

lature, I think, by Mr. Bethune. We have now practically manhood or universal suffrage, and I believe that our next step should be compulsory voting. That might have some drawbacks, and I do not pretend to say that there is more need for a compulsory voting under manhood suffrage than under property qualification. In my little experience, the poor man is not the easiest to bribe, but I do believe that one of the best preventives against the curse of bribery would be to compel men to register their votes. You may say, Sir, that that would be an arbitrary measure, but I cannot see it in that light. I would not impose a fine or imprisonment or any similar punishment for the neglect to vote, but I put the matter in this light. We know that there is no right which men more jealously guard than their right to vote. If you try to take the franchise away from a man, he will fight for it and if necessary shed his blood for it. What arbitrary exercise of power therefore would it be to compel him to come forward and exercise a right which, in theory, he values so dearly, and the taking away of which he would resist by force of arms if necessary. He enjoys the advantages and privileges of the laws of our country and the benefit of our institutions, and why should he not bear his share of the responsibility and cast his ballot? If he does not think it worth while to do so, then I say disfranchise him for two or three years until he is brought to his senses and takes an interest in the affairs of his country. I hold that this is a feasible thing. We know, of course, that many things might be said against it. It may be that a man is prevented from voting from sickness or pressure of business calling him away from home. But that can be provided for by allowing a citizen, in such a case, to make a simple affidavit before a justice of the peace or the revising officer that circumstances over which he had no control prevented him from being present and voting. Then, a man may say: I cannot vote for any of the candidates in the field, as I do not regard any of them as worthy of my confidence. But compulsory voting would be an incentive to every man to make sure of having a good candidate in the field. Men would then come to the convention and use their influence in favour of getting good men. But if, as is possible, even then, no candidate met with the citizen's approval he could, what I do not believe in or approve in myself—go to the polls and cast a blank ballot.

Mr. DAVIN. What form of compulsion would the hon. gentleman (Mr. Rogers) use?

Mr. ROGERS. Disfranchisement for two or three years. Another reform that we should bring about is the establishment of an educational franchise qualification for voters. I would not put such a law in force at once, as there are many who have not had the advantages of education and

Mr. ROGERS.

cannot help it that they are illiterate. But no man should be put on the voters' list who cannot read or write. Let an Act be passed providing that three years after the time of its passing this educational test shall be applied. It is a most humiliating thing that one should reach the age of manhood and not be able to read or write, and many a man refrains from casting his vote because he does not wish to acknowledge his lack of education. To pass such a law would really be no hardship, because—I speak for the province of Ontario—we have compulsory education. Every child from the age of seven to the age of fourteen in that province must attend school for at least four months in the year. Free schools are provided and the children have the right to take advantage of them. I do hope that before this Bill comes before the committee these suggestions will be considered. If not adopted now we should move towards their adoption in the near future. The Bill can be improved from time to time, but, even if we cannot have them adopted at once, these points are well worth discussing. I had not intended speaking so long, but my excuse is the importance of the subject. As this Bill is in accordance with the platform of the Patrons of Industry, so far as it goes, I have pleasure in supporting it, and I am glad to see that there is so little opposition to it.

Mr. DAVIN. Before the hon. gentleman sits down, will he allow me to ask him a question? Why should the hon. gentleman, who is in favour of compulsory voting and an educational test for the franchise, support a Bill which puts the power to decide who shall be electors in the hands of other bodies?

Mr. ROGERS. I say that I am in favour of these things personally and would be glad to see them carried out. But I accept this Bill as the lesser of two evils, and hope that the reforms I have advocated will be taken up soon.

Mr. STENSON. I have taken down as well as I could follow them, the main objections to the present Bill made by the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Clancy). They are as follows:—Municipal lists are only preliminary in Ontario and are not really the electoral lists, and judges and clerks must be paid to have these lists revised. The lists are revised only on the eve of local elections. Then this Bill is brought in by the Liberals without having been asked for by the people. The question of expense, I think, has to be considered; the hon. member for Bothwell is of the opinion that there will not be one dollar of difference in expense by adopting the provincial lists as compared with the expense in the preparation of the federal lists. Then, again, he says that the constituencies have not all the same limits