

## BENJAMIN WAKEFIELD.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 547.]

MAY 4, 1858.

Mr. DAVIS, of Massachusetts, from the Committee on Naval Affairs,  
made the following

## REPORT.

*The Committee on Naval Affairs, to whom was referred the memorial of Benjamin Wakefield, have had the same under consideration and submit the following report:*

The petition of the memorialist, Benjamin Wakefield, is, that he be allowed the difference of pay between that of a master's mate and boatswain, while performing the duties of the latter grade on board the United States ship "Preble." In an affidavit attached to his petition he deposes that he entered the navy of the United States, at the navy-yard at Brooklyn, New York, on the 24th of June, 1846; that on the 15th of August following he was transferred from the said navy-yard to the United States ship "Preble," Commander W. F. Shields, and by him was ordered to perform the duties of boatswain of said ship, there being no officer of that grade attached to said ship, although the regulations of the Navy Department allowed such an officer; that at the request of Commodore Shields the memorialist wrote to Hon. George Bancroft, then Secretary of the Navy, asking that he should be appointed by the department a boatswain, or an increase of pay, should he be continued in the performance of the duties of that grade; that the Secretary of the Navy in his reply, directed to Commodore Shields, held forth inducements to the memorialist to hold on to the situation to which the said Commodore Shields had appointed him, until a vacancy should occur for promotion in that grade; that the memorialist proceeded to sea in said ship, and on arriving at the port of Callao he again applied, on the 29th of February, 1848, through Commodore Jones, commanding the Pacific squadron, to the Secretary of the Navy for an increase of pay or an appointment as boatswain; that the Secretary of the Navy, under date of 18th of May, 1848, issued an order to Commodore Jones to the following effect: "You are hereby authorized to give acting appointments to Benjamin Wakefield, &c., and drop his rate as master's mate on board the Preble, to take effect on the 1st of January last;"

that subsequent to the receipt of said order the Preble sailed for San Francisco, thence to Monterey and Mazatlan, and thence to China, where, having cruised for a length of time, she returned to the Pacific station, communicating in September, 1849, with Commodore Jones at the Sandwich Islands, and subsequently, in December of the same year, proceeded to San Francisco, California; that on or about the 15th January, 1850, the above named order from the Navy Department to Commodore Jones was communicated to the memorialist for the first time, by Commander Glynn, then in command of the "Preble;" that the memorialist was at that time in bad health, and severely afflicted with rheumatism, induced, as he believes, by a continuous service of three years and seven months, in consequence of which he was compelled to decline said appointment, being entirely unfit for service, and to seek relief on shore; that he was discharged from the said ship on the 19th day of January, 1850.

On the 29th of January last, when this memorial came up for consideration, the committee addressed a letter to the Secretary of the Navy, asking for information as to the allegations of the memorialist in regard to inducements and promises held out to him by the department to retain his situation; in reply to which the following answer was received:

"NAVY DEPARTMENT, *February 3, 1858.*

"SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 29th ultimo, enclosing a memorial, with accompanying papers, of Benjamin Wakefield, praying to be allowed the difference of pay between that of a master's mate and boatswain in the navy, and requesting information in the case.

"In July, 1846, the sloop-of-war Preble was fitting out at New York for the Pacific station, and there being no boatswain who could be ordered to her, Commander Shields, commanding the Preble, was authorized by the department, under date of July 6, 1846, to select a suitable person to perform the duties of boatswain, who was to be rated as boatswain's mate, and to be paid at the rate of \$30 per month, during the cruise. Commander Shields, in his reply, July 15, expressed apprehensions that a suitable person to perform the duties of boatswain could not be obtained upon the terms prescribed, and suggested the propriety of assigning the rate proposed, and increasing pay to that allowed to a boatswain of a sloop-of-war. This the department, July 18, hesitated to do, and still hoped a suitable person could be obtained at \$30 per month.

"August 18, 1846, Benjamin Wakefield was rated as master's mate on board the Preble, the pay of which rate was \$30 per month; and, in reply to an application from him to be appointed to the grade, (that of boatswain,) the duties of which he was temporarily performing, the department, September 18, 1846, stated that it was understood, at the time of his employment, that the department was under no engagement to appoint him, but that when a vacancy occurred his application would be considered. In May, 1846, in reply to a similar request from him, forwarded by Commodore Jones, commanding the Pacific squadron, the department stated to Commodore Jones that

Benjamin Wakefield had no assurance from it of the appointment he claimed, but authorized him (Commodore Jones) to give him an acting appointment as boatswain, and to drop his rating as master's mate on board the Preble, to take effect on the 1st of January, 1848.

"It appears from the memorialist's own statement that this appointment was never bestowed upon him. He was discharged from the Preble January 19, 1850.

"The memorial and papers are herewith enclosed ; also, copies of letters referred to in the foregoing statement.

"I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

"I. TOUCEY.

"Hon. THOMAS S. BOCKOCK,

"*Chairman Committee on Naval Affairs,*

"*House of Representatives.*"

Though the memorialist was not apprized of his appointment until more than two years after the date from which the department had ordered it to take effect, and as he had, during all this while, performed all the duties attaching to the said office of boatswain, the committee are unable to see any reasons why he should not be allowed the difference of pay between that of master's mate and boatswain, from the ordered date of his appointment to the time of his discharge, and accordingly report a bill for his relief and recommend its passage.

