

JUSTICE TO THE COLORED TROOPS.

In an editorial article in the *New York Tribune*, a few days since, on the pay of colored troops, and the duty of Congress to pay off all arrearages, by an act which shall, at the same time, put all troops, white and black, on an equal footing for the future, the following statistics are given:—

"The 64th Massachusetts left home May 28, 1863. The regiment has lost 89 killed in battle, 20 by disease, 155 wounded, 115 missing (prisoners.) When these men enlisted, they were promised \$18 a month, and the usual allowances for clothing. Now mark: Every man who died in battle, or by disease, died actually in debt to the Government. For clothing which they wore, the Government charged them more than it paid them for their services, and the men who gave their lives to the country in the memorable assault on Fort Wagner, are brought in debt on the Quartermaster's accounts for the uniforms which the rebels stripped from their bodies after death. This regiment now asks to be paid from the date of its enrollment, or to be mustered out of the service. The 1st North Carolina enlisted also on the understanding that they were to have the same pay as white soldiers. They have been seven months in the service, and the average amount charged to each man for clothing is \$51, leaving \$19 due to each for the whole term of enlistment—less than \$3 a month. And there are due and unpaid to the regiment about \$30,000 for work done in the Quartermaster's Department in North Carolina before they enlisted.

The 3d U. S. Colored Volunteers has lost nine men killed in battle, each one of whom is charged with \$30 worth of clothing, and credited with half that amount as pay. Each dies in debt to the government, leaving no bounty, or pension, or provision of any kind for his family. Of the eighteen men who died from disease, the same is true; and the clothing issued to those living has absorbed more than four-fifths of their pay.

The 55th Massachusetts has been in service since June, 1863. The average amount of clothing charged to each man is \$53, and there remained due to each for seven months' service \$17. And in every regiment of colored troops now in the United States service, whether raised North or South, substantially the same state of facts exists."

How is this injustice to be stopped? One thing has been done in the South against it, and it remains to be seen whether the people of the North will make protest, either in behalf of their own regiments, or of the colored soldiers at large.

In December last, the War Department authorized Gen. Gillmore to enlist and organize all the colored troops that can be raised within his Department, offering them the same inferior compensation now granted to colored troops, namely: ten dollars per month, less three dollars for clothing. According to direction, Gen. Gillmore has promulgated this order, and appointed Col. Littlefield Superintendent of the recruiting service. But before proceeding to raise men upon these unworthy terms, he has sent Col. Littlefield to Washington, urging that Congress pass an act (retrospective as well as prospective) giving to colored troops, from the date of their enlistment, the same pay and allowances as to white soldiers.

The *Tribune* well remarks that it is not enough to pass such a bill as has already been introduced into the House, providing only for future pay. The colored regiments had a right to be addressed and treated, from the beginning, like other soldiers. Instead of this, unjust and opprobrious terms were offered to them. The patience, self-control and self-respect which they have shown under these trying circumstances have been in the highest degree creditable to them. No man can say that they are not amply justified, after waiting thus long in vain for a recognition of their rights as men and as soldiers, in demanding either full pay, with the rank and consideration allowed to other soldiers, or an honorable discharge from the service.

The book of Revelation tells us that the church of Laodicea was rejected, and its pretended discipleship deemed worthless, because it was neither cold nor hot; because it stood midway between God and the Devil, taking no active part on either side. Our Government takes a position not unlike this toward the colored soldiers, coldly asking them to stand on its side, but giving them no inducement, either of sympathy or interest, sufficient to make friends of them, and engage their hearty co-operation in the national cause. Constant half-measures, constant insufficiency and lukewarmness are still postponing our triumph over the rebellion.—C. K. W.

On this humiliating subject, we give below a sensible, manly letter from a colored soldier connected with the 64th regiment:—

CAMP NEAR WHITE HOUSE, FOLLY ISLAND, }
(S. C.) Jan. 18, 1864. }

To the Editor of the *Liberator*:—

SIR,—After an absence of several months in the field, I feel it my duty to inform you of some facts in regard to our regiment. We are here on Folly Island, as you will see by my heading. Since we have been here, our duty has been fatigue, almost continually.

The first thing that suggests itself to me is the kindness of the State of Massachusetts in offering to make up to us the amount which we enlisted for, and which is withheld from us by the United States. We earnestly hope that it will not be thought, by the State of Massachusetts, that we refused the money for any motive other than that we desire, at this crisis, the recognition of our rights as men and as soldiers. Sorry am I to say, that we have been considered incapable of acting for ourselves long enough; and as it stands, we are even now not equalized with other troops in the field—as is seen in the taking of officers, or rather sergeants from white regiments, and making them captains, lieutenants, &c. over us, when there are large numbers of our men who are more capable even, in every respect, to be commissioned officers, than those, or a great portion of those who are coming in continually. I do not state this as mere hearsay, for I know it to be a fact; and, sir, we think and hope that these matters, however small they may appear to some, will be looked into. We, as a race, have been trodden down long enough. Are we, who have come into the field of bloody conflict, and left our quiet homes the same as white men, for the sake of our country, and to beat down the rebellion—are we to be put down lower than these, many of whom have not enlisted with as good motives as we have? If we have men in our regiments who are capable of being officers, why not let them be promoted the same as other soldiers?

I hope, sir, that you will urge this matter, as I am well aware that you are on our side, and always have long for us all in your power to help our race.

I remain, yours, S. J. R.
65th Regiment Mass. Volunteer Infantry.

Our colored soldiers of the 64th and 65th will not accept the additional pay offered them by Massachusetts. They say, and they say correctly, that they are soldiers of the United States, and claim to be treated like other members of an honorable service.—*Boston Traveller*.

Officers are wanted for colored regiments. Why not give commissions in those regiments to colored men? There are intelligent, educated, capable colored men enough in the United States to officer every regiment of the kind in the federal service. Conquer your prejudices, and the conquest of the enemy will be effected all the sooner, and with much less cost to us poor whites who have to pay the taxes. Why object to the colored race being killed a little for the benefit of our pockets?—*Ibid*.