

per annum. Had this man been on the ordinary pension list and married a year before his death a girl of eighteen, and she, in turn, had lived as long as her aged husband, viz., to the age of one hundred and nine, Uncle Sam would be paying that woman a pension up to the year 1950. There are now seven widows of revolutionary soldiers on the pension rolls. The oldest of these is Lovey Aldridge, and her age is ninety-seven. She lives in Los Angeles, Cal. The other widows are Nancy Cloud of Virginia, aged eighty-four; Esther S. Damon of Vermont, aged eighty-three; Nancy Jones of Tennessee, aged eighty-three; Rebecca Mayo of Virginia, aged eighty-four; Mary Sneed of Virginia, aged eighty-one, and Nancy Weatherman of Tennessee, aged eighty-seven. It has been estimated that widows of the veterans of the late civil war may be living in the year 2000 A. D.

The President's widows get, you know, \$5,000 a year by special act of Congress. Mrs. Gen. Grant and Mrs. Garfield and Mrs. Tyler, I think, are still drawing pensions. Mrs. President Lincoln received \$3,000 a year from 1870 to 1882, when the amount was increased to \$5,000. Mrs. John A. Logan gets \$40 a week, and the widow of Admiral Faragut receives \$2,000 a year. A number of widows of noted generals of the late war have received or are receiving pensions. Among these are the widows of E. D. Baker, George H. Custer, the Indian fighter, of Robert Anderson, the hero of Fort Sumter, of Daniel McCook and Frank P. Blair.

Among the biggest single pension amounts now granted are those given to widows on account of the clause in the pension act of 1896, which makes the widow's pension date back to the death of her husband. The other day a widow who had been married in 1858, and whose husband had died in 1867, applied for a pension. She claims the right to be paid \$8 a month for every month back to the death of her husband, a period of thirty years. The law, I am told, will give her the pension. Another widow from Ohio, whose husband died in 1871, married again about fifteen years later. She now claims a pension on account of the death of her first husband for the fifteen years of widowhood and wants it in a lump.

There are many rare old papers among these pension records. Among the widows, for instance, I find an autograph showing that Blaine's great-grandmother drew a pension for a long time as a revolutionary widow. This woman was the wife of Col. Ephraim Blaine. He was a rich man, a great friend of Washington, and he did good service during the revolution. He died in 1804, and the application for pension was not made until 1848. Mrs. Blaine's autograph was evidently made with a trembling hand, but the letters are almost as plain as those which her famous grandson used to make. There are papers here from Benedict Arnold, there are autograph letters of George Washington, and there are applications for land warrants from Abraham Lincoln, U. S. Grant, W. T. Sherman, Winfield Scott and Jefferson Davis. I have traced the autographs of these men as they were made in applying for warrants when they were young. Sherman asked for two quarter sections of land, one for his Florida services, and the other for his record in the Mexican war. Gen. Scott got his bounty for his bravery in the war of 1812, and Jefferson Davis was granted his for his services as an officer in our war with Mexico. President Lincoln's grant was given for his service in the Black Hawk Indian war, and John A. Logan received 160 acres for his Mexican war record.

During my walk through the office with the commissioner I referred to the

petition which is being circulated in Indianapolis among the old veterans. This petition requests Congress to pay the pensions in a lump on the basis that every soldier now living will last for twenty years. These men want the twenty years' pension given at once, and if their request is granted they are willing to release Uncle Sam from all pension in the future. I asked the commissioner what would be the effect of such a law. He said: "It would necessitate the paying of least \$3,000,000,000, and the probability is that within three weeks a large number of the pensioners would have lost all they got from the government, and something else would have to be done for them. There is, of course, no possibility of such movement succeeding. It would not be seriously considered for an instant by Congress."

It is not generally known that the pension office has a rogue's gallery. The commissioner gave me my first introduction to it, and we spent some time together looking over the photographs of the impostors who make their living out of the old soldiers. There are hundreds of such men now going over the country, and there are other hundreds who are serving their terms in the penitentiaries. Some of these men pose as special examiners and draw money for advance fees from the office.

Others impersonate the medical examiners in the pension bureau and charge for their services. James Ferguson, for instance, who is now serving a sentence in the penitentiary at Concord, N. H., has been going over the country representing that he was employed by the pension bureau to appoint a special examiner in each county. He would call upon some farmer and offer him the place at a salary of \$75 per month. When he had filled out the man's application he would tell him that the government required that every examiner should have a pair of handcuffs and revolver, and that for this purpose \$10 must be sent with the application. This \$10 would be put in the letter containing the application, and on the way to the postoffice with the man Ferguson would change the envelopes so that he got the \$10. Buckskin Joe, a fat, jolly looking, illiterate fellow, represented that he was a detective sent out by the pension office, and told the soldiers that he would get their pensions for them if they would pay him \$5. This man has been twice sentenced for such crimes, though he is now, I believe, at large. The Rev. C. W. Lewis of Chattanooga, a colored man, operated almost entirely with widows. He would apply for pensions and fleece the widows out of a certain amount for delivering the mail to them. Another impostor claimed to be the son of Fred Douglass. This man operated entirely with colored people. In addition to these there are impostors who pretend to be doctors, and also a large number who, under the guise of pension attorneys, do their best to fleece both the government and the pensioners out of their just dues. The laws are such, however, that it is not easy to fleece the soldier who uses ordinary care as to getting his pension. The real truth of the matter is that there is no necessity for an attorney in pension cases. The requirements of the government are plainly expressed, and all papers will be promptly sent upon application.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

#### WASHINGTON LETTER.

Washington, D. C., Jan. 20th, 1898.—To say that the McKinleys' first public reception, which occurred last night, was "the most brilliant ever held in the White House," as the society columns narrate all such occasions, would

be somewhat overstating it; but it was a gorgeous function nevertheless, and the stately old mansion has seldom looked better. It being the initial effort of the President and his wife, to settle their status as entertainers and indicate what may be expected in the social line of the present administration, no pains or expense were spared to satisfy the most carping critic in the smallest details. For twenty-four hours beforehand the sound of the saw and the hammer was heard, preparing stalls and stands for wraps and umbrellas, and converted one of the big windows into a temporary door of exit, with a wide "bridge" leading down to the pavement outside, to be carpeted and screened with awnings, according to the time-honored custom when an unusual crush is expected. All day long twenty florists were busy as bees transforming the big rooms into veritable bowers of beauty. They wreathed the crystal chandeliers with asparagus, and the mirrors with ropes of smilax, and the columns with garlands starred with red carnations; they banked the mantles high with orchids and roses, ranged tall palms and blooming azalias along the corridors and made jungles of ferns and tropical trees in every corner; they fringed each doorway with trailing vines and put magnificent portiers of flowers in all the parlors; and plaques and bouquets and vases of flowers wherever a flower could be set. The blue-room, especially, where the receiving party were to stand, called for their highest art, and when finished, suggested a fairy grotto in a spectacular play before the queen comes in to break the spell of silence. From the central chandelier garlands of smilax were strung to each corner of the vast apartment, the garlands thickly set with tiny electric lights in the national colors, twinkling like stars amid the green. The same red, white and blue lights shone from a huge pyramid of ferns under the chandelier; and the mirror, completely veiled in smilax, was framed in lights of emerald green. The east room was resplendent in the artistic arrangement of electric lights, which studded the white and gold ceiling and the double rows of columns.

As usual on such occasions in Washington, the skies wept profusely during the reception. Promptly at eight o'clock the dripping crowd began to arrive. As the first carriage rolled up to the well-carpeted, well-sheltered vestibule, the Sixth Cavalry band, composed of twenty-five musicians led by Prof. Luchsinger, heralded the receiving party, which came sweeping down the grand stairway headed by Col. Bingham and Lieut. Gilmore. The President, with the same intent, inscrutable look on his face which it wore Inauguration day, almost carried his frail wife on his arm; and closely following came the members of the cabinet, and their ladies. In the Blue Room some twenty invited guests had assembled, including Miss Mabel McKinley, Miss Barber, several daughters of the cabinet and two or three young army officers, who remained behind the receiving line throughout the evening. Mrs. McKinley was immediately seated in a throne-like chair of blue velvet at the President's left hand, while the rest of the receiving party stood. She wore a beautiful gown of white brocade satin, with diamond ornaments and a white aigrette in her short dark hair. She chatted smilingly throughout the evening and shook hands with several hundred of people, with no apparent fatigue. Mrs. Hobart was a bit late and did not join the receiving group until the corps diplomatic had begun their profound salaams. She looked regally handsome in cream satin, with a superb train, square-cut bodice and double necklace of diamonds and pearls.