

HENRY O. BRIGGS.

MAY 26, 1898.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

Mr. SAMUEL W. SMITH, from the Committee on Invalid Pensions, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 2867.]

The Committee on Invalid Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 2867) granting an increase of pension to Henry O. Briggs, having examined the same and all the evidence respectfully report:

The bill as amended proposes to increase from \$8 to \$30 per month the pension of Henry O. Briggs, of Lansing, Mich., who enlisted December 16, 1863, as a private in Company L, Fourteenth New York Heavy Artillery, was wounded June 1, 1864, sent to hospital, Washington, D. C., transferred to Company A, Twenty-second Veteran Reserve Corps, and discharged September 12, 1865.

He was treated in different hospitals and transferred to Veteran Reserve Corps for shell wound of left arm.

He filed and established a claim under the general law for shell wound of left arm and was pensioned at \$4 therefor from discharge and increased to \$8 from February 23, 1887, for same and resulting weakness of arm, which rate he is still receiving.

In an application filed May 10, 1887, claimant alleged injury to head from explosion of a shell June 2, 1864, at Cold Harbor, Virginia, causing pains and dizziness in head, deafness of left ear, partial paralysis, and nervous debility.

This was rejected July 26, 1895. No record, and inability of claimant, aided by special examination, to prove origin in service, or existence at discharge, by satisfactory evidence.

A shell did explode near claimant and his arm was hit by a piece of it, and there is evidence tending to show that his hearing was impaired and his head and nervous system injured by the explosion, but not sufficient to satisfy the Pension Office.

The examining board at Lansing, Mich., January 21, 1891, rated him ten-eighteenths for shell wound of left arm and sixteen-eighteenths for injury to head and resulting deafness, dizziness, and paralysis.

Besides the disabilities alleged to be due to service, he, in 1866, had one of his legs fractured by a tree falling on him, and has since had the leg amputated above the knee. Claimant is 51 years of age and very needy.

His disabilities of service origin entitle him to pension at \$24 per month, and in view of his helplessness and necessities an increase to \$30 per month is fully warranted.

The bill is reported back with the recommendation that it pass, when amended as follows:

In lines 4 and 5 strike out the words "at the rate of forty-five dollars per month."

In line 8 strike out the words "the pension hereby granted to be" and insert in lieu thereof the following: "and pay him a pension at the rate of thirty dollars per month."

LANSING, September 25, 1897.

Hon. S. W. SMITH, M. C.,
Washington, D. C.

DEAR SIR: I was a private in Company L, Fourteenth New York Heavy Artillery Volunteers; was wounded at Coldharbor, Va., the 2d day of June, 1864, by explosion of a shell, one piece hitting my left arm near elbow. One of many affidavits is as follows:

STATE OF NEW YORK, County of Yates, ss:

On this 5th day of October, A. D. 1895, personally appeared before me, a notary public in and for the aforesaid county, duly authorized to administer oaths, John Covert, aged 49 years, a resident of the town of Benton, in the county of Yates and State of New York, who, being duly sworn according to law, states that he was acquainted with Henry O. Briggs, applicant for invalid pension, and known to the said John Covert to be the identical person of that name who enlisted or volunteered as a private in Company L, Fourteenth New York Regiment of Heavy Artillery Volunteers, and who, on or about ——— discharged ———.

That the said Henry O. Briggs, while in the line of his duty at or near Cold Harbor, in the State of Virginia, did, on or about the 1st day of June, 1864, become disabled in the following manner, viz: Deponent says he was in the same company and regiment with the above-named Henry O. Briggs, and about the 1st of June, 1864, the regiment was stationed at Cold Harbor, and on that day the regiment was ordered to swing round in flanking breastworks, and did so. Then the rebels had a cross fire on us, and then they did fire on us, and a shell exploded in our company, and said Briggs was wounded by the shell. Then we had orders to fall back, and did so. That Briggs was then on the ground and Stanley Biglow and myself carried said Briggs back in the main breastworks and laid him on the ground, and Biglow and I was with him three or four hours, and Briggs did not seem to know anything—seemed as though he was out of his head, and seemed to be deaf—could not make him hear anything. Then we were detached on the picket line and left Briggs on the ground.

Deponent further states that claimant was a sound and able-bodied man prior to enlistment.

STATE OF NEW YORK, County of Yates:

Sworn to and subscribed before me this day.

BENJAMIN L. HOYT, Notary Public.

I remember nothing from the time I was wounded until I partially recovered several weeks later at Little York (Pa.) Hospital. I found I was deaf in left ear, had severe pains in my head, and so nervous I could hardly control myself, also had very bad wound in left arm near elbow, with gangrene in it. Got a furlough soon as able and went to my uncle's at Savona, N. Y. Tried to get admitted in hospital at Elmira, N. Y., but my condition was such they did not want to take me, but offered to secure my discharge. As I was unable to do anything and had no home (my home was broken up by the death of my mother after I had entered the service) I did not want my discharge. I returned to Little York (Pa.) Hospital and was transferred to Invalid Corps and remained until discharged at close of the war. I

then came to Michigan, where my father had moved and remarried. I accidentally broke my right leg.

Affidavits of a few doctors:

STATE OF MICHIGAN, *County of Monroe*, ss:

In the matter of claim for pension of Henry O. Briggs: I first saw claimant February 1, 1866; was called this time to dress fracture of right leg; found a serious injury—a compound comminuted fracture. The sharp points of bone, splinters, and crushed muscular tissues, blood clots were removed; temporary dressings were applied, until reaction should occur, when I intended to apply permanent splints and dressing. Reaction did not take place at the expected time, even with the exhibition of best of stimulants, and after waiting three or four days I began to fear some serious injury had been overlooked. I noticed that the boy did not hear acutely and was slow in answering questions. I feared an injury of the head, but his companions in the woods assured me his head was not hurt. As they were felling a tree they saw he occupied a dangerous position; they shouted to him, he heard them, he saw his danger, but apparently could not move.

In conversation with his father I said: "There is something about your boy I do not understand. He should have recovered from the shock of the injury to the leg in twelve hours—it is now several days and no improvement." He reminded me of cases of shock to nervous system so often seen in soldiers. I then learned that claimant was an ex-soldier—had been injured by a shell exploding near him, rendering him unconscious for a long time. This cleared up the matter and I advised amputation, as I felt confident from my experience that the leg would never heal, as the nerve shock was permanent and interfered with all reparative process. The father objected to amputation. By request of all I did the best I could for claimant to save the limb until he removed to Hillsdale County in the summer of 1866. I firmly believe the injury to leg was the result of the injury to nervous system from the exploding shell, rendering the claimant unable to respond promptly to nerve impressions. I have no interest, etc. Am 63 years of age. Practiced thirty-five years.

SAMUEL L. JONES, M. D.,

*Late Assistant Surgeon Eleventh Michigan Infantry,
and Surgeon in Charge Brigade Hospital, Third Brigade,
Second Separate Division, A. C.*

Sworn and subscribed before me this 23d day of January, 1896.

JAMES H. GAGE, *Notary Public.*

PITTSFORD, MICH., *January 16, 1896.*

This is to certify that I became acquainted with Henry O. Briggs in 1866; that he came to me at that time and consulted me as a physician; that at this time he was on crutches, and had a diseased leg which had resulted from a compound fracture of both bones—an ununited fracture and in an unhealthy condition—with a necrosed state, with sinuses extending about the ankle, etc. His state of health at this time was bad and at this time he gave me a detailed account of his injuries he had received in the service—injury to head and left arm. I remember that at this time his hearing was lost in his left ear—a wound to the left arm which had very materially destroyed its usefulness.

After treating him some considerable time the leg did not repair well, but remained in a bad state. He received the care of Dr. McKeller, who continued the treatment. Subsequent to my care of his case and after the Doctor had treated him, I saw the case in consultation with Dr. McKeller upon several occasions. There was in his case developed a peculiar train of nervous phenomenon, or some form of neurosis, and which I attributed to his having received the injury to his head by the bursting shell while in the service. Upon these occasions he complained of vertigo; also pains in the head, a great confusion of ideas, and various other symptoms illy defined, but still very apparent. The shock incident to being struck on the head by a fragment of shell severe enough to destroy the hearing would very likely do great injury to other nerve centers. Besides that, I believe that this case received serious injury to the nervous system, from which he has not and will not recover.

VOLKERT P. WHITEBECK, M. D.

I have been a practitioner of medicine thirty-six years.

Sworn and subscribed before me, a notary public for Hillsdale County, State of Michigan, this 16th day of January, 1896.

LYSANDER G. STEEDMAN, *Notary Public.*

OSSEO, MICH., *January 31, 1896.*

I hereby certify that I have been acquainted with Henry O. Briggs since May 20, 1876; I was his father's family physician for fifteen years; I was first called to attend Henry O. Briggs in 1879; found him suffering from paralysis of right arm and left leg; he also complained of severe pains at base of brain; his nervous system was in a broken-down condition; he also had a large ulcer of right leg about 3 inches above the ankle, with a profuse discharge of foul-smelling pus. Upon examination of leg I found that ulcer was caused by an ununited fracture of bones of the leg. The tibia was badly necrosed. The paralysis improved under treatment, but he still suffered from nervous prostration and with a general debilitated condition of his system. I had charge of the case up to 1882, when he moved away from here.

DUNCAN MCKELLER, M. D.

Sworn and subscribed before me, a notary public for Hillsdale County, Mich.

J. HAWLEY MANN, *Notary Public.*LANSING, MICH., *January 14, 1896.*

This is to certify that I have known Henry O. Briggs, late a private of Company L, Fourteenth New York Heavy Artillery, for about ten years. He first consulted me about eight years ago, because of the diseased condition of his right leg. I then found necrosis of bones of ankle joint and of leg, extending up to lower third. I have been consulted frequently by said Henry O. Briggs for eight years last past in relation to his leg, and also because of what he called his nervousness, which was a neurosis resulting from an irritable brain, exhibited in numbness of his right arm and left leg. He has complained constantly of this nervous trouble ever since I have known him.

In May, 1893, his right leg was amputated above the knee, with the hope that his nerves would improve if he could be relieved of the constant source of irritation caused by the constantly extending necrosis. I am now compelled to say that in this hope I am disappointed, as there is no improvement in the neurosis. In fact, I think that his nervous troubles are much worse than they were three years ago at the time of amputation. I am now convinced that his brain trouble was not dependent upon irritation resulting from disease of his leg.

RUSH J. SHANK, M. D.

Subscribed and sworn to this 14th day of February, 1896.

E. A. SCUTT, *Notary Public.*LANSING, MICH., *January 14, 1896.*

This is to certify that I have known Henry O. Briggs, claimant for pension, for thirteen years last past. I was called on to visit him at his home the spring of 1883, and made a thorough examination of his case. I found him suffering with vertigo, also pains in the head, numbness of right arm and left leg, shell wound of left arm near elbow, deafness of left ear, and a diseased leg in an unhealthy condition, with necrosis of bones of ankle and leg. I endeavored to build up his nervous system, feeling assured that many of his ailments were due to the low condition of his system. I have seen Mr. Briggs at times when his vision was confused and he was unable to articulate or swallow. His memory is much impaired. I have treated Mr. Briggs continuously for twelve years for all of the above ailments and many others, illy defined but very apparent, and much of the time without remuneration, on account of his condition, and he being unable to pay.

I failed to make any permanent improvement and the low condition of his system made the amputation of his leg a necessity, so I advised it being removed at once, hoping by its removal there would be an improvement in his general health; but in this I was disappointed. The leg was amputated nearly three years ago, and I am compelled to say there is no material change in his condition, and I firmly believe that Mr. Briggs's condition is due to the injury received in the Army at the time he was wounded, shocking his system so that he never has and never will recover, and had it not been for this shock to his nervous system his leg could have been saved.

I have been in practice upward of thirty years.

C. N. HAYDEN, M. D.

Sworn and subscribed to before me this 13th day of February, 1896.

E. A. SCUTT, *Notary Public.*

For twenty years I suffered and doctored, with relatives' help, hoping and thinking that I would regain my health and save my leg. About ten years ago, losing all my helping friends and being without means, I became discouraged of ever being able to help myself, and feeling sure I must lose my leg (which was amputated about four years ago), I applied for a pension covering my disabilities. Four years ago last January I was assured my claim was on the completed list, but the new Administration put it in the special examiner's hands and allowed it to remain over two years in York State in one place without being acted on, and when action was taken the examiner passed by comrades who were with me and could have done me justice and interviewed two comrades that never knew anything about the battle of Cold Harbor, for they were not there.

I have worked all I could and found many helping friends, seeing my willingness to do all that I could and more than I was able to do, and feeling the justice of my claim, knowing that they would be recompensed some day. I was advised, on the merits of my claim, to put it in Congress, which I did, and a year ago last March it passed the Committee on Pensions in preference of thousands that were ahead of it. It failed to be brought up in the House and passed, which is a great loss to me in my condition. Now I am not fit to work at all, with the loss of one leg above the knee, a crippled arm, and my deafness; also in debt to doctors and others who have helped me to the amount of \$800, which must be paid when I get my pension. I think I am deserving of all your sympathy, for I should have been helped long ago, and I hope you will feel at liberty to be as liberal as the justice of my case demands, and I also hope you will feel it your duty that my pension commences from March, 1896, when it passed the committee, which would enable me to pay my obligations and live a little while in peace. Kindly do all you can for me now, for I don't think I will need it long.

Very truly, yours,

HENRY O. BRIGGS.

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