

HATTIE A. BURNETT.

MAY 22, 1888.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

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

R E P O R T :

[To accompany bill S. 681.]

The Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (S. 681) granting an increase of pension to Mrs. General Ward B. Burnett, have considered the same and report it back to the House, with the recommendation that it do pass.

The facts of the case are correctly set forth in the report of the Senate Committee on Pensions as follows :

[Report No. 519, Fiftieth Congress, first session.]

That the applicant is the widow of the late General Ward B. Burnett, deceased. The principal facts in the military life of her husband have been presented once before to this committee, in a report made April 6, 1880, by Senator Blair, of New Hampshire, now, as then, a member of this committee.

We quote from said report as follows :

GENERAL WARD B. BURNETT.

Died June 24, 1884, at Washington City, aged 74.

This distinguished veteran of six wars was appointed by President Jackson a cadet at West Point in 1828, and he was graduated in 1832, brevetted second lieutenant, Second Artillery, July 1, 1834 ; ordered to report to Colonel Mahan, professor of engineers (was furloughed), reported to Chief Engineer Major Douglass, assistant upon the surveys and plans and estimates which resulted in the adoption of his plans for the Croton Water Works, now indispensable to New York City, and a monument to his genius. When relieved from the academy, was ordered to report for duty to Maj. Hartman Bache, U. S. Topographical Engineers, at Philadelphia, Pa., on harbors and light-houses, then as principal engineer to Col. H. Long, topographical engineer, upon surveys conducted by himself and Major Yarl, of the Royal Engineers, to determine the routes of railways connecting the Atlantic with the Canadas.

Engaged in action of Lacha-Hatcha against the Seminole Indians. He fought in the Black Hawk war in that year on the ground near where Chicago now stands, before a single house was built in that great city, and as captain of cadets in the Black Hawk war ; the command, in seeking the enemies of his country, met one more formidable in the Asiatic cholera, which attacked more than one-half of General Scott's army, spreading consternation and death among them. As the surgeon-general and his assistants were among the dead and dying, the officers were obliged to take care of the sick, and young Burnett, fearless of consequences, was among the most active in providing for their comfort and safety.

Reported to Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott, during the nullification difficulties at Charleston, S. C. ; acted quartermaster for a time ; was staff officer to General Clinch ; staff officer to General Bankhead at the battle of the Coves of the Withla-coo-cha. He organized two regiments and tendered his services to the President for the Mormon war. In 1842 and 1843 he organized a brigade, offered his services to the President when war was anticipated with England over the Oregon boundary line ; he was the

brigadier-general and the brigade was kept together at his own expense. He attended the artillery school, Metz, France.

After leaving the Florida and Creek wars, was engineer with Colonel Abert, chief engineer of topography on harbors, in 1837; became resident engineer in State of Illinois and Michigan Canal upon that great and important work. Was made major-general of militia; founded the Light Guard of New York State; captain of Tompkins Blues when a mere lad; was major and brigade inspector.

In 1846, two regiments of his brigade having been accepted by Governor Wright, he was ordered to report with his regiments (the first troops raised for the Mexican war) to Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott, for duty in the Mexican war, where his actions were brilliant. He was engaged in that war in the siege of Vera Cruz, Molino del Rey, Buena Vista, Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, in the battles of Cerro Gordo, Contreras, Monterey, and Churubusco—battles unsurpassed in thrilling interest and the glory of military achievement in the annals of the world, and the bravest deeds on record.

General Burnett's regimental flag was the first one planted on the elevated causeway opposite Portalis in the battle of Churubusco, and his command captured Santa Anna, and planted his flag at Cerro Gordo, the headquarters of General Santa Anna; after the troops had captured the position held by the whole Mexican line, he returned the first American flag that was planted upon the castle at Chapultepec, even before the Mexican standard was hauled down from the plaza of the castle, and the brave Mexican general surrendered his troops and the key to the enemy's position to General Burnett's command, as shown of him in the great painting now hanging in the governor's room, city hall, New York, and the national flag presented to him by Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott at the national palace in the City of Mexico, and a beautiful one from the ladies of Mexico, made by their own hands, and three other ones presented by the State and the city of New York for their gallant conduct through the war. General Burnett presented the flags of his country to his command at the Island of Loboas, Mexico, in 1846, upon their knees repeating this oath from his lips—"No enemy shall capture these colors while our lives are spared to defend them." Welcomed home to New York by the first division of New York regiments, under Maj. Gen. Sandford, by 200,000 people. Broadway was literally packed with people, who turned out to receive the returning troops, and flowers strewn in their pathway. Public receptions tendered him by the cities of New York, Brooklyn, Troy, Albany, Philadelphia, New Orleans.

General Burnett was a warm personal friend of President Andrew Jackson, of Henry Clay, Abraham Lincoln, and Daniel Webster. In the wars he had many wounds, and the Mexican, where he was severely wounded by a shot through his body, hip and shoulder dislocated by the fall of his horse—twice shot under him; from his wounds his jaws were closed with (tetanus) lock-jaw for forty-five days. His coffin was made, but the gallant Major Twiggs was buried in it. He was promoted general by President Polk, September, 1847, by an act of Congress, his commission signed by Governor Seymour; he commanded a brigade.

For General Burnett's heroic services to his country he was tendered a resolution of thanks by the State of New York, Congress, and other States, and honors in private life showered upon him by his countrymen.

In 1861 he organized troops for the war of the rebellion, although a great cripple, in the Assembly Rooms, Broadway, New York City, at his own expense, consolidating regiments as general United States Army, under appointment by the governor and commission from the Government by President Lincoln; headquarters were at the Metropolitan Hotel. He rendered valuable service to the city during the New York riots; and by his efforts saved the United States mint when he had command of the city; was wounded again and sent to the United States Ladies' Hospital. He organized several commands in New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, for services in the field during the war. From exposure consequent upon these labors, he became a martyr to inflammatory rheumatism and neuralgia.

General Burnett rendered valuable services to his country as United States topographical engineer. In 1849 President Polk offered to make him commissioner to run the boundary line between the United States and Mexico; but being upon crutches, he was made chief engineer for the construction of the navy-yard dry-dock, which he completed in 1852. Thence, in 1855, he was in charge of the New York dry-dock, and the construction of the work-shops in the New York navy-yard.

He made the plans of the Brooklyn water-works, which were adopted and of inestimable value to the city of churches and a lasting honor to his name. In 1857 he was made chief engineer of Norfolk navy-yard and Portsmouth water-works, which involved his survey of Lake Drummond; in Richmond and Maryland made plans for tunneling the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia.

He was made surveyor-general of Kansas and Nebraska, which included Colorado, Montana, and two other Territories, because from ill-health he was unable to accept the appointment offered him by President Buchanan as minister to Turkey.

General Burnett, at the time of his death, was the oldest living graduate who became general, U. S. Army, in the Mexican war. Of the fruits of his valor was a territory conquered by the United States in 1848 almost one-quarter in extent of its then existing area, which is now peopled by 1,500,000 souls, and which, from its mines alone, could pay our national debt. He won, by his bravery, the highest honors awarded to the immortal Jackson; in brief, the highest honors accorded to Lafayette by the Empire City of the Union. Relics of great value were showered upon him; many came from foreigners. Two massive gold medals from the city and State of New York, another of great intrinsic value from the officers and soldiers of his division and command. The sword and the old hickory cane of President Jackson, newly mounted and ornamented with jewels and a massive gold eagle; another one from Mrs. Jackson, heavily mounted. A beautiful gold-mounted sword, with diamonds, was presented to him by the Light Guard of New York for the gallant acts of his youth and saving the life of Cadet Clark from drowning, and six others at different times. A grand reception was given to him by the mayor and common council and citizens at the governor's room, City Hall, New York, at the theaters, and public places. A great dinner was given to him by the citizens of Philadelphia, and also dinners and receptions in several other cities. A grand banquet was given to him and his officers at Troy, where the ladies from the seminaries showered them with flowers.

General Burnett never was in a battle that was lost, or skirmish; he had great perseverance and fortitude, and many are the incidents of his generous nature which can be related. He drew around him a multitude of friends. In the parlor he was as gentle as a lady. He was calm, cool, and brave in the field. It was often said of him he never knew what fear was, ever manly and hopeful through the many afflictions and hardships he was called to endure. His civil and military career placed him as one of the most distinguished men in American history, and he was a most accomplished gentleman, possessed of more than ordinary intelligence of mind and of refined and artistic tastes. His mind had been cultivated by reading, studying, and reflection, and his memory was wonderful even up to the hour of his death, and the extent and accuracy of his information was remarkable. He was sociable, refined, and generous to a fault. He revered and loved his Redeemer and was confirmed early in life in the Episcopal Church. A hero, a gentleman, a kind father, a devoted husband; for many years an invalid, but cheered by a faithful, brave-hearted wife, which was the one bright spot in the closing years of a once brilliant career.

General Burnett was honored as the bravest officer in the United States, and by his countrymen he was awarded the "President Jackson Gold Box" (and bequeathed to his widow), which bears the following inscription:

(Front side.)

February 23, 1819.

Presented by the mayor, aldermen, and commonalty of the city of New York to Major-General Andrew Jackson, with the freedom of the city, as a testimonial of respect for his high military service.

(Reverse side.)

THE HERMITAGE, TENNESSEE, August 17, 1859.

Bequeathed

by Major-General Andrew Jackson "to that patriot of New York City who (should our happy country not be blessed with peace) should be adjudged by his countrymen to have been the most distinguished in defense of the country and our country's rights."

Awarded

under that bequest, by the general voice of his countrymen, to Brigadier-General Ward B. Burnett, commanding the New York troops in the late war with Mexico.

It is seldom that we find a service so long and so distinguished.

General Burnett died in Washington City nearly four years ago. He had been, for many years prior to his death, in a condition of helplessness, requiring the constant aid and attendance of hired persons. This condition is clearly shown to have been

caused by wounds and disease incurred in his military service. The applicant was his faithful attendant, affectionate nurse and companion during many years of suffering; spared neither time nor labor in easing the afflictions of that long disease—his life in these latter years.

He was and had been for some time prior to his death, a pensioner at the rate of \$122 per month. Neither the general nor his wife seem to have been possessed of any means of livelihood except the pension so paid to him. This was all exhausted, and even indebtedness beyond it accumulated against them by reason of the necessary expenses of his protracted illness. So that when he died there were no assets of his estate, no dower for his widow except the claim upon the gratitude of the country for services so prolonged and so meritorious.

The widow is left without resources, except the pension now paid her under the special act of Congress, which is \$50 per month. The bill under consideration proposes to grant her \$122 per month, the amount of the pension of her late husband at the time of his death. She may indeed be equitably entitled to the full sum thereof, but having signified her willingness to accept \$100 per month, the committee, by reason of the premises, accord her that sum as a merited provision for the claim made by her.

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