

had peculiar properties in multiplication, addition and division, and many persons explained prophecy by the elastic use of the number seven, but he was not aware that even Zadkiel, who was quite as good a soothsayer as the late Finance Minister, had ever adopted seventeen-and-a-half as a term to conjure with. He could not discover that there was anything in the old tariff that could not be altered or meddled with without meeting the denunciations of hon. gentlemen opposite; but yet they seemed to think that there must be something almost holy in the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. evolved by the ex-Finance Minister out of the depths of his own rather confused—consciousness, should it be called? The previous figures, however,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., he had desired to adopt for no apparent reason but that it made the calculation of duties easy. What did the tariff of the hon. member for Centre Huron (Mr. Cartwright) effect? In the fond belief that it would produce \$3,000,000, he said that he could not be expected to reduce the expenditures of his friend, the then Minister of Public Works. There were too many contractors in the purlieus of the capital waiting for their wages. The financial storm was then raging, but there was no retrenchment. He (Mr. Plumb) remembered perfectly well the language of the member for Centre Huron in 1874, when, turning to the First Minister (Mr. Mackenzie), he said that they must go on with the expenditure for the works which were under his charge. From whom did the House and the country expect economy? From whom had they a right to expect it? From a life-long Reformer; from a man whose instincts were supposed to be in the direction of close management of the expenditure in the Department over which he presided especially, who was supposed to possess a peculiar fitness, from personal training and experience, for that Department? The late Government could not cut down the Estimates, because there were certain powers behind the Grit throne greater than the Grit throne itself, that had to be placated after the elections. He (Mr. Plumb) believed that he should be borne out in that assertion. The tariff proved a failure, and a deficit arose the next

year, as well as each of the two following years, with which the Government of the day confessed themselves utterly powerless to deal. They acknowledged that they were utterly powerless to propose a policy suitable for meeting the crying needs of the hour. They declared that a Government had no power to deal with questions affecting the vital interests of the country. They, on the Conservative side, however, held the contrary. They always had said that if they should be entrusted with the solution of those questions, they would not sit with their hands folded, but would try, at least, to do something for the country, and he thought that the people had taken the late Government at their word, and the Conservatives at their word; and it was not far to seek, or difficult to know, why the great revolution had occurred, which placed hon. gentlemen opposite in even a smaller minority than the Conservatives appeared in 1874. Deficits, to the amount of nearly seven millions of dollars, had accrued since hon. gentlemen opposite assumed charge of public affairs. His hon. friend the present Finance Minister, on returning to power, had to deal with that grave condition of the finances, and, after this cursory review of events, leading up to the present situation, it was somewhat refreshing to refer back to the patriotic resolutions put upon the table of the House by the present able Finance Minister, and to compare their breadth and fullness with the lifeless and meagre amendment with which the leader of the Opposition proposed to supersede them. He declared, "That, while we are willing to do anything to sustain the public credit, to meet the necessities of the hour, we cannot consent to any legislation which shall disturb the present condition of the country," as if that condition was so very satisfactory that it ought not to be disturbed. He held that they ought to disturb it—that they were here exactly for that purpose, and he, for one, would lift up his voice in every way which might be calculated to disturb it. Whatever the leader of the Opposition might think of the necessity of his amendment, he (Mr. Plumb) differed with him, *toto cælo*, in the proposition he had made. What the hon. gentleman proposed, he had had ample opportunity to carry out