

servant of yours, Mr. Speaker, in the House than the hon. member for Laval, even though he is not allowed to read his notes. Fortunately for everybody to-night, I have no notes; I have not the privileges enjoyed by the Prime Minister. I am very sorry that on such an important subject I have no notes, because, as I was going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, I expected that the Bill would be discussed later. The object I had in view was to have obtained a little more information. However, I have some information on the subject. The other day in Montreal a coloured man named Campbell was executed. I am delighted to see here now the hon. member for Montcalm (Mr. Lafortune) who was the crown prosecutor in Montreal. There was a current report in the newspapers that this man Campbell had committed nine murders before the last one for which he paid the penalty of his life. I ask hon. members of this House, especially my hon. friend the member for St. Lawrence, what they would do with such a specimen of humanity, or such a—no, I will not use the other word, but any hon. gentleman in this House can supply it for me. Supposing this man had been sentenced to jail for life, would he be deprived of his mania for committing murder, and refrain from killing the guards? Reference has been made to the fact that in Edmonton, I think it was, one of the deputy wardens had his throat cut by a convict. If there is good reason for having erected a monument to the Chevalier d'Assas it seems to me that one should be erected to Dr. Lavolette of St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary, who, being wounded by convicts, gave the command: 'Shoot, shoot, never mind me.' Dr. Lavolette did his duty, and did it well. I have had considerable experience during nineteen years of practice; I have defended fifteen cases of murder, and have prosecuted in two instances. If I were asked: 'Are you in favour of the abolition of capital punishment or are you against it?' I would admit very sincerely that when I was defending I was quite in favour of the abolition of capital punishment, but when I was prosecuting it took all the majesty of the law to keep me within bounds. Fortunately, this is not a political question; every member on this side and on the other side of the House is free to express his opinion. A professor came to me once and asked me: 'How do you stand with your conscience when you are defending a murderer who has confessed to you his guilt? How can

[Mr. C. A. Wilson.]

you defend such a case?' I said I never took a bad case in my life and I do not know of any bad cases so far as criminality is concerned. This assertion may appear to be a very broad one, and perhaps hon. gentlemen will come to the conclusion that my conscience is a most elastic one. I cannot blame those of my friends who have a smile on their faces now, as there is reason for it, and if it is a consolation to them I am willing that they should have that consolation. If I am sick, I go to a doctor; if I have some sins to confess, I go to the priest; if any hon. gentlemen have trouble about law, I would advise them to go to a lawyer—he is not the worst adviser after all. There is one thing we must not forget. After all, what is a verdict? It is a conclusion which the judge and jury have got to draw from the facts and from the law, and that is the reason why jurisprudence, so far as criminal law is concerned, is so particular about the admissions and confessions of criminals. I have seen some men under the strain of the charge that was laid against them make an admission of guilt when they were not guilty at all. Should we apply to those men the principle that punishment is a deterrent of their actions? The actions of the criminal may have been brought about by passion, by drugs, by liquor, by jealousy, by temper. The hon. member for St. Lawrence said that society would be more adequately protected against criminals by imprisonment for life. I know that imprisonment for life is a severe punishment. Are we going to leave to the murderers themselves the choice as to whether they prefer to hang or to be imprisoned for life? I think we have to take a saner view than this. I heard the hon. member for South Renfrew say that when he was a minister of the Cabinet he found it one of the most trying things to decide a question of life or death. I cannot blame him for that. I have said that during the course of my practice I have defended fifteen cases of murder. A remark of the hon. member for Frontenac to which I take exception was his assertion that some men were safe because they had wealthy or political friends. On one occasion I addressed a petition to His Excellency, the Governor General in Council, but I was not successful. However, there is one thing which must be considered. How can a Cabinet composed of fourteen or fifteen members, receiving a report from a judge and reading dry depositions written in cold red or black ink on white paper, appreciate the evidence of a witness when they do not see the witness? This is what