

is a self-evident fact, and therefore did not require any information from the hon. gentleman to make us aware of it. But the other is not a self-evident fact, and to my mind it was a very pertinent question on which the House should be informed. If these hon. gentlemen have consulted British authorities and obtained a reply, the House ought to know it. That would not be giving away state secrets which must be kept sacred until the negotiations are completed, because there are no negotiations going on between this country and Great Britain with regard to this question. Any information which they may have obtained from the authorities in Great Britain as to their right to make this special tariff should have been given to this House. It is the right of Parliament to expect it and the duty of Parliament to demand it, and these hon. gentlemen are doing less than their duty when they refuse to give it. I do not think it adds to the dignity of a Minister of the Crown to reply in the peevish fashion he did to a pertinent question of this kind, and I do not think that it adds to his credit in the country. If we believed what we have heard lately, we must conclude that we have not the right to make that tariff. While I do not intend to say very much on this question, I cannot refrain from reading clause 15 of the Belgian treaty which is the one that applies to this matter in the case of the most-favoured-nations :

Article XV. The produce or manufacture of Belgium, shall not be subject in the British colonies to higher duties than those imposed on goods of British origin.

Now, British and Belgian goods come in to-day at the same duties. Will the Belgian goods be subject to higher duties or not? The hon. Controller of Customs (Mr. Pater-son) said undoubtedly they will. Then, I say, that will be a deliberate violation of that article of the treaty, so far as I can understand it. Lord Ripon said, in answer to the report made by Lord Jersey regarding the Colonial Conference, which was held in this city in 1894 :

Clause 15 in the Belgian, and clause 17 in the German, treaty do not prevent differential treatment by the United Kingdom in favour of the British colonies, they do not prevent differential treatment by the British colonies in favour of each other, but they do prevent differential treatment by the British colonies in favour of the United Kingdom.

Will the hon. gentleman answer that by saying that this is not a differential tariff? That may be the case in the sense that it make the same offer to Belgium as to England and every other country, but what is the spirit of the Belgian treaty? Belgium says: We entered into that treaty long ago, in the year 1862, and under it we were to have the right to put our goods into any British colony at the same rates of duty as English goods. Have we that right under this tariff? The reply is, of course, cer-

Mr. SPROULE.

tainly not. But hon. gentlemen opposite say: We have made them an offer contingent on their doing something. What is that something? It is that they reduce their tariff to us. But, Mr. Speaker, there is no contingency in this Belgian treaty. That treaty secures to Belgium absolutely the right to enter her goods into British colonies at the same rate of duties as English goods, and they can safely say to us: We are not called upon to regard any contingency. We demand the advantages we secured under that tariff in 1862, and we have a right to demand them. And what is the result? The Belgian consul in Montreal says: We expect your customs collector to understand it, and not to charge higher duties on Belgian goods than are charged on those of England. If he does not understand it, we can only apply to our home government, give them the information and let them do as they like. I think this is a deliberate violation of that clause of the Belgian treaty; and, if so, it is a violation of article 7 of the German treaty, because it is practically the same. What does that mean? Either the goods from other countries, come under the lower tariff or they do not. If they do not, then we violate one of the treaty obligations of England; and it is said and very properly said, in effect, that as soon as a nation disregards its own treaties it practically declares war against the nation aggrieved. If a nation does not respect its own treaties, its national word is worth nothing, and this must lead to trouble. If the goods of these countries do come in at a reduction under the new tariff as we believe they have a right to come in, what does that mean? It means that we are going to receive at the lower rates the goods from the Argentine Confederation, Austria, Hungary, Belgium, Bolivia, Chili, Colombia, Corea, Costa Rica, Denmark, Dominican Republic, German Zollverein, Liberia, Madagascar, Morocco, Muscat, Persia, Portugal, Russia, Sandwich Islands, Siam, South African Republic, Spain, Sweden and Norway, Swiss Confederation, Tunis, Uruguay, and Venezuela. It means that the goods from those countries must come in under the lower tariff if we are to observe the favoured-nation clause, and I do not see how we are to get round it. It seems that the hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce is not very strong in his conviction, that we have the right, because, in speaking of that he says "that it will be found that the passage of the tariff we have at one and the same time rung the death-knell of protection." We have done that, but we have done more than that. He said that the ex-Finance Minister asked for a precedent but that it was utterly unprecedented.

I believe the world will agree with him in that. But it would be better if there was a precedent. He says further:

As to England, I submit that the case is very different. Our Government intend to bring the