

time lay the papers on the table. Of course, they are responsible. But in the present case you had really no diplomatists in Washington to arrange a treaty. What you had was this: Three Ministers going down to Washington at the invitation—and I will come to the dispute on that in a minute, and pass rapidly from it too—of a member of a foreign government to have an informal, a *quasi* private discussion as to what might be done in the way of reciprocal trade. As I understand it, because I am not in the confidence of the Government in this matter, in regard to the subjects that were definitely arranged, and in regard to which definite information could be given, we have the papers laid on the table; and in regard to these communications which passed between the Ministers and Mr. Blaine and General Foster, respecting reciprocal trade, what have we? We have what has again and again been done in the British Parliament, we have one of those Ministers, the very best means of affording information to Parliament that could be obtained, rising in his place and stating what had taken place between him and Mr. Blaine. (Cheers.) The manner is somewhat different from a Minister giving information to Parliament about what took place between a diplomatist and the representative of a foreign state, that diplomatist not being in Parliament. What we had was one of the Ministers who engaged in these conversations with Mr. Blaine giving the House a statement of what took place, and I ask hon. members what better means could Parliament have of being made acquainted with what took place? The question of what a Minister is bound to do in regard to information in his possession came up in 1863 in the British Parliament. It was about very important transactions; it was a case where, if ever, the papers ought to have been laid on the table, once you grant the argument of the hon. member for Bothwell. But, Sir, when Lord John Manners, and Mr. Pope Hennessey protested against the Government referring to the communications that they had had without laying these communications on the

table, what does Lord Palmerston say:

"It is altogether a new doctrine to me that a Minister making a statement from information which has come to his knowledge, is bound to lay on the table of the House the documents from which that information is derived. I admit no such principle. It is perfectly true that when a Minister reads a paper he is bound to lay it on the table."

If the hon. Minister of Finance had come here and made extracts from so-called protocols, there would be ground for complaining that they were not laid on the table. But there could have been no protocols, and the hon. member for Queen's (Mr. Davies) used the word, as he used many other words, in a way that would make the genius of English literature stare and gasp. If the hon. Minister of Finance read from some documents, there would be good ground for complaining that they were not laid on the table; but the reason why it is necessary to lay documents on the table when extracts are read from them, is that Parliament should be face to face with the source of the information that is given to it. In this case, we have the very men here, between whom and Mr. Blaine the conversation had taken place, and you cannot doubt the accuracy of the statement made by the hon. Minister of Finance unless you resort to the extraordinary parliamentary politeness that belongs at times to the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) and which I am afraid the hon. and learned member for Queen's (Mr. Davies) fell into to night, and unless you are going to say to a Minister of the Crown who stands in his place with the eyes of the country and the eyes of Parliament upon him, and whose position could not be maintained if he would palter with the truth; we do not believe you unless you are going to doubt the word of the Minister of Finance, and put his position and responsibility aside, in the face of the fact that if he misrepresented what took place, detection and exposure must inevitably and speedily follow. I say that that sort of thing is not treated properly by speaking satirically of it as politeness, but that it should be denounced with all the invective a man is capable of, because it is a degrading thing to this House to hear