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All articles, contributions, and letters on matters pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

A CIRCULAR from the Chairman and Honorary Local Secretaries of the Royal Society of Canada informs us that the next annual meeting of the Society will be held in the city of Montreal, on Wednesday, May 27th, 1891, and that it is anticipated that the meeting will be attended by many distinguished persons, eminent in Literature and Science, from Europe and the United States, as well as from the Dominion of Canada. The ordinary sessions of the Society will be held in the buildings of the McGill University, and the popular evening lectures will be delivered in the Queen's Hall on St. Catherine Street. The museums and art galleries, with the educational, industrial and other institutions of the city, will be opened to visiting members and associates. These various provisions for the indulgence and cultivation of literary, scientific and artistic tastes, combined with the various social entertainments which will no doubt be liberally provided by the citizens, and the attractions offered by the scenery and historical associations of the neighbourhood, should ensure, at that delightful season of the year, a large attendance of the educated and scholarly classes for whom the Society is designed to cater. Though we have never been able to admire or approve the principles on which such societies are based, or to admit the right of any self-constituted and close corporation to assume, to the extent seemingly implied in so ambitious a title, either to represent or to gauge the learning and culture of the Dominion, we, nevertheless, gladly recognize that good literary and scientific work has already been done by the "Royal Society of Canada," and we wish it every success in its efforts to stimulate the intellectual life of Canada. Could the members some day see their way clear to so liberalize the constitution, and broaden the sphere of the Society as to enlist the sympathy and co-operation of a larger proportion of the best literary talent and scholarship of the Dominion, it might, we conceive, secure both a more thoroughly representative standing and a wider usefulness than it can hope to attain along its present restrictive lines on this democratic hemisphere.

THE stand taken by Mr. Mowat and his colleagues against Mr. Whitney's Bill to amend the Election Act by providing for the more rigid punishment of corruption, must, we fancy, have been disappointing to many of the Premier's admirers. We have in a former number commented on the amendments proposed by Mr. Whitney. The two most important of these were that imprisonment was to be made a necessary consequence of conviction, and that the county attorney was to be required to attend Election trials and prosecute guilty parties summarily. The gist of Mr. Mowat's argument in justification of his opposition to the Bill was that it would defeat its own ends by greatly increasing the difficulty in obtaining proof, which is even now the chief obstacle to the enforcement of the law. There is undoubtedly force in this argument. It cannot be doubted that beyond a certain point the severity of the punishment tends to render it more difficult to obtain proof of the crime. The only question in this case is the practical one, as to whether Mr. Whitney's proposals went beyond that point. As the present law makes imprisonment optional it does not seem likely that the reluctance to testify would be very greatly increased by the proposed change. On the other hand, the educative influence of that change would, it seems to us, be very valuable, though we do not remember that this was mentioned in the discussion. To make imprisonment the invariable punishment of corrupt acts would at once stamp those acts as crimes, while to many minds the imposition of a fine suggests only the idea of a misdemeanour, more or less pardonable. The objection to the punishment by fine, that it discriminates against the poor man, which was strongly urged by Mr. Whitney, is simply unanswerable. To the man of means the payment of a fine may be no punishment whatever, while for precisely the same offence the poor man may be lodged in gaol, to take his place among criminals. This is a glaring injustice, such as no enlightened people should commit or tolerate. Mr. Whitney's suggestion that the procuring of proof might be facilitated by doing away with the penalty for the taking of bribes should commend itself to Mr. Mowat's consideration, as directly in line with his argument, though from other points of view it is open to grave objections. The smallness of the Government majority, coupled with the fact that one or two of its supporters voted for the Bill, should encourage Mr. Whitney to persevere. Evidently the principle of his measure is making headway.

THE debate in the Ontario Legislature on the motion to refer the charges of election frauds in East Hastings to the Committee on Privileges and Elections was on the whole able and dignified. Premier Mowat's amendment affirming that the reference proposed would be "contrary to usage and precedent since the transfer of election trials to the courts, and would serve no useful, legitimate purpose which would not be better accomplished by the ordinary tribunals provided by law, or by a commission, etc.," was of course carried by the party majority. The justice of this decision and the conclusiveness of the arguments urged by Mr. Mowat and others in its support seem to us to depend entirely upon the question whether under the circumstances the courts are accessible for the correction of the alleged fraudulent artifices. On this point the authorities of the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition were at variance. Assuming the correctness of Mr. Mowat's views on this point, most thoughtful persons will agree with him that the courts constitute a much better tribunal for the investigation of all such questions than any that can be afforded by a Committee of the House. It would be unfortunate to establish a precedent in favour of going back to the old system of having such election disputes decided by a committee of interested politicians. There should be, it is true, great force in Mr. Meredith's protest against the implication that the judgments of honourable members could be swayed by party considerations. But why should the members of the House composing such a committee be less liable to be influenced by such considerations than the House itself, and we do not suppose that anybody but a modern Apella could believe that, e.g., the division upon Mr. Mowat's

amendment touching this very matter represents the honest convictions, conscientiously and independently reached, of the individual members. It would be an extraordinary coincidence, indeed, that, if unbiassed, the supporters of the Administration should invariably come to one conclusion and the members of the Opposition to the opposite, on such a question. But, on the other hand, it is of primary importance that Government officials should be placed under the heaviest possible bonds for the impartial discharge of the duties of their offices in all such matters, and that a ready and effective means of investigation and redress should be open to all responsible persons who are ready to prefer definite charges of irregularity or wrong doing. In fact, when such accusations as those made by Mr. Hudson are openly presented, a thorough investigation is due to the officials themselves no less than to their accusers, and the Government, it seems to us, should feel in honour bound to see that such investigations are promptly made.

ONE of the most interesting debates of the session in the Ontario Legislature was that of the 15th inst., on Mr. Wood's resolution in favour of abolishing the system of paying sheriffs, registrars and certain other classes of public officials by fees instead of by salaries. That the system of payment by fees, as at present operated, leads to serious disparities and anomalies was very clearly shown by Mr. Wood and other speakers. This is specially apparent in the case of the registrars, of whom there are at present, according to Mr. Wood's figures, sixty-three, who receive as the net proceeds of their offices about \$100,000, an average of about \$1,600 each, for the performance of duties which make no demand upon the official beyond that of being a fair business man and an honest one. If all these officers were fully employed and the salaries somewhat evenly distributed, the remuneration could hardly be deemed excessive, but this is not the case, as the salaries range from \$726 to nearly \$9,000. The result is that a number of these officials derive incomes greater by fifty to seventy-five per cent. than that of the Premier himself. The question is, however, as Mr. Mowat said, one of the proper mode of remuneration, rather than of the proper amount of the salaries paid. The Premier joined issue on this question and maintained that the fee system is, on the merits, the better system. Some of his arguments in support of this position were, to say the least, curious. For instance, he argued that when paid by salary the officer confined himself strictly to office hours, while when paid by fees he would work up to twelve o'clock at night, if necessary. One would have supposed that in such a position there would be a certain amount of work to be done, and that the honest officer would hold himself responsible for doing it. If the question were one of employing assistants, the amount of income would be a pretty safe guide to the work to be done, and neither Government nor people would wish a public servant to be overworked. On the other hand, the desire to retain the position would usually suffice, even if higher motives failed, to secure a faithful and economical performance of duty, as it does in the case of the many officers who are remunerated by salary. A still more puzzling argument was the Premier's statement that under the salary system the receipts would be very much less than they are now. As Mr. Whitney put it, how the payment by salary would prevent John Doe or Richard Roe from selling his property and registering the deed is hard to understand. In fact Mr. Mowat's opinion on this point was well adapted to give force to the suggestion of another speaker, that the fee system presents temptations to abuse in the direction of making unnecessary and excessive charges. The sum of the matter seems to be that the fee system gives the Government an opportunity to reward political services with fat offices, seeing that, as a matter of fact, there are at present a number of incumbents of such offices enjoying large salaries for which they actually render comparatively little service, the bulk of the work being done by employees whose labours are but scantily remunerated. The system which produces such results is not only unfair and unjust in itself, but injurious to political morality. It should be speedily amended.