

session. In the former bill he sought to intensify the punishment for burglary by compelling the court to inflict imprisonment for life in all cases where there was a conviction. The common sense of the House declared itself just a year ago against this exceptional mode of dealing with an offence, susceptible of very various degrees of criminality. Not satisfied with this decision, he returns to the charge with a bill open to the same objections as the one of last year. The only difference is that the punishment of imprisonment for life is only to be inflicted necessarily, when the burglar is found armed or in possession of burglars' tools. As the breaking may be effected by almost any instrument, and as in most cases it must be brought about by some instrument, almost every burglar would be necessarily imprisoned for life.

Encouraged by the successful agitation of Mr. Stead, but, we trust, not approving his tactics, Mr. Charlton is once more on the war path for the protection of women and girls. He borrows to some extent from the Imperial Act of last session (48 & 49 Vic., c. 69); but he does not go so far as to seek to have illicit connection with a girl under 16 declared to be a misdemeanour in all cases. Mr. Charlton insists that the girl must have been *seduced*, and that she must have been "of previously chaste character." This would certainly be some protection to the male sex; but he assumes as true that which is notoriously false. He takes it for granted that a female under sixteen cannot consent to sexual intercourse; or what is worse, he has got himself to believe that parliament has a right to contradict the laws of nature. It is a favorite dogma of parliamentarians that parliament may do anything. Ethically speaking, it may do wrong within the measure of its force, just as the Prince of Monaco may live on the profits of a gambling hell, or a brawny ruffian may rob a quiet citizen of his purse.

In the most moral countries in the world it is not unusual for women to be married under sixteen, and it must be perfectly plain that if they cannot consent to illicit sexual intercourse, they cannot consent to marriage.

If we might venture to suggest that any proposition emanating from Mr. Charlton could be immoral, we should say that the 2nd

sub-section of section 2 deserves to be so called. It amounts to a temptation to women under twenty-one to sell their virtue for a promise of marriage; or it enables them, having bartered their virtue, to use a false charge to force the male transgressor, or some one else, to a marriage. From the wording of the sub-section it would appear that a married man might be held liable for a breach of promise, even if the woman was aware of his marriage. Does Mr. Charlton mean this?

If all this sensational enthusiasm for the protection of women and children is due to an outburst of chivalry, it occurs simultaneously with the expression of sentiments of the most opposite character. A few months before Mr. Stead alarmed the world with a narrative of atrocities, about as real as the tales of Jules Verne, the men who murdered the boy on board the "Mignonette," that they might feed on his body, came to England. After their arrest they were applauded by the crowd at Falmouth; and the Court of Queen's Bench almost apologized for calling their crime murder.

When Canon Kingsley lectured here some years ago, he repeated an old Norse tale as indicative of the courage of the old sea rovers. A ship sprang a leak and was settling down far out at sea. All the crew took refuge in the boat save one boy, for whom there was no room. As the boat pushed off from the sinking vessel, the boy came to the side and reproached the captain with leaving him to perish though he had vowed to his father he would bring him safe home again. The captain jumped into the sea and was drowned, the boy was saved. The Canon added, "We believe these men were our ancestors, I hope they were mine." Who would claim descent from the murderers of the "Mignonette"?

As some compensation for all these sensational and experimental suggestions, Mr. Robertson (Hamilton) offers us one little bill, which, if enforced, would be a security to travellers. It is a bill to make it a misdemeanour to cut holes in the ice in frequented places, and to leave them unguarded. There is old legislation about this matter in the Province of Quebec, but like many other useful laws it has fallen into disuse.