

GERSHOM MUNCHESTER.

MARCH 3, 1851,  
Ordered to be printed.

Mr. WALDO, from the Committee on Revolutionary Pensions, made the following

REPORT:

*The Committee on Revolutionary Pensions, to whom was referred the petition of Gershom Munchester, respectfully report:*

The petitioner represents himself to have been a soldier of the revolutionary war; and complains that the act of Congress passed June 7, 1832, in making provision for those soldiers of the Revolution who served six months, and not making provision for those who served three months, is unequal; and he asks Congress to pass an act giving a pension to those soldiers, now living, who served three months or more; to commence on the 4th day of March, 1831, and to continue during their lives.

It was evidently the intention of Congress in passing the act of June 7, 1832, to make general provision for all persons who took part in our revolutionary struggle; and in distributing its gratuities it arbitrarily adopted the principle of graduating the amount received by each recipient by the length of his service, under certain limitations in the act expressed. These limitations prescribe that the length of service which shall entitle a man to the largest pension shall be two years, and the shortest service that shall receive any gratuity shall be six months. It cannot be claimed that this rule operates equitably in every case, and in some instances its inequality is very apparent. But if the committee were to cite a case of hardship it would not be taken from that class of persons who served in the whole of the seven years' contest but three months, but it would be found among those who served during the whole war, and who do not receive any larger gratuity than those who served two years. The soldier who left the pleasures and comforts of his home and took upon himself the exposures and hardships of the camp for five years, or during the war, draws more largely upon our sympathies, even though he be now the recipient of an annual annuity of eighty dollars, than one who only ventured into the service for three months.

But the principal reason for limiting the minimum service at six months is the small annual amount the recipient would be entitled to receive. The annuity for three months' service would be too small a pittance to warrant the expense in making out a case, and the trouble in obtaining the pension. The petitioner seems to be aware of this, and he asks that the law may be so framed as to allow these pensions to commence on the 4th of March, 1831, thus allowing them to extend back a period of nineteen

years, which would make an aggregate amount worth receiving. The committee know of no instance in which any pension law has given an annuity to extend back more than two years, nor do they believe it to be sound policy to do so. Should this provision be adopted, the committee cannot see any good reason why it should be limited only to the soldiers now living, but think it should be made to extend to those who have deceased, and be paid to their representatives to the time of their death. But on the whole, the committee are of opinion that the change asked for should not be made. The present law has been in operation for eighteen years, and has been very generally approved, and the committee would recommend that its provisions remain undisturbed. They therefore ask to be discharged from the further consideration of this subject, and that the petition should be laid upon the table.