

GEORGE A. ARMES.

JUNE 1, 1876.—Committed to a Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

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

REPORT :

[To accompany bill H. R. 3634.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 906) for the restoration of George A. Armes to the Army, with the rank of captain, have had the same under consideration, and beg to submit the following report :

The records of the War Department show the following facts : That George A. Armes entered the military service of the United States as a private in Company B, Sixteenth Regiment Virginia Volunteer Infantry, September 1, 1862; was appointed second lieutenant in the same regiment December 8, 1862, and was appointed captain in the Second Regiment New York Artillery, October, 1864. On the 14th of December, 1864, he was mentioned in "general orders" for meritorious conduct by General Miles, for leading the charge at Hatcher's Run, Va. Upon the recommendation of Generals Hancock, Auger, Griffin, Mott, Miles, and Pierce, he was appointed second lieutenant in the Second United States Cavalry. Soon after he was appointed captain in the Tenth United States Cavalry, and his commission was dated back, upon the recommendation of General Philip St. George Cooke, with the approval of General U. S. Grant, as a recognition of merit. March 2, 1867, he was breveted major in the Regular Army, for gallant services, having been previously breveted major of volunteers.

On the 12th of November, 1866, the following general order was issued :

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE,
Omaha, Nebr., November 12, 1866.

[General Order No. 20.]

The commanding general announces to the department that Lieut. Geo. A. Armes, Second United States Cavalry, being sent with twenty-five men of his regiment from Fort Sedgwick, October 23, in pursuit of a war-party of Sioux Indians which had driven off the previous day several hundred head of stock, found and followed their trail—under the difficulties of crossing two wide rivers, forks of the Platte, and of darkness—*ninety-eight miles*, from 5 o'clock a. m. to 11 o'clock p. m.; then he surprised the party, instantly attacked, killed, and wounded nearly all their superior numbers, captured twenty-two Indian horses, burned their camp, and brought off safely most of their stolen stock. Thus this young officer has set a fine example to the department of overcoming difficulties that would have discouraged and stopped many without.

loss of credit; of bold determination to succeed, and of striking without stopping to count his enemies; and has presented to the profession, perhaps, the greatest cavalry feat heretofore recorded.

By order of Brevet Major-General Cooke:

H. G. LITCHFIELD,

Brevet Major U. S. A., Aid-de-Camp, Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

On the 20th of August, 1867, he was recommended by Generals Sherman and Hancock for the brevet of lieutenant-colonel, for hard and heroic services against the Indians, by whom he was wounded during an engagement.

This is only a portion of the very meritorious and gallant conduct of this young officer to this date in his military history, which seems to have challenged almost the universal respect and confidence of the officers under whom he served.

The records of the War Department further show that in 1869 charges were preferred against Captain Armes. They were four in number.

Upon the *first a nolle prosequi* was entered. Upon the third and fourth he was found *not guilty*. And upon the second charge, "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman," he was found guilty and was sentenced "to be dismissed the service." These charges were preferred by Capt. George W. Graham. The main witnesses were Lieut. B. F. Bell and Capt. Charles G. Cox. Lieutenant Bell, who had been tried, convicted, dismissed, and cashiered for bribery and embezzlement of public property, was called to testify against Armes. Captain Cox was called to testify—whom the testimony shows was a bitter personal enemy of Captain Armes, who had preferred the charges upon which both Cox and Graham were tried, convicted, and sentenced to be *dismissed* and *cashiered* the service, fined, and imprisoned in a penitentiary.

Viewing the testimony in the light of its own inconsistency and contradictions, and in the light of the character of the persons who appeared and testified, as shown at the time, or by immediate subsequent events, *it was all of the very worst possible character*, upon which Captain Armes was found guilty. All the circumstances of his trial are remarkable. In the first place, the organization of the court was very objectionable. The court was composed, in part, of an officer who not only acknowledged that he entertained an opinion unfavorable to Captain Armes, but had publicly proclaimed it, was allowed to sit in judgment upon him, and no objection or remonstrance on the part of Armes was of any avail. Another most remarkable fact was, that after the trial of Captain Cox had commenced, on charges preferred by Captain Armes, and upon which Captain Cox was immediately afterward sentenced to be dismissed, the *trial of Cox was arrested*, and he was allowed to appear as a witness against Armes. Of course the debased principles of these witnesses and accusers, Cox, Bell, and Graham, were no better before conviction than after. Yet, if justice had been allowed to take its course, and these two desperate villains had been tried before Captain Armes, as they should have been in the regular and due order of things, the trial of Armes, and the *terrible injustice* that was done him, would never have taken place. Here is a case of a brave, dashing, and laborious young officer, who, in the brilliancy of his achievements in active service, has outstripped all of his age and rank, driven in disgrace from his profession upon the contradictory testimony of the most *desperate* and *despicable* witnesses, (except that of the weak-minded boy, Ben.)

The person against whom the alleged offense is said to have been committed, the testimony clearly shows, did not know Captain Armes, nor is there any evidence that that person was known by him. In view

of the foregoing facts and reasons, it is difficult to perceive why the late Secretary of War, to whom was subsequently known the *despicable character* of the witnesses who testified against Captain Armes, should have sought to defeat his restoration to his former place and rank in the Army, which he had so bravely won, and from which he had been so cruelly and unjustly driven.

Of the witnesses and accusers who testified against Captain Armes, it may be said Cox and Graham were fined, dismissed, and cashiered the Army, and sentenced to imprisonment in a penitentiary, and the latter, Captain Graham, who broke his confinement, was afterward killed on the plains as a *highwayman*. The females who testified had been ordered off the reservation at Fort Harker, by the commanding officer, as women of notoriously bad character. The testimony of the weak-minded boy who was a witness against Captain Armes was so inconsistent and contradictory as to be entirely worthless. It is believed that every committee either of the House or Senate which has examined this case has reported in favor of Captain Armes.

To any one who will examine the evidence and the subsequent character and history of the witnesses in the case, there can be no doubt that the charges against and conviction of Captain Armes were the result of a *vile conspiracy* among desperate characters, to disgrace and drive from the Army a man who—then and now—enjoys to a wonderful degree the sympathy, confidence, and esteem of a large circle of officers of the Army, despite the cloud under which he has rested.

The history of the accusers of Captain Armes, and of the witnesses who testified against him, as shown by record evidence, prior to, at the time of trial, or immediately after, shows that they were all totally destitute of honor, veracity, or virtue.

Possibly there has never been a *prosecution* in which all the elements of honor, decency, and respectability were so entirely absent.

The committee are of the opinion that nothing short of a full restoration to all the rights, honors, and ranks of which Captain Armes has been deprived, will do justice in the case, and, therefore, recommend the passage of the bill as substituted by the committee.