

from the province of Ontario. or it is still within the vivid recollection of this House, what a remarkable feat the hon. gentleman did achieve, who has just taken his seat. At all events, Mr. Speaker, apart from the question whether it was to good or bad luck that I am indebted for the honour of seconding this motion, I have a very pleasant duty to discharge from the very outset, and it is to offer my best thanks to the right hon. the prime minister for the great honour he has conferred upon me in inviting me to perform this task. That honour, I am well aware, is not only a compliment paid to my humble self but a compliment paid to the electors of the county of Beauce, who have just returned me by acclamation. To the right hon. prime minister, then, my most heartfelt thanks are due, the more so, as under these particular circumstances, he has given a fresh proof of his devotion, which was already so marked, to the interests of his old agricultural county.

Mr. Speaker, in reading over the different paragraphs of the Speech from the Throne, the feeling which is uppermost in our minds, the feeling which is most vividly brought home to us is one of gratitude to Divine Providence for the blessings conferred, during the last twelve months, upon this vast Dominion.

I think I am voicing the feelings of this side of the House at any rate in saying that to Divine Providence we indeed owe a debt of gratitude for the happy inspiration imparted to the gentlemen who sit on the treasury benches and who have the control of public affairs.

A simple glance thrown at the Speech from the Throne will show that the government do not mean to rest upon their oars but that they are up and doing.

No doubt, they have not forgotten the fact of that great general who saw the fruit of his dearly bought victories snatched from his hands, for having one single day rested upon his laurels. No, the government cannot remain idle and with their arms folded, and that is the reason why fresh legislation is going to be brought forward and new amendments added to the existing laws. It is characteristic of human affairs that they always admit of improvement and perfecting. Go through the different provinces of the Dominion, and everywhere among the various classes of the community, you will find the country is blessed with universal prosperity; go among the farming community, the mechanics, the manufacturing classes, and everywhere you will find that the fires of content blaze upon the hearthstones and the lights of hope illumine every household.

I need not dwell at any length here on the facts which show that an unprecedented prosperity smiles on us. But I may anticipate the comment often heard from certain quarters, and mainly from the hon. gentle-

men opposite, that the prosperity we are now enjoying is neither the result of legislation nor to be attributed to any action of the government, but is the gift of a bountiful Providence. On the other hand, I am also aware that credit is claimed for the Liberal party for the prosperity with which the country is blessed. That public men are often unduly criticised or lauded and praised beyond their deserts I know very well. I for one am inclined to believe with some—and that opinion rests on a well known principle in political economy—that the criterion of prosperity of a country is to be found in the balance of trade, according as that balance turns in favour of or against such country. Although, under the circumstances, to encroach upon the domain of statistics may seem out of place, still I crave leave to say that, during the last five years of the Conservative administration, from 1891 to 1896, the balance of trade was in our favour but for one year; whereas, in four out of five years under Liberal rule, the balance of trade was in our favour. During the last five years under the Conservative regime, only in one year was there an excess of imports over exports; whereas, under Liberal rule, there was an excess of exports over imports in four years out of five.

As I have the honour of representing here a rural constituency, the population of which is one as thoroughly agricultural as is to be found anywhere in the province of Quebec, I may perhaps take the liberty of dwelling at greater length on the prosperity of our farming community, and mainly upon the remarkable growth and steady development of dairying, but at the very outset, I am met with this question: what is the part to be played by the government, in order to promote, encourage and secure the proper development of our agricultural industry?

To build up and secure the prosperity of that industry, there are requisite conditions: first, a market must be provided; in the second place, proper and ample facilities of transportation at a low temperature have to be arranged; and thirdly, improving our processes of manufacture and bringing them up to date.

Now, the government have secured the proper manufacture of cheese and butter, by educating the farming population as to the best methods of manufacture, and this by means of lectures given by competent men; further, by bonusing the industry and trade, and by enacting proper legislation. To the prosperity of that industry the government have also contributed by providing greater facilities for carrying our perishable agricultural products, and mainly by means of a chain system of cold storage on board trains and by the mechanical refrigerator plan on board steamers, so that our farm products may be placed upon the British markets in as good a condition as when leaving points of shipment.