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Mrs. Mary W. Thompson

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MRS. MARY W. THOMPSON.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 387.]

MAY 24, 1844.

Mr. FISH, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT :

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the memorial of Mrs. Mary W. Thompson, widow of the late Lieutenant Colonel Thompson of the army, report :

That the memorial of the petitioner alleges that Colonel Thompson fell in battle at the head of his regiment, in an engagement with the Indians in Florida, on December 25, 1837; that he entered the service at the commencement of the war of 1812, and distinguished himself during that struggle; that at the close of the war he was retained in the service, and was constantly employed in the practical duties of his profession; that he was engaged during the whole of the Black Hawk war, and rendered important service during the prevalence of the cholera amongst the troops employed in that war; that he was very frequently charged with duties of much value and importance to the Government, which he performed without any compensation in addition to his ordinary pay. The petitioner states, that "while in Florida he lost his health, and applied for a short leave of absence to restore it, and at the same time to enable him to attend to his own private affairs, which, on account of the embarrassed situation of our commercial interests, were placed in great jeopardy; but of such importance was his presence deemed, that he was denied the privilege. On account of his absence therefrom, I (the petitioner) have suffered great loss; had he been permitted to attend to them, the result would not have been what it now is." The memorial concludes with a prayer for a pension during the time she may remain a widow.

The memorial does no more than justice to the memory and gallant services of one of the most meritorious of those distinguished officers whose virtues and whose bravery have reflected so much credit upon the American army. During a service of some twenty-six years, Colonel Thompson was distinguished in every grade through which he passed.

The committee have been furnished with testimonials in his behalf, of the highest commendation, from the most distinguished officers of the army.

Colonel Thompson has also been required to perform public services and agencies of a civil character, which were entirely out of the line of his official or military duties, involving high responsibilities. To enable him to discharge these satisfactorily to the Government, it was necessary for him to have an assistant; this assistance was rendered by the memorialist, by

the devotion of much of her time for a series of years, or rather by giving her time to the Government, and thereby rendering important services.

The committee cannot see the propriety of a Government like that of the United States deriving benefit from the labor and toil of an accomplished female, and not requiring the obligation; for, although Mrs. Thompson has received the pension to which she was entitled under the existing laws for five years, as the widow of an officer slain in his country's service, she has received no correspondent return for the many years of service which she herself has rendered.

The committee are not prepared to recommend any extension of the present pension laws; neither would they recommend, in this case, any course which might tend to establish a precedent for future claims. But the case of the petitioner is peculiar; the services of her husband were such as are rarely, if ever, rendered; her own services were such as are still more rarely rendered; and the circumstances of his death in a war "wherein no glory was to be gained—a war of suffering and disease," wherein all was at hazard, and nothing to be gained—must be taken into consideration (in the opinion of the committee) in estimating the compensation to be allowed.

The committee, therefore, report a bill, allowing the memorialist a pension for five years.

The memorialist states that she was married to a man who was a soldier in the army of the United States during the late war, and that he was killed in the battle of Gettysburg. She claims that she has rendered valuable services to the Government during the war, and that she is now a widow and has no other means of support. She asks for a pension for five years as a reward for her services and as compensation for the loss of her husband.

The committee have considered the memorial and the evidence in support of it, and they are of opinion that the petitioner's claims are well founded. They recommend that a pension be granted to her for five years, and that the same be paid to her until she reaches the age of 60 years.