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THE SEDUCTION BILL.

Mr. Charlton's Bill, making seduction a criminal offence, (as well as the Incest Bill,) has been extinguished in the Senate. The Minister of Justice, Sir Alexander Campbell, spoke strongly and decidedly against the measure. In the course of an able argument the Minister referred to communications which he had received "from two of the most eminent judges in Canada who have written voluntarily, without my suggestion, against the legislation contemplated by this Bill." These judicial opinions are important, as it is possible that some ambitious legislator may be anxious to make a fresh attempt at this pernicious and ill-advised species of legislation. One of the learned judges says:—

"I see a bill reported by a select committee, and read a second time, making adultery and seduction criminal offences. I can hardly conceive any more dangerous step that could be taken in the present complicated state of society than to bring such matters within the scope of criminal legislation. It might suit a primitive and simple state of society like that of the old Puritan communities of New England. As an old Judge, alas, of many years' experience in trying civil and criminal cases, I look with undisguised alarm at the probable effects of such legislation on the world as it now is around us; but to my mind the greatest objection to the proposal (as I understand it), it is only a crime for punishment in the man and not in the woman. It is intelligible to declare that such offences are crimes, but it is absurd, to my mind, to declare that the criminality is only with one of the two actors. If it be a sin or a crime, the principals must be equally guilty. It is nonsense to declare that because the consequences—the shame and suffering—fall chiefly on the female the sin or the crime is not equally with her as with him. Such one-sided legislation is an utter confusion of right and wrong, and a burlesque on discriminating justice. I take a strong view, and look upon such one-sided legislation as tampering with immutable principles

of right and wrong. Women should be made to understand that they must guard their own honour and chastity. As the law now is, they are too frequently the seducers and tempters, and then obtain, or their parents for them, damages. Give them the additional terrors of a criminal prosecution and the effect on public morals will be indeed edifying."

The other letter was summarized as follows by Sir Alexander Campbell:—

"The other letter which I have points to a very grave danger which men are exposed to in their intercourse with women of this character, although it is not with reference to actions for seduction. The learned judge refers to a case where a young man was charged with rape on a young woman. The evidence of the woman was very clear; she swore to the commission of the offence distinctly. On the part of the defence it was shown that for a month or six weeks after the offence they were in daily intercourse, visiting at each other's houses and dining and taking tea together without objection from the parents on either side. When the young woman found that she was pregnant, she accused the young man of a rape. The judge, on hearing of her conduct during the month after the offence, and that the girl had made no complaint even to her mother, charged very strongly for the defence, and said the jury should acquit the prisoner. To his consternation they found him guilty. In such a glaring case he declined to pronounce sentence, and held the prisoner over for trial at the next assizes, and sent a copy of the evidence to me. He protests against this kind of legislation."

The Minister of Justice also declared that his own experience was not favorable to the bill.

"I find (he said) that the bill which is now proposed is substantially the law in many states of the neighboring union, and in France and Germany. It is not the law in Great Britain or in any colony of the Empire, and I think we are bound to ask ourselves whether the state of morals in those countries, as far as we know, leaves anything to be desired on our part; whether there is any evidence before the community—not before the House—but whether we know as private citizens of any evidence leading us justly and soundly to the conclusion that the state of morals in those communities is higher and better than in ours. For my own part, I