

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—We have followed the premier during the speeches he made in 1896 in Canada, we have followed him to England, in 1897, and we find he went back there upon what he said in Montreal and Toronto, and when he came back to Canada he went back on what he said in England. We find that shortly after his return he addressed a meeting in Toronto at a banquet and said :

Certainly, if I thought I could have obtained for my country, for the products of Canada, a preferential treatment in the markets of Great Britain, I would not only have been wanting in patriotism, but I would have been wanting in reason—I simply would have been an idiot—if I had failed to obtain such preference.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—He knew it was impossible.

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—Indeed, he said in Montreal during the last elections that all that was necessary to get preferential trade was for the liberal party to come into power when a revenue tariff would be adopted. They will say that they have just done exactly that—all that was necessary to be done was to put the liberal party in power and adopt a revenue tariff, and that progressive statesman Mr. Chamberlain was ready to take them by the hand, and give them preferential trade. He went to England, and before he met Mr. Chamberlain he went back and said I do not want any of your preference ; but now he says he would have been an idiot if he could have obtained for his country such a preferential treatment and have failed to obtain it. I have no desire to describe the premier of this country as an idiot, but I cannot object to the classification which he himself has written down in a manner which is far from complimentary, to his intelligence.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—He says it was absolutely impossible.

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—Where did the light strike ? Where did this conversion take place ? It must have been about as sudden as the celebrated conversion on the journey from Jerusalem to Damascus. He had left here full of yearnings for preferential trade, and before he touched English soil, before he had met English opinion on the other side of the Atlantic he gave it all up. Where did he become convinced that it was utterly and completely impracticable ?

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—We have made the first step towards it. It may come in the

next ten years. A great change would not come in twelve months.

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—That looks as if somebody was going to change again. According to my hon. friend the vision must have occurred on the broad Atlantic, some supernatural communication must have been made to the hon. premier of Canada to account for this wonderful change which has no parallel since that remarkable conversion which occurred some eighteen hundred years ago on the road to Damascus. I have no hesitation in saying, hon. gentlemen, that Canada instead of being placed in a more advantageous position on account of the friendship of England at the present time than she had enjoyed before we have lost ground that has been worked up for Canada and for the other colonies with great industry in the face of strong obstacles by the most eminent men in the colonies and most eminent men in Great Britain together, notably among these men who have fought and toiled day in and day out, year in and year out to put this question in the happy shape in which it stood when Sir Wilfrid Laurier went to England, is Sir Charles Tupper, the leader of the conservative party in Canada ; and the work he did was responded to by Mr. Chamberlain and there was every prospect of an agreement being reached and a solution being found when there was so much real desire for preferential trade within the bounds of the empire, but all this has been lost for the present and a setback has been given to that question, the effects which I am afraid will last many years to come by the action of the premier of this country in this Jubilee year. But I am very glad to find from a recent speech made before the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, on the 18th January of this year, though bitterly disappointed with regard to the premier action in the meeting of the colonial premiers last summer, that Mr. Chamberlain is pretty well back on his old ground again. He is not going to give up the fight. Probably he has found out that when Sir Wilfrid Laurier was in England he did not speak the views of Canada on this question. We find that Mr. Chamberlain addressing the Chamber of Commerce of Liverpool last month said :

Our policy is to bind the colonies closer to us by all means in our power, and if not practicable yet to pave the way for a future union which will be closer than anything that is now practicable.