

bouring counties and the Bill will do its work silently like the loaded gun on the walls, of which you do not need to pull the trigger to enable it to give you protection. In the neighbouring districts the electors will learn that they will be liable to suffer if they take bribes, as the corrupt voters have suffered in another county. I believe that for the Bill to be of any use, it must be called into play in some of the first cases of corruption that happen in the next election, in order to teach a wholesome lesson to a particular county, and by the influence of that example to teach the same lesson to the constituencies generally. The first objection that will occur to any one who reads the Bill, as it occurred to me, when I first drafted it, is, that it is too limited in its scope. I may be told that the Bill is directed against people who take bribes, but that there is nothing said about those who give bribes. My answer is: that this criticism is based on an entire misunderstanding of my object. My object is a limited one. It is not to punish any one, but to take votes away from unworthy people, and the briber who is very often a much greater offender than the bribe-taker can be dealt with under the criminal law, which is now as stringent as a law can be. I believe that we need not add to the terrors of the law in that regard, for in my opinion the law is very drastic and very stringent now. If this were a Bill to punish, that criticism would be a good one, but as it is a Bill merely to take votes away from people who abuse the right of the franchise, that criticism does not seem to me to be a sound one. It is distinct from the object I had in view in submitting this measure to Parliament. A much graver objection, it seems to me, against the Bill, and one which deterred me for two or three years, I may frankly say, from introducing the principle—although I had it in my mind for two or three years to bring in such a Bill—is the objection that, in all conscience, there are now on the Statute-books sufficient and stringent laws dealing with the matter, and why come as a medicine-man with a new nostrum to try and cure that which the statutes have failed to remedy. I may be told that the most important cure for the evil is the use of moral agencies, a sounder pulpit, a sounder press, sounder universities, sounder common schools and sounder journals or magazines, to teach the people the meanness and immorality of this practice of selling votes, and that you must rely on these. To be sure you must rely largely on all these things; but if I am not wrong there is some hope of bringing this into practice, at least in the case of a county where there is a strong and earnest feeling against this whole wretched business, of giving and taking bribes. If you find that this Bill is faulty in detail, its provisions can be modified when we go into committee. But I believe that it will be found adequate, and that it will do good in a country where there is a feeling of public abhorrence at the

shameful practice against which it is directed. I need say but little more on the subject. I do not think there is a single member of this House, whether he belongs to the Liberal party or to my own party, who will not acknowledge that this is and has been for twenty years a great evil in Canada, as it is in all self-governing communities. A few days ago the Governor of New York, in his message to the Legislature, directed the most pungent paragraph of that message against this evil, and his remedy was to introduce our Canadian Bill, as he called it, providing for election petitions. Now, we have had that system in this country for almost twenty years, and I appeal to the members of this House, to the Liberals as well as to my Conservative friends, to say whether, in so far as it was meant to be a means of cleansing the constituencies and preventing bribery, it has not been a miserable and colossal failure. It has been used for other purposes altogether. In most counties it has been turned into an instrument of revenge, to harass and worry candidates. In some cases it has afforded opportunities to unscrupulous men of my own profession to drum up a bill of costs. It has been used for the purpose of forcing a new contest, and making the candidates go a second time before the electors within a few months. It seems to me that it has been used in 1892 practically to bring on a general election throughout Canada. Our friends opposite, seeing that the parties were very nearly balanced in this Chamber, were enabled by that Bill to force new contests in many places. In these ways the original purpose of the measure has often been lost sight of, and it has been made to serve purposes entirely foreign to that for which it was introduced, while it has not served the purpose of cleansing the counties of bribery and corruption. We have another Act, that of Mr. Blake, which was prepared with great skill. I have copied closely as much as I could of the machinery of that Act, which was well drafted; but the purport of that Act seems to betray that gentleman's incapacity to understand average human nature. You can see in every clause of it that the man who drafted it did not know what the common, every-day ment upon persons quite beyond our control. One could easily see that such a Bill would not be of much value to the country. It is too complicated, and depends for enforcement upon persons quite beyond our control. This Bill proposes to disentangle the subject from political party interests, and to place the punishment of bribery in the hands of men who, without reference to either one party or the other, will try to cleanse the counties of the whole miserable business, and will be ready to smite down any and all men found guilty of it. Now, before I sit down, let me say that, in my judgment, the gravest present evil in Canadian and American politics, and in the colonies of England in other parts of the world, is this evil of bribery.