36TH CONGRESS, 1st Session. } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. { REPORT No. 247.

JANE B. EVANS.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 471.]

MARCH 30, 1860.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. BURNHAM, from the Committee on Patents, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Patents, to whom were referred the memorial and petition of Jane B. Evans, widow, exerutrix and devisee of Cadwallader Evans, late of Pittsburg, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, submit the following report:

The memorialist sets forth that her late husband, whose feelings of humanity had been awakened by the frequent recurrence of most disastrous calamities on our western waters occasioned by the explosion of the boilers of steam vessels, applied himself to discover a practical and efficient preventive against these accidents. He was eminently successful in his efforts to accomplish this highly important and valuable object. In 1839 he obtained a patent for his invention designed to insure safety to passengers on board steamboats acting on the high-pressure principle.

In 1852 he surrendered the original patent and with some modifications procured another, the continuance of which, under the stringent provisions of the patent laws, could only extend to the month of April, 1853. He presented his application for an extension, which, in accordance with the same laws, was granted him an additional period of seven years, and which will consequently expire in April, 1860.

The conditions on which patents are allowed to be renewed are, that the applicant shall establish to the satisfaction of the department that his invention was original, that it has been proved by experience to be useful, and that he has reaped a benefit wholly incommensurate with the benefit which the public has enjoyed from his invention. These points were fully proved by a mass of evidence. No one was found to question the utility of Mr. Evans's invention. Its utility was proved by the concurrent testimony of the ablest scientific gentlemen in our country, and of the most experienced navigators of steam vessels. It was shown that it had been the means of preserving thousands of lives and millions of property. It was also shown that the ingenious inventor of this invaluable instrument had not derived from it a compensation more than equivalent to the wages of one of

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the laborers whom he had employed in the construction of his instruments. The commissioner unhesitatingly and with great justice granted the extension of the patent for the period of seven years, which was the extent to which the law authorized him to go.

That period is about expiring. This committee are satisfied that the case as now presented imperatively demands as a simple act of justice a further extension of the patent. Every years' experience has confirmed the evidence laid before the commissioner in 1852, and the correctness of the judgment he pronounced upon it. The multiplication of steamboats on our western waters has proportionately increased the number of passengers and the value of the cargoes which they transport, yet, with all this augmentation, it is believed that instead of the large amount of destruction both of life and of property which annually occurred prior to the introduction of Mr. Evans's invention, but few explosions have happened, and the committee has not been able to learn of any in which an explosion has occurred on board any vessel on which Mr. Evans's invention has been in use and properly employed.

No one has yet been known to call in question the originality of the invention.

The committee are fully satisfied that the emoluments which have been derived by Mr. Evans during his lifetime, and by his family since his death, have not only been altogether disproportionate to the benefit which he has bestowed upon the nation, but have barely compensated him for the personal labor bestowed on the fabrication of the instrument.

It might indeed with great reason and force be urged, that an individual who has originated an invention which has already been the means of preserving thousands of valuable lives and an incalculable amount of property, deserves a more valuable testimony of national gratitude than the mere temporary extension of a patent right. Less than this the committee cannot recommend. They therefore submit the accompanying bill, which has received their unanimous concurrence, and recommend its speedy passage.