

1,000 miles from the capital to seek relief. A poor man cannot think of applying for a divorce. It may be said that the object in maintaining the present system is to make divorce difficult. That is all very well; but, as my hon. friend has said, it may lead to something worse. I do not believe in a law which favours the rich man and denies a poor man justice. I have no desire to prolong this discussion now, because I do not suppose that anything effectual will result from it.

HON. MR. POWER—It may be perhaps a little objectionable to lengthen this discussion, but as it is on a very important matter, and as no less than three hon. gentlemen have placed their views on record on one side of the question, it might be as well that at least a few words should be said on the other side. The hon. member from Victoria, who brought the matter before the House, appeared to base his argument chiefly on the precedent afforded by England—that England had had a system of parliamentary divorce such as we have, and that system had given way to a regular divorce court. Perhaps the case of England tends in an altogether different direction from what the hon. gentleman supposed. I am convinced that, if the British Parliament, in 1857, had anticipated the results which have flowed from the establishment of a divorce court, it is highly probable that the change would not have been made. The divorce court in England is one of the greatest scandals of British life to-day; and my conviction is, that if the best men in the Imperial Parliament could go back to the system which existed before 1857 they would be only too happy to do so. I do not think the British precedent goes for very much. Then, the hon. member from Selkirk said that one great objection to our present system was, it gave the rich man an advantage over the poor man. As a matter of fact, we have had cases where the parties have applied in *formâ pauperis* and have not been obliged to pay. Of course that is a rather unusual thing. Two of the hon. gentlemen I think reflected somewhat upon the decisions of our parliamentary court. My own impression is, that although sometimes our proceedings were a little slow, on the whole substantial justice has been done in a great majority of the cases—quite as substantial justice as

in usually done in an ordinary court. I hope the Government, if they do take up this matter, will consider it very seriously, and reflect upon the probable effect of the change on the morals of the public, as well as on the relieving of members of this honourable House from a slight inconvenience. As a rule, we have not more than four or five cases before us each session, and they do not take up a very great deal of time. Another fact is that, inasmuch as the evidence taken before our committees is not set before the public, the same amount of mischief does not result as is wrought in cases before the divorce courts, where the proceedings are spread broadcast over the country; and any one who reads the English papers must realize how very important a matter that is.

HON. MR. ABBOTT—My hon. friend from British Columbia has raised a question before the House, the importance of which everyone must admit; but I think those who admit its importance will also recognize its extreme difficulty. It is not only that the constitution of such a tribunal would create an additional burden, because that is not to be considered if the welfare of the country demands it—but it is that a proposition to establish such a tribunal would meet with vast diversity of opinions, and opinions of the very strongest possible character. I do not propose to say at this moment in what direction my views would lie, nor do I propose to enter upon the subject at all. No doubt some hon. gentlemen who have spoken to-day will give us an opportunity during the session to discuss the subject as a substantive matter, and in that case it will be the duty of those representing the Government to express their views. In the meantime, I can only say that it is a subject which has for a long time had the consideration, not only of the Government, but no doubt of all thoughtful members of Parliament in both Houses. It is a problem of great difficulty, which will sooner or later, perhaps, have to be solved in some form. I hope it may be long before such a cause of dissension will be placed before the people of this country as that would inevitably be, but still it may be a necessity to discuss it and dispose of it, as it may be a necessity to discuss and dispose of other matters of difficulty within the country. With refer-