

Trying to Make Uncle Sam Pay Up on All Sorts of Peculiar Claims



GEORGE WASHINGTON PUT IN A CLAIM FOR THE MONEY HE PAID HIS BARBER DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR. THE BILL WAS PAID.

BY H. O. BISHOP.

FROM the birth of this nation right down to the present day it has been the custom for many persons in all sections of the country to go upon the theory that the Treasury in Washington was in constant danger of overflowing, and that bins of gold and silver coin and bundles of greenbacks were spilling out into the streets and were swept away in the gutters. They think they may relieve the pressure by fling strange and wonderful claims.

In the minds of a great many men and women Uncle Sam is pictured as a benevolent, easygoing old gentleman who hasn't a business thing in the world to do except stand at the open doors of the Treasury with a long-handled shovel in his hands, ready and eager at any old time of the day or night to scoop out the golden shekels to any one who happens to make a claim for anything from their great-grandpa's Sunday coat and pants that disappeared during the revolutionary war to a lost mule or liberty bond of the present period.

That queer little worm known to physicians, druggists and the scientific fraternity as the "leech" is downright lazy and absolutely devoid of even the elementary principles of "persistence," as compared with some of the people who file claims against the federal government. Leeches will give up now and then and quit after pursuing their quest for a time. Government "claimants," however, are different. They stick it out as long as there is thought in their heads or vigor in their feet. These determined folk will trail a claim through various governmental channels year after year until they are inclined official gets tired of seeing it cluttering up his files or desk and will disapprove it in order to get rid of it and its herders.

It must not be supposed, though, that such disposal of a claim forevermore discourages the claimant. Oh, no! Early the next morning he is at the office of his representative or senator, all primed and smiled with facts and figures for either a reopening of the case or the introduction of a special bill. The Congress is designed to get the much desired money from Uncle Sam. And then the long

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"Breakfast, dinner, port and club cyder; brandy and port in the evening." "Club cyder and half a dozen lemons." "Club cyder" was one of Mr. Burr's favorite drinks. He would occasionally go without brandy, but never without "cyder." It is perhaps fair to assume that the "cyder" of that ancient period was not limited to such meager dimensions as one-half of a bushel of apples.

A frantic S. O. S. was recently received at the Treasury from an over-careful housewife who lives in the middle West. It appears that this particular lady, after washing the supper dishes and putting them away in the cupboard, picked up the evening paper and commenced reading about numerous thefts of liberty bonds in all sections of the country. She became greatly excited and, fearing that she had been the victim of a burglary during the night, she removed her one lone bond from the old kitchen clock, where it had been secured for several years, and hid it in the kitchen stove, confidently believing that no burglar would dream of looking there for a hidden treasure.

When Washington assumed the duties of commander-in-chief he immediately bought five war horses with his own money. At the close of the war he rendered a claim for reimbursement.

Some of the most interesting items contained in the above mentioned book are as follows: "To barber, in full, 5 guineas, 18 shillings and 4 pence." "To cash paid for cleaning the house which was provided for my headquarters." "To cash for recovering my pistols, which were stolen, and for repairing the same." "To expense of party of Oneida Indians on a visit to me and for presents to them." "To the expense of Maj. Cary A. Harrison, my aid-de-camp, on the up-

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MANY of the Claimants Have Just and Reasonable Bills Against the Government, But Others Are Unique—George Washington's Bill for His Barber. Aaron Burr's Bills for "Club Cyder"—Interesting Civil War Claims—Army Motor Cycle Is Alleged to Have Killed Peacock, "the Only Fowl of Its Kind in the County," and Farmer Files a Bill—The "Plug" Hat Used as a Foot Ball by United States Sailors—When an Airplane Destroyed a Truck Patch.

After reciting the valiant record of the long-departed old fighter and giving the full details of the present straitened financial circumstances of his descendants, the lawyer says: "I am prepared to admit that this is quite an ancient claim, but I suppose it is all right, for I never knew, in all my practice now of over forty-seven years, of our respected Uncle Sam sneaking out and paying a bill by pleading the statute of limitations, and, if I have good success, perhaps I may find some unpaid bill incurred in the partial execution of the tower of Babel, or some of Old Noah's unpaid bills for lumber, carpentering and plumbing, incurred in the matter of the ark, and as a result, his claim for the same may be paid."

In times of war it sometimes becomes necessary for soldiers to help themselves when their commanding officers refuse to pay for their necessities. One of the most famous of these "self-help" cases was that of a soldier who, during the war between the states, it seems that a soldier named "Cyder" had taken to himself to keep on going when he had a toothsome variety of livestock in a barnyard, and less time than it takes to tell it, the soldier emerged from that barnyard with a young pig, a head of cabbage, a hen, a turkey and a pair of chickens. He took every ham, shoulder and side of bacon he had. I wish you would either send me some more hogs or pay for my good smokehouse."

Comparatively few persons are aware that \$50,000,000 has been lying in the United States Treasury since away back in the seventies waiting for people to claim it. This money was appropriated by Congress to pay for many bales of cotton that were taken by the northern armies while the war was in progress. When the southern planters whose cotton had been taken commenced sending in their claims they realized that an unfortunate joker had been slipped in the bill. This joker compelled them to take the "ironclad oath of loyalty," in which they were obliged to swear that they had never bore arms against the Union. Of course, they were unwilling to do this, and as a result, all either participated in the fighting against the north or were heartily in favor of the south.

There is a lawyer living along the St. Lawrence river, in the state of New York, who possesses an extraordinarily keen sense of humor. The money he sent with a claim for the leather equivalent of coat and pants lost by a soldier of the revolutionary war kept the Treasury officials and clerks smiling for days.

THE Gen. H. H. Sibley war tent claim is another that has been hanging fire for many years. Long before the civil war Sibley invented an army tent which was adopted by the government and used for a long period. Sibley took the side of the south, and as a result, his claim for the tent was sidetracked. The claimant made slight progress during the ensuing years.

Even fish figured in a civil war claim against the government. A handful of shad was sent to the Washington officials to prove that prior to the marching of soldiers through a certain section of Kentucky a well known minister of the gospel had a large pond on his premises, and that the shad were taken from the pond and confiscated by the soldiers. It was, of course, impossible to agree as to the size, weight and number of fish, and therefore, the claim made slight progress during the ensuing years.

Lightning by soldiers of an old thoroughbred mare which was proudly chaperoned by her two-month-old mule colt so badly that both the horse and colt fell over a high precipice was the basis of a claim that was kept lively for a number of years.

Based upon the large number of claims that were filed directly after the civil war it would seem as though every fruit tree existing in the night were being visited and stripped by soldiers with keen appetites for fresh fruit. It appears that nothing was left but the branches and leaves in most cases. In several instances it was claimed that all of the branches were torn off and the fruit eaten as the men continued on their march.

Chicken coops and duck ponds evidently were as greatly appreciated as the orchards. If the claims are to be relied upon, no poultry houses were overlooked during the years of fighting.

I had the only peacock in this county and now one of the Army motorcyclists with two men, one on and one in the little tub alongside, came in to my place and kills my handsome bird, and they didn't even look back, but headed straight for the next county on a lightning speed. The representative, of course, will seriously pass the buck to the War, Treasury and other departments. The "plug" hat was once the subject of extensive and bitter correspondence between its owner and

the federal authorities. The wearer of the silk title was "taking in" the city of New York, and he was strolling in the vicinity of the Brooklyn navy yard. A crowd of healthy, happy and blooded young sailors, who had just landed from a long cruise in foreign waters, was starting lively sections of Broadway and other thoroughfares, and he was very young fellows. It happened to be especially true with this crowd of sailors. They cited and tried to give vent to the exuberance of their feelings as a result of their happy homecoming or blow up. Folly but firmly they removed the "plug" hat from the gentleman's head and used it as a foot ball all the way across Brooklyn, finally attaching it to a piece of rope and ceremoniously dragging it behind them into each of the many varied places visited. They tenaciously clung to it until the return to the ship, where it was proudly exhibited as a choice souvenir.

The owner had no sense of humor, and instead of quietly buying a nice new hat, he had the hat repaired and damages from the government and to have all of the sailors dishonorably dismissed from the Navy. No damages were collected and a sailor was fired.

MANY years ago Kansas provided a claim that caused considerable bitterness of feeling. It was known as the "Black Bob" claim. It seems that a band of Shawnee Indians, through the chief, who was known as "Black Bob," had been granted, in 1851, 35,000 acres of land in southeastern Kansas, about 200 acres for each man in the tribe. The treaty specified that the land should be held in common by the tribe, but if any one Indian wanted to take his portion in severalty, he was at liberty to do so, and could obtain a patent from the Indian commissioner in Washington.

In the days of the civil war Quantrell and his band came along and seized the "Black Bob" claim over upon certain speculators and officeholders that they might get possession of some mighty good property by taking advantage of the severalty clause of the treaty. After the war was over and the "Black Bob" band wandering back to their old homes they found the rich, timbered and well watered sections of the reservation in the possession of strangers. A white man, purporting to be an Indian, would send in a claim for a patent for his 200 acres, and soon it would be received nicely embellished with huge red seals and ribbons. One of the most cruel features of this fraud was the disappearance of several hundred settlers from the east, on whom the speculators unloaded the property. During the time the title was perfect, these settlers had put a quarter of a million dollars worth of improvements in the form of houses, barns and fences on the property before the return of the original claimant. The farmer's claims were placed before Washington for years. In fact, there are people today who are still waiting for their "Black Bob" land, in which they have a claim.

Land claims have always cluttered

with the store molar at government expense was a civilian laborer at Governor Island, when a hefty hemlock plank failed to stay put, hitting him in several places, seriously damaging his artificial chewing apparatus. Many a man would have considered himself lucky to have been comfortably sitting in the shoes of a certain Texas man named Johnson, whose home is perched on a nice grassy, tree-covered hill on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. One afternoon in early autumn, when he was comfortably sitting in a big hickory rocking chair with his feet resting against the trunk of a monster magnolia tree, he observed a good-sized brilliant object bobbing up and down on the lazy waves a few hundred yards from the shore. A Mexican servant was dispatched in the electric launch to make an investigation.

He returned with a five-gallon metal cask, which upon investigation was found to contain pure grain alcohol. He even looked up the skid five gallons into his spacious concrete-lined cellar for future reference. He did not. He is a stickler for laws. He insists that property ought to be put through the usual legal channels. He, therefore, delivered his precious cask to the United States customs officer, to whom he gave his address, mildly suggesting that when the original owner failed to put in an appearance within a reasonable time the pretty little cask and its contents be forwarded to his palatial home, down where the gulf breezes gently purr through his grove of massive magnolias. But his said wife and four charming daughters more frequently observe him sitting there with a faraway expression on his features, softly singing, "Oh, where, oh where, has my little cask gone? Oh, where, can it be?"

ON New Year day of this year Representative Drane of Florida received a claim which he thinks is one of the most unique now on file. It was from an old gentleman in his district who fought in the Indian war of 1837. The old gentleman says a horse was shot from under him and he would like to collect the sum of \$150.

The fact that a President of the United States was riding on a special train, was grasped as good and sufficient reason why the United States government should pay for the loss of a haystack that was supposed to have been set fire by a spark from the presidential train. The farmer seemed to be quite peeved with the President and every other government official when his bill failed to get an O. K.

A truck farmer on Long Island, whose specialty is growing fancy spinach and tomatoes for the people of New York, was rudely shocked one beautiful spring day, when one of Mr. Burleson's mail airplanes got out of his budding plants and a few seconds later made a scrambled landing right in the middle of the truck patch. Mr. Farmer wanted the Treasury or Congress to quickly come across with \$1,320 worth of damages. When Mr. Burleson is not postmaster general, he dons serviceable jeans and, with his ever-present umbrella tucked beneath his arms, goes a-farming on his spacious Texas acres. He, therefore, knows all about garden kale and its financial possibilities. It

has been permanently impaired. He feels that a cash payment of \$10 per acre would be about right. The War Department placed a new roof on a huge rented building during the war, and otherwise improved it by painting it inside and outside, building new fences around it and constructing a new cement sidewalk. "Well," he says, "I might suspect that the old gentleman had gone into the dental business. While that would not exactly be the true status of affairs, nevertheless Uncle Sam, not so very long ago, set a check for \$50,000, angrily protesting that the roof is not the kind he likes, and that his wife and children, ridiculous as the color of the paint, which is pure white. Asserting that a new rope clothes line, a hammock and a live fall of pure white disappeared from her property while soldiers were encamped half a mile away, an indignant widow has put in a claim for \$4.45.

AN avalanche of claims are flooding every government department at Washington as a result of the world war. Land owners whose cantonments and other war establishments were located have evolved some wonderful damage claims. Changing a muddy dirt road to a concrete one is condemned by a farmer as being inferior to his hot air. He said it jams their legs and wears out their shoes every few weeks. His grief can be assuaged, he intimates, by a sizable amount of good coin is pure. Another farmer is quite certain that the fertility of the soil on which cantonment buildings were located

was not at all surprising when he recommended the cutting of the L. I. farmer's claim to \$500. Those who are not particularly conversant with national housekeeping would perhaps be surprised if they were to see a communication addressed to Uncle Sam asking him to set a false teeth. They might suspect that the old gentleman had gone into the dental business. While that would not exactly be the true status of affairs, nevertheless Uncle Sam, not so very long ago, set a check for \$50,000, angrily protesting that the roof is not the kind he likes, and that his wife and children, ridiculous as the color of the paint, which is pure white. Asserting that a new rope clothes line, a hammock and a live fall of pure white disappeared from her property while soldiers were encamped half a mile away, an indignant widow has put in a claim for \$4.45.

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ONE MAN THINKS THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PAY HIM \$17, WITH COMPOUND INTEREST, FOR PANTS AND COAT LOST BY AN ANCESTOR IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

SECRETS OF A FORTUNE TELLER

By Rachel Mack

I am familiar with a typewriter as I am with a wireless telephone—and it's a sad but true fact that I wouldn't know a page of shorthand from a Chinese laundry sign. But, just the same, I'm not such a frost when it comes to offering the post-graduate course to ship-wrecked stenographers.

Yesterday about eleven (me Kate Ushers in the most valetudinarian female of the species) I went into the town of Boston to establish a secret correspondence for the purpose of conveying intelligence concerning the enemy's movements and designs. In fact, she's got the features.

Suddenly I understand what the blight is: The awful clothes she's draped in—a durable, mud-colored dress and a weatherproof hat that would have been a liability to Venus herself! She looks like Weary Willie's twin sister all dressed up for a mushroom luncheon.

"I'm a graduate of the best business school in town," she says, "and I'm a graduate of the first ten recommended in my class for vacancies. They got me a good job, but the conversation again blocked by the weeps."

"But you lost it in record time," I finish. "Yes," she admits, "when they cut down the office force I was the first to go. Your walk-in papers before you could show them how valuable you were! Pretty raw. What next?"

"I went back to the business school and asked for another placement. They got me a new position and gave me a number-one recommendation. And job number two dies a natural death also." I venture. "No, girly," she says, "I didn't have the nerve to go back to headquarters and tell them I had failed again."

"You've been out on Your Own," I suggest, "act in as your own little employment agency. Any luck?" "None," she announces. "I've walked the streets till my shoe leather is wearing out, and it's the same old story at every office where I answer an ad. They've just employed a stenographer. And generally," she says, "I should wonder, girly," I says, "kind but true, 'such things happen in the best regulated offices.'"

"Then read my future," she begs, "and tell me what's in store for me." "No, girly," she says, "I'm not telling fortunes today. What you need is a little common sense talk and you're going to get it right now. Prepare for the personal inquiries."

and who refused you jobs all week-end or women?" "Why, men, in every case," she says, "lookin' surprised." "Well," she says, "I'm charged you from your two positions, and I want damages." "Question number three: How much money have you got put away?" "One hundred and seventy-five dollars," she says sort of nervous, "and I'm saving every cent of it for a rainy day."

"Exactly," I says, "and the rainy day has just turned a frump-dry to tell you that you're a frump!" "A what?" she stutters, not believin' her ears.

"I'm careful, and a good speller." "Some accomplishments," I says. "Question number two: What did you charge you from your two positions, and I want damages." "Question number three: How much money have you got put away?" "One hundred and seventy-five dollars," she says sort of nervous, "and I'm saving every cent of it for a rainy day."

"I see she's getting excited, but I mean to keep quiet." "Do you know why you lost your two jobs, and why you can't land another one?" "Simply because the men don't like you looks. What they all crave—whether they know it or not—is a neat, stylish female that's easy on the eyes. Dressed like that, you're a blot on the office landscape—you're a blemish on the scenery."

"Do you mean that I'm a frump?" she says, very dignified, "that looks count more than efficiency?" "Well," I says, "maybe looks don't count more, but they count first. After you've made yourself as necessary to the firm as the office furniture, you can afford to be a frump. Do you advise me to invest part of my money in a few clothes?"

"A regular up-to-date little workin' trousseau and a manicure thrown in. This note," I says, scribbled fast on one of my business cards, "is to be handed to the head saleslady in a certain shop. It calls for a blue serge suit with plenty of pep; six neat shirt waists, a nifty black sailor, tan walk-in pumps, and a supply of odds and ends to complete the outfit."

"Well," she says, "it seems rather extravagant, but I'm going to follow the program. It's my only chance!" "No chance at all, dearie," I informs her. "It's a sure thing. After one good look at yourself in a full-length mirror, you'll be able to stroll up to the biggest mahogany desk in town and offer your services like you're doing them a favor. Good luck!" I says, "and no charges till you've drawn your first pay check!"

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SHE WANTS THE GOVERNMENT TO REIMBURSE HER FOR A LIBERTY BOND, WHICH SHE HID IN THE KITCHEN STOVE TO KEEP BURGLARS FROM GETTING IT.

night gets under way. There is never a let-up as long as that representative or senator holds his job. The only way they can ever get away from the never-say-quit claimant is to either die or meet with defeat, and even then the federal government happens sooner or later. But the first man who greets their successor as he climbs off the train at the station is this same Mr. Claimant, who effusively shakes hands and insists upon carrying his suit case out to the taxi into which he places it, and himself. During the ride to the hotel he pours his many-voiced woes into the politely attentive ear of the new and somewhat bewildered legislator, assuring that embryonic statesman that he will see to it that he is re-elected to Congress for the next twenty years, providing his claim is properly looked after.