

clauses which Great Britain has in her treaties with a great many other countries, and after having secured the denunciation of the German and Belgian treaties they were still confronted with the difficulty which Mr. Chamberlain pointed out to them. Even after that is done he said you will have to go back and modify and change this resolution of yours, you will have to do away with it altogether or you will have to confine your preference entirely to Great Britain and the chains were fastened around them so strongly that the Secretary of State had to announce the change, although in announcing it he placed the premier in a questionable position with regard to the condition on which he accepted the Cobden medal. Whenever I think of their devious course with regard to the denunciation of these treaties, and when I hear the gentlemen on the government side of the House claiming credit to themselves for what they have done and for that wonderful resolution of theirs and what it effected, I am reminded of the heading of a chapter in Pickwick papers where Dickens tells the story of how Mr. Winkle instead of shooting at the crow and killing the pigeon, shot at the pigeon and wounded the crow; or in another version of it he fired at a rook in a tree in the lawn and disabled a duck in the back yard. Even Dickens's sense of humour was not however strong enough to say that Winkle turned round and claimed the applause of the bystanders on account of the accuracy of his shot, but that is just what these gentlemen have been doing—they shot at a crow in a tree on the lawn and wounded a duck in the back yard, and they asked the people of Canada to applaud their markmanship. It is one of the greatest comedies of errors in the history of the country. It has been a series of blunders. Every step they have taken has been a blunder. They have to rescind almost every feature of their famous resolution, and the premier, in the end, will have to send back that Cobden medal. I have taken up so much of the time of this House in discussing this preferential clause of the tariff and the larger questions to which I have been referring, that I will have to restrict the remarks that I, otherwise, would feel inclined to make on a subject that is engaging the attention of the people of Canada just now to a greater degree than any other question—I refer to the Yukon Railway contract which is on the table of the

House, and a bill for which is now being considered in another place. My hon. friend, the Secretary of State, in defending the government with reference to this matter, put up a very alarming and erroneous emergency plea for them. He said in extenuation of the extraordinary dearth of information in the mind of the Minister of Railways when he introduced the bill, and for the extraordinary lack of argument of his colleagues, and for the weakness of the bargain which was apparent to almost everybody, that they were in the presence of a great emergency. When parliament rose last year nobody, said the hon. gentleman, had any conception of such a great development as has occurred in that extreme northern part of our country. No one anticipated such a rush of people to the Klondike and therefore we have been all taken by surprise, and it was necessary to do something to meet the emergency. We had to do the best we could. That is the substance of my hon. friend's plea. I must give the hon. gentleman credit by saying it was the very best plea he could put before the House for this contract. But if we only look a little into the matter we will find that this plea was not as good as the hon. gentleman appeared to think it was. I have in my hand reports of Mr. Ogilvie, the government surveyor, who has been in that country for so long a time. I have those reports and I will read some extracts from them which have been in the possession of the government for a long time.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—How long?

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—I submit that however much hon. gentlemen in this House who were not in the secrets of the government may have been taken by surprise, and many of them may have had substantial reasons for not knowing that a great development was taking place there—the government could not put up that claim. They, at least, knew the extraordinary circumstances developing there. On the 6th of December, 1896, Mr. Ogilvie made his first report to the government with regard to the discoveries of gold in the Klondike. That is more than a year and a-half ago.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—When was it received?