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Report : Mr. Johnson

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MARCH 15, 1858.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. JOHNSON made the following

REPORT.

[To accompany bill S. 202.]

The Committee on Military Affairs and the Militia, to whom was referred the memorial of Major Jeremiah Y. Dashiell, a paymaster in the United States army, praying relief, have considered the same, and now present the following report :

The committee find, from the official documents and affidavits accompanying the petition of Major Dashiell, that the troops stationed on and near Indian river, in Florida, were in arrears of pay from two to six months in April, 1857; that Major Dashiell, in due performance of his duty as paymaster of the district, drew from the assistant treasurer at Charleston, South Carolina, the sum of *twenty-three thousand one hundred and fifteen dollars*, which was placed in a leathern bag ordinarily used by him for this purpose, and put in charge of an escort; that there were two routes by which to reach his place of destination, (Fort Capron, Florida,) one by sea, and the other (the river route) partly by land and partly by water; and that the latter route, owing to the shallowness of the water, as well as to certain outrages and massacres which had been lately perpetrated by the Indians in that vicinity, was considered not only unsafe, but impracticable. Major Dashiell, therefore, took the only alternative, and proceeded by sea, in the schooner William and John, to the mouth of Indian river; arrived there, and acting under the advice of the captain of the vessel, who had six years' experience of the bar at the mouth of the river, he, with his son, proceeded to land. The bag containing the funds, which *was duly identified by size, weight, and appearance*, was lowered into the boat, being taken for that purpose from the iron safe in which it had been deposited. The bar, as appears from the officers of several vessels who were present, was in a favorable state for landing, and that it was so considered by Major Dashiell appears from the fact that himself and son unhesitatingly accompanied the treasure in its transit to the shore.

It further appears that, while crossing the bar, the yawl boat which contained the party was suddenly capsized by a cross-breaker, and the

bag containing the funds sunk. Major Dashiell, his son, and the crew, after clinging to the bottom of the boat for more than an hour, in imminent peril, were rescued by the boat of one of the vessels near by. Immediately after his rescue he applied for a guard to watch the spot, which was furnished by the commanding officer of the post, and took prompt and active measures to recover the money. A large reward was offered, and the most strenuous and constant endeavors made by the major and others to recover the treasure; but, owing to the high winds and heavy seas which then prevailed for several days, these attempts met with no success; and he was finally compelled, with reluctance, to abandon the search. The guard, however, remained, and the attempts to recover the funds were continued by the commanding officer of the post, but without a favorable result.

Your committee are of opinion, therefore, that the funds in charge of Major Dashiell, the property of the United States, were lost by an unforeseen and unavoidable accident, and that the said loss was in no manner due to negligence, or want of proper precautions on the part of said Dashiell; and they beg leave, therefore, to report a bill for his relief.