

General Miscellaneous Matters.

Remarks of the Hon. John L. Dawson, on the Bill for the Relief of Com. Decatur.

In looking over the proceedings of Congress the eye is occasionally attracted by the discussion of propositions involving questions of private right, that are deeply interesting on account of their Historical associations.

The widow of Commodore Decatur, I am informed, resides within this District in absolute poverty. I think that Congress should endeavor to make cheerful a friend so long desolate by the neglect of a Government that owed her husband so much.

Mr. Dawson: I move to take up Senate bill No. 265, for the relief of the captors of the frigate Philadelphia, and ask the House to indulge me whilst I make a brief statement of the history and merits of this claim.

The Government of the United States, prior to being informed of this declaration of war by Tripoli, had sent a squadron into the Mediterranean for the protection of American commerce, which remained there until the fall of 1803, when the frigate Philadelphia, while in chase of a Tripolitan vessel, stranded off the harbor of Tripoli, and in that condition contended gallantly against the powerful batteries of the citadel until the tide falling, the ship settled, was captured, and afterwards carried into Tripoli as a prize.

Commodore Preble in command of the Constitution, had passed the Straits of Gibraltar and took command of the squadron. Decatur suggested to Commodore Preble, his plan for the recapture of the frigate, and on the 31st of January, 1804, he received orders to carry his purpose into execution.

There is no portion of the globe that has furnished so many battleships, or where history has recorded so many instances of heroic daring as that which is washed by the waves of the Mediterranean and the Adriatic; yet there is none that for bold conception, energetic, heroic, and successful execution will compare with that of Decatur and his gallant associates.

The proposition, Mr. Speaker, of providing a reward for these gallant men and their representatives, has engaged the attention of Congress since 1824. Decatur, I believe, fell and died in 1820. Though great difficulty has been found in adjusting the mode of distributing the reward, none has ever been experienced in admitting the hazard and responsibilities of the enterprise.

upon in the House of Representatives, and it would seem that the tardy and uncertain action of Congress, like the "law's delay," amounted to a "denial of justice."

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