

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War



PATRIOTIC RECOLLECTIONS



A Letter from a Veteran [\(a\)](#)

Redwood, April 23, 1888

Mr. Black, Commissioner:

Deer Sir - I've just got another one 'o your postal cards telling me to go before the doctors and be examined. I've been getting these cards bout every new moon since I plied for an increase of my pension two years ago. I've been examined, and punched in the ribs, and sounded in the lungs, and made to bend over the back of a chair and perform all sorts a monkey shines in my shirt tail, till I feel ez I orter hav a salery with an agent to go ahead and stick up bills.

To begin with, you sent a couple of doctors up to Skin Creek, an it took em have an hour to find out that the reason why they couldn't find any circulation into my left leg was because it was made of wood. The next time you sent me a little cuss with glasses down to Swampville, and after fumblin me over long enough, he put my trus on hind side afor and said the pad was intended to brase up my spinal kolum. Three or four times after that you sent me odds and ends of doctors who couldn't tell the difference between an epiletptic syptom and a biled clam, and the last time you sent me before a full board of surgeons down to the county seat. They came to this conclusion, night as i could catch on, that something was wrong with my bladder. Now I have my opinions of a doctor who don't know the difference between a man's bladder and his bollux. It reminds me of the girl who asked her doctor's advise about her sweetheart because one of his kidneys was a little bigger than the other one and it didn't hang down so fur. Perhaps this is all right. It may be fun for the doctors. It was fun fur me fur a while, but now that you order me back again to the first two doctors up to Skin Creek, and probably expect me to start on the same old circus over again, I'm going to kick like a brindle steer.

Last summer, because of the friskyness of a pair of colts, my wooden leg got tangled and all chawed up to sinders in a mowing machine. I 'plied to the Surgeon General for a new leg, but he said that I'd only had the old one three years, and I'd have to wait two years more before the government could afford to make a hole in the *surplus* by getting me a new one. So I'm waiting and in all this interesting panarama of *examinations* I've been hobblin on one leg, and doin my best to prove that one of Uncle Sam's veterans, with one leg in the grave and the other damn near in, is better than a corpse by several percent. But honnlin' around in this way aint furst class fun fur a stiddy job. I've stood it fur a good while with out grumblin and i suppose, furnished a lot of fun fur the doctors, paying my own expenses. Meanwhile my natural leg, the one I brought away safe from the Wilderness, has took to

the rheumatiz till I'm almost sorry I did not drop it where i did the other one.

And about the only hope my well leg can give me now, is to serve as a sort of rudder when I'm sliding downstairs on my arse.

Now, Mr Commissioner, about the matter of increasing my pension, you may do just as you dam please. If you think that loosing one leg and the wilderness in 1864, blotted out the bullet through the body at Antietam in 1862, and if you think that the pension I have been gettin is full pay fur a set of busted insides that haint been in runnin order in more'n twenty years and never will be on this side of New Jerusalem, all right. If the government says so I'm a silent partner. Vut I'm a goin to tell you just between us that when the minie ball went through me at Antietam, it played the mischief with some of the important parts, and *it played fur keeps*. It cut something all to thunder. I don't know wether it was my liver, or my lungs, my gizzard or my guts, and your pet doctors den't seem to know as much about it as I do.

The plain fact is, and thats what I am driving at, I'm physically broke up and busted from my single heel to my chin whiskers and i gut busted up at Antietam before my leg was lost, and the record says so. They wanted to discharge me for the first whole through my body at Anteitam, and I wouldn't let them. I was bound to stick till we busted the Rebellion or till the Rebels busted me, with more bullet holes through my carcass, and I did. And now youve made me do as much marchin from piller to post in this hide-and-seek game with the doctors as would have took me from the Wilderness to the end of the war. If I wasn't good enough to march then, I'm damned if I'll do any more of it now, so you don't need to pay any more doctors charges fur me. You've been actually paying the doctors on the average about ninety six dollars a year for satvin off my claim, and thats more than you'd have to pay me if youd granted my increase at furst sight. You euchred me on my getting a cent of that ninety six dollars and now i am going to euchre the cussed doctors on getting any more of it. If i go before any more doctors for an examination you've got to do something more than send me a postal card. You'll have to haul me before 'em with a derrick.

Now I don't want to be sassy. I ain't built that way. But Mr Black, if you expect to blossom out as a Vice-President of the United States by buckin against the honest claim of an old veteran with one foot actually in the grave and the other dam near it, your gettin down more hay than you'll have time to cock up. You'll make about as much at that game as the Surgeon General will by veto'in wooden legs.

Respectfully with a dam good memory.
Unsigned

There are eight Redwoods in the US so it is hard, if not impossible to imagine where this letter originated. It was found some years ago in the National Archives in Washington D.C. The kind soul that sent this to me indicated that they didn't remember where it was located. The *Mr. Black* indicated in the letter, was the commissioner, John C Black who won the Medal Of Honor at Prairie Grove, Arkansas while a member of the 37th Illinois, He was, at the time, being considered as potential material to run for Vice President on the Republican ticket. Please note the original spelling from the letter is unchanged.

Submitted by:
Richard Brooks
Camp #149
Pennsylvania Department
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War
August 2001