

BENJAMIN CRESSEY.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 226.]

APRIL 11, 1850.

Mr. GERRY, from the Committee on Naval Affairs, made the following

REPORT:

*The Committee on Naval Affairs, to whom was referred the petition of Benjamin Cressey, have had the same under consideration, and report:*

That, from the evidence before the committee, it appeared that the petitioner, in October, 1814, shipped on board the *Harlequin*, a private armed vessel of the United States, as a seaman, during the late war with Great Britain; that he sailed from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the same month; that in about five days after he sailed he was taken prisoner by his Britannic Majesty's ship *Bulwark*, 96 guns, and carried into Halifax, N. S., and from thence to England, and there incarcerated in Dartmoor prison, where he remained a prisoner until July 4, 1815, when he was exchanged and sent in a cartel-ship to the United States; that during his imprisonment at Dartmoor, and on the 6th of April, 1815, the British soldiers, under the command of Captain Shortland, by the order of their commander, made a most wanton and unjustifiable attack upon the prisoners, killing some and wounding others; that this assault was made upon the prisoners in the prison yard, and at a time when no danger was apprehended; that after firing upon the prisoners they (the soldiers) pursued the prisoners with fixed bayonets, wounding and slaughtering them with a savage ferocity while retreating to their prison cells. From this day forward the soldiers were allowed by their officers and indulged in inflicting upon the prisoners acts of cruelty and insolence; and that in four days after the massacre before mentioned, the petitioner was lying in his hammock, and, without being forewarned, a soldier cut away the head-rope to the same, and caused him to be precipitated headforemost on a stone-paved floor, which fractured his skull, and produced a state of insensibility. Even after the petitioner recovered from the insensible state produced by the fall, to the present period, he has been afflicted with a severe disorder in the head, without intermission, which has almost entirely disqualified him from performing manual labor; and his intellect has been seriously impaired in consequence of the injury thus received, and his general health seriously affected. In view of all these facts, your committee are of the opinion that the petitioner is entitled to relief, and accordingly report a bill.

All which is respectfully submitted.

