

## BILL INTRODUCED.

Bill (DDD) An Act to incorporate the Alberta Southwestern Railway Company.—  
(Hon. Sir Mackenzie Bowell.)

## SPRATTE DIVORCE BILL.

## THIRD READING.

Hon. Mr. PERLEY moved the third reading of Bill (BBB) An Act for the relief of Hattie Spratte.

Hon. Mr. CLORAN—Before the motion is carried, I wish to fulfil the promise I made yesterday to call the attention of this honourable House to the document I have in my hand, entitled, 'The Senate of Canada, in re the petition of Hattie Spratte for a Bill of divorce from George Allison Spratte, the report of the Committee on Divorce.' Really, I cannot understand how any person could, after perusing this document, conscientiously vote for the adoption of the Bill before this House. The evidence upon which hon. gentlemen have to base their opinion and arrive at a decision in the matter is most inadequate; in fact this evidence would not justify any court or jury in coming to a decision in favour of either of the parties to this divorce petition. There is absolutely no legal proof whatever in regard to the crime upon which the committee base their decision and express their willingness to grant the petition of Hattie Spratte. She was a girl of seventeen when she married her father's book-keeper. They lived together from 1901 to 1905. Mr. Spratte was in the employ of her father both in the hotel and on certain works throughout that district where they lived. He finally left in 1905 to take a position with the Central Vermont Railway, in St. Albans. He went there alone, and after a while wrote to Mrs. Spratte to follow him, that he had a good position and was able to take care of her. She went down to St. Albans and lived there only six weeks with him, when she left him and returned to her home, in June. At that time the only evidence of misconduct on his part was that he was given to cigarette smoking, and, sometimes, to intemperance; but surely this honourable House will not grant a divorce on such grounds. At this time the young wife was wanting to get a divorce, and had absolutely no reason for it. She had

it in her mind that if she could ever get a chance she would seek a divorce. She went so far as to say she could not get a divorce in the States, not being a resident, and in Canada she could only get a separation. So this intent to get a divorce existed before there was any evidence of crime on his part. Her evidence on that part is as follows:—

Q. You made up your mind after leaving St. Albans to a certain course of action?—A. Yes.

Q. What was that?—A. Well, I would never live with him again, and I would get a divorce if I could.

Q. Did you subsequently discover any ground which you felt justified you in so proceeding?

—A. Not to get it in Canada. Of course there was non-support and drunkenness, and I was going to the United States to get it, and then this letter came from this girl and I determined to try and get it here.

Now this letter is the revolving point in the whole situation. Shortly after she left St. Albans, her husband went to Winnipeg. That was in 1905. She met him after 1905 and while he was in Winnipeg she was stopping at her father's. They had opportunities of meeting between 1905 and 1907. In 1907 she was in her father's home, when a letter, a supposed letter, an alleged letter, supposed to have come from a certain party in St. Albans was received. That letter was addressed to her husband who was away working in Winnipeg. She undertook to open that private letter. It is a peculiar letter written by a girl of impure character; she was a servant in the hotel at St. Albans, a scullery girl in the kitchen. She writes and does not sign her name, but simply the initials J. M. B. She writes from Fairfax, under date of Januray 23, 1907, to the effect that since he had left she had become the mother of a child. Now that child, according to her evidence, was born seven months before she wrote this letter—born in June, 1906. She undertakes to write this letter to Spratte, stating that she had become a mother and it is his fault, and that he ought to bear the consequences. That is the only evidence of wrong-doing on his part. Here is an unsigned document charging this man with adultery. When this letter finds its way into Mrs. Spratte's hands, right there and then she takes steps to secure a divorce. The proceedings started the end