THE CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS..... $4.00 per annum
THE FAVORITE..... 2.00 "
THE CANADIAN PATENT OFFICE RECORD AND MECHANICS' MAGAZINE 1.50 "
L'OPINION PUBLIQUE..... 3.00 "

THE DESBARATS LITHOGRAPHIC AND PUBLISHING COMPANY; Montreal; Publishers.

SUBSCRIPTIONS PAYABLE IN ADVANCE.

All remittances and business communications to be addressed to,
THE MANAGER—DESBARATS COMPANY, Montreal.

All correspondence for the Papers, and literary contributions to be addressed to,
THE EDITOR—DESBARATS COMPANY, Montreal.

When an answer is required, stamps for return postage should be inclosed.

CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, MAY 2, 1874.

THE ELECTION LAW.

The Bill introduced last week by the Minister of Justice for the regulation of elections of members to the Commons is one of the most satisfactory measures that have been submitted for the deliberation of Parliament. With one or two slight exceptions, its provisions have met with the hearty approval and cordial support of members on both sides of the House, and it is pretty evident from present indications that it will undergo but little, if any, modification during the process of becoming law. In many points the Bill is identical with that introduced last year by SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD, but several desirable additions have been made by the framer—additions which we have little doubt will be found to work satisfactorily in every way.

The principal features of Mr. DORION'S new measure are, the appointment of Sheriffs and Registrars to be Returning Officers; the holding of elections throughout the country (with certain exceptions) on one and the same day; the abolition of open nominations and of the property qualification; the regulation of the franchise according to that fixed by law in each Province; and, finally, the introduction of the ballot.

The first of these provisions is in every way a most desirable one, inasmuch as it is calculated to put an end to the abuses arising from the appointment by Government of Returning Officers. Each such officer will for the time being be an employee of Parliament, and will be responsible to Parliament for any maladministration of the functions of his office. A special clause in the Bill provides for the disqualification of offending Returning Officers. Of the advisability of holding the elections throughout the country on one and the same day there can be but one opinion. The manipulation of the elections by the Government is an old, old story, and one which time and time again has been cast in the teeth of Ministers by the Opposition. On these two points but little discussion has taken place either on the floor of the House or in the columns of the press. On all sides it is felt that such measures have long been called for, and both sides unite in congratulating themselves that they are now in a fair way of becoming law.

The proposed abolition of the open nomination day has perhaps excited more discussion, and given rise to more difference of opinion than any other feature of the bill. Members on both sides of the House expressed their opinion that the measure was, if not ill advised, at least unnecessary. It was objected that the public nomination was a useful institution inasmuch as it brought people together to hear the speeches and discussions of public men confronting each other. There is, no doubt, much truth in this. But on the other hand there is nothing to prevent candidates from holding meetings, even on the day of the nomination, for the exposition of their views and the public discussion of the events of the day. Add to this that the public nominations are a fruitful source of disturbance, and the advisability of the intended abolition will at once become patent. Without doubt the soundest plea put forward in favour of the retention of the public nomination was that advanced by SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD, who urged that under the proposed law sham nominations would be much more frequent than under the present system, and that in the future there would be no such thing as elections by acclamation. These are, at first sight, undoubtedly strong objections, but they could be met by the introduction of a clause similar to that proposed by MR. BLAKE, providing for a deposit to be made by each candidate nominated, which should be forfeited in case of his non-appearance. An additional safeguard against bogus nominations would be found in requiring that the nomination paper of each candidate should be signed by a certain number of electors. The Bill as it now stands contains a provision that the nomination of ten electors, with the consent of the candidate, shall be sufficient. This would, however, hardly meet the case, the number of signatures being manifestly too small. A better arrangement would be that each nomination should bear the signatures of say one per cent. of the total number of electors in the constituency. In this way any unjust discrimination between large and small constituencies would be avoided. For it is evident that in a largely populated district, where the electors are to be counted by thousands, a bogus candidate would have little or no trouble in obtaining the requisite number of signatures to his nomination paper. Whereas in a sparsely settled district, where the electors number only a few hundreds, it would be a matter of some difficulty to obtain even the necessary ten. As the Bill now stands it legislates entirely in favour of the smaller constituencies. But with some such amendment as that suggested this discrimination would be done away with and the main objections against the proposed measure would be met. On the whole, we are inclined to welcome any legislation which will diminish the expense and lessen the complication of the elective machinery, and we therefore look upon the abolition of public nominations as a most valuable and opportune measure.

The regulation of the franchise according to the various provincial standards is another provision which has given rise to considerable discussion. This is, to our mind, the most undesirable feature of the Bill. Both SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD and MR. TUPPER raised strong objections to this point. The former argued that only those who contribute to the public revenue should enjoy the franchise. The member for Cumberland took an entirely different ground. He insisted that it would not add to the dignity of the House to have one gentleman sitting in the House as the representative of a constituency where universal suffrage prevailed (as in Prince Edward Island) and another for a constituency where a property qualification was required; and further, he was unwilling to leave the franchise to be settled by the Provincial Assemblies, on the ground that it would be liable to be changed from time to time to suit the ends of the parties who might be in power. On the other hand the arguments in favour of the adoption of the franchise as existing in the various provinces are by no means few in number. A saving of $50,000 or $60,000 would thus be effected, and the confusion arising from having different franchises used by the same people would be done away with. The patronage which would be held by the Dominion Government if it made its own electoral lists would also be avoided. Again, it is very justly argued that the franchise of a maritime province like Nova Scotia would not be suitable for an agricultural province like Ontario. An additional plea in favour of the provincial franchise is based on the supposition that the Provincial Assemblies would be the best judges of what would most suit their people, and that it would be to their advantage so to legislate that the best men should be sent to represent the various constituencies at Ottawa. United States practice is also cited in favour of the proposed measure. In that country it has been the custom for ninety-one years to elect representatives to Congress on the State franchise. In spite, however, of this array of arguments, we are inclined to believe that a uniform franchise for the Lower Provinces—an exception being made in favour of Prince Edward Island and British Columbia—would be found to answer better than the proposed system.

Against the proposed abolition of the property qualification a very serious objection was raised by Mr. JOHN HILLYARD CAMERON, who argued that the property qualification being provided for by the British North America Act this Bill was powerless to touch it. The Minister of Justice made a note of the objection, and promised to give the matter consideration. It is also suggested that in the event of the abolition of the qualification for members, the introduction of manhood suffrage would only be fair.

The space at our disposal does not allow of our commenting on the great feature of the new law—the ballot. We shall therefore reserve our remarks on this subject until our next issue. We may, however, observe in passing that the sense of the country appears to be strongly in favour of the introduction of secret voting, as the only efficient check upon bribery and corruption. Next week we shall enter at some length into the details of the measure as framed by the Minister of Justice.

THE PRESS AND THE P. O. INVESTIGATION.

The investigation now being carried on into the circumstances attending the theft in September last of the POPE-MACDONALD letter has naturally given rise to much comment in the Press all over the country. The matter is one of the highest public importance, as affecting the honesty of certain public officials; and one which should be discussed only in the calmest and most dispassionate manner. Unfortunately this has not been done as often as it might have been. Party journals on both sides have seized upon certain evidence adduced during the enquiry to further their own party purposes, and not unfrequently have allowed themselves to be carried away in a fashion in no way creditable to themselves. The fact has too often been lost sight of that although certain evidence points to one individual as the abstractor of the late Premier's letter, from the fact that this person's handwriting resembles that on the envelope addressed to the HON. JOHN YOUNG, nevertheless no actual proof exists as to his being the real offender. It is a universally admitted principle that no man shall be condemned for an offence until his guilt shall have been sufficiently proved. And yet, totally ignoring this important safeguard in judicial proceedings, a number of journals have hastily jumped at conclusions, judged, condemned, and branded a Post-Office employee, before the enquiry into the matter of which he is accused is actually terminated—thus constituting themselves both judge and jury, no doubt to their own thorough satisfaction, but certainly very much to the prejudice of the unfortunate man who is now so unjustly suffering at their hands.

Now what are the circumstances of the case? The handwriting of all the clerks in the Montreal Post-Office was collected in one book which was forwarded, together with a fac-simile of the envelope addressed to MR. YOUNG, to a New York expert, who declared, after a careful examination, that the address on the envelope was in the same handwriting as that of MR. PALMER. His opinion—for all the certainty upon which his declaration was based it deserves no stronger name—was carried out by that of a colleague in Boston, and on the strength of this MR. PALMER was suspended. Had the experts' testimony been regarded as conclusive evidence, there can be no doubt the Government of the day would have immediately instituted proceedings. And then we should probably have had a fine outcry from the Opposition Press against the injustice of blasting a young man's character and injuring his prospects in life upon the mere *ipse dixit* of an expert. Fortunately for the then Government they showed themselves wiser than the writers whose remarks we are about to quote. After a brief suspension MR. PALMER was reinstated in his position without any further inquiry into the matter. Upon this absence of inquiry—ill-advised we believe it to have been — the Ministerial Press hang their accusations against SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD'S Ministry, and in their eagerness to blacken the characters of the members of the late Cabinet they plentifully bespatter the suspected, but hitherto unconvicted, Post-Office employee. Nor are some of the Liberal Conservative journals a whit more careful in their assertions—though their motives are traceable to a widely different source.

From the following extracts the reader will be able to judge how far political partisanship may blind ordinarily clear and far-seeing minds. Let it be borne in mind that no *proof* exists against MR. PALMER, however much suspicion may point at him as the culprit. The extracts are a few among many taken from journals of all shades of politics and dating from all parts of the country.

A Conservative paper begins an article on "The Montreal Letter Thief" by calling PALMER, "the accomplice of the HON. JOHN YOUNG in the Montreal letter-stealing business." This is pretty direct, although the writer qualifies the assertion by stating that "if PALMER is the guilty party, the country will not be satisfied with his suspension." The value of the qualification, however, is annulled by the following passage which occurs lower down in the same article:—"MR. PALMER, however, is a sort of second edition of DAVID GLASS, a gentleman whose conscience would not allow him to condone the Pacific Scandal, and who was consequently ready to do any dirty work for the party to show the sincerity of his conversion. There is good reason to believe that he had been acting as a spy in the department for a couple of months, and that the present PREMIER of Canada was aware that he was employed in that capacity. There is good reason to believe that SIR JOHN'S letter to POPE was not the only one which was subjected to MR. PALMER'S scrutiny." and so on. And after giving utterance at length to these unworthy innuendoes, the writer unworthily shields himself behind the apologetic addition, "these, of course, may be mere rumours." Can anything be more pitiful than such a course as this? Turning to the other side of the fence we find a ministerial organ making the following statement: "A few weeks ago, when MR. MACKENZIE'S Government ordered an inquiry into the matter, our Ottawa correspondent stated that there was some reason to believe that SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD'S Government did discover the thief and that they, for reasons best known to themselves, shielded him. *That has now been proved to be the fact.*" (The italics are in the original.) And fur-