

former board of claims, arose from a conscientious impression that by the tenor of the act, under which they were constituted, it was their bounden duty so to do; and although not actually designated by that act as a board of revision, yet, virtually they necessarily became such, for as by far the greater number of the claimants declared the impossibility (from their neglect in preserving copies of their former claims) to make them out afresh. The commissioners were compelled, in all such cases to admit the application for reference to those former ones: indeed this reference has proved of infinite advantage to the public; for it has enabled the commissioners to detect the introduction of all additional claims, and in all such cases of discovery, they have felt it an imperious duty to require the most satisfactory reasons to be assigned for their not having been preferred before the former board, and this in order to guard against the introduction of increasing demands against the public, to the prejudice of the old original claimants. It may be proper to observe, with reference to the minutes of their general proceedings, that the evidence upon those claims which were originally preferred before the board which sat at Sandwich in the year 1815, having (as appears by the report of that board) been already supported by sufficient oral testimony *upon oath*, it was not deemed necessary by the present commissioners, to trouble the parties in such cases for a repetition of their former evidence.

The commissioners venture to hope, that the foregoing detail will be received as a proof that they have devoted their abilities to the utmost with the sincerest endeavour to perform their important duty satisfactorily to Your Excellency, never ceasing to hold in view the ruinous consequence of creating dangerous precedents. This feeling may perhaps, in some cases, have produced decisions which, under other circumstances, might appear harsh, but where the interests of a whole community are concerned, those of a few individuals must succumb. As a proof of the zeal and perseverance with which the commissioners have been actua-

ted, from the very beginning of their labours, they beg leave to notice, that in the very first claim which came before them, they succeeded, after a most laborious, baffling investigation, in detecting a flagrant perjury and fraud, by a claimant named John Farmer, to the intended injury of another claimant; a warrant for the apprehension of the offender was in consequence applied for, from the dread of which, he timely absconded, or the commissioners would have felt it their duty to have prosecuted him, as well to procure punishment for the grosser offence, as for the opportunity it would have afforded of exposing the fraud which that perjury embraced.

The commissioners feel it their duty to notice, that many individuals who preferred claims before the former board, have not come forward upon the present occasion to renew them, and the only reason for the commissioners deeming it expedient to advert to the circumstance, is, lest an erroneous estimate should be formed of the total amounts claimed and awarded under the present board, contrasted with the former one,—and lest the result of any measures, which may be adopted for the liquidation of the several awards made by the commissioners of the present board, should be founded upon a supposition that this report embraces every claim that has ever been submitted to the government. The close of this report will therefore notice not only the number of claims decided upon by the commissioners, with the aggregate amount of sums claimed and awarded thereupon, but also the number and amount of claims left undecided, in consequence of inattention to the demands of the board for further evidence, together with the number and amount of those claims submitted to the former board, which have been referred to the present commissioners, but which are now lying dormant in consequence of no application from the parties concerned, to take them under consideration.

With reference to these latter, the commissioners feel it their duty to state that they did not fail to adopt every