

*LIMITATION OF ACTIONS BILL.*

The Lord Chancellor, in moving the second reading of this bill, explained that during the discussions on the Employers' Liability Bill the question was raised whether the period within which actions must be brought was not in some cases too long. At the present time, in the case of some torts, the period of limitation was six years, and in the case of others it was four years and two years. It was desirable, he thought, that when a wrong had been sustained the party charged with liability in respect of it should receive notice of action without undue delay, because the longer the time that was allowed to elapse the greater probably became the difficulties of defence. Witnesses, for example, might die in the interval, or change their place of residence so that they could not be found. The general period of limitation in the case of torts might well be reduced to one year, and that the bill proposed to do. Where, however, a wrong had been committed, but was not discovered and could not with reasonable diligence have been discovered within the period of one year, the period of limitation would remain the same as now, provided that the action was commenced within one year from the time when it could with reasonable diligence have been discovered. The bill also extended to actions of contract. At present the period of limitation for such actions was six years, and the proposal in the bill was to reduce that period to three years except in cases of debts not exceeding 5*l*. In those cases the period would be one year. This exception had been suggested by the report of the committee of their lordships' House on the subject of commitments in County Courts. He rather expected that the proposals in the bill with regard to actions of contract would cause some little controversy, and if a very strong opposition were shown to them he should be willing for the present to confine the bill to the question of the limitation of time for actions of tort.

Viscount Cross observed that the committee referred to by the noble and learned lord were unanimous in holding that the statutory period for the recovery of small debts ought to be materially reduced.

Lord Ashbourne thought that some of the provisions of the bill would need careful examination in committee.

Lord Halsbury, who approved the bill, remarked that great