War Claims.

LOSS OF PERSONAL PROPERTY.

Among the bills annually presented to Congress by individuals are a large number from persons in the military service asking payments for loss of personal property. Bills of this class rarely go through, not because the claims involved are not just, but because Congress does not deem it worth while to consume time in passing upon claims for small amounts and because the claimants have neither opportunity nor means to visit Washington during the sessions of Congress. In consequence of this failure of Congress to act a large number of the class of bills alluded to may be found upon the calendars. They have had in some instances a dozen examinations from as many committees, and notwithstanding the numerous favorable reports they are usually forced upon the calendars upon the final adjournment of Congress. Efforts have been made from time to time to correct this evil by the passage of a general act that would enable the accounting officers of the Treasury to settle all such claims, but until last winter these efforts were unsuccessful. At the close of the last session a bill was passed providing for the settlement of claims of officers and enlisted men of the army for loss of private property destroyed in the military service. This law will be of especial interest to persons who have lost personal property while in the military service, and as the fact of its passage is not generally known, the full text of the measure is appended.

That the proper accounting officers of the Treasury be, and they are hereby, authorized and directed to examine into, ascertain, and determine the value of the private property belonging to officers and elisted men in the military service which has been or may hereafter be lost or destroyed in the military service under the following circumstances:

1. When such loss or destruction was without fault or negligence on the part of the claimant.

2. Where the private property so lost or destroyed was shipped on board an unseaworthy vessel by order of an officer authorized to give such order or direct such shipment.

3. Where it appears that the loss or destruction of the private property of the claimant was in consequence of his having given his attention to the saving of the property belonging to the United States which was in danger at the same time and under similar circumstances; and the amount of said loss so ascertained and determined shall be paid out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, and shall be in full for all such loss or damage. Provided, that any claim which shall be presented and acted on under authority of the act shall be held as finally determined, and shall never thereafter be reopened or considered; and provided further, that this act shall not apply to losses sustained in time of war or hostilities with Indians; and provided further, that the liability of the government under this act shall be limited to such articles of personal property as the Secretary of War in his discretion shall decide to be reasonable, useful, necessary, and proper for such officer or soldier while in quarters engaged in the public service in the line of duty; and provided further, that all claims now existing shall be presented within two years from the passage of this act; and all such claims hereafter arising be presented within two years from the occurrence of the loss or destruction.

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THE administration organs are already beginning to say that a Democratic defeat in New York the coming fall will have no significance. That depends, of course, upon the point of view; but the trouble about seeing it in such a light is that a Democratic defeat must embrace the idea, also, of a Republican victory, and a Republican victory in the President's own State and the State of two of his Cabinet officers will certainly mean something.

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