

I know that for a great many years to come the American people will continue to levy their revenue by a customs tariff; but I say this to the hon. gentleman: That henceforward, not only as long as the Democratic party are in power, but I believe also, that when the Republican party comes back to power, that no more shall revenue be levied for the purpose of protection, but it shall be levied only for the purposes of a revenue, and for nothing else; because, as I have said to the hon. gentleman, the tariff of protection has been denounced by the American people as a fraud and a robbery.

I tell hon. gentlemen opposite, that when they take up that question of discrimination against England, they are raising against reciprocity an objection which England long ago abandoned.

In which the hon. gentleman was not correct.

I do not intend to be bound by the proposition which follows, and to which I must take exception.

He voted for it, but he took occasion before he voted for it, to say: If the Government is turned out, I will not be bound by it.

The proposition which follows is this: That the tariff ought to be amended also by the substantial reduction of customs duties in favour of the United Kingdom, in whose markets products are admitted free of duty, and of those nations which, under treaty obligations with Great Britain, would be entitled to the same advantages.

The hon. gentleman said he was not prepared to be bound by this resolution:

But if the proposition of the hon. gentleman were to carry, we would create a state of things such as it would be impossible to negotiate a treaty with the United States of America. I will say at once to the hon. Minister of Finance—and he can take what advantage he pleases from my words—that, if this motion were to carry, and if the Government were to be defeated on it, the Opposition would not be committed to the proposition that the duties should be reduced on goods from Britain and countries with which Britain has commercial treaties.

What change! Then he would not be bound by it, it would hurt the prospects of getting reciprocity with the United States. To-day his Finance Minister gravely tells us that there is a prospect of getting reciprocity from the United States. To-day the Prime Minister has bid adieu to all his fears, and is ready to vote and place upon the Statute-book a measure which he condemned in 1893. But, Sir, there is one thing that this Government has not done. This Government has not taken the House into its confidence, and to-day this House is utterly in the dark as to the scope of this latter proposition of the Government, and consequently as to the bearing upon the tariff upon any industry outside of wines, liquors, cigarettes, tobacco and snuff. The same fatal uncertainty and change which have followed these gentlemen through all their course of Opposition, so that one never knew, from day to day, what they would advocate next or where they would be when they came to act—the same fatal uncertainty is embodied in this

tariff to-day. No man in this House or in this country knows where the Government stands in regard to it. I ask the Prime Minister to-night if he will tell this House, before we are called upon to vote, whether he considers that if this resolution passes and becomes law, he is bound to give the same treatment to Belgium and Germany and to other countries that have with Great Britain most-favoured-nation treaty clauses. It is of the utmost importance to the action of this House to know it; it is of the utmost moment that the country should have a clear idea upon this subject. The Finance Minister last night did not give that clear idea; is the Prime Minister willing to give it to-night before we are asked to come to a vote upon this? In all honesty he should do it, we should have the conditions fairly before us.

The PRIME MINISTER. If you want my answer now, I say decidedly that it does not apply to either Belgium or to Germany.

Mr. FOSTER. Then we are glad that we have now an authoritative statement. I hold in my hand a return which was brought down to the British Parliament as a return to an address of the English House of Commons. The return asked for was:

A return of the treaties of commerce in force between the United Kingdom and foreign nations which preclude preferential fiscal treatment of British goods in the colonies and dependencies of the British Crown, showing when such treaties were concluded, what notice is necessary for their termination.

That is accompanied by a report of Sir Edwards Hertslet, an authority, and he reports as follows:—

The following treaties between this country and foreign powers expressly "preclude preferential fiscal treatment of British goods in the colonies and dependencies of the British Crown":—

Treaty with Belgium, 23rd July, 1862, article XV.

Treaty with the Zollverein, 30th May, 1865, article VII.

The treaty with Belgium of 1862 contains this stipulation:

"Article VII. Articles the produce or manufacture of Belgium shall not be subject in the British colonies to other or higher duties than those which are, or may be, imposed upon similar articles of British origin."

This treaty is terminable after twelve months' notice.

The treaty with the Zollverein of 1865 contains this stipulation:

"Article VII. The stipulations of the preceding articles I. to VI. shall also be applied to the colonies and foreign possessions of Her Britannic Majesty. In those colonies and possessions the produce of the States of the Zollverein shall not be subject to any higher or other import duties than the produce of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, or of any other country of the like kind; nor shall the exportation from those colonies or possessions to the Zollverein be subject to any higher or other duties than the exportation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland."