

Mr. BICKERDIKE: Exactly; I intend that.

Hon. GEORGE E. FOSTER (Minister of Trade and Commerce): I have listened with a great deal of interest to the address of my hon. friend on this question. I have my own ideas with regard to the matter, but I do not hold them so strongly, speaking for myself alone, that I am not open to argument. My hon. friend has traversed a great deal of ground; he has brought up a great many arguments, and has buttressed them by the opinions of a great many individuals. But there are an infinitely greater number of people who have made arguments and given opinions that he has not cited. While a fair array has been presented as supporting the case made by my hon. friend, the world is so large and there are so many people in it that it is a little difficult to argue that the best has been advocated by those few who have been mentioned, or that a policy should be established upon what the hon. gentleman has cited. I do not think this House is disposed on so slight a discussion as we have had to-day to affirm the principle that capital punishment should be abolished, and thereby change what has been the law and the policy in this country for so many years. I had hoped that enough interest would have been taken in this subject by this House—that is if there is an interest taken in it by the House—to have provoked an expression of opinion for and against by members on both sides. I have no doubt at all that my hon. friend is convinced himself that he is right. But because he is himself convinced that he is right he is not justified in maintaining that everybody who does not agree with him is wrong. I know my hon. friend used two or three expressions that would read us out of decent society on earth and out of any quarter at all in the world to come if we voted against what he considers to be right. But I suppose that is more a matter of argument than of conviction. It is very arguable, I think, that we must not necessarily perpetuate for all time to come modes of punishment which are of very old date and came to be established when the conditions of human life in the world were quite different from what they are to-day. But it is also not allowable, I think, to argue that because a thing dates far back, either as a custom or a precept of law or a method of administration, that it is therefore not entitled to hold its place at the present time. We hope that the

[Mr. Lancaster.]

world has not always been wrong in every conclusion that it has come to. Some of us, I think, hold and may well hold that there are certain modes and expressions of thought in the activities of life that are pretty nearly as old as the world, and they hold as well to-day as in early times. It is no doubt a gruesome thing to take a man up and hang him by the neck until he is dead and usher his soul into the other world, but society is compact, it aggregates its units and it formulates its methods of procedure for its own protection, and there is something still to be said for a means of punishment in extreme cases which has been at one time adopted by all nations, and which is to-day carried out and adhered to by the greater number of what we may call the civilized nations of the world. My hon. friend has cited twelve cases. Amongst these are a number of different states of the United States, so that even in the United States itself, to which he has appealed and which is a great and progressive country, a very large proportion of the states have not yet adopted my hon. friend's views. I have not given special attention to the matter, but it is an impression I have had that there have been Christian and civilized countries that have abolished capital punishment and after an experience of what has followed upon its abolition, have reverted to capital punishment. I think there are cases of that on record. I am quite certain that I have read very strong arguments from states and countries where capital punishment has been abolished on the line that the abolition of capital punishment has lessened, as it were, the respect for the execution of law in extreme cases and has not had a salutary effect upon the general morals as relating to the criminal acts of the community at large.

A man might be extreme enough to say that no individual man has a right to deprive another individual man of the liberty of physical or mental action. He has not, in a sense, and he might argue from that, that a collection of men had no right to do it. But society would be impossible, unless the better sentiment for law and order in society had some physical means of deterring those who would flout it and put it to scorn. It might, perhaps, be pushing it to an extreme to say, that if you argue that men in a civilized community compacted together to preserve what is best amongst them and to keep law and order, have not a right to take a criminal of the first-class and put him out of the possibility of ever plaguing society again; that it