

ONTARIO LEGISLATURE.

THIRD PARLIAMENT--SECOND SESSION.

TUESDAY, 30th Jan., 1877.

After recess,

TERRITORIAL DISTRICTS.

Mr. MOWAT, in moving the second reading of the Bill respecting the territorial districts of Muskoka, Parry Sound, and Thunder Bay, and the provisional county of Haliburton, explained that at present a portion of the territories of Muskoka and Parry Sound belonged judicially to Victoria and a portion to Simcoe, but for the sake of convenience he proposed that in future the whole of these territories should belong to the county of Simcoe for judicial purposes. It was also proposed that the stipendiary magistrates should be allowed to exchange with one another, and that the Division Court procedure in those territories should be assimilated with that in other parts of the Province. There were some other minor provisions.

The Bill was read the second time.

THE LIQUOR LICENSE BILL.

Mr. CROOKS moved the second reading of the Bill to amend the Acts respecting the sale of fermented or spirituous liquors. He explained that the Act did not propose to interfere with the principles of the Acts already in force. The tendency of magistrates and justices had been to circumscribe the operation of the Act instead of giving it a liberal interpretation. He proposed to meet difficulties of that nature which had arisen, but there were further amendments which covered other questions about which there seemed to be legal doubts. A practice seemed to have prevailed under which chemists and druggists had carried on the sale of intoxicating liquors, as if they were excluded from the provisions of the Act. It was proposed to compel them to enter in their books the names of those who obtained alcoholic liquors from them, together with the medical certificates required in such cases. The present Bill also proposed to provide certain means of search which were essential if the provisions of any license law were to be properly carried out. They were far less inquisitorial than the provisions of the Act carried in England under the auspices of the Government, which obtained power by the support of the beer interest. Another provision of the Bill was to make the law of Ontario the law of the entire Province. An idea had got abroad, in consequence of a decision by Chief Justice Draper, that the Ontario License Law did not apply in those sections where the Act of 1864 was in force. He proposed to make that clear. The returns, which would shortly be in the possession of the House, showed conclusively that this Act had been to a very considerable extent effective as a remedial measure. A very recent deliverance of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland had adopted the view that the reduction of taverns or places of drinking diminished intemperance. In 1876, 2,977 taverns were licensed as contrasted with 4,459 in 1875, and 794 shops as compared with 1,267 in 1875. The report, which was now in type and would be brought down in a day or two, showed how the Commissioners and the Inspectors had endeavoured to carry into effect the machinery provided under the Act. The regulations imposed on the Inspectors and the instructions to the Commissioners showed that the whole object of the Government was not to lay down any arbitrary limit, but to arrive at a conclusion which would meet the requirements of each locality. The object of the Government had been to reduce the amount of intemperance by curtailing the number of licenses and by granting them only to persons of good character who were fit to be entrusted with the carrying on of such a business. The License Commissioners had to return to the Treasury Department full particulars in regard to the licenses issued—the date of the application, the name of the applicant, the report of the Inspector, how the matter was disposed of, and other particulars. The report would show that there was no foundation for the statement that the Act had been carried out in any political sense. The evil of intemperance was so enormous that both parties should unite to combat it. The people of England and the people of Massachusetts were now trying to grapple with