

False Prophets.

They were ever strong in prophecy. You will remember how often they declared that the accession of the Liberal party to office meant *financial disaster to this country*; that when we introduced our tariff reform measure in 1897 Sir Charles Tupper declared on the floor of the House that it meant the *closing of our mills* and the ruin of our industries, and that all of his followers in the House cheered the prophecy to the echo, and repeated it for months, only ceasing their doleful prophecies when our industries not only refused to be ruined, but became prosperous as they had never been before. And so, sir, in regard to the reduction in the postage to two cents. They indulged in unqualified prophecies, which, in view of figures that I will give you, are to-day interesting reading. Here are a couple of their *oracular utterances*. In 1893 the Postmaster-General, dealing with the proposal for a reduction of the domestic letter rate to two cents, incorporated in his annual report to Parliament the following words:—

"Whilst the department is thus being assailed on one hand by those who consider that its revenue and expenditure should be more nearly equalized, it is at the same time being urged to reduce to two cents an ounce the postage on letters, the inevitable result of which would be so large a reduction in the revenue, and as a necessary consequence so vast a discrepancy between the revenue and the expenditure, as to materially cripple the operations of the department for years to come. That this is no mere hasty assertion, unsupported by facts, may at once be demonstrated. The lowest estimate of the effect of a reduction to two cents in the rate of postage is a loss of revenue of at least \$750,000, which, even if postage on newspapers were reimposed, by which an additional revenue of \$100,000 would be obtained, would still leave a deficiency of \$650,000, which, added to the present amount, would make \$1,250,000 a year to be provided by Parliament over and above the revenue, and what Postmaster-General could be expected in the face of such a deficiency to entertain propositions for additional expenditures to improve the service, however necessary they might appear?"

Well, I am the guilty Postmaster-General who has been bold enough. (Applause.)

Mr. Foster's Last Apology.

Later on, namely in 1896, the Hon. George R. Foster, then Minister of Finance, in his budget speech in Parliament, the last one he delivered in Parliament, and the last one he is ever likely to deliver—(laughter)—stated as follows:—

"In the postoffice we have an increased estimate of \$240,780, which is a large increase. The demands for the opening up of new lines, and for greater frequency and greater thoroughness in the delivery and despatch of mails, are continually pressing upon the Postoffice Department, and a large expenditure has necessarily to be made if we are to keep at all even with the requirements of the times, which we are bound to do. There is now a de-