

# JOINT STOCK COMPANIES.

## Mr. Gibson's Bill Read a Second Time.

Legislative Chamber, March 18.

The cost of school books and the royalties paid to their authors formed the chief topic of the House to-day. In the Public Accounts Committee this morning Col. Matheson catechized Mr. W. J. Robertson, author of the High School algebra, as to the revenue from his royalties, and he again brought the matter up in the House this afternoon. Dr. Ryerson criticized the arrangement for the publication of the High School readers, but to both of these criticisms Mr. Ross made an effective reply. The joint stock companies bill was read a second time. In the evening the balance of the educational estimates were passed, and the consideration of the agricultural estimates entered upon. Col. Matheson charged the Superintendent of Public Libraries with abusing his position for purposes of money-making.

The act for the regulation of the fisheries was passed through the committee stage.

Col. Gibson moved the second reading of the bill respecting the incorporation and regulation of joint stock companies by letters patent. In doing so he referred to the legislation of the English Parliament upon this question and also the proposed Dominion act. The machinery for incorporating companies was, he said, simplified by the present act. So far as future incorporations are concerned, where any provisions of the present act did not apply the company would have to be specially exempted in the act of incorporation. It was intended to repeal the companies general clauses act. He proposed to amend several clauses in the bill while it was in committee.

Mr. Howland complained that Col. Gibson had not more fully explained the provisions of the bill. It did not sufficiently deal with the case of foreign companies doing business in Ontario, and particularly with Canadians who secured incorporation for the purpose of doing business in Ontario. The bill did not sufficiently guard against the manipulation of mining companies in the stock markets.

Col. Gibson interrupted that another act would be introduced to deal with mining companies.

Mr. Howland replied that in that case the two acts should be combined or else some of the clauses of the present bill should be amended. Continuing, he said that the same remark would apply to all kinds of companies.

Col. Matheson expressed the opinion that the legislation in respect to joint stock companies should be in the nature of restriction. The mere fact of a company possessing a Government charter gave it a prestige which induced people to trust them much more than they would trust private individuals, and, therefore, there should be every safeguard for stockholders and those dealing with them.

Col. Gibson said that there were stringent provisions in the bill to prevent persons of good standing from lending their names to scheme of which they knew nothing and in the conduct of which they took no interest.

### PRICE OF SCHOOL BOOKS.

When the House went into committee of supply on the education estimates Col. Matheson asked for an explanation of the item of \$9,000 in the public accounts of last year paid by the publishers of the Ontario readers on account of a renewal of the right to publish.

Mr. Ross explained that the books were originally published under an agreement for ten years. That agreement lapsed last year, and it was arranged that the Government were to get \$3,000 from each of the three publishers for a further extension. That amount was now in the treasury, and the price of the books had also been reduced to the extent of 20 per cent.

Col. Matheson insisted that the whole amount should have been given to the pupils in the way of reduction in the

price of the books, which should be lower than the present average price. Much better terms might have been made. "The High School Algebra," for instance, cost 75 cents per copy. Of that 11-4 cents went to the gentleman who prepared the algebra. That had been going on for years, and he understood that it amounted to \$1,400 or \$1,500 a year. He had asked in the Public Accounts Committee this morning how much it amounted to, but the gentlemen opposite had refused to permit him to ask the question. The author had, however, admitted that he received 15 per cent. on the retail price of the book. The principle of publishing should be that of competition. Persons should be invited to prepare the books, the Government should select the best one submitted; the Government should hold the absolute copyright, and no royalty should be paid.

Mr. Harcourt asked Col. Matheson why the authors of this country should not be paid as they were in other countries. The royalty did not always pay the author for the labor spent on the book. The English and American books on algebra cost not 75 cents but \$1 25, so that our children got the advantage to the extent of the difference.

Mr. Whitney said there should be competition. As to the price of the books, the question was not whether the pupil in the United States pays more or less than the pupil in Ontario, but whether the pupil in Ontario paid more than was necessary.

Mr. Ross again explained the \$9,000 arrangement. The readers were prepared by the Education Department, and cost some \$16,000 or \$17,000, and it was always understood that the cost should be recouped out of the publication arrangement. Some \$6,700 was received for the first ten years' privilege, and when the right expired it was that as nearly as may be the amount of the original cost should be obtained. It had been decided by arbitration some years ago that the price of these books was as low as possible. He explained that there were two algebras authorized, and that they were both published without any arrangement and were not authorized until after their publication. The price of these books was very low. As to the amount that the author received, that was nobody's business but his own and the publisher's. We never asked a contractor for Government work how much profit he made on a contract. All we had to see was that the price of the book was low. Many of the books were published by more than one firm and the books were cheap.

Dr. Ryerson attacked the Minister of Education for his reader bargain. He read a statement furnished him, as he said, by a disgruntled publisher, which gave the profit upon the different readers at from 50 to 300 per cent., but refused to comply with Mr. Ross' request for the source of his information.

Col. Matheson declared that there should be competition among the publishers in Canada as well as in Great Britain and the United States.

### COST NOT EXCESSIVE.

Mr. Ross quoted from the agreement with publishers of school books which provides that the material and workmanship entering into the mechanical production of a text-book must be of a quality that has met with the approval of the department. Samples of the material used must be submitted to the department. The production of the readers has been in the hands of three firms, but other books were not confined to these firms, so that there was no monopoly. An arbitration held in 1889 had determined after investigation that the prices charged for school books were not excessive. The Minister quoted from a letter by Inspector Hughes the statement that the cost per pupil for school books for 1896, exclusive of the kindergarten, was eighteen cents. The year's supply of new text-books cost five cents per pupil. The cost per pupil for supplies—scribblers, etc.—was fourteen cents. Mr. Ross protested against Col. Matheson's proposition to put American text-books into the schools. This, he said, was even worse than the proposition that the text-books should be manufactured by prison labor.

Mr. Gibson (Huron) told the committee that in 1890, when the school book question was an issue, he sent to London for two sets of English books for the purpose of comparison. He found that though manufactured in free trade England the cost was about the same as that of the Ontario text-books.

Mr. Whitey asserted that the fact