

improvement in this country, the National Policy was started in 1876, where were hon. gentlemen opposite, who to-day talk of the political importance, the material progress and of the good credit of this country? They were banded in complete and in utter opposition to both the principle and practice of protection. They followed the same course from that time, but were thwarted again, by the good strong common sense of the electors of Canada. In 1887, their former leader bowed his head to the inevitable and counselled his party to accept an established fact and make the best of it, but was thrown over for giving that advice, and the battle went on under a new leader until—strange nemesis—in 1897 the new leader in the hour of victory turned around and embraced that very principle and practice which for seventeen years his party had denounced. Sir, these are the things which have made Canada a country whose political importance, material progress and credit are noteworthy throughout the world and are regarded with pride by every Canadian.

Another point that is taken up in the Speech from the Throne is a promise—no, not a promise, but a hope, a somewhat distant hope held out that the burthens of this country shall be decreased. How? Decreased, Sir, by reason of the good credit of the country standing on the foundations which I have spoken of. We are told that the credit of this country will enable the Finance Minister, when the present loans fall due bearing a comparatively high rate of interest, to renew them with loans bearing a lower rate of interest. So that the present Grit doctrine with reference to lightening the burthens and reducing the taxes of the people takes an entirely new form; it is to be measured by the decrease in the rate of interest that can be got when we come to renew our current loans. Oh, what a fall was there! And yet we are told that all pledges have been kept. Who of us is there whose ears are not still ringing with Grit denunciations of the Liberal-Conservative party? Who does not clearly remember their hot and streaming tears of sympathy for the overburdened electors? And what did they promise to do, these true knights of financial science who had bared their swords and buckled on their armour and who were going into the contest to rescue the overburdened electors and to release them from their shackles of over-taxation and expenditure? What was their doctrine then? They cried that the burdens of the people were monstrous and must be alleviated. How? By lessening taxation, by economy, by reduction of expenditure and of the debt. But we have heard nothing of that within the last eighteen months. All that has passed away into that-not-very-far-off oblivion where lie buried side by side the many pledges that the Grit party has made within the last seven-

Mr. FOSTER.

teen years. Ah, no, I must not forget that there is another method. The valiant Knight of Denunciation of former years spoke not long ago since in the city of Toronto. He had but little hope for decreasing expenditure then. He must have felt that new light had dawned upon him, for I doubt if ever before he had stood on a platform when the staple article of his speech was not a denunciation of the burdens put upon the people and asseveration of his desire and his intention to lessen them by doing away with over-expenditure and lessening the taxation. When he spoke at Toronto he had not even thought of this patent device of the Finance Minister to hold out the hope of a little lightening of the burdens of the taxpayers in future years when our current loans are renewed, which will be soon, but he was going to decrease the burdens of the people by bringing in population. Last year he sympathized with some gentleman on this side of the House belonging to the maritime provinces and deplored the little increase in population as compared with former times. But to-day, Sir, this young and lusty Knight intends to endeavour in every way he can individually and collectively with his party to increase the population of the country and so lessen the per capita burdens of each individual.

The next thing referred to in the Speech is the reduction of duties, that is the tariff measure which was introduced and carried through this House last year and which produced, it is said, such a favourable impression in England. And the reference is not veiled but open that one of the great merits of that measure was that it produced a wonderful feeling of sympathy in Great Britain. Sir, I should think that this should be one of the last things in the course of their history as administrators of this country that hon. gentlemen opposite would allude to, for, if there is anything which was commenced under false pretenses, which was based upon false grounds and which has led in every case to humiliation, backdown and disaster, it is that particular feature of the tariff legislation which they carried through the House last year. What are the facts with regard to that so-called preferential legislation? In the first place these hon. gentlemen legislated in the face of treaties which were well known and which for thirty years had been on the records of the Imperial Parliament and had been sanctioned by statutes of that Parliament. They legislated in the face of despatches which, over and over again affirmed the scope and validity of those treaties and their binding character. They legislated in the face of actual decisions worked out in the practical business of customs administration. Canada had been in one or two or more instances reminded of the existence of these treaties, and asked that she should adhere to them in good faith, which Canada did do. They uttered their legal dicta, those gentle-