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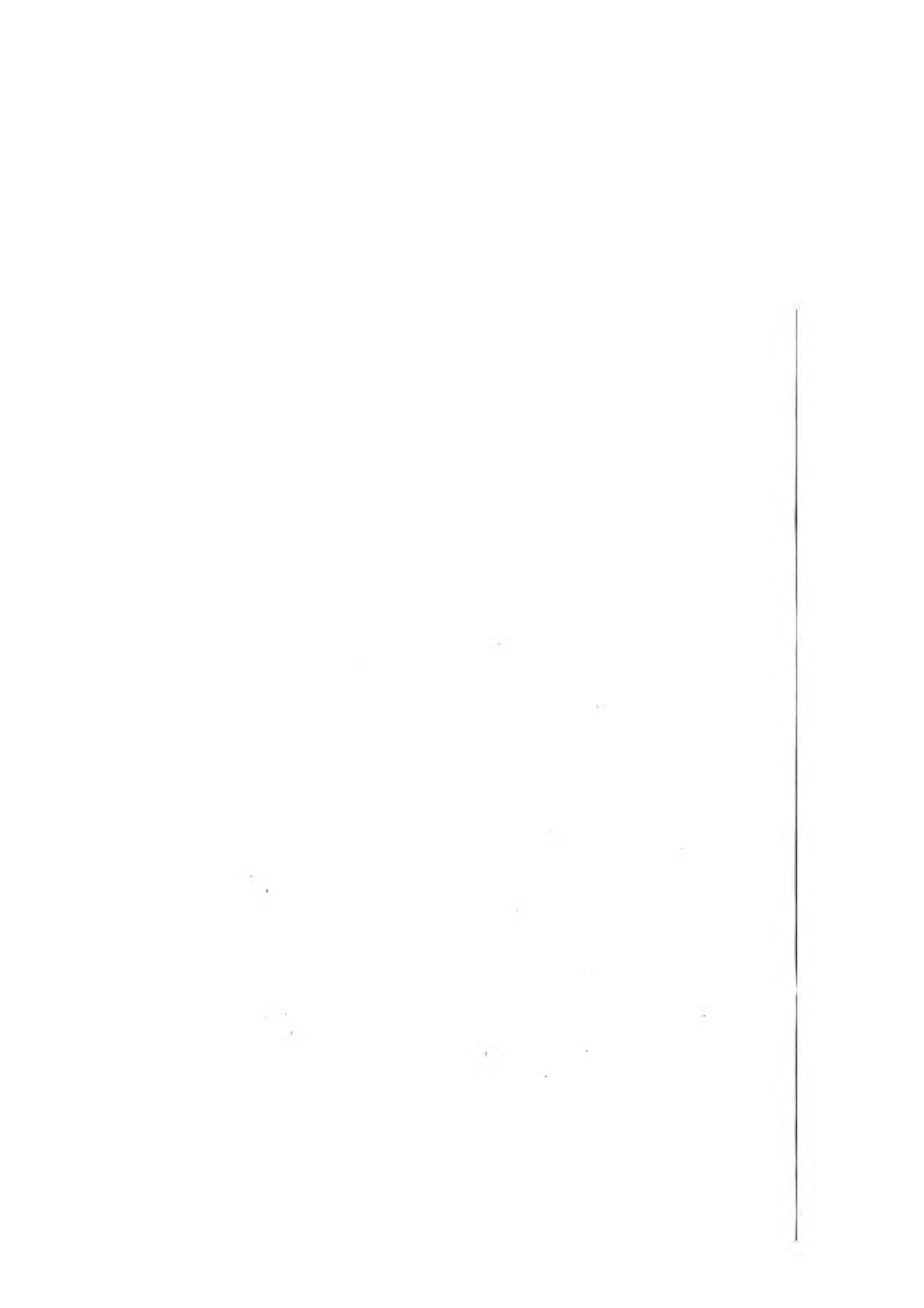
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to the latter should be added the removal of the disqualification which at present exists in cases where lodgers remove from one premises to another, or when lodgers become householders, or householders become lodgers. We further propose that in all cases of disqualification arising from the receipt of parochial relief, the period of such disqualification should be limited to such *shortened* period of qualification as we may decide to recommend. In regard to Ownership qualifications, inasmuch as their existence only helps to perpetuate a gross anomaly, and is opposed to the principle of "one man, one vote," I am not disposed to recommend any alteration of the period of qualification, but would much rather support any proposal for their entire abolition.

I therefore suggest that the qualifying term for the Occupation Franchise shall in all cases be reduced from 12 months to 6 months; that there shall be two qualifying periods in each year, and that they shall terminate on the 30th day of June and the 31st day of December respectively; that the lists of the voters whose qualifying period terminates on the 30th day of June shall be published on the 20th day of July following; that the process of "claiming," "objecting," and "revising" shall be completed on or before the 20th day of September following, and that such revised lists shall form a Register of Voters to come into operation on the first day of November succeeding, and shall remain in force until the 31st day of October of the following year; that the lists of the voters whose qualifying period terminates on the 31st day of December, shall be published on the 20th day of January in the year following; that all claims, objections, and the revision of such lists shall be completed on or before the 20th day of March next ensuing; and that such revised list shall form a "Supplemental" Register of Voters, to come into operation on the 31st day of March, and shall, with that portion of the register already in existence, form the complete register for the remaining portion of the year, and terminating on the 31st day of October in the said year. In regard to "objections" care should be taken, that, in *every case* the last day for the service of Objections should be fixed at least 4 days earlier than the last day for making Claims, instead of being on the same day, as at present. The time thus given to persons "objected" to would be a great boon, as it would in most cases entirely dispense with their personal attendance at the Revision Court. My objection to the shorter qualifying period of 3 months, is that it would be easily capable of manipulation if reduced to a system by cleverly managed parties. It can be seen in a moment how easily property owners or agents who are strong partisans may utilise their empty property for the manufacture of votes if only three months occupation was required. Departing for a moment from the consideration of the main question, there is a serious injustice annually inflicted upon a very large number of householders, which might be remedied by a very simple expedient. I refer to those persons who are compelled by a variety of circumstances to re-



move from one constituency to another (such constituencies not being Parliamentary Divisions of the same Borough or County), and who, although occupiers of dwelling-houses in the two constituencies in immediate succession, and, as in hundreds of cases, without the interval of a single day, are deprived for a considerable period of the Franchise. It is suggested that the Overseers or Registration Officer of the district which the occupier is leaving shall, on application, grant a *certificate* shewing the length of time during the current qualifying period that the applicant has been a duly qualified occupier, and when his occupation terminated; and that the production of such Certificate to the Overseers or Registration Officer of the district into which the occupier has removed shall, provided his occupation is shewn to be in immediate succession, entitle him in due course to be placed upon the next published list of voters for the district in question. I suggest this method in preference to the proposals contained in the Bill, to be found in clause 7, as follows.—

*Clause 7.* “The occupation of qualifying premises in different”  
 “electoral areas shall have the same effect in respect of qualifying any”  
 “person to vote at a parliamentary election as if the premises were”  
 “all situate in the same area : Provided—”

“(1.) The voter shall be entitled to vote only in the area in which the”  
 “premises last occupied by him during the qualifying period are”  
 “situate ; and ”

“(2.) That the voter shall not be entitled to be registered except on”  
 “a claim specifying in addition to the particulars now required the”  
 “time during which he has occupied each class of premises in res-”  
 “pect of which he claims to be qualified, and the electoral area in”  
 “which such premises are respectively situate ; and ”

“(3.) That when the name of the person is on an existing register of”  
 “parliamentary voters in respect of the premises first occupied by”  
 “him during the qualifying period, the claim shall be accompanied”  
 “by an extract from such list in so far as relates to the claimant, and”  
 “the extract shall be verified as a true extract by the declaration”  
 “directed to be made under this Act.”

The proposals for dealing with the “period of qualification” contained in the clauses of the “Registration of Voters Bill” are, in my opinion, and I say it with all respect, in the main, incomplete, inadequate, and badly expressed. I will read them to you.

“*Modification of Law as to Qualification and Franchise.*”

*Clause 3.* “In every parliamentary county and borough every period of”  
 “qualification for parliamentary electors which is now computed by”  
 “reference to the period of twelve months or six months next before the”  
 “fifteenth day of July shall be computed by reference to the period of”  
 “three months next before the *twenty-fourth day of June*, and in all”  
 “enactments relating to such qualification the latter day shall be substi-”



“tuted for the last day of July or the fifteenth day of July, as the case”  
 “requires, and six months shall be substituted for twelve months.”

“The term “period of qualification” in this section shall include any”  
 “period affecting the qualification of an elector whether the period of”  
 “occupation, residence, possession, receipt of rents and profits, coming”  
 “of age, any disqualification by receipt of parochial relief, or other alms,”  
 “or otherwise.”

The first part of this clause proposes in clear and distinct terms to reduce the qualifying periods of occupiers and owners, now 12 months and 6 months respectively, to *one uniform* period of 3 months, terminating on the 24th day of June; but in the latter portion of the clause there is a substitution of a period of “6 months” for “12 months,” which I cannot possibly reconcile with the universally applying period of 3 months referred to in the first portion of the clause.

Again, referring to clause 21, which reads as follows:—

“*Supplemental Register.*”

Clause 21. “In every year a supplemental register of parliamentary”  
 “voters shall be made, and any person whose title to vote was acquired”  
 “between the *twenty-ninth day of September* and the *twenty-fifth day of*”  
 “*December* may claim to have his name inserted on such register, but”  
 “without a claim a person shall not be registered.”

It would seem to have been the intention of the framers of this Bill, to have, as already suggested by me, *two* qualifying periods in each year, but of 3 months each in duration instead of 6, as I propose, and although clauses 21 to 24 inclusive, deal exclusively with the necessary arrangements and regulations for the “*revising*” of a “Supplemental Register,” supposed to be necessary in consequence of the establishment, if I may so describe it, of the second of the two qualifying periods per annum, yet after the most careful perusal, I cannot find a single line in the Bill which proposes to establish the second qualifying period, and as you cannot very well *revise* a Register until you have conferred a Franchise, it seems to me that this Bill must be entirely *re-drawn* in its main provisions if the intentions of its promoters are to take effect.

With clause 4 I entirely agree, it proposes that

Clause 4. “So much of any Act as requires that any person should be”  
 “rated or that any assessed taxes or any rate shall be paid for the pur-”  
 “pose of entitling a person to be qualified as a parliamentary elector shall”  
 “be repealed.”

It will *not* affect the legal rights of recovery, at present possessed by the Overseers, and it *will* relieve tenants from disfranchisement at the hands of unscrupulous or careless landlords; and will also remove the gross injustice which is frequently done to incoming tenants who find arrears of poors’ rate left by the outgoing tenant, and who must either pay the same or be disfranchised.





In *clause 5* we have some most important alterations proposed in regard to the *Lodger Franchise* :—

*Clause 5.* “The overseers shall annually make at the prescribed time ”  
 “the like inquiries as to lodgers which they are required to make as to ”  
 “inhabitant occupiers of dwelling-houses by section nine of the Repe- ”  
 “sentation of the People Act, 1884, and that section and any enactment ”  
 “amending the same shall apply in like manner as if the expression ”  
 “inhabitant occupier of a dwelling-house ” included the occupier of ”  
 “lodgings, and any person who fails to comply with a requisition as to a ”  
 “lodger shall be liable to the like fine under the said section as for ”  
 “failure to comply with a requisition with respect to an inhabitant ”  
 “occupier, provided that “ten days ” shall be deemed to be substituted ”  
 “for “twenty-one days ” in the said section for all the purposes of the ”  
 “Registration Act.”

“It shall not be necessary for lodgers to make any claim, but a lodger ”  
 “whose name is omitted from the list of voters may claim in like manner ”  
 “as the inhabitant occupier of a dwelling-house who is so omitted.”

The Lodger Franchise is in its operation so very unsatisfactory, and provides opportunities for so much questionable practice, that except as regards *old* lodgers, whose claims have been already investigated and proved, I most seriously doubt the wisdom of dispensing with the present Form of Claim and its accompanying “Declaration,” together with the penalties which may follow any malpractices in connection therewith, and of imposing upon the Overseers the duty of placing lodgers upon the Register, in the absence of complete and accurate knowledge of that most important *factor* of the Lodger Franchise, viz. : the question of the *value* of the lodgings. The conditions upon which “*sons*” become “*lodgers*” in their “father’s” dwelling-houses are so frequently *manufactured* with a view to compliance with the “letter” of the requirements of the Franchise Acts, as to demand (in order to prevent wholesale fraud) that searching investigation which can only be obtained in a properly conducted Registration Court.

Clause 6 is entirely unnecessary, as it is merely a confirmation of the law as it at present exists.

*Clause 6.* “Different qualifying premises occupied by an occupation ”  
 “voter in immediate succession during the qualifying period shall have ”  
 “the same effect in qualifying such voter to a vote at a parliamentary ”  
 “election as a continued occupation of any one of the said premises ”  
 “during the whole of the qualifying period would have had.”

“Qualifying premises ” means any house, land, or tenement lodgings, ”  
 “or other property capable of qualifying a person as an occupation voter ”  
 “as defined by the Registration Act, 1885.”





In regard to the "*simplification of the methods of Registration*," provided the persons who are officially responsible for the preparation of the Lists of Voters do their duty, I think that clauses 17 and 18—reading as follows:—

*Clause 17.* "Every claim under the Registration Acts shall be accompanied by a declaration as to the truth thereof, signed in the presence of a witness in the form contained in the Third Schedule to this Act, or to the like effect; and, except in the case of a declaration annexed to the claim of a person to be entered in the list of ownership voters, section twenty-three of the Parliamentary and Municipal Registration Act, 1878, shall apply to all declarations under this section."

"Section twenty-five of the same Act shall apply to every declaration under this section in the same manner as if it were a declaration made under the said section twenty-five."

*Clause 18.* "Section twenty-four of the Parliamentary and Municipal Registration Act, 1878, with respect to a declaration for correcting an incorrect statement or other error or omission in a list of voters for a borough shall apply and extend to incorrect statements and other errors and omissions in a list of voters for a county; and in construing that section the term "town clerk" shall include "clerk of the peace."

inasmuch as they enable a "claimant" to make a declaration attesting the truth of his claim, and so dispense with his personal attendance at the Revision Court, unless his declaration and claim are challenged, and provided that these clauses are amended so as to permit of a person "objected to" making a similar re-claim and declaration with a like object, to be further supported by an obligation upon the part of the Overseers or Registration Officer, personally to investigate into the accuracy of all such claims and declarations, and to report upon the same to the Court, and all such as are found to be correct to be admitted by the Revising Barrister without further question, will embrace nearly all that is practicable in this direction.



The consideration of my proposals to shorten the qualifying period, together with the arrangements consequently necessary for the additional revision of the *Supplemental* Lists of Voters, involving, as they inevitably must do, a considerable amount of extra labour upon some person or persons, naturally leads up to the question as to who should be held responsible for the efficient carrying out of the new order of things. Our knowledge teaches us very emphatically that if men had to depend upon their own unaided personal compliance with the somewhat exacting requirements of the law before they could acquire the Franchise, our Parliamentary Registers would not present *half* so bulky an appearance as they do to-day. Our knowledge also of the manner in which those who are at the present time responsible for the preparation of the Lists of Voters, viz., the Overseers, perform their duties, is hardly such as to enable us to expect from them when their duties in this respect will be doubled, that efficiency, without which our proposals would be of little use when carried into law.

It is therefore proposed that the duty and responsibility of preparing the Voters Lists shall be, *in all cases*, removed from the Overseers, and that in *every constituency* a duly qualified officer (or officers) shall be appointed, whose sole business it shall be to do the whole of the work at present performed by the Overseers in relation to the Registration of Parliamentary and Municipal Voters, and who shall be held responsible (under stringent liability for any default) for correctly placing upon the Voters' Lists the name of *every* person who is duly qualified.

Clauses 8 and 9 deal with this proposal, and they read as follows :—

*“ Registration Officers and Assistants.”*

*Clause 8.* “ In every parliamentary borough, the local authority de-  
 “ fined in this Act *may* appoint an officer, to be called the registration  
 “ officer, and such officer shall possess all the powers, be subject to the  
 “ obligations, and do and have done to him all acts and things in relation  
 “ to registration of parliamentary or municipal voters which the over-  
 “ seers of the several parishes in such boroughs would, if this Act had  
 “ not passed, have possessed, been subject to, done, or have done to them.”

“ The registration officer *may* appoint, subject to the approval of the  
 “ local authority, such number of assistants as he may require. An  
 “ account of all expenses incurred under this section, including the salary  
 “ of the registration officer and his assistants, shall be submitted to the  
 “ local authority for approval, and the amount allowed by them  
 “ shall be defrayed out of the local rate.”

*Clause 9.* “ The expressions “ local authority and local rate ” shall  
 “ mean ; as respects the metropolitan boroughs, the authority and rate  
 “ or fund in that behalf respectively mentioned in the following table  
 “ marked A., and as respects the Parliamentary boroughs other than  
 “ metropolitan, the authority and rate in that behalf respectively  
 “ mentioned in the following table marked B.”



The only suggestions I have here to make are that for the sake of universal efficiency these clauses shall be amended so as to apply to *every constituency*, and that the appointment of a Registration Officer shall be compulsory and not permissive. Care should be taken too, in regard to these appointments, that Registration Officers shall hold no other office or appointment whatsoever, otherwise, the office would be simply "farmed" by men already holding other lucrative positions, and who would merely employ a number of clerks, more or less efficient, to attend to the detail of the work. As to the authority which should appoint these Officers, I am inclined to think that we should secure the best men, and that there would be the least danger of the appointment of mere partizans if the power of appointment in all cases was vested in the Government for the time being. In confirmation of this opinion I would point to the admirable appointments made under the last Bankruptcy Act.

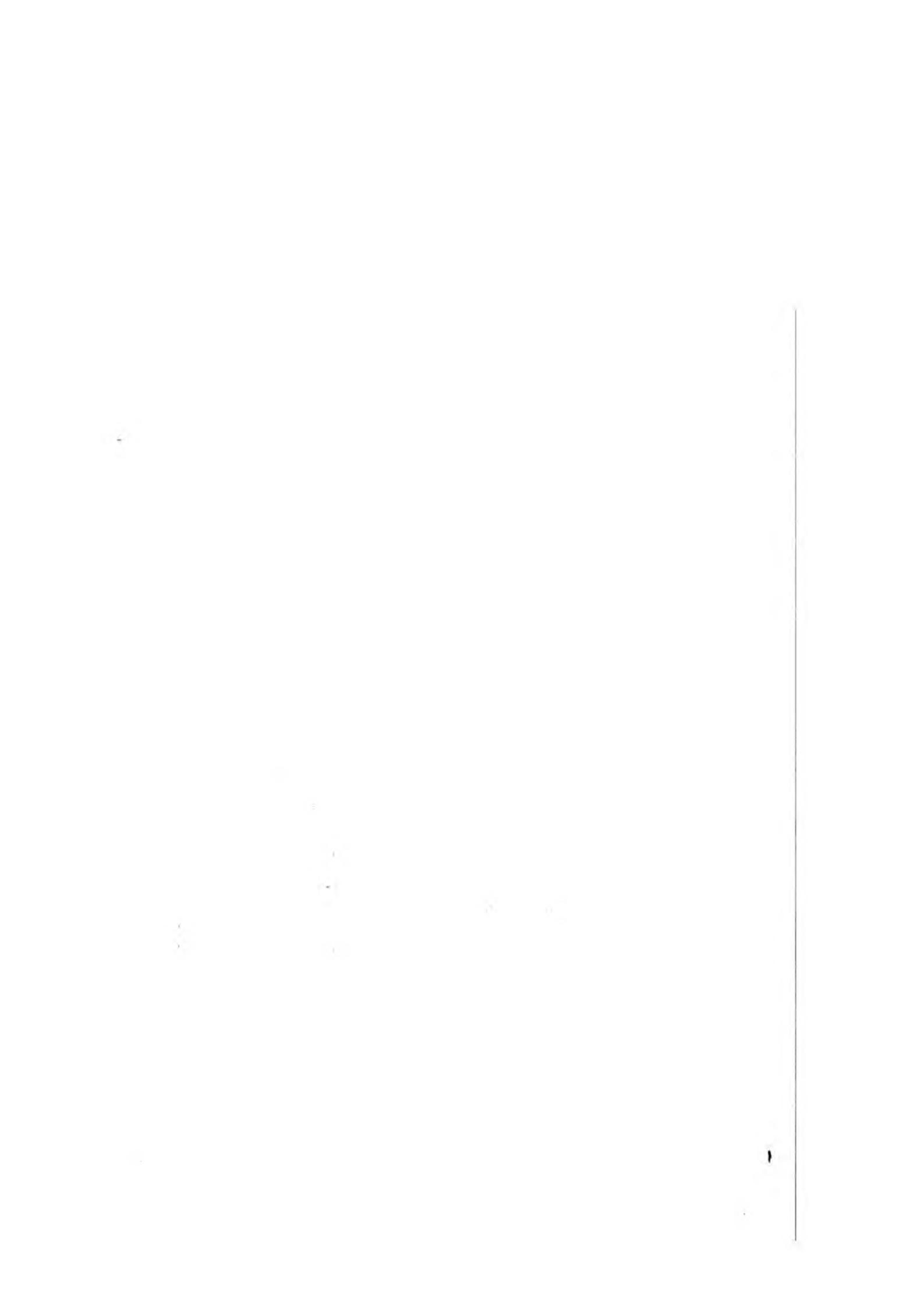
Before leaving the "Registration of Voters Bill," and proceeding to the consideration of my last two points, I would *strongly* urge that any addition to the duties or powers of Revising Barristers, where the intention is to benefit the voter or to correct some laxity or omission on the part of officials which might otherwise act to the voters' prejudice, the performance of such duties, &c., should be made *compulsory* upon the Revising Barrister, and shall not—as in clause 20—remain permissive.

*"Revising Barrister."*

*Clause 20.* "The revising barrister, in addition to any powers hitherto" "exercisable by him, *may* in cases of successive occupation, when all" "the premises occupied in succession are not entered on the list of" "voters, amend the list by the insertion of the omitted premises."

"The revising barrister *may* act under this section on such evidence" "as he thinks sufficient, and he may dispense with a declaration where" "hitherto required, if he thinks it unnecessary."

My reason for this suggestion is that I have frequently noticed that Revising Barristers have refused to exercise their powers of amendment when, technically, there has been a "lapsus" on the part of the voter, for which really the Overseers should have been held responsible, and when the exercise of such powers has been left at the option of, instead of being made compulsory upon, the Revising Barrister.





In considering my third point, viz., the desirability of "The universal application of the principle of One Man One Vote, and the elimination of all Fancy Franchises, including those of the Universities." I shall very briefly deal with the question of the Universities first.

The only possible justification for the retention of University Representation, would be found in the argument that the highest intelligence, the brightest intellects, the most modern culture and thought, and all that is best in the learning and scientific advancement of the day, should be entitled to special representation in the House of Commons. This, at best, is but a poor, and at the same time, a dangerous argument, totally opposed to democratic ideas, inasmuch as it is merely a special plea for "class" representation, but when we find, as was the case in a University election not a very long time ago, that one of the ablest scholars the country possesses, a man whose professional career and high personal attainments and abilities specially fitted him to be the representative of a "seat of learning," was ignominiously defeated by a mere Tory partizan, whose distinguishing characteristic is his *many sided directorate*, and that the "scholar," while receiving the support of the great majority of the leading men of the University, was defeated by the multitude of antiquated country parsons, who are almost universally Tories of the most fossilised variety, and whose politics and learning are about of the same ancient date; then, I say, it is high time that this relic of class privilege should be abolished. It must also be remembered that all, or nearly all, of these men are voters in other constituencies.

The corrupt character of Freeman and other "ancient rights" voters is so well known, and has been the initial cause of so much difficulty in obtaining comparative purity and economy in electioneering, that the very blackness of their past record would alone justify their immediate and absolute extinction. The attachment of a vote to a benefice, curacy, parish clerkship, sextonship, or any other office whatsoever, is a degradation of the Franchise, and must be extinguished, as in no case is it an exercise of citizenship on the part of the holder, but an antiquated recognition of the "rights of property." When we come, however, to consider the "*forty-shilling freeholder*," if duty and a sense of right permitted, I would willingly stay my hand. Remembering the glorious part which the *freeholders* took in emancipating this country from the cursed fiscal system under which the poor were robbed of their daily bread, it is with some reluctance that I am compelled to assert that there is no longer either necessity or justification for retaining this venerable and honourable qualification. The continuance of these property qualifications maintains an unjust anomaly between county and borough constituencies. There is no more justification for the retention of property qualifications in the counties than there would be for the "imposition" of such qualifications upon the borough constituencies. If it is the intention of the legislature, and in the best interests of the country, that the voice of the people shall express itself without "let or hin-



drance" upon all questions which affect our welfare at home, and our policy abroad, then most decidedly is it unjust to particular constituencies that there should be the slightest risk of interference from outsiders with the desires and intentions of the majority of the residential voters therein. Take the typical case of the "Spalding Election." We are told that some 1100 voters (nearly 10 per cent. of the entire constituency) are non-resident. The most momentous political question of modern times was put before the electors of Spalding, and they were asked by our side to shew by their votes their sympathy with the Grand Old Man in his magnificent efforts to emancipate the Irish Nation from the results of centuries of misgovernment. The hearts of the people of *Spalding* were with the Irish people, and their votes in an immense majority went for the popular cause; but we know well that four-fifths, or probably nine-tenths of the outvoters supported the present "hotch potch" called a Conservative Government, although everyone of them without doubt has a vote elsewhere, and has already, at previous elections, cast it against the cause of the people. Suppose for a moment that the election had gone in favour of the Tories, as was the case previously, it would have been triumphantly asserted by our opponents, that the voice of the country as expressed by the Spalding election, had emphatically condemned the pandering of the Gladstonian party to the rebellious and traitorous Irish Leaders, whereas the *fact* would have been that the real desire of the Spalding electors had been *stifled* by an *outside* element. But my strongest objection to the property vote is that it is *absolutely* a *class* privilege, offered exclusively to the rich, not because of their purity, superlative intelligence, or ability, but solely because of their wealth, and as such, its retention is not merely an anomaly and a gross injustice, but is at the same time a constant menace to the good government of the United Kingdom. It is this vote alone which maintains the *House of Lords*, which prevents the *reform of our Land Laws*, which supports the present connection between Church and State, which refuses to the people the right to Control the Liquor Traffic, and prevents the abolition of every class privilege which still remains.

