

JANE D. BRENT.

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FEBRUARY 12, 1885.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

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

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 7248.]

*The Committee on Pensions, having under consideration the bill (H. R. 7248) to increase the pension of Jane D. Brent, widow of Thomas L. Brent, beg leave to make the following report:*

Capt. Thomas L. Brent graduated with honor at the Military Academy of the United States at West Point in 1835, and after this served in the Army twenty-three years, filling many offices with great distinction. He was engaged in the State of North Carolina in removing the Creek Indians; he was in the Florida war, and in the war with the Seminole Indians; in all of which he performed dangerous and laborious duties with credit and faithfully. He was in the war with Mexico, and at the battle of Buena Vista he greatly distinguished himself. General Scott had ordered almost all the troops away from General Taylor, believing that there would be no more fighting on that line, and a messenger with a secret dispatch from General Scott to General Taylor, explaining why it was done, was killed, and the dispatch fell into the hands of the Mexicans. Making no doubt of his ability to capture General Taylor, Santa Anna concentrated 22,000 soldiers and surrounded Taylor's 4,000 soldiers. He commenced his attack on Washington's battery, where Brent was in charge. The battery did great service, and, after considerable slaughter, repulsed the Mexicans and changed their direction. They were afterwards repulsed by Davis and others, and, when in full retreat, Hardin, of Illinois, followed too far out of supporting distance, and was surrounded by the whole Mexican army. McKee of Kentucky went to his assistance, and both regiments were cut to pieces, Hardin, McKee, Clay, and a great many other officers and privates were killed, and the Illinois and Kentucky regiments would have been lost, but for the wonderful exertions and great gallantry of Captain Brent. Our men were fighting their way back through the Mexicans, which brought them under the edge of Washington's battery; Captain Brent, with almost superhuman exertion, fired his gun with his own hand, so fast and with such deadly aim that they were repulsed again. As our men came in squads through the Mexican ranks and gained the open space, Brent would mount on his gun, motion to them with his hands to fall down, and fire over them, putting the match to the gun with his own hands. The enemy was fairly driven back, and our men were safe; and it is certain that none of them would have been saved

but for that battery. For his gallant conduct, Captain Brent was promoted, but his wonderful exertions, and lying on the cold ground the following night, cost him his life; he was never well afterwards, and the proof is clear that he died of disease contracted at that time in the line of his duty. He was afterwards placed on easier duty and lingered until 1858, when he died in the service, at his post and while discharging his duty.

His widow, a lady in every way worthy of him, in the war with the seceding States, following the example of the "angels of Buena Vista," in 1861 left her father's home, who was a judge of the United States court and had plenty, and went into the hospitals, without receiving or desiring any compensation. Like a ministering angel, and with motherly care and Christian tenderness, day and night she nursed the sick and wounded soldiers until 1866. Many soldiers, kept alive by her gentle nursing and kind attention, will bless her, and ask God to bless her while they live, and dying will enjoin upon their children to remember her gratefully. A petition is sent from Detroit, Mich., signed by many veteran soldiers, many United States officials, and many State officers, asking for an increase of pension for her, and speaking of her services to her country and to its soldiers as prompted by love of country and goodness of heart, and as without a parallel; and adds, that the history of Michigan would be incomplete without a favorable mention of these services. Soldiers write, saying, "God bless Mrs. Brent for her attention and care; we love her as we do our own mothers."

Mrs. Brent is now sixty years old, with one child, a daughter, living with her. She has been most unfortunate, and has no money or property left her, her pension being her only means of support. Wherefore we report the bill without amendment, with the opinion that it ought to pass.

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