ONTARIO LEGISLATURE.

Hon. A. M. Ross, in answer to Mr. Ermatinger, said that the continuance or discontinuance of the Provincial Exhibition was a matter of great interest to the agricultural community. The matter was under consideration of the Government, and their decision would be announced when the estimates were brought down.

Hon. G. W. Ross, in reply to Mr. Brereton, said it would be announced when he brought down his High School Bill next Monday or Tuesday, if it was his intention to introduce legislation, making it obligatory on the part of County Councils to aid High Schools and Collegiate Institutions in towns separate from counties for municipal purposes.

Hon. O. Mowat said, in reply to Mr. Meredith, that the Government had not yet decided what course they should take with respect to the East Simcoe constituency representative. Their decision will be made known in a few days.

Mr. Wood moved for a return showing in detail the expenditures made in the township of Hungerford, by the authority of the Provincial Board of Health and the Local Board of Health during the late smallpox epidemic that prevailed in that township, with the number of cases and deaths, and the length of time the epidemic prevailed. He thought many distressing incidents had occurred, and if any one was to blame it ought to be found out.

Hon. A. M. Ross—I have asked Dr. Bryce to make a special report upon the epidemic. That report is prepared and, I believe, now in the printer's hands, and had the motion been delayed a day or two the members would have had it in their hands and had more means of coming to an intelligent conclusion. From the report of the Secretary to the Provincial Board of Health, I find that the expense has been $1,600 to the Province, and from the report received by the Secretary to the Local Board, I learn that the expense to the county will be $10,000. The number of cases of smallpox dealt with is 200, and the deaths from that disease forty-five. The House will thus see that the epidemic was one of great magnitude. While prompt and energetic measures were taken by the local Boards of Health, yet in townships such as Hungerford, which are not so well situated for efficient organization as the older settled townships, it was necessary to extend the aid of the Province to the district. It was found that fourteen cases had occurred before the matter was brought to the attention of the Provincial Board. The local medical men refused to attend to the cases, as they knew they would lose their own practice. One of the medical men did, however, consent to attend to the cases, and he was appointed medical officer to the local Board of Health; and as to the amount of his bill I am not able to state, but I am privately informed that it was a very large one. After the disease had been stayed the houses, clothing and goods of the persons in the district had to be fumigated, and some of the latter were destroyed. In Illinois an outbreak of smallpox had taken place, and though it was of less magnitude than ours it cost more than double to suppress the disease.

Mr. Morris considered it unfair that a township such as Hungerford should bear such a large portion of the expense as $10,000. He wished the House to understand that if such prompt measures had not been taken for the suppression of the outbreak, it would have assumed the magnitude of Provincial proportions. He instanced the case of an outbreak near Halifax, and an extensive outbreak near Manitoba. In the latter place the outbreak was one of terrible proportions, and it had been stamped out by isolation, vaccination and re-vaccination.

Mr. Brereton suggested that the hon. the Provincial Treasurer should include in his returns the ages of the patients treated, the number vaccinated, and the number not vaccinated.

Mr. Ferris said he would like the returns to include the other townships affected by smallpox as well as Hungerford.

Mr. Wood said he had no objection.

Mr. Phelps asked that the return should include all municipalities in the Province which had been afflicted by the smallpox scourge. The township of Flos had been afflicted by it, but fortunately the Council of that municipality had formed themselves into a Board of Health according to statute, not knowing that such a disease would occur. He stated the steps which had been taken to stamp out the disease.

Mr. Hudson said the epidemic had spread to a certain extent before any steps were taken to stop its progress. In the first place he understood the physicians attending the families which were taken down pronounced the disease chicken-pox, and several families were taken down before the truth was discovered. It broke out first in a very poor neighborhood. Through the absence of cleanliness it spread more rapidly than would otherwise have been the case, and had covered a considerable district before the Provincial Board of Health got the matter into their hands. The Secretary, when informed, at once went down to the township, and the Reeve of that township was appointed Chairman of the Local Board of Health, after which the disease was almost entirely stamped out. The people were excited at that time about the disease, but now they were as much excited about the bills which had been brought in by the physicians. He understood that the Medical Officer of the Local Board of Health had applied to the Provincial Board to fix his fee, which he understood was $4,000. He must say he thought this charge very extravagant. The township was very poor. Then there was a bill from Patrick Murphy, who buried the dead, which he regarded as high. The only reasonable bill he saw was that of Dr. Canniff, amounting to $800. This man had allowed a new building, which he had erected for a store and residence at Stoco, to be used for a hospital, and he would have to go to considerable expense in fixing it up again, in order to make it habitable.

Mr. Fraser proposed an alteration of the motion to cover all the information wanted in the return, which was carried.

Mr. Carnegie asked that his motion be amended so as to read as follows: For a return showing the several lots in the township of Belmont, Methuen, Chandos, Anstruther, Galway and Cavendish, in the county of Peterborough, and of the townships of Cardiff, Monmouth, Snowdon, Lutterworth and Glamorgan in the provincial county of Haliburton, which have been sold, located, disposed of, or applied for, otherwise than under the Free Grant and Homestead Act, since the first day of January, 1880; also, the dates of said sales, the persons to whom sold, the prices paid and terms of payments; also, the dates of the several applications for the purchase, location and terms of location of said lots.

Hon. T. B. Pardee—I desire the hon. gentleman and the House to know that the return will still involve a great amount of labor to make out, but the Government does not intend to oppose it after the insinuations which have been made that there is something to cover up. The amendment will make some little difference, and it will be made out at the earliest possible moment, but the House need not be surprised if the extensive nature of the return necessitates a little delay. The returns must be made out by the regular clerks of the department, and the session of the House is their busiest season.

Hon. A. S. Hardy, in reply to Mr. Monk, intimated that he had directed that a list of the returns ordered last session, and not yet brought down, be prepared, and the returns themselves would be brought down as soon as possible.

Hon. A. S. Hardy presented to the House the report of the Minister of Education for 1884 and the report of the births, deaths and marriages for 1883.

Hon. G. W. Ross introduced a Bill to amend the Public Schools Act. In doing so, he departed from the usual procedure by entering upon an explanation of the changes proposed. The arrangements which were proposed by the consolidated law, were that the rural schools and the law respecting them should be treated under one distinct head; secondly, that the same treatment should be adopted with regard to unorganized townships, and thirdly, cities, towns and incorporated villages should be dealt with. Having dealt with the schools under these various heads, then he proposed to arrange the educating books. Then they would have legislation for the support of the schools. Next they would deal with the teachers, the different officers administering the law, and lastly with the pains and penalties. The first amendment was with regard to the school age. Looking at different clauses of the present law they seemed to vary, the school age ranging from 5 to 16 years in one and from 5 to 21 in another. He proposed to establish definitely that the school age should be from 5 years to 21. The next amendment which he thought necessary was in regard to the qualification of a ratepayer to constitute him a voter or a school trustee. Under the Municipal Act it was necessary that a voter should be a subject of Her Majesty, or that he should have undergone the process of naturalization. No such arrangement existed with regard to the election of school trustees, and he was just simply following the analogy in that matter which existed with regard to the choice of other municipal officers. Secondly, he was simplifying the provisions necessary for the adequate accommodation of school children which it was necessary to provide. There were eighty-eight thousand who did not attend each year. The machinery of the law as it now stood was not sufficiently comprehensive to enable the truant officer to get at those who were absent from school contrary to its provisions. The assessor, however, in addition to reporting the number in the municipality between the ages of 7 and 13 would be required to report their names, so that this list could be compared with the school register, and at once a complete chain of evidence would be established against those who had not observed the law in the matter of attending school. Thus all the machinery furnished could be enforced to remedy the evils complained of. Another proposal of his Bill was to dispense entirely with school treasurers specially appointed for that purpose in city, town, village and township boards, and to appoint the treasurer of the corporation to act as such with the same responsibilities and duties as were laid upon him as treasurer of the municipality. A good deal of irritation had arisen from difficulties in the law relating to the amount due a teacher for his services. The present law required that the school trustees should pay a teacher for the holidays that immediately followed the term of his engagement. Suppose a teacher taught up to the vacation in July, the holidays were somewhat long, and he was entitled to be paid to the end of them. That system had been somewhat irritating, and in fact many complaints were made and many expedients resorted to by School Boards to get rid of the responsibility of paying a teacher for services they thought he had not rendered. He proposed that a teacher should be paid for the holidays in proportion to the time during which he had taught to the whole number of teaching days in the year. There were a number of teachers holding old first-class certificates which were limited to the county in which they were granted. He proposed to provide that these should be valid in any county of the Province of Ontario. Those who held them were all men of considerable experience, and no certificate of this character had been granted since 1871. He also proposed that where a County Council deemed it in the interest of the schools it might add to the board of examiners men competent to examine where French or German were exclusively taught, in order to test the competency of the teachers. A good deal of irritation arose over the fees required to be paid by County Councils to examiners. This Bill provided that they should be paid the same amount as members of the County Council. He proposed another change in this connection which would do away with considerable trouble by providing that councils pay the examiners so much per candidate. Examiners also complain that County Councils were not sufficiently liberal to pay their travelling expenses, in addition to those required by law. He was making a provision whereby they would be paid liberally, their expenses to be determined by the County Council. Coming to the question of superannuation, he was going to propose a scheme by which that system might hereafter be entirely abolished. First, no teacher would be required to pay into the Superannuation Fund. Secondly, those who were contributing to this fund, and who wish to continue, would be allowed to do so, the fee being increased from $4 to a voluntary sum of $8. A certain portion of the teachers under 35 and 40 years of age as a rule were opposed to the superannuation system entirely. Those over that age were anxious that it should be retained. If they wished to retain it themselves by a voluntary contribution they might do so. With regard to those who ceased to contribute if they left the profession they would be allowed to withdraw their contribution as at present. If they did not it would be placed to their credit, and at any time hereafter would be allowed to draw for the years during which they contributed. By this means he expected they would be relieved by and by of this charge, and he did not say so because he believed the people should be loth to deal liberally with the teachers, for on the contrary he thought they were deserving of the utmost sympathy and gratitude. The only argument of a substantial character urged against the repeal of the law in regard to superannuation was the simple one that it was an incentive to teachers to remain in the profession. Perhaps it was, yet he noticed that 1 609 teachers left the profession in the past four years, or at the rate of over 400 per annum. They had lost the services of some of their very best men.

An hon. member—Does this number include female teachers?

Hon. G. W. Ross said he could not ascertain the number of female teachers who had left. They had retired for other reasons perhaps. The superannuation system did not appear to retain the teachers, and the argument he had mentioned against doing away with it did not need to restrain the House one moment in the action he proposed to take. The law required each child between 7 and 13 years of age to attend school 55 days in the half year. As he stated a moment ago there were 88,000 children in the Province not fulfilling the law in that respect. In the case of children attending factories he proposed that after passing a certain examination they should be exempt from attending school half the time, namely, the examination required for a pupil for promotion from the third to the fourth book. At this stage of their educational career children were generally from 11 to 12 years of age, and he proposed that such of them as worked in factories should be exempt from attending school at least a portion of the time. What he wanted to provide for was not simply attendance at school, but the education of the pupil. Although the school age was from 5 to 21, the compulsory clauses only affected those between the ages of 7 and 13. Another provision which he proposed of a more radical character was for the election of school trustees on the same day as the election of municipal councils. It would be optional with the trustees by a resolution passed in October to order that the election should be held on the same day as that for members of the Council. It would be by ballot, and so far as the Municipal Act was capable of application for the prevention of corrupt practices, etc., it should apply to the election of school trustees. This did not apply to the Separate schools. He proposed also to disqualify every salaried officer of a municipality from being either a candidate or eligible for election as a school trustee. He thought these provisions would simplify the law and meet a popular demand, excite a greater interest in educational matters, and cause perhaps a more vigorous School Board. He might say he did not propose to move the second reading of the Bill for two or three weeks, in order that members may have ample opportunity to consider it and that the subject might receive that public discussion outside of the House which he thought was desirable in school legislation. He thought it was desirable that they should get this session a measure as nearly perfect as possible in order that, for at least five or six years to come, no other changes would be made in the school laws.

Mr. Meredith—I apprehend that he does not propose any corresponding changes in respect to the election of Separate School Trustees.

Hon. G. W. Ross—I do not, and it is optional all around.

Hon. C. F. Fraser said the House will remember that when permission was given by the House for the erection of new Parliament Buildings it was qualified with the very important fact that no more than $500,000 should be spent on them. The House will also remember that some sessions ago a report was made which stated that in the opinion of the Executive Council they could not be erected for the sum named in a style fitting for the Province and the needs of the Government, and therefore no constitutional responsibility rests with the Executive Council for not taking action especially when it is remembered that it was stated that no steps would be taken without communicating with the House.

Mr. Morris moved that it is expedient and desirable that any city, erected as such under the Municipal Act, which shall petition therefor in due form, shall be entitled to be granted by the Legislature, if, on due consideration of the circumstances thereof, it shall see fit, a special Act of Incorporation in the regulation and government of its special interests. He argued that it would be a great convenience to Toronto, Hamilton, London, Ottawa, etc., if they could have special charters as Halifax and Quebec had. He went into details showing the vast expenditures of Toronto.

Hon. Mr. Mowat—My hon. friend suggests that the proposal contained in the motion is one of great importance, but I see that it is of no importance of all, and that is very easy to demonstrate. My hon. friend has not suggested one single advantage to be gained by the motion he has proposed. The position of the Government is this, that we are in favor of general laws, so far as we can have general laws. We have always acted upon this, and though it was a deal opposed at first it is one that the people of the country now recognize the great advantage of.

Mr. Balfour moved for a return of copies of all reports made to the Government by directors of joint stock road companies for the year 1884, under section 146, cap. 152, of the revised statutes, as amended by s. s. 6 and 7, cap. 24, 47 Vic. He stated that Mr. Lee had consented to incorporate in the motion such portions of his motion as were not carried by the notice he was making. He thought there was a general desire to abolish toll roads. It was expected that towns and cities would abolish market fees where the tolls were taken off the roads, but this was not the case. At the present time there were 23 counties having toll roads, 74 companies and 675 miles. He hoped the motion would pass, and those companies not making returns should be compelled to do so.—Carried.

Hon. A. S. Hardy presented the report of the Commissioner of Public Works.

The House adjourned at 5 o'clock.

Among the petitions presented were the following:

Mr. Badgerow—From the Council of York to amend the Act so as to make election of school trustees by ballot.

Mr. Hagar—From the County Council of Prescott and Russell for a simplification of the Land Laws and the introduction of the Torrens system of land transfer.

Hon. C. F. Fraser offered a motion in effect ordering that the report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the conspiracy be printed with all possible despatch, which was carried.

Hon. G. W. Ross, in reply to Mr. Mulholland, said: No decision has yet been arrived at by the Government as to the propriety of introducing legislation during this session of the Legislature on the subject of University Federation. Until after that decision has been arrived at it would be premature to state what the expense will be.

Hon. O. Mowat, in reply to Mr. Meredith, said: As far as I am concerned there is but one other place concerning which notice has been given for the formation of a new county, and that is the one in which Mount Forest is interested. We don't think it desirable to pass legislation for that during the present session.

Mr. Mowat said the report of the Special Committee appointed to strike the Standing Committees of the House had been laid over in consequence of Mr. Drury's name being mentioned. It was very necessary that the committee should be organized at once, and he therefore suggested that the committees should be printed without Mr. Drury's name. He proposed this without prejudice to Mr. Drury or his constituency, and retained the right to choose a substitute.

Mr. Morris saw no objection to this.

The motion was carried.

Imitators vs. Substitutes.

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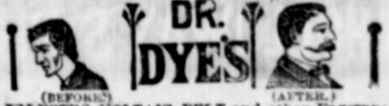

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