

of valor, or from a comrade who gave up his life that his country might live. Unlike many organizations or associations of our country its members are scattered throughout the entire land and are not restricted to a certain territory, neither is it necessary for them to have certain qualifications in order to become members, but every man who risked his life to save the nation—from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Lakes to the Gulf—is considered, alike, entitled to membership.

Its sole object is the promotion of fraternal relations between, its members. No tie that binds brother to brother, in any fraternity is stronger than that which binds soldier to soldier. No initiation however startling or impressive can compare with that of the soldier, who waded through rivers of blood and marched over fields of carnage in defense of that emblem of freedom—his country's flag.

The Grand Army of the Republic is to-day the strongest and most powerful organization in the land. It can, if it so desires, control our important elections, and why should it not? Have not those who spilled their blood in their country's defense a right to say who shall be at the head of the government they so nobly defended? Because of their experience is not their choice likely to be a wise one? Your answer will undoubtedly be yes. There is not one of us here present who, when the soldiers rights are affected by some under hand legislation or by some proclamation of an unscrupulous executive, does not feel chagrined and who does not try to set matters right. What appreciation for their service would we show did we not interest ourselves in their welfare?

However, politics is not the only strong-hold of this grand fraternity for so we may rightly call it. What is to be done with the surplus in our national treasury? Shall we let it remain where it is and allow it to go on accumulating when it is doing no one any good and is draining the country of national currency.

What could be a wiser and more just measure

than to give it to the soldier? Did he not well earn it? By a recent act of congress a pension has been granted to every dependent soldier who served in the war and helped to crush the rebellion. This surplus in our treasury is thus put into circulation through the hands of our citizen soldiery, and this body being scattered throughout the country the money is distributed from one end of this broad land to the other, thus giving the soldier a great hold on our mercantile interests.

Again the Grand Army, being composed largely of members from the middle and lower classes, is opposed to monopolies and other organizations which tend to defraud the people and lower the standard of our government. Through their influence these combinations are to a certain extent kept in subjection.

True, different opinions are held as regards its political influence and the feasibility of the present pension system; but on a second sober thought does it not seem just that every deserving veteran should become the possessor of a pension certificate, when he has given the best part of his life to his country's service and is now perhaps destitute and no longer able to help himself?

"Arms that once could swing the saber
With a nerve of truest steel,
Now soon weary while at labor
From infirmities they feel.
Graceful forms of manly beauty
Glowed with health and honest pride,
Never faltering when duty
Led the way where heroes died.
Over mountain, through the valley,
On with buoyant hearts they go,
Sound the charge, advance or rally,
All were welcome near the foe.
Time has wrought a transformation,
Changed them as by artists skill,
They who saved this land and nation,
Now are going down the hill."

A unique feature of the organization is that there are no growing ranks from which recruits can be drawn in. In the words of a past commander in-chief,—

"No child can be born into it; no proclamation of president, edict of king, or ukase of Czar can command admission; no university or insti-