

House, to the remarkable calmness and evenness of temper which has been proof against every temptation to return blow for blow, to the Christian character which has enabled him to bear with equanimity, attacks which a smaller and meaner spirit would have angrily and bitterly resented; thanks to the wisdom that has inspired the soft answer that turneth away wrath, to the charity which has not been easily provoked, which beareth all things, hopeth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things; to that calm and restful and inexhaustible patience, which we have very high authority for saying is of the essence of genius, and which in every grave crisis of national affairs is the indispensable condition, if it is not the very basis of the highest statesmanship, we have been borne in safety through a crisis which was of a serious and alarming character; I will not say a crisis which threatened the national life of this country, because I think that none but pessimists and alarmists would concede so much to their fears as that, but a crisis which threatened to bring about in this country a condition of things similar to that of the United States in "the times that tried men's souls" before the federal constitution was adopted; a state of things presenting the kind of obstacles to stable and successful constitutional government which were encountered in the old province of Canada during the few years that preceded the union of the provinces. Local agitations there will be, of course, a recrudescence here and there of the furious spirit which was imported into our discussions and controversies of a twelve month ago, eddying circles of sectarian bitterness and rancour, but only such as to direct attention more conspicuously to the central current of peace and harmony that flows through this land for its enrichment in every branch of our national life. But in spite of these local and temporary agitations, I believe, that for the great mass of the people of Canada, the halcyon days have come. An epoch has been brought in not unworthy to be celebrated in the organ tones of Milton:

The ocean now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed
wave.

There is one subject, Mr. Speaker, and one subject only, which I think will occasion any sharp divergencies of opinion in this House; and even as to that subject, I think our differences will be in the main of a theoretical rather than of a practical character. So far as our differences may be of a practical character, I believe they will largely concern mere matters of detail. Of course, there are differences of principle among the members of this House with respect to the kind of tariff that should be imposed upon the people of this country—differences of principle which might occupy volumes, which have occupied volumes in

their discussion. It was not always so, Mr. Speaker. Twenty or twenty-five years ago the people of this country were all of one mind on this subject. There was then a universal and unquestioned concurrence among public men of all shades of politics throughout this country in the principle that a tariff was a tax—that it was at the very best a necessary evil, something to be endured only so long as it had to be endured, and to be got rid of if by any possible means it could be,—in the meantime, to be endured with what measure of patience we could command, to be kept within the narrowest possible limits, to be curtailed and hemmed in at every point and to be made to press as lightly as possible upon the incomes and resources of the people of this country. There is even a tradition floating in the minds of many people—I thought at one time that it was a historical fact, though I have heard its historical accuracy questioned—that when the mild and reasonable proposition was made in this House to advance our tariff from 15 to 17½ per cent, it was assailed here as the thin edge of the protectionist wedge. From that point to the present how great the distance that has been traversed. Now, I believe it is the received doctrine of Conservative orthodoxy that a tariff tax is not a necessary evil at all, but a thing intrinsically and essentially good.

Mr. MACLEAN (York). Hear, hear.

Mr. RUSSELL. But from the beginning it was not so, as the hon. gentleman who says "hear, hear," will remember, that when we took our leap in the dark in 1878, the leader of the Conservative party in this country did not defend his position upon economic so much as on strategic grounds. We were to have trade restriction, not because it was a thing intrinsically good and excellent, but because it was to lead to the opening up of a still larger field of commercial freedom. It was the commercial freedom that was the good and excellent thing in itself, and we were to have only a temporary restriction of our commercial freedom as a means to an end, that end being the untrammelled freedom of our commerce which it is now the quintessence of Conservative protectionist orthodoxy, the "articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ" of the Conservative faith to consider one of the greatest evils with which any country can be afflicted. According to the present lights of Conservative orthodoxy in this House, a tariff tax is not a necessary evil, only to be endured for as short a time as possible, but a thing intrinsically good and excellent,—so good and excellent that even if it were not required for the purposes for which all tariffs are primarily devised it would nevertheless be desirable to have it for the sake of the collateral benefits it can be made to confer. It is a necessary and logical deduction from that proposition that even if by some