

more than I do. I have proved this in times past; when it was not in my interest politically to do so, and I am prepared to show the same spirit in the future. The religious views of every one ought to be respected, but when we come to a question of this sort, we come to a question of moral suasion, and until we learn to stand up face to face and consider it in all its phases, we will not be apt to come to any satisfactory conclusion.

And I am sure that every hon. gentleman within the sound of my voice and every Catholic that knows me or has ever heard me speak, will do me the justice to say that I am as ready to concede to them full freedom of opinion as I am to claim it from others, ready to be convinced by them, and to change my views or prejudice or whatever you call them. My claim is that, assuming that we are to have divorce, a judicial tribunal can best deal with the evidence in divorce cases. The proceedings before those tribunals will not involve the danger of injuring public morals that may attach to our present system. As my hon. friend (Mr. Charlton) has said, the evidence will be confined to a court and not be spread throughout the country by having printed copies of the evidence sent out, very much of it of a nature that we would not desire to see in the bosoms of our families. Therefore, on moral grounds it would be better to make this change. On legal grounds, there can be no question. The evidence upon questions involving the marriage tie should be taken in a court of law, for there is only one thing more solemn than the marriage tie, and that is the belief in a personal God and a future life. If these divorce cases are to go before any tribunal, they should be sent to the best and soundest tribunal. Beyond all peradventure, my hon. friend (Mr. Charlton) is right, and we should thank him for bringing this matter before us. The consideration of these grave matters relating to the very foundations of our social life must have the effect of improving, elevating and strengthening our people. We must decide these questions according to the principles of British freedom, for, under that flag, which now, I believe, is being recognized more than ever as holding the freedom of the world with other enlightened nations, there is no man, be he heathen or Christian but is assured of freedom such as no other but British institutions can secure for him. If it is necessary, as I believe it is, and as the practice of all civilized nations seems to sanction, that society should authorize the severance of the marriage relation, the bond should be unloosed only upon conditions which this parliament lays down. We should restrict as closely as possible the grounds upon which the divorce shall be allowed. But, having provided for this, we should relegate the rest to the courts of our land, which I believe are, and which history, I am glad to say, proclaims to be, in this as in other

British countries, the best fitted to pronounce a verdict in such matters.

Mr. HAUGHTON LENNOX (South Simcoe). I am a little surprised to find that the House, apparently, takes no great interest in this very important question. The reason may possibly be found in the suggestion made by the hon. member for Victoria (Mr. Ross) that a number of hon. gentlemen in the House—amongst them, if I understand him, the Minister of Finance (Hon. Mr. Fielding) and the Minister of Justice (Hon. Mr. Fitzpatrick)—were not free to take the stand that they would like to take in this matter. In our deliberations last session, we learned from the hon. gentleman (Mr. Charlton) who moved this resolution a good deal as to the inner workings of the Reform party, or Liberal party, as they are usually called, and from the hon. member from Victoria we are again learning to-night something more as to the tendencies of that party. The hon. gentleman tells us that Ontario, at one time, prided itself upon its reform principles. If the hon. gentleman is referring to the members who form a majority of the representation from Ontario in this House, I do not know that he has any reason to attack them upon this question, because, I am not aware that, as yet, any of them have declared themselves hostile to the resolution. But we can well understand such remarks from an hon. member who has had long experience of Liberal practices, who can look back to the day when the position of the party upon many questions was not what it is to-day, who can look back to the stand taken in this House by the Liberal opposition and to the stand taken in Ontario years ago, and contrast it with the unfortunate position occupied, for instance, by the Liberal party in Ontario to-day.

Now, as to what the hon. gentleman has suggested as to the desirability of secrecy of proceedings in these cases, we need not go into a careful discussion of that matter now, because, if it is determined by the House that it is desirable to change the mode of procedure in obtaining a divorce in the Dominion of Canada, the details of the measure and the procedure to be fixed can be dealt with later on. I am not sure, however, that we should do wisely to revert to the old system of jurisprudence with its secret proceedings, as secrecy was then understood. There may be many things to be said in favour of the position advanced by the hon. member for Victoria as regards not transmitting the records of these proceedings in all their noisome details to the public through the newspapers. But, on the other hand, I do not understand that in Nova Scotia they have an absolutely secret tribunal such as obtained in days gone by. As to the question of lessening of costs, that, too, is a debateable subject. In the course of my practice as a lawyer, I have known many instances of parties who con-