

remarkable histrionic powers the First Minister has exhibited. It is said by the admirers of Mr. Gladstone, that they are willing to back Mr. Gladstone against any man of his years in England to cut down trees, but I think the admirers of the present venerable father of the House—because I believe the hon. gentleman has attained that distinction—I think they could fairly back him against any man, not only of his years, but any man in Canada, either for turning a summersault or executing a double-shuffle, or capacity for devouring his own words, or ability to turn his back upon himself in any conceivable fashion or way. Now, Sir, I can recollect exceedingly well a good many illustrations of this remarkable faculty, this mental agility which the hon. gentleman possesses. I recollect at an early time in the formation of this Confederation we were told that we were now preparing to tread in the footsteps of English statesmen and economists, whom the hon. gentleman always desired then, as he says he desires now, to imitate. I can recollect very well in the earlier period of this Confederation the hon. gentleman issuing some most admirable state papers, in which he defined, with great clearness and precision, the duties of the Central Government and the Local Governments; and most of us have since had frequent opportunities of seeing how completely the hon. gentleman can violate all those admirable precepts which he then so lucidly laid down. I desire to call attention to a speech which he made very recently in England, and as he accused my hon. friend beside me of misquoting him, I will take the trouble to read exactly what the hon. gentleman said, as reported by an organ which certainly does not design to misrepresent any of his utterances. The hon. gentleman said:

“With regard to the question of Imperial federation, he fully agreed that there must be Imperial federation. He believed that as the auxiliary nations of Australia and Canada and South Africa increased, the present relations, comfortable and pleasant as they were, could not remain permanently fixed. As those auxiliary nations must increase in wealth and in population, so they must in responsibilities, and speaking for the Dominion of Canada, he might say they were ready to increase the responsibilities, they were ready to join the Mother Country in her offensive and defensive league, to sacrifice their last man, and their last shilling in defence of the Empire and the flag of England.”

That, Sir, was on the 4th of January, 1886, and I suppose it is a correct report.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. Certainly.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. And I find, eighteen months before this, as reported in the same newspaper, that the hon. gentleman speaking, not to an English, but to a Canadian audience in Toronto, declared that Imperial federation was utterly impracticable.

“Imperial federation is utterly impracticable. We could never agree to send a number of men over to England to sit in Parliament there and vote away our rights and privileges.”

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. Hear, hear. That is the federation I did not agree with.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT:

“I am, as far as this question goes, up to the handle a Home Ruler. We will govern our own country. We will put on the taxes ourselves. If we choose to misgovern ourselves we will do so, and we do not desire England, Ireland or Scotland to tell us we are fools. We will say, ‘If we are fools we will keep our folly to ourselves. You will not be the worse for it, and we will not be the worse for any folly of yours.’”

Now, it does appear to me that there is, to say the least of it, a trifling inconsistency between those two utterances by the hon. gentleman. The hon. gentleman, speaking in his position as Premier of Canada, undertakes to pledge the Dominion to some scheme which no doubt was clearly defined in his own mind, else a man of his station and prudence would never have given his assent to it; and I think we have a right to know what that scheme of federation is which the hon. gentleman advocates, and for the carrying out of which he is willing to pledge the

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT.

last man and the last dollar which his Government have left in our treasury. The hon. gentleman who sits beside him will have an opportunity of explaining to us how much money we have left; and I do not wish to anticipate the roseate and glowing terms in which, as we know by experience, he will acquit himself of his task. But I desire to say that this question is too important a question to be treated as a means of catching, by clap-trap, the cheers of an English audience on one occasion, and of a Canadian audience on another. If the hon. gentleman has convictions on this subject, if he thinks that such a project is practicable, then I call upon the hon. gentleman to explain his scheme, and I say it is his duty, after pledging himself in this way, after pledging the Dominion of Canada, speaking for it in his official capacity, it is his duty to tell us precisely what he proposes to do—what it is that he proposes to pledge us to, what this project is which so greatly commands itself to his mind, although apparently it did not so greatly commend itself to him, as short a period ago as 18 months. Sir, if the hon. gentleman means anything by the remarks he made, he means a very considerable deal. If, on the other hand, as I very much fear, the hon. gentleman means nothing; if his remarks amount to a mere rhetorical flourish, then I have to tell him that such words used by him, who was practically, to all intents and purposes, our ambassador in England at the time, do great harm, and are calculated to bring the honor of Canada into very serious discredit. The hon. gentleman, in his anxiety, I suppose, to throw oil on the troubled waters, denounced my hon. friend beside me as most malignant and unchristian, and went on to say that my hon. friend had raked together all this garbage. Now, Sir, I listened carefully to the statements my hon. friend read; they were one and all of them utterances either of the hon. gentleman himself or of some of the hon. gentleman's colleagues; and if those statements be correctly described as garbage, what possible opinion can hon. gentlemen opposite have of their own utterances? The hon. gentleman went on to use very strong language, indeed, as to the advice which he stated to have been tendered from this side of the House, that he should have endeavored, two years ago, while there was yet time, when due notice had been given of the probable abrogation of the Fishery Treaty—

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. No, of the certain.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. What other form of words would the hon. gentleman have? The thing cannot be certain until it has happened, the hon. gentleman must admit. But the hon. gentleman's contention was this, that he and his friends behind him would rather endure any loss, would rather run any risk to this country, than humiliate themselves by proposing, a couple of years ago, to the American Government what they actually proposed the other day; and he went on to say, possibly with some reason, that there were circumstances known to him and to the Imperial Government which rendered it unlikely at that moment that such an application would meet with a fit response. Well, Sir, what was our charge? Our charge was that the hon. gentleman would not take any steps to renew the treaty, and would not take any steps to protect our fish and fishermén; that was our charge. The hon. gentleman had a right, if he chose, to refuse to take steps to renew the treaty, but it was his bounden duty, the moment he made up his mind to that course, to protect our people in the exercise of their just rights. It is not by any means alone that he refused to attempt to renew that treaty, but that, knowing as he says that it was certain to be abrogated, the hon. gentleman would not lift his little finger to enable our people to enjoy their just rights; that is his offence, and a very serious offence it is against the people of this country; and I do not hesitate to tell him that he