

years, but it was finally fixed at sixteen years. Those who were in the House at that time will no doubt remember that that Bill, when first introduced, met with a great deal of badinage. It was treated as a huge joke. For one or two sessions the House would hardly consent to treat the matter seriously, and jeers and gibes were the fortune of the promoter of the Bill. Finally, the Bill became law. It has now been on the Statute-book for ten years, and its operation has unquestionably been salutary, and in the public interest. Nobody now questions that it should have a place on our Statute-book, or would suggest that it should be repealed, and that the protection which females enjoy under the laws of Canada should be removed. I think we may now take a step in advance, and increase the age of consent to eighteen years, as proposed by this Bill. If good, substantial, tangible reasons exist for giving protection to the female up to the age of sixteen years, I can scarcely understand why the same reasons will not apply with equal or almost equal force to the proposal to extend that limit to eighteen years. From sixteen to eighteen years is an age of inexperience on the part of the female; there can be no doubt about that. In this country, and more notably in many other countries, if the seduction of a female is visited by the punishment of death by a brother or a parent, it is customary that conviction cannot be obtained. Society holds that the brother or the father or the friend of the female who has been robbed of her virtue, has the right to visit the crime with the punishment of death; and in many countries the fear of the guardian or the friend of the female taking justice into his own hands and inflicting this summary punishment, acts as a salutary restraint—such restraint which it is proposed by this Bill shall be imposed legally and decorously and in a proper manner.

It is not necessary to say much about the serious affect of the canker of vice, and the great importance of preserving chastity and public virtue. Anything that will conduce to that condition in society is commendable and salutary, and should be applied by all means. The object of this Bill is to protect the female, and to restrain those who have designs against her virtue—to serve the public good by holding out the prospect of punishment to the male who will not be otherwise restrained from giving full rein to his vicious propensities. There are many states in the American Union that have the age limit which this Bill proposes to establish. The State of New York, with a population of over six millions, has the age of consent placed at eighteen years. I do not know that it is necessary to give a list of the states which make the age limit eighteen, but there are ten or twelve of them, and there are others that have fixed the limit at seventeen, and

others again that fix it at sixteen; and I believe that those which have the age limit at eighteen have more advanced legislation than the others have. It is proposed to amend section 181 of the Criminal Code, which reads as follows:—

Every one is guilty of an indictable offence, and liable to two years' imprisonment, who seduces or has illicit connection with any girl of previously chaste character, of or above the age of fourteen years and under the age of sixteen years.

The Bill proposes to substitute eighteen for sixteen. It is proposed to raise the age of consent from sixteen to eighteen.

The second section of the Bill proposes to amend section 182 of the Criminal Code. Sec. 182 reads as follows:—

Every one above the age of twenty-one years is guilty of an indictable offence, and liable to two years' imprisonment, who, under promise of marriage, seduces and has illicit connection with any unmarried female of previously chaste character and under twenty-one years of age.

The original Bill provided for the punishment of seduction, under promise of marriage by a male over the age of eighteen. I understand that some of the Senators were afraid that some of our young men, at this age of indiscretion, might commit a crime for which they were scarcely responsible, and thought it would be better to advance the age to twenty-one. I think, however, that any young man who deprives a woman of her virtue, who commits the flagrant offence of seduction under promise of marriage, is old enough at the age of 18 to know that he has committed a base act, and to comprehend the provision of a law which makes the act punishable, and I believe if it is proper to impose this penalty at the age of 21, it is just as proper to impose it at the age of 18 on the part of a male.

The third section of the Bill proposes to amend section 283 of the Criminal Code. That section reads:

Every one is guilty of an indictable offence, and liable to five years' imprisonment, who unlawfully takes, or causes to be taken, any unmarried girl, being under the age of sixteen years, out of the possession and against the will of her father or mother, or of any other person having the lawful care or charge of her. It is immaterial whether the girl is taken with her own consent or at her own suggestion or not. It is immaterial whether or not the offender believed the girl to be of or above the age of sixteen.

The provision is aimed at the punishment of the offence of enticing girls into brothels or houses of ill-fame or enticing them out of the country under false pretenses, for the purpose of robbing them of their virtue and making them inmates of dens. If a girl, 21 years of age, has been inveigled from her home—made to enter a brothel, I am unable to see why her parents or other guardian should not be able to re-