

which he allows \$4 for the rent of a hall for nomination. I know that last nomination in my riding, the returning officer, through economy, I presume, hired a very small place. There was a very large attendance, and we were under the necessity of engaging the opera house and paying \$10 for it ourselves. It is utterly impossible to get a building of sufficient size to hold the crowds at nomination, for so small a sum as \$4.

Mr. CAMERON (Huron). I think the hon. gentleman is correct. In county towns the court house is generally used, but in other ridings where there is no public building it is impossible to obtain a hall for \$4. We generally pay more than that for a political meeting. The provision should be "not exceeding \$8." I did not thoroughly understand whether it is proposed to pay the returning officer \$2 for each poll.

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. He will receive a minimum of \$60, and \$2 for each poll above 30. If there are 30 polls, he will receive \$90; if there are 40 polls he will receive \$80.

Mr. CAMERON (Huron). I do not object to the increase proposed if there is a guarantee that the returning officers will be men capable of discharging their duties, and will discharge them. I know in the election of 1887 the returning officer in my county was a man who did not so act, and it was proposed to bring several actions against him for several violations of the law. Such, however, would have been unless, for while judgments could have been obtained, he was a man without means. At the last election in my own riding a similar observation might apply. In more than one riding men were appointed without means, and no man, however grievously the law is violated, can then be reached except for a criminal offence. Under the election law it is very difficult to get at a returning officer criminally, and so practically as regards violations of the law, which sometimes are gross violations, it is only by civil action, and it is useless to bring a civil action against a man of straw. I prefer to increase the fees if men of responsibility are appointed to positions of that kind. If the Minister would compel these returning officers to enter into sureties for the proper discharge of their duties it would be a step in the right direction. The Government should make it a condition of their appointment that these officers should fulfil the law, and the Government should take some guarantee that the law will be carried out and their duties honestly discharged.

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. We discussed this subject a good deal when the House had before it the proposition to alter the law respecting returning officers. The matter will have to stand over for the present. The leader of the Opposition suggested the advisability of having permanent returning officers, and perhaps that would be an improvement. We decided to consider that suggestion and various other suggestions made, including one from the hon. member for Bothwell in regard to the returning officers' sufficiency as regards property. I think, however, we cannot undertake, in regard to either of these Bills, to do all that is required to be done in the opinion of individual members by way of amendment at this session. We cannot undertake to do more than complete the outline of this Bill this session.

Mr. Trow.

Mr. WATSON. I agree with the proposed increase of the fees. If a man occupies the very responsible position of returning officer, he should be fairly paid; but I would urge that only respectable men should be selected to discharge those duties. This is not only important with respect to discharging his own duties honestly, but also in regard to giving good and proper instruction to his deputies, and selecting efficient deputies. I have known several cases at different polls in my own county where deputies employed in 1882 and 1887 have not to this day been paid for their services, and they had to pay out disbursements amounting, in many cases, to \$10 or \$15. The Government should see to it that the returning officers are not men of straw, but possess some means and are able to give security for carrying out the duties imposed on them. Unless something of this kind is exacted, the Government should not increase the fees; but it is well worth while increasing the fees if we have a guarantee that the men receiving the appointments will give some security that they will discharge their duties in good faith.

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. I hope the hon. gentleman is not under the impression that the fees generally are being increased. Only in the large constituencies will there be any change, and it is in those constituencies we have had trouble in obtaining suitable persons.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Under the provision made, the fees will be largely increased, in my own county at least one-half. There are 47 polls, and the returning officer will receive \$94 instead of \$60, and 12½ cents for each mile travelled instead of 10 cents. Some provision should be made to increase the fees, but at the same time the returning officers should be compelled to give security for the due performance of their duties. In many cases the officers are men of straw. If they make an error, either wilfully or negligently there is no way of recovering anything from them. The returning officer has also the appointment of his deputies. He should be held accountable for what they do. It is hardly fair he should have the appointment of 47 deputy returning officers in one county and not be held responsible for their conduct. This is not a party question, and we want to see good men appointed whether they be Reformers or Conservatives: men who will honestly and faithfully carry out their duties. I, therefore, think that the returning officer should be a man of some substance, who would be responsible for his appointments.

Mr. CHAPLEAU. The law says that the lists can be certified by the Queen's Printer, the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery and the revising officer. That is the law under the Franchise Act of 1890. The errors upon which my hon. friend from Bothwell (Mr. Mills) remarked do not depend at all upon the Queen's Printer. Far from it. They were unfortunately the result of errors committed by the revising officers, which a new system adopted this year will prevent. I have to add to the remarks of the hon. gentleman who just sat down, that the returning officers are probably the hardest worked and the worst paid officials in all the service. I agree that they should be men who have a standing in the community, and I may add that, except in very rare occasions has it ever been complained, by the most exacting of the Government's opponents, that they were men of straw. I agree