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Elizabeth M. J. Meagher

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ELIZABETH M. J. MEAGHER.

JANUARY 14, 1887.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

Mr. LOUITT, from the Committee on Invalid Pensions, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 8463.]

The Committee on Invalid Pensions, having had under consideration the bill (H. R. 8463) granting a pension to Elizabeth M. J. Meagher, widow of Thomas Francis Meagher, beg leave to submit the following report thereon:

A recital of the events in the life and career of General Thomas Francis Meagher would read like romance. A study of his power and success in the dual characters of military commander and leader of the masses in the walks of the civilian leaves undetermined the field of his superiority, so brilliant, indeed, was his career and so complete his success in each.

An exile from his native heath by reason of his active efforts in early life to relieve Ireland from the thrall of oppression, he brought with him to these shores a love for free government that became intensified and crystallized to devotion when the life of this Government was assailed. Always active in the councils of his fellow-man, resolute and determined in plan and purpose, at the first mutterings of rebellion he set about to assist in thwarting the plans of the enemies of his adopted land.

The seeds of dissension, doubt, and distrust were industriously sown in the great cities of the North by the secret allies of the common foe; riots were incited, disturbances created, and every impediment thrown in the way of those intrusted with the mission of bringing together in military organizations those who were willing to uphold and defend the integrity of the States and the permanency of its institutions with their lives, if need be.

From city to city Meagher journeyed and faced the issues and the dangers of the hour, exhorting the people of the North, and particularly those of his own race, to cast their lot, their influence, and, if need be, their lives with the Government in this its struggle for existence.

The effect of these appeals, falling from the lips of one whose record in behalf of the principles of freedom was known to all as a bright page in the history of nations, and garnished as they were with all the captivating graces of oratory, made alive and burning in the person of this leader, can now hardly be estimated.

Vast numbers of his countrymen, inspired by his example and led by his voice, joined the Union Army, and the gallant services rendered by

the "Irish Brigade" under his command are well known to all familiar with the history of the famous Second Corps, Army of the Potomac.

General Meagher was commissioned brigadier-general United States Volunteers February 3, 1862, having previously served as captain, and, in addition to valuable services in the field, was called thence by the President on several occasions to serve his country's needs in the North, where his presence and words of burning eloquence were required to quell threatening eruptions of the disaffected in the populous centers of the land.

To every call he responded; in each case he was found equal to the pressing emergency.

Strong in battle and all-powerful in council, to the flag of his adoption and for the maintenance of those principles which had won and chained his admiration in childhood's days he gave all the great energy and strength of maturer years.

General Meagher was brevetted major-general about the close of the war, and was accidentally drowned shortly after while on his way with troops to quell an Indian disturbance in Montana Territory, of which he was then acting governor.

His widow, an estimable lady, his companion during all the scenes of his busy life herein recited, is in need, and in this her hour of adversity instinctively turns to the Government in the fond hope and strong faith that by it the past has not been forgotten. We append a letter received from Colonel Nugent by General Brady, a member of this House, in which is contained the statement of an honorable gentleman who knew General Meagher well in his lifetime and is conversant with the present financial condition of the widow, whose chief heritage is the memory of her gallant and talented husband.

Though for more than twenty years she has refrained from asking any recognition at the hands of Congress, while about her with lavish hand were dispensed just dues and merited favors, yet, prompted by the demands of present necessities, she is an applicant for assistance and this testimonial of appreciation of the services of one dear to her as he was useful to the Union in the hours of trial and tribulation.

The military record of General Meagher is attached hereto, and we, your committee, recommend that the bill as presented be amended by striking out all after the word "pension" in line 7, and inserting in lieu thereof the words "of fifty dollars per month," and that, as so amended, the same be passed.

MORRISANA, NEW YORK CITY,
May 17, 1866.

MY DEAR COLONEL: A bill has been presented in Congress by Mr. Woodburn, of Nevada, granting a pension to the widow of our late old and gallant commander, General Meagher. I now take the liberty of writing to you and to ask for your kind co-operation in the matter. Since the death of the general Mrs. Meagher has entirely been depending on her father (Mr. Townsend) for support, but now that the old gentleman is dead, Mrs. Meagher is in limited circumstances, and is really in need. The great services of General Meagher during the late war are certainly deserving of some recognition from the Government, and I do not know of any better way of recognizing these services than by Congress granting a suitable means for the support of his widow in this her time of need. I need not tell you of the great services rendered to the country during the late war by General Meagher whilst in command of the Irish Brigade, as they are as well known to you as they are to me. You served on his staff, and you had every opportunity of knowing all his movements. The history of General Meagher and the Irish Brigade are a part of the history of that grand and gallant old Second (Hancock's) Corps of the Army of the Potomac. The Irish Brigade was one of the first brigades that formed a portion of the first division of the Second

Corps in 1861, and served with it until the end of the war. This of itself is sufficient history to show what the services of the Irish Brigade have been. Anything I might say of the Second Corps would be useless, as the history of Hancock and the Second Corps are known all over the world. General Meagher was a true patriot at a time when patriots were wanted. He worked hard to organize the brigade, and his prompt action in forming the brigade so early in the struggle had great influence with his countrymen all over the North, and had the effect of procuring many thousands to enroll and fight under the glorious standard of the Union. His widow is deserving of a pension. It is a just claim, and I trust that you and your friends in Congress will give all the aid to the bill presented by Mr. Woodburn, and I can assure you that every veteran of the Irish Brigade living to-day will fully appreciate any service that you or your friends may render to this noble woman.

Very truly, your friend and comrade,

ROBERT NUGENT.

Col. JAMES D. BRADY,
Washington.

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, May 10, 1866.

Statement of the military service of Thomas F. Meagher, late of the United States Army, compiled from the records of this office.

He was appointed brigadier-general, United States Volunteers, February 2, 1862, and commanded the "Irish Brigade," of the Second Corps, Army of the Potomac, from February 8 to July 16, 1862; was on recruiting service in New York City to September 8, 1862, when he resumed command of his brigade, and served with it in the Army of the Potomac to December 22, 1862, upon which date he availed himself of twenty days' leave of absence on account of sickness (copy of surgeon's certificate herewith). On February 18, 1863, he resumed command of his brigade, and served therewith to May 18, 1863.

He had on May 8, 1863, tendered his resignation (giving as his reasons that his brigade was reduced to 500 men, and that he had failed to secure orders for its withdrawal from the field to recruit itself), and the same was accepted, to take effect May 14, 1863.

On December 23, 1863, the acceptance of his resignation was canceled, and having re-entered the service he was awaiting orders to September 13, 1864, when directed to report to General W. T. Sherman for orders; he commanded the brigades of convalescents, which subsequently became the Provisional Division, Army of the Tennessee, conducting the same from Tennessee to North Carolina, from November 15, 1864, to February 24, 1865; was awaiting orders from the latter date to May 15, 1865, when he resigned.

O. D. GREENE,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

FREDERICKSBURG, December 15, 1862.

Brigadier-General Thomas Francis Meagher, Irish Brigade, Hancock's Division, Second Corps d'Armée, having applied for a certificate on which to ground an application for leave of absence, I do hereby certify that having carefully examined this officer I find that he is suffering from a furunculous abscess of the left knee, which quite disables him for active duty in the field. It is further my opinion that an absence of twenty (20) days is absolutely necessary to prevent loss of life or permanent disability.

F. REYNOLDS,
*Surgeon Eighty-eighth New York Volunteers,
and Acting Chief Medical Officer of Hancock's Division.*

Examined, approved, and respectfully recommended.

J. W. TAYLOR,
Surgeon United States Volunteers and Medical Director Second Army Corps.