

that has been marked out by its leaders, or with the views that have been put forward in Parliament. Now, under our parliamentary system, although we have often changes of administration, we have not very often, or to any very great extent, a change in the political opinions of the electors. There are more frequently change in the results of the elections, arising from a large number of the electors refusing to record their votes, than from their having gone from one political party to the other, and it does seem to me that a measure of this sort tends to interfere with that free play and free working of our parliamentary system which is necessary to make it really a representative system of government. As an instance, let me refer to what happened in England in 1885 and in 1886. We know that the Government of Mr. Gladstone introduced into Parliament after the elections of 1885, a measure of Home Rule for Ireland, and that measure was defeated by a small majority in the House of Commons. When an appeal was had to the country the Government of Mr. Gladstone was defeated and the Conservative party, led by Lord Salisbury, obtained a decided majority in Parliament. Now, if anyone looks at the vote in these two elections, he will see that it was not due to the fact that a very large number of those who had hitherto supported Mr. Gladstone and his party had changed their votes in the elections which took place in the various constituencies in the United Kingdom, but that a large number of those who had, in the previous election, supported him had abstained from voting altogether. We may have this condition of things in this country: you may have a large number of electors of one or the other political party not disposed to change sides but disposed to withhold their votes for the time being, and the fact that they have withheld their votes brings about a change in the constitution of the Parliament as complete, and makes the Parliament as completely a representative body as if these voters had gone to the polls. In some instances, by introducing the principle contained in this Bill, you would alter the result, and alter it not in accordance with the interests of the country. Let me suppose that a large number of persons who support one or the other political party in this country were, at an election, compelled to attend the polls. Whether these parties would spoil their ballots or whether they would mark them for one of the candidates, would depend very largely upon how far their dissatisfaction extended. In nine cases out of ten, I will venture to say that if a person is compelled to go to the polls, and actually did go there, he would not spoil his ballot, but he would give his vote for the candidate from whom he was disposed to withhold that vote, and thus, by compelling him to go to the polls you might in the end produce a different political complexion in Parliament, and you might give to a party a political ascendancy in Parliament that, if the electors were left free to do just precisely as they desired, would have been different from what it is under a measure of this sort. I do not see myself, nor have I ever seen, how you are to reconcile compulsory attendance at the polls with the free working of our representative system. I am of opinion that if you adopt the rule of excluding non-resident voters from the electoral lists, and if you adopt the principle of one man one vote, then you will have done all that

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell).

can well be done with a view of preventing that system of corruption and that large expenditure at elections which my hon. friend from Bellechasse (Mr. Amyot) proposes to remedy by this measure. It is a fact that under the present system non-residents do remain upon the electoral lists, and this in a large degree has led to the discussion of this subject and induced a very great number of the intelligent and thoughtful electors of this country to subscribe to the views embodied in the Bill which the hon. member now presents to the House. The subject is, however, an important one, there is much to be said on both sides of it, and it ought to be very fully considered.

Mr. STAIRS. The hon. gentleman who has introduced the Bill, refers to the large expenditure at elections, and it would seem that he expects to secure the decrease of this expenditure, as well as to prevent corruption at elections, by compelling voters to attend at the polls. Now, it seems to me that this Bill, if passed, will not have the effect of lessening corruption. It does not follow, if you make it compulsory for voters to go to the polls, that in every case they will not be taken, or if they do go, that they will vote. My experience is that the parties are most anxious to bring voters to the polls, and generally succeed in inducing them to go; and, I understand, that it is not proposed to make it a corrupt act to bring voters to the polls. There is nothing in the Bill that I can see, that is going to prevent corruption that the present law fails to provide against. I put forward these views very briefly as a layman, and, I think, before such a radical change is made in the election law, it should receive very careful consideration.

Mr. COCKBURN. As a layman, may I add something to what has already been said? It seems to me that the provisions of this Bill will be of peculiar benefit to the rich man, because if he wishes to abstain from voting, he can afford to pay the fine of \$50, while a poor man, if unable or unwilling to go to the poll, and if he cannot afford to pay the fine, is practically disfranchised for five years or is sent to gaol as a criminal. Then, I cannot help thinking, from the little experience I have had in these matters, that provision number 2 would tend to bring into existence a class of persons who would be a curse to the country, namely, persons who, by threatening those who had failed to vote, with the penalty of \$50, would try to compound with them for a sum of money, varying from the full sum of \$50 down to whatever they could extort. It appears to me that this provision would tend to create the worst class of informers, such as those who flourished in the days of Charles II, and tend to produce more corruption than exists under the present Act. Then, the question arises, what is a valid and sufficient excuse? Now, while we are all willing to do everything that lies in our power to secure purity of elections, I think it would be very difficult for any of us to decide what is a valid and sufficient reason. What in one case would be a valid and sufficient reason might not be so in another case. Therefore I cannot but think that the provision in section 2, which, instead of tending to diminish the bitterness of party, which is already great enough in this country, would encourage men to attack a man of means and worry him into paying \$50, is a provi-