

part of Canada, finds that while the prices of his products have diminished, he has to pay artificial prices for all that he has to buy. And this is the result of the policy of gentlemen on the Treasury benches. While he has to sell at free trade prices, he has to buy at protection prices. The result of the policy of hon. gentlemen opposite is this,—that the farmer of Canada has to sell, not in the dearest, but in the cheapest market, while what he has to buy he must get, not in the cheapest, but in the dearest market. This is the cause of what is termed on the other side of the House, "depression." What then is to be done? What course shall we follow? The course to follow is to retrace our steps of the last fifteen years, to devise some sensible scheme of taxation. The course to follow is to make this country a cheap country to live in, and until this is done it is vain for gentlemen on the other side of the House to expect that we shall have such a thing as prosperity in Canada. Until this country has been made a cheap country to live in, we may expect anything but that the plains of the North-west will fill up, and we shall look in vain for the prosperity which has been promised us for the last fifteen years, but which has not come. This is the aim, this is the goal, this is the purpose. But it is an aim, a goal, and a purpose which it is vain to expect gentlemen on the Treasury benches to keep in view. But we can expect it when the little operation of two days ago is extended, and the whole people of the Dominion of Canada, from the Atlantic to the Pacific express their opinions at the polls.

Mr. FOSTER. You are better on small operations.

Mr. LAURIER. Why do you not try the larger ones, if in those you have the advantage? I want to be a fair opponent and give every possible credit to gentlemen on the other side. There is an admission, at all events, in the Speech from the Throne of something that exists, there is an admission that the finances are not as good as they might be. Though you will look in vain through the four corners of the Speech for such a word as deficit, the word is not to be found, but the thing is there. This is what we read:

Although this has not resulted in any considerable decrease in the volume of our foreign trade, yet, owing to low prices and recent reductions in and removal of taxation, it has been followed by a serious decrease in revenue derived from Customs and Excise. In order to produce equilibrium between revenue and expenditure for the coming year, it will be necessary to observe the greatest possible economy in the appropriations for the various branches of the public service.

Sir, it seems to me that we are somewhat familiar with this language. I do not

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know but we have heard it before. I think we heard it last year, perhaps, with some more rhetorical flourish than we see in this dry speech. We heard it last year from the mouth of the Minister of Finance himself, and the flowery language which my hon. friend then made use of is worth repeating to the House:

If the expenditure from the 10th of March to the end of the year should be normal that would leave us with a deficit; but this Government has come to the conclusion—a wise conclusion, which I think will be echoed by this House, and in which the Government will have the co-operation and cordial help of the House—to endeavour to live during the year within our income, and if our income is less, to resolutely keep down the expenditure, so that in the end we shall not have that unwelcome visitation which so often made its appearance to my hon. friend who sits opposite me—an ugly and ill-visaged deficit. A prudent business man, any prudent business concern, any private gentleman, any householder, would take that course of action; and in the national housekeeping it is equally incumbent, it seems to me, to follow the same.

So it seemed to my hon. friend, and so it seemed to all of us, that he was using very resolute language. It could not be more resolute, and would to Heaven my hon. friend had been as resolute in his action as he was in his speech. But it is manifest that during the course of the year my hon. friend has not only had one moment of weakness, but moment after moment of weakness until it became chronic. I am quite sure that my hon. friend was covered from head to foot with good intentions, but he was besieged by those who had been in the habit of bleeding the treasury, and he yielded, and he yielded, until, between his language and his performance, there is a discrepancy of \$6,000,000. Now, we have the same promises of economy and retrenchment, but to-day they are made in more sober language—not made in so pompous language as last year, but I am much afraid that whether made in sober or pompous language, the expenditure will always be the reverse of sober. My hon. friend from Simcoe (Mr. Bennett) said in his speech a moment ago, there must be reasons for a deficit. Why, of course there must be reasons for a deficit, and what are they? They are simply that the Minister does not, as a prudent man, as a prudent business concern, cut down the expenditure to the level of the revenue. That is all there is about it. If my hon. friend had been as resolute in his conduct as he was in his language, my hon. friend from Simcoe would have an answer to his query. For my part, I must say to my hon. friend from Simcoe, and perhaps I will not surprise him if I say so, that I am not so much overburdened as he seems to be with confidence in the men who adorn the Treasury benches. He takes their promises as they are made, I take them as they are ex-