

reference of this Bill. Although a Private Bill, brought in at the instance of an individual to redress a private wrong; though only six persons are directly interested in its passage, you will all agree that as an example and a precedent—let us hope as a warning—it will be read, and the action of the Senate upon it regarded with interest in every Province of the Dominion. In its nature and consequences, the decision in this case will have an important bearing, not only on the rights of these individuals, and their future happiness and position in society, but a powerful moral influence upon other families and individuals, far and wide.

The decision of this Committee, confirmed as it probably will be by the Senate, is to the respondent morally speaking, life or death. Life in one event clouded and unhappy, it is true; but still tolerable, still susceptible of those parental emotions, those joys, and hopes, and sweet anxieties, which none but a mother's heart can feel, and, perhaps, under the subduing and chastening influence of her unexampled misfortunes, she may in her declining years look forward with a steadier eye, and a firmer faith, and a better assurance of sympathy and love from that other marriage which, we are told, awaits the Christian believer when all earthly bonds are severed. In the other event, she is condemned to a living death. She is branded with a mark of infamy which no power on earth can efface. The verdict of a common jury obtained by surprise, if not by perjured testimony, in a case in which she was neither witness, nor defendant, she could survive. Surrounded by relatives and friends who knew the motives of her accusers, and the falsehoods by which they had misled the court, she could still hold up her head and assert her innocence; she could point triumphantly to another verdict when the scales of justice were not weighted against her—where her witnesses were not excluded by a rule of law—the relic of a barbarous jurisprudence. She could claim that the latter verdict had reversed the former, and that by the oaths of twelve men she had shewn that her accusers and traducers were not to be believed. She might still command the sympathy of

strangers, and of hundreds of undoubting believers in her honor and truth among her neighbors, the most competent to judge of her character and conduct, in all the scenes of this domestic drama, even though a Chancery judge had argued himself out of his doubts in her favour, by a laborious process, which required 17 months to reach an adverse conclusion! But who can expect her to withstand, or even to survive, the cruel blow aimed at her defenceless head by this Bill? She must go down before the power of the two Houses of Parliament. There is no re-hearing in this case; no ultimate appeal except to that dread tribunal, where the helpless victim of human injustice may look for exculpation if innocent, as certainly as her persecutors and judges may expect condemnation if they have falsely or carelessly wronged her. The question therefore is one of exceeding gravity in whatever way it may terminate, and no doubt of very serious importance to the petitioner also. I simply glance at this view of the case, for the purpose not only of preparing my own mind for the work before me, but of directing the attention of the Committee to the serious character of the issue they are about to try. I trust I will be pardoned for reminding them of the duty and the necessity that rest upon them, to consider carefully, and weigh justly, the evidence in their hands. It would almost be an impertinence to make this special appeal if the case had not been before other tribunals, with opposite results.

An action for damages was brought against the alleged seducer, Gordon;—it was tried by a jury. Under the law of Ontario—which in this respect is peculiar, because in other Provinces, as well as in England, a special tribunal exists for the trial of such cases, and rules of evidence obtain in them different from ordinary courts—the petitioner in this action has the case all to himself. He produces his own witnesses and they can not be contradicted. The real party charged—the lady who was here a few moments ago—could not be heard, and had neither witnesses nor defenders. It was a matter debated and decided behind her back. She had no right, power, or privilege to make any explanation or defence. The co-respondent in that par-