

Charlottetown, May 8, 1876.

WORK OF THE LATE SESSION.

THIRTY-TWO ACTS were passed during the session of the Legislature which was prorogued on Saturday, 30th ult. Of these, three provide for the final settlement of the Land Question. The "Act to amend the Land Purchase Act, 1875," familiarly known as the "Ancillary Bill," has already been explained in these columns. It simply declares the meaning of some clauses in the compulsory measure passed last year; and makes a few additional regulations for the guidance of the Supreme Court and the Commissioners. The report circulating throughout some parts of the country that it relieves tenants from paying to proprietors whose estates have not yet been paid for by Government, the current year's rent, is entirely erroneous. The fact that proprietors and their agents are, to secure themselves, suing thousands of poor tenants who have not paid the year's rent, and who are unable at this season to pay it without making great sacrifices, should stimulate the Government to get possession of the estates at the earliest moment possible. The rent must, of course, be paid. It is, however, very unfortunate that proprietors should be placed in circumstances in which they deem themselves compelled to distrain for rent at a season when many farmers find it next to impossible to raise a dollar. "An Act to facilitate the purchase of the estates of proprietors under the Land Purchase Act, 1875," and an "Act to empower the Government of Prince Edward Island to purchase lands held by proprietors," both of which have received the assent of the Lieutenant Governor, will, we trust, be speedily put into operation. With the power which these Acts give, the Government will, we believe, be enabled to bring the agitation of a century to a peaceful if not a thoroughly satisfactory close. The Act providing for reform in the Civil Service of the Province, though felt by all parties to be wanting in some respects, is yet a decided step in the right direction. One result of its operation will be the introduction of the principle of departmental government—a government under which the head of each department is a member of the Executive, and responsible to the Legislature for the performance of the duties appertaining to his office. In reforming the Civil Service the Legislature doubtless went as far as it was prudent or possible to go at the present time. While it is extremely desirable that the two highly important departments of Public Lands and Public Education should be thoroughly re-organized and placed directly under the control of a responsible Government, it was perhaps advisable not to tinker with them until the state of the first is definitely ascertained, and the will of the people respecting the other is shown by an appeal to the polls. If the "Act further securing the independence of the General Assembly" contained a clause providing that only one representative in either House should be elected where there are now two, it would, besides the saving a large amount of money annually, tend, not only to the independence but also to the efficiency and respectability of our Legislature. That our ship of state is now too heavily manned is becoming more and more apparent every year. The real work of the session falls almost entirely upon the shoulders of six or seven men; and the Province, though she can ill afford it, is obliged to pay upwards of forty. But, though the Act lacks this important provision, it is, yet, a good measure; and it will, we feel convinced, be productive of good results. The Act, introduced by the Hon. A. J. McDonald, regulating the sale by license of spirituous liquors "appears to contain," says His Honor the Lieutenant Governor, "provisions which will have a salutary effect in checking the prevalence of local evils generally deplored." It leaves the power of permitting a licensed tavern to be opened in any school district in the hands of the people of the district. It requires that only two meetings shall be held in the same school district in the course of a year; and that the meetings shall not be held in a private house, but in a school house or some public building. Notices of the meetings must be published two weeks in the newspapers of the County, or if there be no County paper, in one of the papers of Charlottetown. A notice is also to be posted on the schoolhouse, and a copy of it must be left with the schoolmaster. In order to discourage tavern-keepers from giving liquor to persons who have not the ready money to pay for it, the Act provides that the tavern keeper shall not recover, in a court of law, the price of any quantity less than a gallon. It also imposes a heavy fine on any Magistrate who may grant a certificate to a would-be tavern keeper, whose house and premises are not supplied with all the accommodation the law requires. Last, but not least, it raises the fees for tavern licenses to \$30, and for store licenses to \$75. Two Acts affect the City of Charlottetown. The "Act in further amendment of the Act to incorporate the city of Charlottetown," gives the city the right of governing itself, and renders the City Council a powerful body. We trust citizens will rise to the occasion. There is, undoubtedly, sufficient talent and sufficient enterprise and public spirit in the town to govern it economically and well, and to raise it to a level with any of the cities of the neighboring provinces. The selection of Councillors will, in future, be an important matter; and civic elections will, doubtless, be a little more lively in the future than they have been in the past. Good, tried, practical, respectable, business men, should be obtained to represent the interest of citizens. Unfortunately such men will not now serve merely for the honor of the thing; and it may be well for citizens seriously to consider the propriety of paying to City Councillors a sum sufficient to indemnify them from personal loss. A small allowance—such as is paid the Directors of Banks and Insurance Companies, might have a salutary effect, and be the means, in the long run, of saving money. The "Act vesting in

the city of Charlottetown a certain portion of Government House Farm," will, if it receives the assent of the Governor General, give to the citizens for all time, a general and beautiful park, in which to recreate and amuse themselves. Altogether, the session has been moderately fruitful. We subjoin a complete list of the Acts passed:— An Act to confirm the registration of certain deeds and writings. An Act in further amendment of an Act to incorporate the City of Charlottetown. An Act relating to Partnerships. An Act for the appointment of Commissioners beyond the limit of this Province, to take affidavits in the Supreme Court, and acknowledgments of Deeds. The Seduction Act, 1876. An Act to continue certain Acts therein mentioned. An Act to amend and consolidate the laws relating to the Methodist Church of Canada. An Act to amend an Act to incorporate the Merchants Marine Insurance Company of Prince Edward Island. An Act to amend the Insolvent Debtors' Act. An Act to change the place in Charlottetown for holding the Sheriff's Court for the purposes of Elections to the General Assembly. An Act to ratify and confirm a certain exchange of Pasture Lots, Nos. 326 and 325, made between George Coles and Martin Dougherty both deceased. The Official Oaths Act, 1876. An Act to amend the jurisdiction of the Stipendiary Magistrate. An Act for vesting in the Town of Summerside, the Lands and Premises therein mentioned. An Act to amend the Act of the thirty-seventh Victoria, Chapter five, intitled "An Act to prevent live running at large of horses, cattle and sheep in the several school districts in Queen's County in this Island." An Act enabling the Stipendiary Magistrate of the City of Charlottetown to grant relief to Insolvent Debtors. An Act to incorporate the Acadie Provincial Association. An Act to incorporate a Law Society. An Act for the Incorporation of the Victoria Boring and Mining Association. An Act respecting the Town of Summerside. An Act relating to Public Wharfs and Bridges. An Act further securing the independence of the General Assembly. An Act to facilitate the purchase of the estates of the proprietors under "The Land Purchase Act, 1875." An Act relating to certain departments of the Public Service. An Act regulating the sale by license of Spirituous Liquors. An Act relating to Coroners Inquests. An Act respecting the recovery of Assessments imposed on land in this Island. An Act to empower the Government of Prince Edward Island to purchase lands held by proprietors. An Act to amend "The Land Purchase Act, 1875." An Act to vest a certain portion of Government House Farm in the City of Charlottetown for certain purposes therein mentioned.

THE SCHOOL COMMISSION.

TRUTH, like a torch, the more its shock, the more its shines." Investigation and criticism never injure a good cause. We were not of those who opposed the appointment of a Parliamentary Committee to enquire into the state of our public schools. Had our advice been followed, a Committee with similar but wider powers would have been appointed last year; and a full and comprehensive report of the working of our school system, together with a scheme to remedy existing evils, would, ere this, have been laid before the people. The Committee of which the Leader of the Opposition was chairman, could not, necessarily, make anything like a thorough examination into the state of our public schools. Still less could they offer to the people a well-weighted plan, by the adoption of which those schools may be improved. But they have rendered, at least, one very important service. An argument constantly used by secularists is that the teaching of distinctive religious beliefs in public schools cannot, in a mixed community, co-exist with the peace, contentment and good government of the country. The developments made before the Committee show that this is a fallacy. Though in glaring violation of the spirit as well as the letter of our educational laws; though in direct opposition to the will of the majority, as expressed by their representatives in the Legislature, religious instruction in the Legislature, religious instruction has been imparted in many of our public schools for at least seventeen years—and so exceedingly slight has been the disturbance that the public at large never heard of it. Nor could the closest cross-examination of the witnesses, by the Leader of the Opposition and other members of the Committee, elicit a single instance in which such religious instruction had been the means of disturbing the tranquility of the district in which it was imparted. Mr. McPhail, School Visitor for Queen's County, said that in Rustico there are two schools side by side—one composed of the children of Roman Catholics, the other of those of Protestants. In the former the catechism is taught; in the latter the education is purely secular. Yet there is no quarrelling among the children; "no pointing with the finger of scorn at the Papist school;" no strife among the parents. On the contrary, "the most perfect harmony exists." The Rev. Alexander McLean has been so slightly effected with the horrible results of sectarian teaching that he has, ever since he became Pastor of Belfast, permitted the religion of Presbyterians, as laid down in the shorter catechism, to be taught in the public schools of that district—simply because "it was not of much consequence; it was an old Highland custom, and Highlanders are very tenacious of their customs." The instance of a schoolmaster who actually taught two different catechisms—and lived—was also cited. The Committee having established the fact that religion has been, and may be, taught in the public schools of this Province, it is, of course, needless to adduce the example of such cities as Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, and such countries as England and Prussia, to prove that the Christian Religion—the religion of peace, morality and good-will—may, under certain conditions, be admitted into the public schools of a Christian people without disastrous results. This important point having been made clear, we may hope that the persistent demands of Roman Catholics, and the ardent desires of all truly religious Protestant parents may be speedily satisfied; that a long continued agitation may be allayed, and our public schools raised to the level of respectability.

THE LOBSTER QUESTION.

CANNED LOBSTERS, prepared by Messrs. Cairns and Waddell in this Island, have now a high place in the market of England. We recently tested a can put up last summer by Mr. Waddell. The meat proved so fresh and good as the day the can was hermetically sealed. The demand for such goods is of course on the increase. A large amount of capital has been invested in the lobster canning business. "Lobster factories" have been erected in various parts of the Island; and preparations are, we understand, being made to vigorously prosecute the work during the coming summer. The trade will, however, we fear, receive a severe shock from the Dominion Government. By a recent order in Council, all fishing for lobsters from the 10th of July to the 20th of August is prohibited and rendered illegal. This order was doubtless passed because it was thought necessary or advisable to protect the fish during the spawning season. But before passing it, the Dominion Government would have done well to enquire 1st, whether lobsters require protection; 2nd, whether capitalists and fishermen who have invested largely in the lobster fishery may not be injured or ruined if the order is enforced. Mr. F. H. Baker, a gentleman who evidently knows the habits of lobsters and understands the lobster canning business, writes to the Halifax Reporter:—

On the coast of the Maritime Provinces the Fisheries rarely open until the middle or last of May, the time being later as you go East from Cape Sable—an average being the 1st of June. On the coast of Maine the lobsters really are soft-shelled and unfit for use by the time all through July, and even far into August in Cape Breton, while on the coast of Newfoundland lobsters are often good all through August in some localities. To close the season on the 10th of July, therefore, is to close the season on the 20th of August, is virtually to prohibit lobsters from being caught when in season and allowing them to be caught when out of season—soft-shelled propagating their kind and filling the water with now-proposed close season (that is from the 10th July to the 20th Aug.) on this coast expires, and the factories are allowed to open—not only is this opening time the best for the fish, but it is also the best for the fisherman, as the fish are then in season and the fisherman is not longer at sea—hence the lobster hides, and will not come out. The books of all the canning factories show a sudden falling off in the catch in July, but a very large increase in the catch beginning at the end of August. The factories, beginning at Cape Sable on the 31st July, and later as you go east and north, or north-east, as the coast line runs. This is when the proper close season should begin if enforced. South of Cape Sable, for instance, to that with the close season, as imposed by the Dominion Government, beginning six weeks before the true spawning season really begins, added to the six weeks of the fishing season, the fisherman is virtually closed the Canadian factories from the 10th July to the 10th October, by which time the rough weather on the Southern sea-board of the Maritime Provinces, the exposed and rocky coast, and the risk of losing the traps and gear used by the fisherman, which unlike nets are set close in shore and are often destroyed in a single night for miles by a heavy sea heaving in from the South-west, South-east, or West, makes the fall fishing for lobsters every year less and less prosecuted, because unremunerative, more especially as so abundant as the lobster fishery has been in the past. 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