

Mr. DAVIES. I do not understand why the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stairs) should have adopted the tone he did towards the hon. member for Digby. He reproved that hon. gentleman for bringing this matter to the notice of the House, and at the same time he admitted that the Province from which he comes had a very great interest at stake in the proper adjustment of our trade relations with the Spanish Antilles. The hon. gentleman says he has the most unbounded confidence in the Government that they will do what is right. Well, he may have that unbounded confidence in the Government; but I do not think the conduct of the Government in this matter has been such as to justify or challenge confidence. The hon. gentleman says he would like to know whether the dodge of putting on duties would bring the Spanish Government to their knees, and bring about the desirable result of reciprocal relations between Canada and the Spanish Antilles; but the hon. member for Digby was not making any such proposition, and that suggestion was a purely gratuitous one. If he had made such a suggestion, he would have been only following the line the Government have adopted regarding our relations with the United States. They thought that by putting duties on United States products, they would bring about reciprocal relations between this country and the United States, and what had been the result? The result has been most lamentable. It appears that we are farther away than ever from reciprocal relations with the United States. The hon. member for Halifax has misinterpreted the object of my hon. friend altogether. He explained clearly that this is the third time he has brought this matter before the House, with the object of obtaining from the Government a statement of what action they are taking to have Canada placed on the same footing as our neighbors. He said he had brought forward this motion in 1884, when he was met with the statement by the Finance Minister, that negotiations were proceeding. He brought it up again in 1885, when he was met with the statement, that inasmuch as a provisional treaty was made between Spain and the United States, Spain declined to enter into negotiations with us on the same terms until the Senate had ratified that treaty; but in the meantime, the old flag treaty is going on, and the produce of the United States is being admitted into the Spanish Antilles on much more favorable terms than ours. Last year, the hon. First Minister said in reply to the hon. member for Digby:—

"I believe we never stood a fairer chance of making an arrangement with Spain."

Surely, with such language as that coming from the leader of the Government, it was proper for the hon. member for Digby to endeavor to ascertain if the Government had done anything this year. The hon. member for Halifax is perfectly satisfied with the policy they have adopted. As far as we have been enlightened by the hon. Minister of Finance, that policy has been a do-nothing policy. He has not stated that anything has been done during the last year. He knows that the Senate of the United States has not ratified the provisional treaty; he knows that the treaty now in existence is the old flag treaty, and he hears the statement made by the hon. member for Digby that under that treaty we are placed at a great disadvantage. The hon. member for Halifax admits that; his constituents feel it; they memorialised Parliament and the Government last year; they are anxious to find out if the Government has done anything; and the statement of the Finance Minister is that he will bring down the papers. We want to know if the Government have done their duty. What is that duty as stated by the First Minister last year?

"Meanwhile, all we can do is to be constantly on the watch; to be vigilant. We are vigilant; we believe we have done everything we could do; and we will continue to watch every opportunity of pressing for a treaty."

Mr. McLELAN.

We want to know what direction their vigilance has taken; we want to know what they have done. Surely the House is entitled to something more than the bald statement of the Minister that they will bring down the papers. It appears that we are in equally as bad or a worse position than we were in last year; and so far as one can judge, there does not appear to be any kind of desire on the part of the Administration to remove the disadvantages under which we labor. I think the hon. member for Halifax does not discharge his duty by simply expressing to the House his belief that if we had freer trade relations with Cuba and Porto Rico, it would be a great advantage. It is his duty to press upon the Government to take such action as is in their power. The hon. gentleman says we cannot force Spain into a treaty. Who is asking them to do so? We want to know if the proper representations have been made; we want to know whether anything has been done, or whether another year has been allowed to drag along without anything having been done either by the Government or by our representative at the Court of St. James. We have an ambassador there who has been instructed to exercise vigilance, which the leader of the Government last year stated should be exercised in this matter. Has he opened up any negotiations since the new treaty with the United States has been refused sanction by the Senate? Have the Government attempted to re-open the old negotiations which have been closed—negotiations, the object of which was to put us on the same basis as that which the United States occupies under the flag treaty? That is what I understand my hon. friend to have asked for, and it is something which, if obtainable, would be a great boon to the country, especially to the Maritime Provinces who are particularly interested in the matter. Now that our fish is excluded to some extent from the United States; it becomes doubly the duty of the Government to try and open to us the ports of other countries for the admission of our products. I am sorry that the Minister of Finance is not in a position to be more explicit; I am sorry he is not in a position to make a satisfactory statement instead of simply stating that the papers would be brought down without giving the slightest intimation of the nature of the business done if any, or about anything pertaining to an object the achievement of which would be a most desirable consummation.

Mr. VAIL. I have not, as the hon. member for Halifax seems to think, desired to cast reflections on the Government for not having managed this business better, but I desired to have some statements from the Government as to what has been done, especially as I have brought this matter before the House twice, and that already two years have elapsed since I first brought it under their notice. I am much disappointed to-day to find that the Government are not in a position to tell the House they have done something. I am aware that any negotiations on our part must be carried on through the British Government, but I think, as the hon. member for Queen's (Mr. Davies) has said, as we have an ambassador to the Court of St. James and as he seems to be in close communication with the higher powers there, he ought certainly to have been instructed by our Government to have brought the matter before the Government of Great Britain and been able and have had an answer from them of some kind. I think the Minister of Finance should have been able to tell the House that the Government had given instructions which were carried out, and had the assurance of the British Government they were doing their best to get the restrictions we complain of removed. I have no desire to say a word against the Government as to their action in a matter of this kind, but we must presume they have taken some action, and I would like to know what is its nature. I know how they are hampered, and I am willing to make every allowance, but I think they