

and Commerce (Sir Richard Cartwright) said that he drew a great line of distinction between a preferential trade arrangement and a treaty. He said that the fact that it was not a simple tariff revision providing for the admission of the goods of one country upon more favoured terms than another, but was a treaty under which the advantage was obtained by purchase, as it were, and not by gift, changed the whole aspect of the question and removed all the difficulty. The hon. gentleman will find that that would not help him, if it were the case, because in this case there is no treaty. Was there any treaty made with England under which this Act came into operation on the morning the tariff was announced? Not at all. There was no communication, no arrangement, no treaty, and therefore the flimsy argument of the hon. Minister, the only one he could conjure up, falls to the ground. If there were anything wanting to satisfy him of the entire fallacy of his view, it is the fact that when a treaty was negotiated for freer trade between France and Canada by the Imperial Government, the Bill which was submitted to this House did not provide for the admission of the goods of Belgium and of Germany and the other countries that had the most-favoured-nation treatment with England, and consequently Her Majesty's Government would not consent to it, and my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) was obliged to come back to Parliament and to lay before it the Bill of 1895 removing that difficulty and providing that the same rights enjoyed by France should be enjoyed by every country that had the most-favoured-nation treatment with England. Now, one would suppose that these hon. gentlemen, charged with such high and important duties, would have taken the trouble, if they did not know, to inform themselves, but it appears they were otherwise too busily engaged to consider a matter of such small import. What is the position to-day? The hon. gentleman says the law is in operation. Does he mean to say that the statement made by the hon. First Minister here a few evenings ago, that Belgium could not have the benefits that we extended to the mother country, is in force? Does he mean to say that throughout Canada to-day this Government, which professes such loyal devotion to the Crown, has actually instructed its customs officers to violate one of the plainest and most stringent treaty obligations of the mother country? The hon. member for South Oxford (Sir Richard Cartwright) said that this was a grave and important crisis. Sir, you cannot over-rate the importance of the position in which these hon. gentlemen have placed the Government and this Parliament in relation to this question. Their intentions may have been very good, but their absolute inability to deal with this question in the way that treaty obligations made it absolutely imperative

that they should deal with it, the ignorance which they have exhibited on the whole question, has placed the Government of the country in one of the most humiliating and unfortunate positions that it has ever been placed in. But the hon. Minister of Finance, in his jaunty way, said: Suppose it is so. He did not seem to have taken the trouble to have informed himself, but confined himself to a mere supposition. Suppose Lord Chief Justice Russell has given that opinion? Why, he said, the world moves. But does the hon. gentleman want to move the Canadian world in the direction of defiant hostility to the mother country? What is the boast of England? It is that she never makes a treaty which she does not maintain in all its integrity to the last jot and tittle. England holds a transcendent position in the world because it is known that her engagements with foreign countries will always be held inviolate. Where have you placed England to-day by this extreme transcendent folly? The hon. gentleman laughs? Does he find anything to laugh at in the statement that it is transcendent folly for any Government in Canada to place itself in open, direct hostility to England. Does he think it anything but an act of transcendent folly for the Government of the day to ask Parliament to put a law on our Statute-book which they know is in the teeth of a solemn treaty made between England and all those other countries? And does he not know that every man whether he is a Belgian or a German or a Russian or a Persian, whoever he may be, belonging to a nation that is entitled to most-favoured-nation treatment by England, is in a position to demand from England—not from us they have nothing to do with us—that the rights they have had pledged, formally pledged by the greatest Empire in the world be recognized, and that this revolutionary encroachment by the Dominion of Canada shall be made good. This boast that these collectors have taken charge and are setting at defiance the treaties of England is an idle boast. Or, worse, it is one that will involve this country not only in disgrace but in most serious loss. There is not one of these countries, and I say it advisedly—if they dare to carry out this project of instructing their custom officers to discriminate between countries between which Great Britain has declared there shall be no discrimination, but may demand that the loss shall be made good, and not only that, but that all the trouble and inconvenience and embarrassment to trade that will follow as a matter of course shall be also made good. I ask this House whether, after all that Canada has suffered by reason of the long uncertainty with regard to the fiscal policy of the Government, it is not a high crime on the part of hon. gentlemen opposite now to prolong that uncer-