

FRIDAY, MARCH 16.

On motion of COL. BOYD, the House went into Committee to take into consideration A Bill to incorporate the St. Andrew's Friendly Society.

COL. BOYD in explaining the object of the Bill, said, that there was another Society in St. Andrews called the St. Andrew's Benefit Society, which Society had lost a considerable amount of money, which they had invested in Charlotte County Bank Stock. That Society was still in existence, and this Society is formed for the same object—viz: a Society to render mutual assistance to its members, and to enable them to invest their money in Provincial Debentures.

HON. MR. GILMOR laid on the table a Report on Public Accounts.

A BILL TO ABOLISH PROPERTY QUALIFICATION OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

MR. COSTIGAN moved the House into Committee on the above Bill and said, he always had doubts about the propriety of that portion of the law providing for a property qualification of members serving in the Assembly. He had prepared a Bill somewhat different from this, but, upon speaking to several members of the House, he found there was a general willingness that the property qualification should be done away with entirely. The law requires that the candidate, before coming before the constituency, shall possess an estate valued at £500 over and above his liabilities. The spirit of the law is, that no person can represent a constituency in this Assembly unless he is possessed of an estate of £300. Suppose a member of this House has a ship at sea, and by some accident the ship was lost, and the loss of that ship placed him in a position that enabled his creditors to come down upon him, so that he would not be possessed of £300 of real estate; to carry out the spirit of the law, he should resign his seat in the Legislature, because the law says no man shall be qualified to represent any constituency unless possessed of that sum. In the debates which took place on this question in the Parliament of England, some of the most able men on the other side of the Atlantic, took strong grounds in favor of doing away with this property qualification. He would read the arguments put forth by one of them which will corroborate the arguments he had made use of. He then read from Lord John Russell's speech on this question.

COL. BOYD said, the property qualification was a very small one, and any person could not expect to represent the people of this country without having some interest in the country. He considered the property qualification as entirely too low now, and he would therefore oppose the Bill.

HON. MR. CUDLIP said, he was inclined to support the principle of the Bill, but he would not support the Bill without it went further. It should take from the members all the privileges they have, as members, over other men. They should be liable to be arrested for debt, except during the meeting of the Legislature, and for twenty days before and twenty days after it has met. The law of property qualification, which they had,

was of no service, as it is so often evaded.

MR. ANGLIN said, it was a matter of little importance whether it passed or not. They ought to study not to teach the people to violate the laws, or not to teach them they are something that could be violated. This law is scarcely ever regarded at all. If you go back to the history of the formation of the British Parliament, you will find the reason why it was required. At that time, when the King of England called a Parliament, he found it very difficult to get the members to attend, and he had to compel the attendance of persons in distant districts, for they did not like to come to London, and spend their time, besides being to a considerable expense, which they could not afford. They did not have as much relish for Parliamentary life as the people of the present day; and, as they received no pay for their services, it was necessary they should have a certain income of their own, to enable them to attend. This is the reason a law was made requiring a property qualification, but it is now abolished, and it is absurd that we should require a property qualification when it is not required in England. The law is so easily evaded that it is of no effect, and only serves to bring the law into contempt.

DR. THOMPSON thought they should get the opinion of their constituents upon a Bill of that kind. He did not think it right to pass a law to lower the property qualification of the voters, or the person voted for. There were very few candidates for a seat in that House who were not possessed of £300 worth of property. As to the qualification of voters, it gives poor men a kind of stimulus, and induces them to strive to acquire property for the purpose of enabling them to vote, thus acquiring a habit of industry which enables them in time to become well off. He thought the Bill had better stand over until they had a revision of the election law, for he would like to see a good election law made, which would commend itself to the views of all; for these reasons he thought they had better report progress.

MR. NEEDHAM said, that a law relating to elections had been introduced, and another for the registration of votes. They had better let them all go together, and they might be incorporated in one.

MR. COSTIGAN remarked that the more they took off restrictions from the candidate, the more they increased the privileges of the elector, because they gave them a larger field from which to select their representatives.

MR. NEEDHAM had no doubt but a great deal could be said on both sides; but he thought the fair, honest, legitimate principle was this: the qualification of a member of the House should be the same as that of the elector. The idea of property qualification ought to have been buried long ago. When the election law was brought forward by the former Government he went for universal suffrage, that was, that no man should be taxed unless he had a right to vote, and he did it upon a good sound constitutional principle. If they would refer to Blackstone they would find that it is a sound British principle, that no man should be taxed unless he is represented, and the time will come in England when universal suffrage will be adopted. That is the principle of the sound constitutional lawyer, Blackstone, who speaks, though he is dead.

When he had heard that Nova Scotia had passed that law and then went back, it reminded him of "the dog that went to his vomit, and the sow to her wallowing in the mire."

Progress was reported upon this Bill.

QUESTION CONCERNING VOLUNTEERS.

MR. L. P. W. DESBRISAY asked the Government whether several companies of volunteers had not been called out. If so, to what part have they been called, and to what extent.

HON. MR. SMITH doubted the propriety of making public everything done in reference to the defence of the country. He could only assure this House that the most active and energetic steps are being taken for the defence of the country. The military authorities are vigilant, and the volunteers are being organized and drilled in different places.

MR. LINDSAY did not think it would do any harm to let the people know whether there will be a force sent to the frontier to prevent an invasion of our borders. It has been stated that a large number of arms had been sent to Woodstock. He found that it was not the case. A company had been formed there, one hundred strong, and they had never received any arms.

HON. MR. SMITH replied that there were 390 rifles in the County of Carleton, in the hands of men able to use them. He would further inform him that so far as information has been received from abroad from those persons best able to form an opinion on the subject, that Woodstock is not in danger at all, for it is not the intention of any parties to make a raid upon it.

MR. LINDSAY wished information in regard to a company of Home Guards, which had been organized two months ago at Woodstock, and of which he had the honor of being elected captain, but which had never received a gun.

HON. MR. SMITH asked whether there had not been some local difficulty regarding them.

MR. LINDSAY was not aware of any. They had requested to have arms, but had never received a reply whether they could have them or not.

MR. HILL could scarcely understand why there should be so much alarm felt in the County of Carleton, as the nearest point from which it could be reached was from Bangor, which was about one hundred miles from Houlton Village, which contained about one thousand inhabitants, and where it was not at all probable that any Fenian organization existed, it being so far from the centre. In Bangor he believed the organization did exist, but to reach Houlton they would have to travel one hundred miles, and we would receive notice of it from the American authorities. They would not invade us from that quarter when they could reach Calais so much easier, and be met by others from Boston and New York; but for all this, they did not feel any great alarm there. They try to embarrass the Government by questions. He did not think information of this kind should be put in the newspapers, for it would not be wise policy to tell the enemy just what we intended to do. He did not think the Government knew just what they were going to do. (Laughter.) He would venture to say if the Government expended \$200,000 for the defence of the country, as certain gentlemen seem to desire they should do,