

trade problem in this country, is to my mind the most important that this Parliament is called upon to solve. We have had a great deal of talk in this House about the constitution and the interpretation of the constitution, but in my opinion, it is not at all so important as the transportation problem. I have attempted on several occasions to deal with the problem by Bills of more or less importance, but as yet I have not met with a great deal of success. However, we are making some progress; we are engaging more and more the attention of this House, and to-day in the Railway Committee, we have made considerable progress in this direction. Hon. gentlemen say: Why do you not go in for a Bill dealing with the whole transportation problem? Well, I have tried that, but have not been very successful up to the present time, and there is nothing left for us but to take up the question in detail. We now propose in dealing with the railway passenger rates to get at the facts. We shall know when the returns provided for in the second section of the Bill are rendered, what amount of free transportation is given by the railways, and what preferred passenger rates are given to certain classes in the community. The second clause of the Bill provides:

The said Act is hereby further amended by inserting the following section immediately after section 301:—

Every company shall, within one month after the first day of January in each year, make to the Railway Committee, under the oath of the president, secretary or chief executive officer of the company, true and particular returns—

(a.) Of all annual and trip passes issued by the company during the year next preceeding, with the names of the persons to whom they were issued, the reasons why they were issued, and the distance of travel included in the said passes;

(b.) Of all special passenger rates given to various organizations, trades or professions, or to any other persons, together with the number of miles of passenger travel included under such special rates.

One reason why the people of this country have not got lower passenger rates is, because so many free passes and so much preferred transportation rates are given by the railway companies. If we know from this return the extent of this, the persons who pay 3 cents a mile would be in a much better position to command more equitable treatment than they now receive. When the Bill comes before the Railway Committee, as I hope it shall, I will be prepared there to give further reasons for the adoption of the measure. I shall content myself to-night, with merely moving the second reading, and that it be referred to the Railway Committee.

Motion agreed to, Bill read the second time, and referred to the Select Standing Committee on Railways, Canals and Telegraph lines.

Mr. MACLEAN.

## SEDUCTION AND ABDUCTION.

Mr. CHARLTON moved second reading of Bill (No. 13) to amend the Criminal Code, 1892, for the purpose of making more effectual provision for the punishment of seduction and abduction. He said: Mr. Speaker, I ask the attention of the House for a few moments to the provisions of the Bill, the second reading of which I now beg leave to move. The object of this Bill is to afford additional protection to females. One of its provisions is to raise the age of consent from 16 years to 18 years. Another provision is to make the male responsible for seduction under promise of marriage, from the age of 18 instead of from the age of 21, as at present. The third provision is to increase the age of responsibility for abduction for immoral purposes from the age of 16 to the age of 21.

These three provisions are provisions which in my opinion should command the assent of this House.

I am quite well aware that reasons will be urged against the adoption of all these provisions, especially the first two. It will be claimed that females over the age of sixteen years have sufficient experience to enable them to resist wiles of the character to which they are exposed, and are not entitled to the protection of the law. There is one feature of the usages of society in Canada, and in all other civilized countries, which entitles the young female to special consideration; that is the fact that society deals with the female much more severely and unjustly than with the male. Lapses of this kind on the part of the female consign her to a position in society from which she can never recover. She becomes an outcast. The results of an indiscretion of this kind are more terrible in her case than any punishment that may be inflicted on the male, in whose case the offence is commonly regarded by society as a very trivial one. For this reason the female is entitled to a greater degree of consideration under the law than the male. The female between the ages of sixteen and eighteen in this country can scarcely be claimed to have attained the full years of experience that will enable her to understand as perfectly as she will later in life the temptations to which she is exposed, or to guard against those temptations as later in life as she will certainly do.

The same reasons which will doubtless be urged against this Bill were urged against the measure now on the Statute-book, providing that the age of consent shall be limited to sixteen years. I had the honour of promoting that measure in this House. It was discussed here for several years before it passed this House. After it passed the House of Commons, it had to run the gauntlet of the Senate, and it was discussed in that body for two or three years before it became law. That Bill originally provided for the age of consent being fixed at eighteen