

to them. Whether his death was the result of an assassination or a justifiable homicide it is all the same to them. But, for that reason, would you have two widows, two sets of orphans, and two sorrowing parents? Why, the family of the prisoner are just as innocent of an offence as the family of the deceased, and are just as much entitled to compassion and sympathy. For example, a man commits murder. He probably got drunk, or was by environment made a criminal. He has a good wife and also children; a good mother and father, and a large number of relatives, all innocent people, and profoundly grieved that the offence was committed. The accused is tried, convicted, and sentenced to be hanged. The very thoughts of taking the life of the husband, father, brother and son breaks a multitude of hearts. The time has healed the wounds that grief for the victim rent, but as the days roll by and the time approaches for the execution of the prisoner, the heart of the mother and father all but breaks; the affectionate and tender cord of love that stretches from the altar to the scaffold is crushed but not broken, and the heart of the wife is burned to its very socket. She goes to and from the awful death cell. Little innocent hearts of children are crushed like the tender blades of grass beneath the angry heels of cannon on the German battlefield, yet they are all innocent. The brother and sister suffer for his sins, and see his ghost-like form in their dreams of repose. As the day draws near, the father and mother with tottering footsteps visit the death cell, and their minds wander back to the time when a little boy said his prayers at his mother's knee, and they ask God why they have this affliction to bear. The wife, children, relatives and friends all bid him good-bye and leave with breaking hearts, bitterly thinking of tomorrow. With heart-breaking despair, the mother prays God to spare her son, and as the time flies by the height of Heaven could not measure her sorrow. The father's hair turns gray over night, and the very souls are all scarred and forever seared over by the thought of the vengeance visited on their unfortunate relative, son and husband and father. The parents are hurried to their graves by broken hearts; the wife tries to forget, but cannot forgive; and the hearts of the children, relatives and friends are hardened by the harrowing example of killing by the State. Two families are in mourning, and the prisoner's family

[Mr. Bickerdike.]

crushed and heart-broken by a protracted suspense, and that amounts to cruelty to the innocents. Then why make two families instead of one desolate? Then, suppose he was innocent? The State cannot retract what it has done. If life imprisonment would serve the same purpose, would you not prefer it to the death penalty?

I have asked the Minister of Justice to allow this Bill to be referred to a committee. I claim that if I could make good before a committee the statements I have made before the Minister of Justice in this House, this Government would be obliged to abolish capital punishment. If I cannot make good my statements I should be obliged to resign my seat in this House. But every statement I have made I can prove. Now, I appeal to the House to allow this Bill to be referred to a special committee, for I am quite convinced that a change in the law is necessary. I do not intend to say any more on that question.

I can quite realize how difficult it is to succeed in bringing about such a very important reform as I have introduced into this House, especially in these degenerate days, when principles have become subservient to politics; these dark and anxious days when men are rushing to join the Get-Rich-Quick procession; when many are making colossal fortunes out of a situation created by this unfortunate, cruel war.

These are days, Mr. Speaker, when we ask men to raise themselves above any political squabbling, men who will neither bow to capital, nor to-day to aristocracy.

God give us men a time like this demands.
Great hearts, strong minds, true faith and
willing hands;

Men whom the lust of power cannot kill;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
Men who possess a conscience and a will;
Men who have honour; men who will not lie.
For while this country with our thumbworn
creeds,

Our great professions and our little deeds,
Wrangle in strife, lo, freedom weeps,
Graft rules our land while justice sleeps.

Mr. STEVENS: As the hour is late, I move the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. GRAHAM: I presume that means sending this Bill to a place where it will not be revived this session. I have pretty strong convictions on this measure myself, and if the motion means shelving the debate for the rest of the session I will join with the hon. member for Montreal (Mr. Bickerdike) in objecting to that being done.