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All articles, contributions, and letters on matters pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any other person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

THE annual financial statement laid before Parliament the other day by Mr. Foster was as clear and straightforward a budget as could be desired. In refraining from any attempt at rhetorical elaboration, and in avoiding the discussion of unessential, though closely related, questions of a debatable character, the Minister displayed a degree of prudence not always shown on such occasions. It is of the first importance in the business of a nation, as of an individual, that the balance sheets should disclose a state of solvency, and, whether the surplus on the past year's transactions be reckoned at \$1,860,000, according to Mr. Foster's reckoning, or at half-a-million less according to Sir Richard Cartwright's contention, it is sufficient for the purpose, while not so large as to become a source of temptation or danger, or to give occasion for complaint on the score of unnecessary taxation. So far as the changes in the tariff are concerned, they are, with the exception perhaps of the duties imposed upon fruits, shrubs, and other articles last year declared free, in accordance with the statutory offer of reciprocity, about what was to be expected. The Government and the majority which supports it are fully committed to the principles of the National Policy. The only question, from their point of view, is how best to strengthen weak points and remove inequalities in the tariff. The protective system, so long as it is maintained, must be, as Mr. Foster observed, re-adjusted from time to time to meet changing conditions. The re-adjustments will almost invariably be in the direction of increasing existing taxes and imposing new ones. This results naturally from the fact that the Government must be guided in the matter mainly by the representations of those connected with the various industries protected or desiring protection. It is easy, of course, to point out how seriously defective, theoretically, is the system which thus compels the Government to take counsel with those who expect to profit directly and personally by the taxes imposed, in regard to the amount of the taxes which purchasers of the kind of goods such counsellors manufacture shall be compelled to pay as the alternative of purchasing from them. It is too much to expect that the advice given under such circumstances should be disinterested. But there is no help for it. The members of the Government cannot possibly be expertly acquainted with the conditions of the different industries they undertake to protect, and

the only individuals who have the requisite knowledge are, as a rule, those whose pecuniary interests are thus involved. The purchasers and consumers of the different commodities in question are no less interested than the producers in whatever threatens to affect the prices of those commodities, and they are usually vastly more in number, but were their advice to be taken and followed, in regard to the specific articles of which they are purchasers on a considerable scale, the wall of protection would soon be pulled down brick by brick. The fact that the Government, under a system of protection, is thus compelled, in a measure, to be guided by the advice of those interested in preserving and increasing the duties affords, no doubt, the answer to the question so often asked, "Why is it that the infant industries requiring protection so rarely reach the adolescent and self-supporting state?"

IN one respect the Government may be said to have taken a new position in the tariff debate now in progress, i.e., if the voice of a single Minister may be assumed to commit the Government. Hitherto it has generally been admitted, and unless we greatly err, explicitly stated by members of the Cabinet, that free interchange of agricultural products with the United States would be greatly to the advantage of Canadian farmers. The statutory offer of reciprocity went at least a good way towards affirming that view. Now the Hon Mr. Colby, whose speech, by the way, seems to have been exceptionally able, marking him out as one sure to wield great influence in Cabinet Councils, distinctly avers, if correctly reported, that no greater calamity could happen to the farmers of Canada than reciprocity in agricultural products. There can be no doubt that this view, consistently and conscientiously maintained, would greatly strengthen the logical position of the upholders of the National Policy. It would supply in fact a firm foundation stone for the whole superstructure. Farming, in its various lines, as pursued in the different Provinces, is unquestionably the most important of all Canadian industries. It is more important than all others combined, and must continue to be so, no matter what pitch of development our manufactures may reach. When agriculture flourishes, the country prospers. When agriculture declines, trade and manufactures must languish. So long, then, as it is openly or tacitly admitted that reciprocity in farming products would be greatly helpful to Canadian agriculturists, and it is further perceived that reciprocity in such products is unattainable, save on the basis of general reciprocity, so long the argument for protection is obviously top-heavy. But if it can be boldly maintained that the enlightened farmers of the Dominion do not desire free exchange of the products of their toil with the United States, and that such exchange would be calamitous to them, the whole course of the argument in regard to other things is made comparatively smooth. It is not, indeed, easy to see where Mr. Colby would hope to find a market sufficiently large and accessible, not only to absorb the present agricultural surplus of Canada, but to stimulate agriculture as it is indispensable to the growth and progress of Canada that it should be stimulated. It would be idle to imagine that a sufficient home market can be provided, even when manufactures have been developed to the utmost extent possible under the circumstances. But whenever such a market can be assured Canada may watch with comparative indifference the gradual heightening of the tariff wall on the other side of the boundary, and, secure in her own resources, go calmly and confidently forward in the path marked out for her by protectionist statesmen.

IT is not a little singular that one of the main questions at issue between the Government and its critics, especially between the Minister of Finance and his chief critic, Sir Richard Cartwright, should have been one of fact, in regard to the present condition of Canada—a matter on which it would be natural to suppose there could be but little room for differences of opinion. It is not usually difficult to know whether a country is in a prosperous condition, or in one very much the reverse. Private individuals, business men and public men agree on such points, particularly if the prosperity or adversity is at all marked. The simplest explanation of the fact that while Mr. Foster congratulates the House and the country on

the general prosperity, Sir Richard Cartwright sees nothing but threatened poverty, debt and disaster staring us in the face, is, we suppose, that the state of things is neither very good or very bad. A good many of the people in most communities are fairly prosperous, and a good many others are suffering considerable hardship. But as we have before pointed out, the apparently simple question of fact is in this case very seriously complicated by the want of a common standard of measurement. What degree of prosperity and progress ought to satisfy the people of Canada? Ought they to be content with a state of affairs such as would compare favourably with that of most other and older lands? Is it sufficient if the country jogs forward at a moderate pace, with a small annual increase of population, and an average condition of comfort for industrious citizens? Or ought the people, in view of the vast unoccupied areas and undeveloped resources of the country, to be satisfied with nothing less than an annual increase in population and wealth analogous to that which has so marvellously raised the power and status of the United States. On the former hypothesis there is little cause for discouragement or complaint. On the latter there is great cause for dissatisfaction. It is pretty clear that the second condition will never be attained under the present system. That it could be attained under any condition that Sir Richard Cartwright and his colleagues would have it in their power to effect, were they in office, remains to be proved. The burden of proof must rest upon those who maintain the affirmative. To furnish it to the satisfaction of the country will be, we suppose, the effort of the Opposition during the approaching electoral campaign.

THE specific changes proposed in the tariff are, we may well believe, the result of anxious and painstaking inquiry, and may therefore be presumed to be, on the whole, in the direction of uniformity and symmetry. Those whose special business is likely to be helped will approve, those whose personal interests are threatened with injury will remonstrate or condemn, while the great body of the people, whose gain or loss, though vastly greater in the aggregate, will be comparatively slight in the case of the individual, will look on with comparative indifference, or through distorting party spectacles. There are grave inherent difficulties in every protective system, and these difficulties, in the case of Canada, are greatly increased by the diversity of conditions in its various and widely-separated Provinces. That the price of bread will be increased to the people of the Eastern Provinces by the increase in the flour duty is almost certain, Hon. Mr. Foster to the contrary notwithstanding. But then it was, we suppose, a matter of imperative necessity, if the protective system is to be maintained at all, that the millers should be rescued from their anomalous position. The removal of the tax on corn as an article of food, coupled with the increase of the flour duty, will put a premium, in the Maritime Provinces and elsewhere, upon the substitution of the former still more largely for the latter as the bread of the poorer classes, but it is possible that the gain to the national health may more than counterbalance the hardship to the palate. Similarly, in the case of each specific change, the gain to certain classes and localities will be in a measure offset by a corresponding loss to other classes and localities. All that can be hoped for from the wisest legislation is that the sum total of the gain shall in each case be materially greater than that of the counter-vailing loss. Perhaps the least justifiable of all the changes proposed is the taxation of fresh fruits. We are inclined to believe that, were the members of the medical fraternity employed on the wiser system we have once or twice ventured recommend so that their interests lay wholly in the direction of prevention rather than cure, they would rise up in a body to protest, in the name of hygienic science, against any legislation which tends to increase the cost and so to discourage the use of fruits. To place, for instance, a duty of forty cents a barrel on apples seems a sin against nature. But then, on the other hand, why should not the horticulturists be protected as well as other producers? For the very reasons we have indicated, there is no industry more beneficent or more worthy of being fostered than theirs, and it would be too much to ask that while contributing their share to the protection of all other industries, they