

SEIGNIORIAL QUESTION.

No apology need be offered for intruding on public notice a few observations suggested by perusal of the Amendments proposed to be offered in the Legislative Council to the Bill sent from the Legislative Assembly, and intitled, "An Act to provide for the abolition of feudal rights and duties in Lower Canada." The importance of the subject and its bearing on the character of the Government and of the Province, will, it may be hoped, secure a patient consideration for the views of one, who without pretending to have originated any new scheme of settlement, has given much consideration to the question during several years, and who is most anxious to contribute to the extent of his humble ability, to its final and satisfactory adjustment. It is proposed in the first place to review briefly the late proceedings with reference to the Seigniorial question. In 1851, the subject was referred to a Select Committee, of which Mr. Drummond, then Solicitor General, was Chairman. The result of the protracted labours of that Committee was a Bill, not to settle the question, but to define the rights of the Seigniors. It was proposed to settle by legislative enactment the maximum amount of *cens et rentes*, to which the Seignior would be entitled, and to adopt measures to compel him to concede at that rate. A Bill was accordingly introduced of a declaratory character, but Mr. Attorney General Lafontaine objected to its being proceeded with, on the ground that it provided no real settlement of the Seigniorial question, and that it was in reality a measure of confiscation.

It was at a very late period of the Session of 1851 when the subject was brought under the consideration of the House, and it soon became apparent that no legislative action could be taken before the prorogation. During the year 1851 a new Administration was formed, and a general election followed. The Government occupied itself during the recess with the consideration of the best means of effecting a satisfactory adjustment of the Seigniorial Question, and the Bill of 1852 was the result of their deliberations. It is necessary to direct special attention to the principle and object of that bill. Not only did it not contemplate the extinction of the Seigniorial Tenure, but it was held by those who professed to be best acquainted with the