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Report : Petition of O. Meacham

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 10, 1883.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. BLAIR, from the Committee on Pensions, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 6400.]

The Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 6400), granting a pension to Mrs. Orpha Meacham, have examined the same, and report as follows:

Upon an examination of the evidence in the case the committee find the facts clearly set forth in the House report, which is as follows:

This case originated with the bill 1669, which was presented in this House December 19, 1881, and referred to the Committee on Claims. This bill provided for an appropriation for the relief of Colonel Meacham, but while the matter was under consideration in Committee on Claims Colonel Meacham died, and the case was reported back to the House by the Committee on Claims, with a resolution that the original bill be referred to the Committee on Pensions, with a recommendation to report a bill granting a reasonable pension to the widow of the late Colonel Meacham.

By the authority of this resolution, which was adopted by the House, your committee have examined the subject, and find that Col. Alfred B. Meacham, in 1873, was appointed chairman of a commission to negotiate a treaty with the Modoc Indians in California, who were at that time in hostility to the United States. Acting under instructions from the Secretary of the Interior, he undertook, with his associates on the commission, General Canby and Dr. Thomas, to do the work committed to him, and having effected an armistice with the Indians, he met them, with his associates, at a place called the Lava-Beds, on the 11th of April, 1873, for the purpose of negotiating a treaty, when he and his party were immediately attacked by the Indians, and General Canby and Dr. Thomas were killed. Colonel Meacham received seven pistol and rifle shot wounds, five of which were very serious, producing permanent injuries, and so deranging his nervous system that he never afterwards enjoyed good health or was free from pain. From the time of this terrible, and only not deadly, assault, Colonel Meacham was an invalid, able only to keep up by great resolution, and finally died, on February 16, 1882, from causes which, in the opinion of his physicians, originated with the injuries received by him, when in the line of duty, from the Indians on the 11th day of April, 1873, and when attempting to execute the express orders of the Interior Department.

In consideration of the premises, your committee are of the opinion that, while the service rendered by Colonel Meacham was not strictly a military service, that the circumstances of the case are so peculiar, and the service itself was so dangerous, his widow should receive a pension and be placed on as favorable footing as the widow of General Canby, who was engaged in the same work with Colonel Meacham at the time of his death. They therefore submit the accompanying bill.

Your committee, after taking into consideration all the circumstances and evidence connected with this exceptional case, especially the very hazardous nature of the service required by the government, the sacrifice he made in accepting the appointment, the pecuniary damage he sustained as resulting therefrom, and the years of suffering he endured, report favorably upon the bill, and recommend its passage.