

moved this resolution. I had no very great desire to speak upon it because I did not feel that I could add anything to what hon. members of the House know and understand more thoroughly than I do. I felt that I could say nothing but what could be very much better said by many hon. members of this House of greater experience and ability, but I venture to say, that when an important question like this comes up it is just as well that we should have an opinion upon it one way or the other.

Mr. A. C. BELL (Pictou). Mr. Speaker, I suppose we must acknowledge that in this case, as in several others, we owe a considerable debt of gratitude to the hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) who is not afraid to face the indifference, or the quiet and sometimes effective inertia of the public and who has on several occasions, and in connection with a good many different subjects which are of great importance, found himself capable of taking hold of a case long before it has received popular support. It is gratifying to find that while there is not very much evidence of great interest there is a great deal of gravity and decorum about the debate so far as it has proceeded. There is no disposition to treat the subject with levity or to improve the opportunities which it affords for jocosity, but, evidently the House is disposed to regard the matter as of a somewhat serious character and of very great importance. It cannot be forgotten, in dealing with this matter, that the subject of divorce is inevitably associated with our civilized life. From the beginning of time almost, at least, from a very early date, in fact since marriage was established as an ordinance, occasional interruptions to married life have arisen from various causes. In Canada the proposition of the hon. member for North Norfolk would not materially change the position of affairs. In the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and British Columbia, divorce courts are established and have been established since before confederation. These give relief from time to time to those parties who find the conjugal bond one of intolerable weight and one which must impose conditions to which they can no longer comfortably submit. Divorce is a subject that must be dealt with and although the effect of the sentiment in the province of Quebec has so far and probably will perhaps for ever prevent the institution of such a court in that province, still, we find that in the absence of provisions by which married persons can secure the relief which the divorce action affords they do, in the cases of the several provinces, where divorce courts do not exist, overcome that difficulty by appealing to the law of our country which enables them by legislative enactment to procure the relief which the courts of their provinces cannot afford. The pre-

Mr. LENNOX.

sumption is that the number of divorces granted would not be materially increased if the present system were done away with and if we substituted a more easy, economical and what would be of the utmost importance, a procedure which would involve much less publicity. Reference has been made to the character of the proceedings before the Senate and of the circulation of the evidence disclosing the relations between the married persons to the action and other correspondents. Literature of this character would not be tolerated at all if circulated in our country in the ordinary way. The courts and legislatures of the country would forbid the circulation of such material as this through the mails, of such material as under our system is put out in large quantities and which finds its way by one course or another into the hands of persons who should not have access to it. It is most unsatisfactory that such must be the case and I feel some sympathy with the hon. member for West Elgin (Mr. Robinson) who really seemed to look upon it as a grave infraction of his rights that he was compelled to receive, at the hands of the Senate, communications of such a very improper character. Still, I suppose it is an infliction to which we must all be prepared to submit unless we should determine to rid ourselves of that infliction by giving our moral, our personal and our active support to the cause which the hon. member for North Norfolk has espoused. It would be utterly wrong and intolerable that we, here, as a branch of the legislature of Canada, should give our contributory action to the effecting of a divorce without acquainting ourselves with the circumstances, the grounds and the evidence upon which the petitioner relied in each case of divorce. I do not know that all the members read the evidence in every case, but, certainly, in every case it is the duty of every hon. member, representing a constituency and forming part of the legislating body of Canada, to give effect to the legislation which secures a divorce, to satisfy himself that the evidence is sufficient to warrant him in voting so as to give legal effect to the Bill which has its origin in the other Chamber adjacent to this. Now, that the subject is of considerable importance a review of the statistical record of our country in connection with it will show. Taking the figures as they appear in the last volume of the Year-book up to June, 1901, we find that in the provinces of Canada which have no divorce courts, parliament has granted divorces numbering seventy-one. Seventy-one divorces have been granted by the parliament of Canada in the course of thirty-four years, not a very large number, it is true. In the province of Nova Scotia, in these thirty-four years, 102 divorces were granted by the courts. In the province of New Brunswick seventy-three divorces were granted and in British Columbia fifty-four divorces