BRAVE BREVET WIDOWS.

SPINSTERS WHO WOULD HAVE BEEN WIVES BUT FOR THE WAR.

One Reason Why There Are So Many Single Women About Forty Years of Age in This Country—Story of a Heroic Girl Who Deserves a Pension.

Last week I went to see my friend the colonel, a Virginian, who was a distinguished officer on the side of the South. Since the war his duties as consulting engineer have taken him all over the country, and, being a close observer, his opinions are entitled to respectful consideration. As we sat musing on the side of a lake and watching the moonlight sparkle in diamonds on the spindrift of the whitecap mountain, I saw a number of lady bathing suitings and heard them commenting in low, subdued voices on the glories of the night.

"Your maiden sisters," whispered the colonel, and then we fell into a long talk on the subject, the substance of which the colonel remembers.

"It is evident that some wife has unbuckled little in you," I laughed, "or you would not have you alone in this neighborhood."

"She is a real friend of the widows and she feels that I am quite safe with them within call," said the colonel.

"Did I thought you said they were marrying?"

"Yes I did, and when I said 'widows' I meant widows by brevet. Those ladies are now between forty and fifty years of age. Friends tell me that as girls they were very pretty. They are the best educated women I ever met, but they are serious pedants and misanthropes. They are alone now, but their loneliness cost them blood."

"Did thousands killed?" I interrupted.

"Not thousands killed! Let me explain. You may not know it. Let me explain. North and south there were killed in battle or died of disease fully 500,000 men, not counting those who were maimed. Of the men at the front who were the boys of battle fully nine-tenths were under thirty years of age. Now it is a law of nature that every male must have his mate, and every man who is killed or who dies prematurely and unmarried forces some woman to occupy his or remain single. This analogy is certain as, and as I have made a study of it, I started out with a theory to account for the number of single women over forty whom I meet with unvarying regularity in the north as well as in the south, and my theory is correct, that is why I call them, not old maids, but widows by brevet."

"It is a fact that many of the widows by brevet are never have had the husbands they might have married had there been no war, but in the great majority of cases they knew the man, for they had been neighbors, friends and acquaintances. I was a single man when in 1861 I took service out of my troop at Staunton, Va. Of the 1st men in the company there was not one married. I was then twenty-five and was the oldest man in the troop. One youngster was about eighteen, but I was bold, and I believe it was from the captain down every man who rode with me for Bull Run that July morning had a sweetheart and was engaged.

"When the war ended I checked off with a friend the original muster roll of that company. Sixty-two survived. The rest had gone down before the bullet or the more fatal disease of the camp. But that meant eighty girls in cold short Staunton when armistice went away to die. Then came war a soldier, worth the load that killed him, that didn't have some woman at home, mother, sister or sweetheart, whose all time, to mourn his taking off. The bullet seldom stopped in the body, at least if it did the man fell down on the battlefield, but winged in way over river and hill to find its final resting place in a woman's heart. Not of all her people who have suffered by the war, the heroic widow must entire my sympathies.

"I do not think I regard her from the standpoint of a sentimentalist, but I felt when congress was looking about for something to pension that it would have been a stroke of statesmanship and an evidence of chivalry and the brave widows been pensioned. You laugh. Will you let me state a case in point?

"I knew right here in New York quite a lady who deserves a pension for her brevet widhood far more than do many of the widows of full rank. This lady was engaged to be married to a young man, a member of the Seventh regiment, who he fought in a good family, and who held a position that would have made him rich in a few years had he kept close to business. So day set for his marriage was that on which the regiment marched to Washington. He saw the lady the night before and said he would remain here and join his regiment, which accompanied him, the day after the departure. Her her pride and her patriotism were strong in her love. She said: 'Go on with the regiment and the day after its