

they are far less numerous to-day than they were previous to the 21st of September, 1911. I see men to-day on the other side of the House—nay, I see men sitting on the Treasury Benches—and we shall have their word in due time, who said, before the 21st of September, that Canada owed nothing at all to England. There has been a material change in their views since that time, and therefore, I have only to repeat that there is no cause for apprehension in that direction. There has been too much in the past of appeals to passion and prejudice, and I hope for my part there will be no more.

There is another subject, one of which there is no mention whatever in the Speech from the Throne, but as to which we should have some information on an occasion like this. That is, the changes which have apparently been made in the character of the Transcontinental railway. Our engineers some ten years ago, when we commenced the construction of the Transcontinental railway, designed a railway which would be in advance of everything that had up to that time been planned, not only in Canada, but in any part of the American Continent; a railway which would be practically level from ocean to ocean, with no grade exceeding 21 feet to the mile. Specifications for such a road were prepared by our engineers. Those specifications were approved by the Grand Trunk Railway Company. The Grand Trunk Railway Company have constructed their share of the road upon those specifications from Winnipeg westward. The road has been constructed on those specifications from the Rocky mountains to the St. Lawrence. I understand that the Government have now changed the character of the road from Superior Junction to the St. Lawrence. We have never had any satisfactory explanation upon this point; but I agree altogether with the statement of my hon. friend from Kingston, that no road is better than its worst mile, and in degrading that portion of the road the Government are degrading the whole road from ocean to ocean. This is a question which interests not only the province of Quebec, not only the province of Ontario, but the whole of the Dominion from the Maritime Provinces to British Columbia. The matter was mooted in the press more than once, and the only explanation coming from the Government, which was given to us was that nothing had been done; no changes had taken place which would in any way alter the usefulness of the road. That is not a satisfactory answer. That is begging the whole question. We want to know as a matter of fact whether or not the engineers in charge of the work have received instructions from

the Government to alter the character of the road, and to degrade it.

I do not at the present time make any charge against the Government. We have not got the information. We will wait for its answer. But we have reason to complain that such a change should have taken place without any information being given of it. My hon. friend had the whole session before him last year, and if he had intended to change the character of that road, he should have given us notice of it, so that we could have debated the matter and could have suggested whether or not it was advisable to take such a course.

Another matter of some importance, which should have been mentioned in the Speech, and of which we should have had some information, is the extraordinary step which was taken last year by the Government in undertaking by Order in Council to amend the tariff and to reduce by one-half the duty on cement. This was a most important step to take under existing circumstances. I address myself in particular to my hon. friend the Minister of Finance, and I think, upon this occasion he took a course for which no precedent can be found. We derive our revenue from a customs tariff. There are many people who believe that a customs tariff is not the best method of raising a revenue. For my part, I say frankly, I do not believe that it is possible now, or will be for many years, to raise our revenue in any other way. But whether we approve of that system or not, whether we are free traders or protectionists, we are agreed that once a duty has been imposed that duty should not be lightly interfered with. In the first place, a duty should not be levied except after ample consideration as to the amount of revenue that it may produce, and the effect it may have; because the effect of any customs tariff, even if it be for revenue only, is to create a different atmosphere and therefore likely to produce very serious consequences. For that reason I say that no changes in the tariff should be lightly made. We made in our day a change in the tariff when we abolished the coal duty west of Lake Superior, but we gave the reason. The West was threatened with a coal famine, and it was to avoid that most dire calamity in a country like Canada in the winter time that we resorted to that method. But what is the justification for the course which was taken last June? We were told all of a sudden that the duty on cement had been reduced by one-half. On this subject there was published in the Canadian Courier in the month of July last, a most illuminating correspondence, in which the charge was made, that the