

LIEUTENANT A. J. WILLIAMSON.

[To accompany S. bill No. 165.]

July 22, 1854.

Mr. EDGERTON, from the Committee of Claims, made the following

REPORT.

*The Committee of Claims, to whom was referred Senate bill No. 165, "for the relief of Lieutenant A. J. Williamson," report:*

That the Senate report upon this claim sets forth its nature, and is annexed hereto. This committee cannot concur in the doctrine that the United States is responsible for the safety of the clothing and baggage of either civil or military officers, whilst travelling in boats, cars, or otherwise. Government pays for the services of its numerous officers, but leaves to underwriters the business of *insuring* the safety of life and property. The government *insures* neither officer nor private citizen, though it steadily labors for the protection of both. Occasionally, in moments of great excitement, Congress has made exceptions to most of the great principles which govern its action; but it is not deemed advisable, by this committee, that Congress should deliberately resolve to pay for such clothing and baggage as any of its officers in any branch of the public service may chance to lose whilst travelling from place to place. There seems to be no sound reason why the clothing of the employés of individuals shall not, when lost, be paid for by government, as well as clothing lost by men who receive their salaries from the United States. Both alike charge the value of their services, and for their services, when paid, the property of each should receive a like protection from government. A preference accorded to either would be *partiality*. Citizens do not *insure* the lives or property of those whom they employ, nor should a government do so that does not wish to build up "privileged classes." The committee recommend the rejection of the bill.

JANUARY 30, 1854.

*The Committee of Claims, to whom was referred the petition of A. J. Williamson, report:*

It appears from the papers in the case that the petitioner, then a lieutenant in the United States army, was ordered in December, 1851,

to conduct a detachment of one hundred recruits from Newport barracks, Kentucky, to San Antonio. On the 8th of December they embarked on board the steamer "South America" for New Orleans. On the passage the vessel took fire and was consumed, by which disaster fifteen of the recruits were drowned, and nearly all the clothing and baggage was consumed.

Assistant Adjutant General Cooper, who was at that time in New Orleans, certifies to the truth of the facts stated, and says that "the Secretary of War directed, in April, 1851, that the lost articles should be replaced without cost" to the recruits. It seems, therefore, but just that Lieutenant Williamson should also be remunerated.

An adverse report has been previously made in this case; but, aside from the additional evidence now produced, the report of the Committee on Naval Affairs, made at the first session of the last Congress, in the case of the petty officers and seamen on board the United States steamer "Missouri," at the time of her destruction by fire at Gibraltar, which was sustained by the action of the Senate, seems to have settled the rule for such cases in favor of the petitioner—the Senate having passed the bill for the remuneration of the officers and seamen of the "Missouri," for losses occurring under analogous circumstances.

The committee submit a bill for the relief of the claimant.