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Report : Petition of F. Potter

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 23, 1886.—Ordered to be printed.

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

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 1625.]

The Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 1625) for the relief of Frances McNeil Potter, have examined the same, and report :

The facts of this case are fairly stated in the report of the Committee on Invalid Pensions of the House of Representatives during the present session (House Report No. 150), as follows :

Frances McNeil Potter is a daughter of General John McNeil, U. S. Army; that John McNeil, of New Hampshire, was appointed a captain of infantry March 12, 1812, and had charge of the troops at Concord, and subsequently at Plattsburgh, where he was charged also with the supervision of the drilling of the new soldiers. In August, 1813, he was promoted to the rank of major and marched to Burlington in command of a regiment.

In July, 1814, he served in Brown's division, in Sackett's Harbor, until he was ordered with his regiment, in July, to the frontier at Niagara. During an attack by the enemy Colonel Campbell, of the Eleventh Regiment, fell, and the command of the regiment devolved upon Major McNeil.

The action of this officer at this battle, known in history as the battle of Chippewa, was supposed by his superior officers to have had a determining influence in securing the success of the American Army.

General Scott, in his report, said, "The self-possession of Major McNeil under fire was unequalled," and "the flank movement of the gallant McNeil in this important battle turned the fortunes of the day and gave victory to the American troops."

General Jesup declares :

"I followed the Eleventh Regiment with my command over the bridge. I had ample opportunity of witnessing the conduct of Major McNeil. He formed his regiment under fire of the enemy with the accuracy of a parade. He promptly availed himself of every advantage presented, and he wielded his force with great coolness and judgment, and on his own responsibility and without orders made the decisive movement at Chippewa."

General Scott, in his report to General Brown, said :

"Major McNeil deserves everything which conspicuous skill and gallantry can win from a grateful country."

He subsequently commanded the Eleventh Regiment at the battle of Lundy's Lane, and in this engagement he exhibited not only the military tact, judgment, and bravery that had been exhibited in the battle of Chippewa, but was severely wounded and rendered a cripple for life. He subsequently served in 1824 on the Indian frontier.

His death, which occurred in Washington, February, 1850, was commemorated appropriately by the action of both houses of Congress, which were then in session, eulogies being delivered upon him by Mr. Herbert, of the House, and Mr. Hale, in the Senate.

This officer was, for merit and gallantry in the service, promoted from a captaincy to the rank of brevet brigadier-general, and not only devoted his time to the service of the country through a long series of years, but finally succumbed to the effect of wounds received and diseases contracted in the service. And your committee are of the opinion that the gallant service of the father to his country entitles his daughter to consideration from his grateful countrymen.

This bill gives to Mrs. Potter an increase from \$20 to \$30 per month. It passed the House and was reported favorably by this committee during the Forty-eighth Congress, and only failed from lack of consideration to become a law. Mrs. Potter is now advanced in years, and is in circumstances which make the increase essential to her comfortable support.

Your committee recommend the passage of the bill.

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