion, believing it to be out of order, but an appeal will lie from his decision.

No. 11. "A" was regularly elected Post Commander, but his Post set the election aside, and thereupon elected "B," who was installed and served to the end of the term. The action of the Post in setting aside A's election was erroneous, but under the rule *de facto* B is a Past Post Commander and entitled to the benefits incident thereto.

No. 12. A refusal to permit a comrade to introduce testimony tending to prove a negative of the principal charges and specifications upon which he was court-martialed is a fatal error, which cannot be cured, and the decision of the court in such case, if adverse to the accused, should be reversed.

No. 13. A Past Post Commander was tried by court-martial upon unsigned charges and specifications. Held that the court-martial should have been convened by order of the Department Commander; that no objection being taken at time of trial to the informality of the charges and specifications, the defendant is estopped from objecting after the trial is concluded. In this case, however, the defendant was not served with a copy of the charges and specifications, and it was accordingly held that all proceedings connected with the trial were void.

No. 14. An officer who was by order of the President dishonorably dismissed from the army, and whose disability to re-enter the army because of such order was removed by subsequent order, is eligible to membership in the Grand Army of the Republic.

No. 15. A trial and conviction by court-martial of a comrade, however unworthy he may be, without notice or without direct testimony proving or tending to prove the charges and specifications, is wholly illegal and void.

No. 16. The suspension of a Post does not throw out of membership in the G.A.R. the comrades of such Post, and they, being members, are entitled to all the offices and honors previously earned. If any one of such members is a Delegate to the National Encampment, member of the Council of Administration, or Past Department Commander, he is still eligible to occupy such position, notwithstanding the suspension of his Post.

No. 17. A soldier was honorably discharged for promotion, was commissioned and mustered and subsequently dismissed, again re-enlisted, (third time,) and after serving his term was honorably discharged. Held, that because of his final honorable discharge he is eligible to membership.

No. 18. A Past Post Commander applied for and received an honorable discharge from the Grand Army of the Republic. He subsequently re-entered the G.A.R. in another Post and claimed the right to sit in the Department Encampment as P. P. C. of the Post from which he received his discharge. Held, that he was not entitled to the honors and privileges of a Past Post Commander. (Note.—See Opinion No. 94, Dec. 5, 1878, p. 128, Opinions of G.A.R.)

No. 19. A special order of the President of the United States, directing that an officer who has been dishonorably dismissed from the service of the United States shall, upon the receipt of a new commission from the Governor of the State from which his regiment came, be again mustered into service and mustered out with his regiment, cures the disability resulting from the officer's dismissal, notwithstanding the fact that before the new commission arrived the regiment was mustered out.

No. 20. A Department Encampment not being in session, an appeal from an original act of the Department Commander, or Department Council of Administration, may be made direct to the Commander-in-Chief.

The following opinions were rendered without reference to the Judge Advocate General:

The Woman's Relief Corps, though auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic, is yet a distinct and independent organization, and not subject to the control of any Department or Post. Any attempt by a Post to exercise affirmative jurisdiction over a Corps is without authority. Advisory action is the limit of both duty and authority.

A Post may instruct its Quartermaster to collect the dues of the Post in any proper manner which may be deemed necessary for the best interest of the Post.

A Department Commander may, with the advice and consent of the Council of Administration, annul the charter of a Post. (Sec. 4, Art. 1, Chap. 5, Rules and Regulations.)

The subject of Opinion No. 6 requires remark. Suggestions from several sources entitled to respect were made to Headquarters in the interest of comrades residing in the Dominion of Canada, who desired the organization of Posts of the Grand Army within that jurisdiction.

Upon examination of our law on the general subject, notwithstanding the precedent already set by the action of the Encampment on that question to the heads of Departments at Washington, and urge observance of existing law giving preference "for appointments to civil offices" to "persons honorably discharged from the military and naval service by reason of disability resulting from wounds or sickness incurred in the line of duty."

The committee assembled and performed its duty. The commendatory action of the Encampment was duly promulgated by General Order.

As to what may have resulted from this action I have no official knowledge. I am personally aware that in one Department an organization has been effected. That the National Encampment and the Grand Army at large is responsible for whatever may have happened since its indorsement was so unreservedly given, and for what may in the future happen through the instrumentality of the Union, is undoubtedly true; this every comrade should understand.

The situation is anomalous. For the transaction of a business requiring the greatest possible tact; trenching dangerously near to the line of partisan interest; peculiarly open to the imputation of sordid motive and end, we have given the loan of our great name and greater influence, without retaining the power in the prosecution of the ends proposed to name one of the agents, to supervise any of the plans, to call for a report, or to know what is either proposed or accomplished either for or against our peace or honor.

I submit it to you that there ought to be definition and determination of the extent to which you are willing to stand sponsor for the Union. The time to do this is before there shall have been serious complaint, and before the approaching political contests shall be upon us, when, more than these will wish to thrust us, and with which indiscreet friends will be sure to entangle us if afforded but the shadow of an opportunity.

PENSIONS.

Your Committee on Pensions will on their own behalf make report upon the condition and prospects of legislation on the subject with which they are charged.

I desire to acknowledge the ability and industry with which they have discharged their duties, and to bear witness that failure thus far to realize all of our just expectations is through no fault or neglect of theirs. There are certain general matters of which I may take note without trenching too far on the committee's ground. Failure to accomplish that we aim for, seems at times to blot out the memory of the great things worthy of our country that have been done.

We are citizens as well as veterans, we are sharers in the responsibilities, in the glory, in the shame, if shame there be, as well as in the benefits that may flow from wise legislation and just administration. I think that, in spite of all failures we may lament, our country has been so great in her generous justice on this very subject of pensions, that it is due we acknowledge it, if but by a statement on our records of the simple aggregates of payment made and the number of the beneficiaries.

The whole number of persons, who, on account of the war of the rebellion, have been borne upon the pension rolls in the period from 1861 to June 3, 1886, is 561,881.

The whole amount paid to these persons during that period is $830,840,020.18.

By the courtesy of Comrade Black, Commissioner of Pensions, I am able to state in advance of the general publication of the result of operations for the year ended that for the year ending June 30, 1886, there were issued 81,422 pension certificates, that for the month of June alone there were issued 10,375 certificates, and that for the same fiscal year the payments were $65,747,380.

The new names added to the rolls foot up 43,166, of which 2,31[illegible] were restoration.

These are great results, and whilst they in no wise turn us aside from pursuing our further just and temperate demands, they should end unjust and captious criticism whether aimed against the administration of the law or the law itself.

Our last Encampment renewed its recognition of the value to our comrades of the work of the "Army and Navy Survivors' Division of the Pensions Office," and directed that a general order issue explaining the nature and value of the work done, and inviting the active co-operation of all.

General Orders, No. 5, current series, was issued in compliance with this mandate. I am in receipt of a letter from the Commissioner, which will be printed in the report of the Adjutant-General, which states that not more than 70 per cent. of our Posts have yet been heard from on this subject, and urging active measures to induce the delinquents to send forward their lists. Too much cannot be said in praise of this instrumentality. The name and post-office addresses of over 200,000 ex-soldiers and sailors have been gathered by it and so arranged with reference to service and organization as to be at the call of any inquirer. To quote from the Commissioner's letter, "During the past 12 months 23,302 cases have been supplied with lists of officers and enlisted men, and in many hundreds of these late whole cases has hinged upon the evidence of a man, and we frequently find that the one missing link has been waited and searched for, perhaps, for years." For the benefit of applicants 144,970 names and addresses have been furnished the past year.

In response to inquiries sent through National Headquarters more than 1,300 addresses have been found and furnished. I have several times visited the Division of the Pensions Office and there saw in the proofs that again and again the meritorious cases of comrades which had lain for years undecided, or perhaps rejected, have been rescued from abandonment and finally allowed through resort to its files.

I beg to impress upon the Encampment that every name furnished is a good work done, and that the neglect of any Post to do this easy and costless duty is greatly to be regretted. The establishment of National Headquarters at Washington naturally suggested to many comrades, whose cases were delayed, an appeal for aid to the Commander-in-Chief; such appeals came in large number, and they were laid before that Comrade Commissioner with such suggestion or request as seemed right.

I have pleasure in saying that all such cases received the most prompt attention, for which my obligations are due and heartily tendered.

You will allow me one further suggestion on this general subject: We strive with all good faith to keep a wide distance between all our Grand Army concerns and partisan political action or alliances. It is inevitable that whenever we interest ourselves through any of our acknowledged agencies in pending or proposed legislation, we should be subjected to criticism, and by the thoughtless or malignant charged with violating our known principles and purposes. Hitherto purely we have thus escaped giving cause for just complaint. The deliverances of the National Encampment and the efforts of its Committee on Pensions have been so wholly devoted to the carrying into effect of existing law, or the enactment of new legislation necessary to make good the plain bargain that there should be no discrimination against the current or resulting from the service, and so free from any appearance of seeming to set a price on patriotism, that as a rule the good faith of our acts and purposes has been admitted.

Heretofore our efforts have been to get legislation; we are threatened now with a situation that compels us to deprecate some that is proposed profoundly in our interest.

In view of the large sums that would be required to satisfy measures of pension legislation—whose passage is now almost assured—it has been proposed in the lower House to add to every such bill a taxing clause by which shall be raised the money necessary to discharge the debt created. The source from which this unusual proposition comes makes it seem serious. It is not necessary that the motive of the proposal be at all called in question; presuming it to be patriotic and well intended it is all the more to be watched and defeated. The Pension Committee, perceiving the danger, addressed me their letter of July 1, 1886, to which I gave currency in General Order, No. 21, current series. I think it a fit subject for the action of the Encampment by way of petition or protest. Such a policy would be an end of legislation. It would call into activity upon every bill for the benefit of pensioners, or those who should be pensioned, the antagonistic views on taxation and revenue which have divided the economists of the world into hostile camps for 500 years. If there were no other reasons for not asking the action of the Pensions Office and Committee upon