Globe, Apr. 21st

valent in this Province, and this he attributed in great part to the fact that the punishment of persons guilty of such acts was inadequate. He ridiculed especially the idea of allowing a corruptionist who happened to have money to pay his fine to go free while a man whose only crime as compared with the other was poverty was sent to gaol. This system, he contended, simply put a premium upon corruption. He quoted the English law to show that the principle of summary trials as proposed was recognised there and also that the punishment of corruption was very severe. He referred to the Dominion statutes also to show that the principle he contended for was recognised there.

Mr. Mowat at once candidly stated that the bill could not be accepted by the Government, the reason being that they feared that it would be injurious rather than beneficial. Corrupt practices in elections could not be too strongly condemned; the Government stood ready to adopt any means which would put an end to them. The difficulty was in proving that there had been wrong-doing. A thousand acts of corruption, he ventured to say, were committed for one that was proven in court. He appealed to the experience of every lawyer and every observer of affairs to prove that the severity of punishmont sometimes actually stood in the way of conviction. Witnesses hesitated to give evidence to convict where they felt that the result would be a very severe punishment. Thus there was danger that this bill would defeat the very object it was intended to promote. He referred to the fact, as Mr. Whitney had stated it, that there was a provision on this subject in the Dominion law, yet he held that there was more corruption ten times over in Dominion than in Provincial affairs. Observers stated also that there was more corruption in Dominion affairs now than at any time for 30 years past. In the case of personation the Provincial law already provided for punishment by imprisonment, but it was a well-known fact there was no corrupt practice so common. "My hon. friend," continued the Attorney-General, amidst laughter, "is more familiar with corrupt practices than I am, but, so far as I have seen or heard anything of it, I believe there is more personation than corruption of any other form at any rate in the cities." The Government, he said, had done a good deal in giving the judges power to act in these cases without a jury. They had gone far enough in that direction, considering the state of public sentiment. In England the accused had the right to have a jury. The mover of the bill would hardly claim that it would be an improvement to suggest a jury. As to the clause relating to the county Crown attorney, it was now his duty to prosecute cases brought to his attention. It did not seem well to cause the expense of that officer's attendance at the court. "Before the next general election I purpose consolidating the whole election law and to revise it, and I shall be glad to find that we can introduce into it some provision that may accomplish something more than the present laws do to prevent corrupt practices in the future, but so far as we can form a judgment from experience we do not think that the amendment of my hon. friend will have the effect he desires."

Mr. Meredith supported the bill in a vigorous speech, in the course of which he contended that there was not more corruption in Dominion than in Provincial affairs. He also spoke of cases in which a briber by "making himself scarce" during an election trial could avoid prosecution, and, returning after it was over, he might laugh at those who threatened him with punishment. For such cases he held imprisonment to be the true remedy.

Mr. Hardy pointed to the comparative purity of the recent Provincial general election as shown by the few petitions and the very few cases of corruption proven, as rather weakening the argument in favor of the bill. Speaking of the comparative purity of the Dominion and Provincial elections, he said the former had to do with great questions, involving not only the interests of the whole people but also the interests of great corporations, so that more corruption might not unreasonably be expected. He spoke of the vast sums subscribed by individuals for election purposes, and when Mr. Meredith said this was a reference to cases of many years ago, he plumply replied that he had in mind especially the case of Mr. McGreevy and his large contributions for twelve or fourteen years past. As to Provincial election funds, he said:—"I may tell gentlemen opposite that so far as any Government fund is concerned, or any supply of money to candidates on behalf of the Government, there was no fund for the purpose. (Several members, "Hear, hear.") We have had no money to pay for the ordinary expenses of printing and so on without going down into our own pockets. That has been my experience in fifteen years of government in this Province. If I were to give scope to my imagination—("Don't, don't," interposed Mr. Meredith)—of what was done on the other side or what they would like to have done, it might not be pleasing." He pointed to the danger of witnesses screening wrong-doers from severe punishment, and dwelt upon the fact that under the very Dominion law to which Mr. Whitney had referred very few prosecutions had taken place. In reply to Mr. Meredith, he said there was no reason to suppose that merely making the punishment heavier would lead to the prosecution of bribers more than under the present law.

Mr. Wood (Hastings) was of the opinion that usually the candidate with the most money would be the winner. It had become notorious that elections were won by money in a great many constituencies, and he did not think the penalty proposed by the bill was too severe to stamp out the illegal use of money which had become so prevalent, and the punishment ought to be such as would touch the rich as well as the poor man.

Mr. Whitney thought that if the clause imposing a penalty upon the person accepting a bribe were struck out it would help the proof of offences. The reason why convictions were so difficult and so infrequent was because there had been no public prosecutor. The Attorney-General had asked what county Crown attorney had refused to prosecute, but Mr. Whitney asked what county Crown attorney had ever taken the initiative in such prosecutions. He said he supposed it would always be the fact that there would be difficulty in obtaining evidence; but were laws made lax because of the reluctance of witnesses?

The Worst Sort of Corruption.

Mr. Conmee said the worst sort of corrupt practice was intimidation. Mr. Meredith cried "hear, hear," and Mr. Conmee remarked that perhaps the leader of the Opposition knew something about such methods. Mr. Meredith denied it, and Mr. Conmee asked him if during the last election he had not made a trip up into Algoma. Mr. Meredith protested it was not true, but when Mr. Conmee asked him if he had not travelled to Rat Portage in Mr. Niblock's private car the Opposition leader replied in the affirmative, but denied that there was any significance in it. Mr. Conmee said he did not mean to charge anything against Mr. Meredith, but he thought the hon. member might have heard of the open methods adopted by Superintendent Niblock before and on polling day as he travelled through that county in his private car. Mr. Conmee went on to say that although he had himself introduced a bill a few sessions ago which was in the direction of Mr. Whitney's, yet he was satisfied with the explanation Mr. Mowat had made, and he felt strongly that Mr. Whitney's bill ought to deal with wholesale intimidation.

The House was divided on the bill. The division resulted in the defeat of the bill in a depleted House by a vote of 32 to 25. Mr. Campbell of Durham voted for it, and on