

that single battalion may depend on the feeling of the officer who may happen to be in command.

Hon. Mr. WATSON—The man that marks the ballots for them.

Hon. Mr. POWER—Yes, as my hon. friend says, the man who marks the ballots for them. It is only necessary to state that position to show how wrong and improper it is. I may be pardoned if I give a practical illustration of what I mean. I have no doubt the hon. leader of the Government in this House, if there were an election taking place in Alberta, would like to have the election conducted in a perfectly fair way. To show what may happen, and under conditions when perhaps there was less risk, one would think, of any serious interference with the rights of the forces to vote than would be likely in this case, I happen to be aware of an incident which occurred in the election of a member of the House of Commons in what is now the province of Saskatchewan, but was then part of the Northwest Territories. The principal town of the constituency was a mounted police station at which 88 mounted police were stationed when the election took place. The candidate of whom I am speaking was an exceedingly popular man, and on the day of election 87 out of the 88 mounted police came down practically in a solid body and voted against him, open voting. One of the 88 was a resident who would not be either cajoled or cowed, and refused to vote against my hon. friend. That one man was sent down to Regina on urgent business on the morning of the election. You see what you are doing by passing this Bill: You are putting into the hands of people who, I must say, as far as our experience goes in this country, are not particularly scrupulous in their election methods, the power of swinging a vote of anywhere from 50,000 to 100,000, and the effect of that would be that the votes of the people on the spot, who understand the position, would be nullified by the votes of the men in the trenches who do not understand the position and who will vote as the officers wish them.

Hon. Mr. THOMPSON—I do not hesitate to say that I would do as much as any other man for the soldiers at the front who are protecting the rights and liberties of Canada. I am not opposing this Bill because of fealty to any party, but I oppose it because I am satisfied that legislation of

this kind should not pass. I cannot imagine who conceived it. We have contracted with the boys that went to the front to take care of their families in their absence, and Canada will be glad to have them back. We are doing our duty to the men who have gone to fight for the Empire. The problem itself with which we are confronted is a difficult one sufficiently difficult to solve without increasing it needlessly; and I am absolutely certain that the machinery in connection with this measure will never work out so that soldiers at the front will have an opportunity of voting as men who exercise the franchise should vote. At the front there are entanglements of barbed wire fences, but there is more barbed wire in this Bill than there is around the trenches. Let us see how this Bill would work. Now we will say it is election day. The leader of some battalion is the returning officer, and at the time the vote is taken a battle is going on and the Canadians are in the thick of it: the leader of that battalion is the returning officer, infused with a desire to help his political leader, and the stretcher comes up bearing a Canadian boy, wounded almost unto death. The leader of the battalion follows up and says, "John you are gone," and he says "yes," and the leader says, "But I want you to vote for Laurier or Borden before you die." Shame on such legislation.

Hon. Mr. POPE—He would not do it.

Hon. Mr. THOMPSON—I do not believe the mothers and fathers of these boys want any such legislation to pass through Parliament. What is the vote to be? It is Government or Opposition. This would have been a better ballot if it said "vote in favour of Conservative interests or Liberal interests." It is like the Irishman coming to the North-West who asks, "Is there a Government in the country?" and when told that there is says, "Well, I vote again it." I do not think it does credit to the House to have a ballot of that kind sent across the water asking our soldiers to vote for the Government or Opposition. If a man were asked whether he would vote for the Conservative or Liberal interests, and he had an opportunity to consider the question, he might very well attach his mark to either the one or the other; Sherman said "war is hell" and this is the first time that any parliament in the world ever invaded the precincts of that domain with the franchise. It calls upon men who are at the front in disturbed con-