49TH CONGRESS, 1st Session. } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. { REPORT No. 3031.

WILLIAM M. MORRISON.

JUNE 22, 1886.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

Mr. FLEEGER, from the Committee on Claims, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 2629.]

The Committee on Claims, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 2629) for the relief of William M. Morrison, having had the same under consideration, respectfully submit the following report:

A bill for the relief of the claimant in this case was presented in the Forty-eighth Congress and referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs. Mr. Graves, from said committee, made a report, finding the facts and recommending the passage of the bill for the amount of $1,800.

Your committee, after a careful examination of the case, concur in the report made by Mr. Graves, adopt the same, and recommend that the present bill be amended by inserting in the sixth line, between the words "appropriated" and "the," the following, "upon receiving report from Commissioner of Indian Affairs recommending same;" also by striking out, in the sixth and seventh lines, the words "two thousand one hundred and twenty dollars and fifty cents," and inserting in lieu thereof the words "eighteen hundred dollars," and as so amended recommend the passage of the bill.

The report of Mr. Graves was as follows, to wit:

[House of Representatives Report No. 2589, Forty-eighth Congress, second session.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the claim of William M. Morrison, formerly a licensed trader at the agency of the Otoe and Missouria Agency, has had the same under consideration, and beg leave to report:

That the claim embraced in the bill for $2,120.50 is composed of two accounts:

(1) A claim of $304.47 for goods and property stolen by the Indians of said agency from said Morrison's store-house.

(2) A claim of $1,816.03 for supplies furnished under the direction of W. W. Dennison, at that time United States Indian agent for Otoe and Missouria Indians.

The first of said claims, for $304.47, is supported by the affidavit of the claimant, corroborated by the affidavits of Robert P. Dowell and Stephen Wood, who swear that they, of their own personal knowledge, know that the trading-house of said Morrison was broken into at the time named in his affidavit, and that it was robbed of a large amount of goods, and that from the fact that a part of the goods were found in possession of some of these Indians who confessed the depredation, as well as from other circumstances, these witnesses say they believe the robbery was committed by the Otoes and Missourias. Your committee is of opinion that this item of the claim is adequately proven, and that said Morrison is entitled to restitution out of any money held by the United States in trust for said Indians.

The second item, of $1,816.03, is placed upon the ground that in 1860 the crops of the Otoes and Missouria Indians were destroyed by drought, and that these Indians were in a starving condition, and that but for these supplies, furnished them by direction of the Indian agent, they would have greatly suffered, and perhaps starved.

The fact that the claimant, Morrison, under these circumstances, and at the request of the agent, William W. Dennison, furnished supplies to these Indians to relieve their distress is proved by the affidavits of the claimant, Morrison, and of two other witnesses, Robert P. Dowell and Stephen Wood, who testify that they were at that time assistant engineers in the Engineer Corps of the Army at the Indian reservation, and heard the agent give the orders to Morrison to advance supplies for the relief of these Indians. The witnesses, Wood and Dowell, also testify that Morrison did, in compliance with such orders of the agent, advance supplies, and thus prevented much distress, and perhaps starvation, among these Indians. But the claimant is the only witness who testifies as to the amount of goods so advanced, and he is the only witness who testifies to the value thereof. The same is likewise true concerning the evidence as to amount and value of goods embraced in the first of the foregoing items.

These claims were passed upon by a similar committee in the Forty-seventh Congress, and the one of $1,816.03 was disallowed, because it did not appear from any evidence but that claimant had already been paid out of annuities of these Indians, which by the evidence seems to have been stopped for that year for the purpose of furnishing the needful supplies for support of these Indians.

But letters from the Department of the Interior and Second Auditor's office, showing an examination of the proper records, fail to disclose any payment or allowance of any claim in favor of Morrison for the supplies so furnished these Indians upon the agent's orders. While it would have been more satisfactory had the testimony of the agent, W. W. Dennison, been procured, or its absence accounted for, yet, in the opinion of your committee, the evidence justifies the conclusion that upon both items of the account the claimant is entitled to relief, and would therefore report favorably upon said bill and recommend its passage for the amount of $1,800 in full satisfaction of such claims, instead of the amount named therein.