

claim her under a provision of the law, and why punishment should not be inflicted on the wretches who have abducted her, under any pretense whatever, and consigned her to a life of shame. For that reason the Bill proposes to raise the age when abduction is punishable from 16 to 21.

These are the provisions of the Bill I have the honour to submit to the House. I believe that all the hon. members are in favour of our establishing every safeguard possible for the purpose of conserving public virtue and punishing crime on the part of any individual, the purport or result of which is to sap the foundations of public virtue and render the chastity of females in this country less secure than it is at present.

Mr. CRAIG. With the general purport of this Bill I have full sympathy, and I have entire sympathy with those who are advocating this measure. I am not, however, able to agree in the whole Bill. While I have no objection at all, personally, to the first section which provides for raising the age of consent in women from 16 to 18, and while I think that is a part of the Bill which will commend itself to the judgment of this House, because 18 is not very old for a girl, I cannot support the second section of the Bill which provides for reducing the age of responsibility in the man from 21 to 18. It seems to me that that is a step in the wrong direction. The law, as it stands, is aimed at a man over twenty-one who seduces a woman under promise of marriage. But suppose we reduce the age limit from twenty-one to eighteen, then the man, instead of the woman, would require to be protected. Take a young man of nineteen, we might easily imagine cases in which he might be led into temptation and induced to commit the crime mentioned in this Bill by the woman herself, so that I think the age is very properly put at twenty-one. I say further that if we raise the age from sixteen to eighteen in woman, we are going far in that direction to protect the woman, because a woman at eighteen years of age, we know from experience and observation, is just as old as a man of twenty-one. I think it would be a most unfortunate step to take to reduce the age of responsibility in a man from twenty-one to eighteen. I can support the first section, but am compelled to oppose the section reducing the age of responsibility in a man from twenty-one to eighteen. Instead of having a good effect, this would have a bad effect. As to the third section, I have not looked into it particularly, but do not see that there is any particular objection to it. I think, therefore, that I might support the first and third sections, but as the Bill now stands I shall have to vote against it.

Mr. CHARLTON.

The PRIME MINISTER (Mr. Laurier). I quite agree in the remarks of my hon. friend from East Durham (Mr. Craig), but I do not see any objection to this Bill taking its second reading and being discussed in Committee of the Whole. The first clause, I think, might be very fairly accepted, but to the second clause I have the very same objection which has been urged by my hon. friend from East Durham. I do not think that it would be wise in any way to accept the modification proposed by my hon. friend from North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton). Under the civil law in the province of Quebec, and I think it is the same in the other provinces, but I can speak only for Quebec, a man cannot contract marriage legally under the age of 21 without the consent of his parents. Such being the law of the land, if a girl is so imprudent as to accept the promise of marriage of any boy under 21, she has only herself to blame for the consequence which may follow; and if you are to amend the law so as to make a man responsible for any promise of marriage he may give, being under 21 years, in my opinion such a change would not be conducive to morality but the very reverse. It would lead necessarily to blackmail in many cases and to boys being entrapped. The best age to be fixed, I think, is that already fixed—21 years. If a girl wants to accept the promise of a man, let her accept the promise of a man and not of a boy, and, by the law a man is not a man and able to give consent before he is 21 years of age. Barring thus, one criticism, I think the first clause should be admitted. As to the third clause, I am not prepared to give an opinion at this moment. It should be reserved for a future occasion.

Motion agreed to, and Bill read the second time.

#### DRAINAGE ACROSS RAILWAY LANDS.

Mr. CASEY moved second reading of Bill (No. 14) respecting drainage on and across the lands of railway companies. He said: In moving the second reading of this Bill, I am merely following what I understand to have been the drift of opinion in this House on the last occasion when the House considered this subject. In consequence of many petitions from municipalities to this House in former years, and of complaints made to myself by individuals who wished to drain their lands across railways, I introduced on two former occasions Bills to make the Dominion railways subject to provincial laws concerning drainage. These Bills were attacked by the Government of the day, by many friends of the railways, and by many disinterested members of the House, on the ground that it would be far better to have a law which was applicable to all railways in the Dominion, so far as they were under the con-