

timidity and the same tradition of another age.

Capital punishment, though sanctioned by the letter of the old biblical law, is contrary to its interpretation in the light of Christianity.

During the debate on this question at a previous session, one honourable gentleman quoted from the Levitical law: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." But I honestly believe that that honourable gentleman will admit now that this law was abrogated nearly two thousand years ago. The Pharisees of that day taunted the Lord for not approving of that law, and also quoted the passage to back up their demands: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." But the answer came clear and sound: "Ye say an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you, forgive." We are told to forgive our enemies as we hope to be forgiven. We hang a man at eight o'clock in the morning. That is how we forgive those who trespass against us; strangling a few of them every year; hanging them by the neck until they are dead, and sending their souls into eternity. Then we pray every afternoon in this House at three o'clock to the Father of Mercy to forgive us our sins as we forgive them who sin against us. Just think of it, Mr. Speaker, killing a man at eight o'clock in the morning, sending his soul into eternity, then in the afternoon at three o'clock praying to our Father in heaven to forgive us as we forgive. Sir, I shudder at times to think of what would happen quite a number of us in this House, and myself included, if the Lord would take us at our word.

Quite a number of the honourable members of this House undertook to criticise my amendment, but failed to find any good, sound, legitimate argument in favour of the retention of the death penalty, and they all with one accord began to make excuses. The hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce (Sir George Foster) probably introduced the most valid excuse that was made during the discussion, but after all, he simply said that he was not quite sure whether Canada was ready for this important change at the present time. Well, I am sure that it must now be quite clear to the minister's mind that the time has arrived when capital punishment in Canada must be abolished, and I am sure that no man realizes better than he does that capital punishment is based on revenge, it is dangerous to society, brutalizes human nature, and is not in accord with the modern theory of penology. Capital punishment is

[Mr. Bickerdike.]

the leprous outcroppings of the dark ages, and while I would not undertake to reply to that eloquent speech delivered by the Minister of Trade and Commerce, I would simply like to place opposite his remarks a quotation from the speech on this question delivered by the late Right Hon. John Bright.

The Right Hon. John Bright, illustrious English statesman and author, who lived and died in the 19th century, gave his valuation of death as a penalty during one of the last speeches he delivered from his place in the British House of Commons, in the following words:

The real security for human life is found in a reverence for it. If the law regarded it as inviolable, then the people would begin also to so regard it. A deep reverence for human life is worth more than a thousand executions in the prevention of murder, and is, in fact, the great security for human life.

The law of capital punishment, while pretending to support this reverence, does, in fact, tend to destroy it. If the death penalty is of any force in any case to deter from crime, it is of much more force in lessening our chief security against it, for it proclaims the fact that kings, parliaments, judges, juries and Ministers of Justice may determine when and how men may be put to death by violence, and familiarity with this idea cannot strengthen the reverence for human life. To put men to death for crimes, civil or political, is to give proof of weakness rather than strength, and of barbarism rather than Christian civilization.

So long as the state continues to kill its enemies, individuals are going to continue to kill theirs. In other words, by retention of the death penalty, the state sets a precedent for the commission of the very crime which it is trying to extinguish. Far from touching the sanctity of human life by its own conduct, organized government in prescribing the death penalty for certain crimes, declines to uphold the sacredness of individual existence.

Several hon. members delivered very eloquent speeches against my amendment, but all with one accord began to make excuses, and while I find no fault with the criticisms, none of the hon. gentlemen undertook to call down fire from heaven to burn up my Bill, root and branch. There was considerable eloquence against my amendment, but the speeches were entirely devoid of facts or argument.

The hon. member for Frontenac (Mr. Edwards) like all the other members who opposed my amendment, began by making excuses, and claimed that it would be more humane to hang a man than to send him to the Kingston penitentiary. The hon