

COMPULSORY VOTING.

Mr. AMYOT moved second reading of Bill (No. 8) to make voting compulsory. He said : This Bill is the same as that which was reported by the sub-committee last year. It is in the same sense as the Bill presented a moment ago, to disfranchise electors who have taken a bribe. One of the great troubles we have to contend with during elections is to get the electors to the polls. A great many say : This year I am going if my day's work is paid, or I will go if they send for me. This is a mere pretext to be bribed. They know that if any one goes for them, that person will be provided with some money or something else to pay for their vote. I am of opinion that we should try every means possible to put down corruption. One of the great sources of expense and trouble to candidates is the refusal of the electors to come alone to the poll, and if, as has been done in some other countries, we make it obligatory on them to come without being sent for we will be taking a very good step in the right direction. I introduced my Bill two years ago. It has since been discussed by the press. It was discussed last year by the sub-committee and had the unanimous support of that committee. I will not trouble the House with the opinions of the press, as every hon. member has been in a position to read those comments. But I may mention that last year, a very important paper called "The Week" was distributed to every member containing some very good articles, amongst others an article written by one of our best officers, Mr. Wicksteed, in support of this measure. I may also tell the House that many institutions, comprising a great many important citizens, after mature deliberation have adopted the principle of the Bill. I will quote amongst others the deliberations of the "Artisan and Working-man" of the 4th September, 1891. It was proposed by Mr. McDonald and seconded by Mr. O'Donoghue, that voting be made obligatory. The same decision was come to by the Knights of Labour on the 1st of July, 1891. I have here a copy of the resolution then passed :

Col. AMYOT, M.P.,

SIR,—At the last regular meeting of the above assembly—

That is, the noble order of the Knights of Labour—

—it was resolved that we endorse and approve of the Bill in favour of compulsory voting, introduced in the House of Commons by Col. Amyot, M.P., and that we ask the members of this city in Parliament to use their vote and influence in favour of its becoming the law.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Yours very truly,

G. WILKINS,

Sec.-Treas.

Then, Mr. Speaker, the French press. I hold in my hand an article from "Le Courrier du Canada" and "L'Evenement," of Que-

bec, approving generally the principle of the Bill. I shall speak presently of a paper that has not approved it. I have been asked : Is there any country where voting is compulsory ? Well, Sir, we find that in Denmark the voting is compulsory and that everybody is bound to assist by appearing at the polls and recording his vote. I may quote from the constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark of 1849, revised and promulgated on the 28th January, 1866, the following sections :—

Sec. 64—The electors are bound under penalty to present themselves.

Sec. 74—Every person appointed an elector of the second degree is bound to accept the trust unless he can give legal excuse.

Sec. 75—Every elector of the second degree who makes default and abstains from voting is subject to a penalty of 20 rix-dollars.

That is about \$12 of our money.

Sec. 80—The electors of the second degree and prime electors must be present at the place and hour of election.

Sec. 92—Any person neglecting the duties imposed by the present Act is subject to a fine of 10 to 200 rix-dollars, unless a severer penalty has been imposed.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am informed, and in fact our reading shows, that the law is operated and is working very well in Denmark. We know also that, in the United States, many states of the Union are trying to introduce this system, as one of the best means of preventing corruption. Let me, now, Mr. Speaker, give a synopsis of the Bill, after which I shall deal with the objections made to it. The first clause says :

Every elector whose name is registered on the list of voters unless he has a reasonable excuse, shall appear.

"Unless he has a reasonable excuse." We will be asked : "What is a reasonable excuse ?" Let me quote a number of examples : illness and infirmity, old age, accident, fire, absence, violent and sudden storm, necessary attendance at court. All these will be reasonable excuses. But who shall determine whether the excuse given comes within the category of "reasonable" excuses ? This matter is left to the decision of the judge. In every case before a court the judge is bound to judge the facts. Suppose we have a case of misdemeanour ; you must have proof of the intention. Who gives the law on the point to the jury ? It is the judge, and then the jury who say whether the facts of the case show the intention. Suppose I sue a man for damages ; who says if there is a damage, an infringement upon the law ? The judge does that. It is the same under the Bill which I propose. In a case of force majeure—superior force—if, in answer to the action taken against me, I plead that I had been acting under a superior force which I could not master, which no human force could master, who decides whether it is a superior force or not ? The judge. In every case where there is a contract to be inter-