

CANADA'S TERRIBLE DEPRESSION

And here it may be as well to say a few words as to this matter of unrestricted reciprocity, more particularly as at this distance of time very few persons care to recollect what condition Canada was in at the time we proposed that measure. Sir, I have never denied that unrestricted reciprocity was an heroic measure, but justified by the terrible condition into which Canada had then fallen. Sir, it is a most impudent falsehood to allege, as I see some of these people do not hesitate to allege, that Canada prospered in the eighteen years between 1878 and 1896.

What was the result of these men's administration during this period? We had in Canada a country with enormous potential resources, a country with a population of scarcely 5,000,000 well able to maintain 50,000,000 at the least. What was the result of their administration during these years? It is the very blackest page in the whole history of Canada, and I doubt whether in the last 100 years any man can point to a country, possessing anything like the advantages of Canada, which was reduced to such a position as we were by 1896.

TWENTY YEARS' RETROGRESSION

We had had twenty years of retrogression. Allowing the ordinary rate of natural increase, far less than that which actually occurred in the United States during a similar period, we must have lost in those twenty years something like 2,000,000 of people. I speak by the book when I say that starting as we did in 1881 with 4,300,000 souls, we ought, taking into account the large number of emigrants who were recorded to have landed in Canada with the intention of settling here, we ought at least to have equalled the progress made in a similar period by the United States from 1790 to 1810. They had no such advantages as we possessed; they had most imperfect means of transportation; they had no aid from European or other emigration, yet their pure natural increase was such that in those twenty years the population of the United States increased from 3,900,000 in 1790 to 7,250,000 in 1810. I say that we who had expended \$100,000,000 in promoting settlement in the Northwest, should have done at least as well by 1901 as the Americans did in a similar period of their history.

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I could wish that that were the worst! But not only did we lose materially, but demoralization of the worst sort had set in among our public men. Canada is much in the limelight to-day; she was equally in the limelight but not to her advantage in 1891. I can recollect when you could not pick up an English newspaper from the *Times* to *Punch*, from the great dailies in London to the great provincial papers in Leeds, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh without finding the most contemptuous allusions to Canada and the people of Canada as the chosen home of graft, when to use the oft repeated phrase, "The state of things in Ottawa made Tammany smell sweet."