

I say here, especially after the extraordinary revelations that were made in the election trial in the city of London, that there is no one source that tends more to corruption or a violation of the election law, than cumulative voting. Voters with us are scattered all over. A great many, I am sorry to say, go to the United States, a great many go to the North-west Territories, and when an election takes place, especially in a close constituency, it is of importance that these scattered fragments should be gathered together. Both parties make the greatest possible effort to get in the outside vote. A man's fate, as a candidate for parliamentary honours or perhaps even as a Minister of the Crown, may depend on his getting in the outside vote. I have had some experience of this. In my by-election of 1892, I found three men, who had lived in British Columbia for years, brought in on passes from that province to vote against me. From Crystal City in the North-west Territories, eight men came in on passes over a certain railway to vote against me and all their expenses were paid. From Manitoba and the North-west Territories and British Columbia, over fifty outside votes were brought into West Huron to vote against me, and all their expenses paid. The majority against me was sixteen, and as I could not go to the expense of bringing in men from outlying provinces and from the United States, the result was that these fifty votes gave my opponent his majority of sixteen and some to spare. If my hon. friend the Solicitor General will take my advice, he will, on the further consideration of this Bill, give one man one vote. Look at the terrible condition of things that was revealed in the London election trials. Both parties struggled to get the party vote from Hamilton, Detroit and Toronto, and other places. I am satisfied that there is nothing which tends so much to the violation of the election law as the right of a man to vote in as many constituencies as he can reach.

There is another thing which I am not sure is in my hon. friend's Bill or not, and that is the right to appoint returning officers. I am not sure whether the Government have reserved still to themselves the power of nominating returning officers. If they do, my own inclination is to oppose that clause. I believe that the correct and fair and honest principle, would be to make the local officials returning officers—the sheriffs and registrars of counties, men who have got their offices for life, who have responsible and honourable positions to fill, and who are not likely therefore to commit fraud. Under the present system, what have we had? We have had jail birds, penitentiary birds, appointed as deputies. We have it on record that in one case a man who was appointed a deputy returning officer had been convicted 42 times by the police magistrate.

Mr. BEATTIE. I beg the hon. gentleman's pardon. He was never convicted of any offence.

Mr. CAMERON. What do you know about it?

Mr. BEATTIE. I know all about it.

Mr. CAMERON. I was not referring to the hon. gentleman about it at all. I only said that one man had been convicted 42 times, and from the hon. gentleman's interruption I am afraid there is something in it. All I can say on the subject is that at one election trial it was sworn to that one deputy returning officer had been convicted 42 times, and is now in jail.

Mr. BENNETT. Will the hon. gentleman allow me? The statement was made that a returning officer had been a jail bird, not a deputy returning officer, and let me further state that in my last election, one of the deputy returning officers was arrested three days afterwards for fraud and forgery. That is a sample of the appointment of hon. gentlemen opposite.

Mr. CAMERON. If so, he ought to be committed, but it strikes me forcibly that I saw somewhere that in the west they brought deputy returning officers from the city of Winnipeg, and one of these had just got out of the penitentiary where he had been for a year or two. At all events, whether that statement be correct or not, we ought to have returning officers who would not select such men as their deputies, and you can accomplish that best by making the sheriffs and registrars of counties ex-officio returning officers.

I do not propose to discuss this matter much further. The hon. gentleman who preceded me said nothing practically about the Franchise Bill, but his leader, on the introduction of this Bill, did make some observations to the effect that it would be beneath the dignity of this Parliament to leave our franchise at the mercy of the local legislatures. Well, I know one country where the local legislatures fix the qualification; they have either universal suffrage or property qualification. If my memory serves me right, in the United States Congressmen are elected by universal suffrage, but the suffrage is fixed by the different states as they see fit. They may give a vote to a mule, they may make an income franchise, or establish a property qualification or do anything they like. Yet every United States Congressman is elected under the franchise adopted by his own commonwealth. Sir, I never heard any complaint of that system. I believe that it is wholly unexceptionable, and I believe that this Government could do no better thing than follow that course. The hon. gentleman says that he would favour universal suffrage rather than have the local legislatures prepare the voters' lists. I am as