

should have our heartiest support. Does capital punishment reduce crime? I think not. I am opposed to it because I believe the object of punishment is overlooked in its infliction. We can argue all we like, but if capital punishment is being inflicted on some man, we are inclined to say: 'It serves him right.' That is not the spirit, I believe, in which legislation is enacted. If in this present age we were to go back to the old time of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' there would be very few hon. gentlemen in this House who would not, metaphorically speaking, be blind and toothless. None of us want that law applied to ourselves; we are always ready to throw ourselves into the great sea of humanity, trusting to the guidance and kind heartedness of our fellow beings to treat us just as they themselves would be treated.

I do not believe that anything is gained by capital punishment. What is the object of punishment? It is not retribution, although I fear that is the view held by many persons. Punishment for crime has two objects. One object is the protection of society, and the other ought to be the reformation of the individual. If society is to be protected, it can be protected just as well by shutting the criminal up during the remainder of his life, and making him contribute to the welfare of the family which he has, perhaps, deprived of its head, or by his labour contribute to the state if circumstances are otherwise. Society is just as well protected in that way as it would be if the man were hanged, and the spectacle given to the world of an entire nation taking hold of one defenceless man and putting him to death in the name of the law. Perhaps you will not agree with me, Mr. Speaker, but I believe that there is in every man an inherent good which can be cultivated if that man has the proper surroundings and the proper instruction. I myself take the ground emphatically that there are few criminals in the world who cannot by proper treatment be largely reclaimed to themselves at least, if not to the community. It might not, and possibly would not in all cases be safe to allow these men their freedom, but I believe that if an examination of four-fifths of the criminals of the Dominion of Canada to-day were made it would be found that by the influence of proper surroundings and proper teaching many of these persons could be reclaimed and made

[Mr. Graham.]

good citizens, better for this world, and surely better for the world to come. On the ground that I believe it wrong for even the State to take life, I am in favour of my hon. friend's motion. I am in favour of it on the second ground that I believe capital punishment does not add any protection that society would not have, equally strong, by incarceration for life; and on the third ground that I believe it would be possible, in many instances, to reclaim and bring back to manhood the men who otherwise lose their lives and bring disgrace on their families and those connected with them for all time to come. I have spoken strongly on this subject, it is a thing that has been next my heart all my life and I am delighted to have this opportunity to speak a word in favour of this measure. Without giving away any secrets I might say—and members of the Government will realize more fully what I mean—that one of the most trying things I had in my life as a member of a government was the dealing with these cases, believing in my heart that the State had no right, morally, to inflict capital punishment, believing it was not in the interests of society and certainly deprives individuals of all chance to be reclaimed. You can readily understand the position I was often placed in in having to express an opinion on questions of this kind. I speak strongly, I believe what I have said and I believe that the House could not better spend an hour or two than in discussing this great question which will have to be settled within a few years and I hope that what will be said will tend to what I believe is the right solution, the abolition of capital punishment in the Dominion of Canada.

Mr. W. F. NICKLE (Kingston): I have listened with a great deal of interest to the remarks of the hon. member for Montreal (Mr. Bickerdike) and the hon. member for South Renfrew (Mr. Graham), both of whom have spoken calmly on a subject that must be of interest in this country, both of whom have based their remarks on their inmost convictions. As I understand their positions, each of these hon. gentlemen believes that capital punishment is wrong and that the infliction of capital punishment is not a deterrent. I feel satisfied that if I were to enter into a verbal conflict with the hon. member for South Renfrew (Mr. Graham) with reference to the Scriptures and knowledge of them, I would surely suffer; but I am a little surprised that the