

MARGARET A. BLAKE.

FEBRUARY 11, 1886.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

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

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 2021.]

*The Committee on Invalid Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 2021) granting a pension to Margaret A. Blake, widow of George A. H. Blake, late colonel of the First Cavalry and a brevet brigadier-general in the United States Army, have had the same under consideration, and submit the following report:*

General George A. H. Blake was born in Pennsylvania and appointed from that State first lieutenant Second Dragoons, June 11, 1836; in Florida to 1841, and engaged in actions with the Seminole Indians at Fort Welborn, Jupiter Inlet, and other engagements; captain Second Dragoons, December 3, 1839; was in the Indian Territory and Texas; in the war with Mexico, and engaged in the battles of Cerro Gordo, defense of Pueblo, battles of Contreras, Molino del Rey, Chapultepec, and City of Mexico; brevet major U. S. Army, August 17, 1847, for gallant and meritorious conduct in an affair at Saint Augustine, Mexico; major First Dragoons, July 23, 1850; in Missouri, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington Territory to 1861, and engaged against the Apache and Navajo Indians; lieutenant-colonel First Cavalry, February 15, 1862; engaged in the Seven Days' fight and battle of Gaines's Mill, Virginia (in which he was slightly wounded); chief commissary of musters, Department of Virginia, to April, 1863; chief commissary of cavalry corps, Army of the Potomac, to December, 1863; was present at the actions of Aldie, Middletown, Upperville, and battle of Gettysburg; special duty in the cavalry bureau, Washington, D. C., to April, 1864; commanding cavalry depot Giesboro' Point, Maryland, to September 1, 1864; special duty to February, 1865; member of a military commission at Washington, D. C., to March, 1866; brevet brigadier-general U. S. Army, March 15, 1865, for "gallant and efficient services during the Gettysburg campaign;" commanding regiment and post of Fort Vancouver, Wash., and retired at his own request "for over forty years' service," December 15, 1870.

Thus it will be seen that for forty years and in three wars this faithful officer served his country in various positions of trust and responsibility, and finally retired from the service full of years and honors. The claim of his widow for pension was rejected on the ground that the "fatal disease originated subsequent to his retirement."

Strictly construed, as the law must necessarily be by the Pension Department, this was probably a correct decision for that department to make. But giving due weight to all the consequences and effects of a service continued for so many years and in every variety of climate, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific, and from the City of Mexico to Gettysburg, your committee are of the opinion that it is not proven that his death did not originate from disease contracted in the service, and are disposed to give his widow the benefit of the doubt as to this point, and they are further of the opinion that, in view of the long and valuable services of General Blake, his widow, who is in impoverished circumstances, should have the pension asked for in the bill, and they therefore recommend its passage.

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