

I should not be doing myself justice if I allowed the opportunity to pass without voicing my views on this question. I am glad of this opportunity to speak, for this is a question that lays bare the inmost thoughts of men on the subject of their fellowmen in a way that is not called for in most of the debates of a legislature. It is a question the discussion of which need bear no tinge of party, a question higher than party, a question of more real import to the well-being of the nation and the advancement of humanity than even the highest type of partyism. Most of our legislation of necessity deals with things that are material—the resources of the country, our increasing population, our financial situation, our exports, imports, etc. These are highly important, undoubtedly, all of them of vast interest to our native born people and also to those who are induced either by conditions here or by conditions in their home countries to come and make themselves citizens of the land which we think the best country in the world. This theme opens up broader considerations than even our prosperity in a material way; it enables one to view the situation from the sociological standpoint and to deal in a matter somewhat new to legislatures with a question that vitally affects the whole social and moral fabric. No matter what views we may hold on these other public questions, there is a ground on which all men, whether in public or in private life, can stand as one, and that is on the uplifting of the people, of whom they themselves are a part. I have had my name connected, since coming into public life, with a good many measures which I thought were for the benefit of the people of Canada, but I wish to say, Sir, and I say it conscientiously, that I do not believe I have ever had my name connected with a measure that has been of more far-reaching importance than the one introduced by the hon. member for Montreal (Mr. Bickerdike). I congratulate him on his courage in bringing this Bill before the House—courage, I say, because I believe the majority of this House do not view the matter as he views it and as I view it. Still, no great advance has ever been made along these lines till some man has had the courage to take one step in advance. And I believe that in the years to come the name of Robert Bickerdike will stand out large on the pages of Canadian history. He has dealt with this question in an exhaustive manner, calling to his aid some

[Mr. Graham.]

of the highest authorities, and supporting his case with the record of experiences of other countries and the results that have been obtained in those countries by this advanced measure. It is true that many years have elapsed since this form of putting men to death—or any form of putting men to death—became a part of the statutes of the various countries. I might go further than my hon. friend has gone and say that in the broader field I am opposed, generally speaking, to the sacrifice of life by war. There are cases, of course, when war is necessary, but those cases are few at the present day as compared with those of days gone by when the arbitrament of the sword seemed to be the only solution of international difficulties. In those days—and we are perhaps too much inclined to imitate them—a man's greatness was measured by the number of men he had slain during his lifetime. Those were the days when the sword was drawn on the slightest provocation, and it is strange to say—or rather it is not strange to say—that the death penalty by law was equally liberally meted out. These are not the days which we in our day should imitate. It is true, we have had rapid advances, and to-day life is held more sacred than it was a century ago. But still, Sir, I am firmly of the opinion that the people of this country do not hold human life as sacred as they ought. If I might be permitted a word of criticism, I believe that our educational system lacks in that it does not impress on the young of our land the sacredness of human life. In our histories, in our fiction, and in the textbooks of our schools as well, we find glorification of the men who have won victories by the slaughter of their fellowmen. In our fiction sometimes men are glorified not for having taken the lives of men in battle, but for slaying them on the least provocation as private citizens. I believe a benefit would be conferred upon the State if in our textbooks chapters were given pointing out to the youth the very great sacredness of human life, and conveying the lesson that the shedding of blood is perhaps the greatest crime of which man can be guilty. In my reading—and I may say that I was brought up in a family where theology was discussed a great deal—I have never found anything from the divine standpoint that has changed the Ten Commandments. I have never yet found anything to convince me that human law ought to be proposed as an amendment to the Ten Commandments.