

*Divorce*

imposed on the Dominion at large. They recognized the existence of these provincial courts, but they gave to the Parliament of Canada the power to legislate in certain special cases to grant relief, and every bill that is passed by this parliament is worded "An Act for the relief of So-and-So." No direct divorce legislation has ever been passed by this parliament. It would never be accepted I know in my province, and in Ontario there are also very strong objections to it.

I asked at the time of the debate last year for statistics on divorce, and I just want to read these few lines:

For many years subsequent to confederation the number of divorces granted in Canada was very small; in 1883, thirteen divorces, that being the first year in which the number attained two figures; while 1903, with twenty-one divorces, was the record year up to that time.

If we look back to the war years we find that in 1919 there were 376 divorces granted in Canada; in 1920, 429; in 1921, 548; and in 1922, 544. I have not the complete figures for 1923. At the time this question was before the House before I happened upon the following paragraph, I think in the *Ottawa Journal*, judging by the type. It shows the effect of the change in the law in England giving women over there the same rights that are sought for them in the western provinces. The cable is dated London, April 25, and reads:

A striking feature of the forthcoming law term here is the large number of divorce suits brought by wives under the new act which gives women equal rights with men in the matter of ground for divorce, namely, proof of misconduct. There are nearly 600 undefended divorce suits entered on the court lists.

That was the first term after the passing of the new law in England; so the contention that a change in the law will not increase the number of divorces in the west cannot be sustained.

Any woman who has a rightful grievance under the law as it exists now can come to this parliament and be granted relief, and her fees can be remitted; the fees have been remitted in a number of cases, for the Senate committee has that power. No real grievance is allowed now to exist. If the Fathers of Confederation could not agree at the time of confederation to impose divorce on Canada seeing we are so divided on that question, I do not see that we should ask now to pass an act which we have always objected to, and which the Fathers of Confederation also objected to, and bring about a state of affairs such as exists across the line. The hon. member for Vancouver said that all Christian countries had passed divorce legislation. I have often scanned the new testament to find

[Mr. Marcil.]

authority for the establishment of divorce, and especially for the remarriage of the divorced party. Every divorce bill that comes into this House, and they have been coming here for the twenty-five years I have been here, always contains a second clause granting the right to marry again. If that clause were not there, would any application ever be made to this parliament?

We know the state of affairs that exists now in the United States, where one divorce occurs out of every seven or eight marriages. Last year in the state of Nevada where Reno is situated there were more divorces than marriages.

Here is a country that does not rank as a Christian country, but in which there are more divorces than marriages. It is a cable from London, published last year:

London, April 8.—Divorces exceeded marriages in Constantinople during the last year, according to the *Daily Mail* correspondent. He gives the official figures as 9,259 divorces against 7,974 marriages.

We are all of one mind; no man worthy of sitting in this House would impose an injustice upon women, but there are means known to members of the legal profession in our province, and in other provinces by which a woman now can seek relief and a judicial separation, if necessary. Every time you pick up a newspaper nowadays you find people are making a mockery and a farce of marriage, an advertising scheme with moving picture people coming around and taking pictures of it. You find persons divorced one day and remarried the next. I think it is about time for Canadian legislators to consider this matter earnestly, and not to follow the legislation that is in existence now in the United States. Let us take warning before it is too late.

Mr. ROSS (Kingston): Has the hon. member figures of the number of couples who have been remarried after getting divorce?

Mr. MARCIL: I am sorry I have not. It is a well known fact that divorces have increased enormously. Here are the number of divorces granted in this country during the last ten years:

1914..	33
1915..	18
1916..	34
1917..	17
1918..	15
1919..	51
1920..	100
1921..	112
1922..	102
1923..	117

589

As the hon. member for Lotbiniere (Mr. Vien) has said divorce is becoming a plague