

"Mr. Wurtele said that as the matter had only recently been brought before the attention of the Government, he would, with the consent of the House, alter his motion, by striking out the latter portion requiring the Government to discontinue the collection, but drawing the special attention of the Government to the statement which seemed to show that the fund was recouped. He would leave the responsibility of action with the Government, and stated that although the Treasurer had said that it was necessary to raise funds and that a considerable sum would be taken from the revenue by the abolition of these taxes, there was no reason why Montreal, which contributed nearly two-thirds of the revenue collected in the Province, should bear this burden unjustly levied on an exceptional class when all the other districts contributed nothing."

The motion was then carried, having been changed to read as follows:—"That an address be presented to his Honor the Lieutenant-Governor, drawing the attention of the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to the statement prepared by the Auditor of the Province of the fund established by the Acts 12 Vic., chap. 112, and 18 Vic., chap. 164, for the building of the court house of the district of Montreal, which seems to show that the amount expended in building the court house has been recouped."

#### A PEER'S PRIVILEGE.

There has been a time when, in the ardour for changes (or reforms, as their promoters would say), it has seemed doubtful whether the House of Lords would be much longer suffered to exist. But whatever may be the merits of this question, the peers seem to possess one privilege which might beneficially be curtailed. We take the following from the *London Times'* report of proceedings in the House of Commons, Aug. 13:—

"Mr. Blake asked whether the attention of the Attorney-General had been called to a case which occurred last week in the Brompton County Court, in which a defaulting debtor, who is also a peer of the realm, refused to obey a judgment summons of the Court and, as in

the case of a former summons before the Court, pleaded his privilege as a peer in order to secure immunity from arrest, and declined in any way to take cognizance of the proceedings; whether, in the opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown, defaulting debtors who are peers are entitled by law to such exemption; and whether the Attorney-General had considered the desirability of repealing the exemption.

"The Attorney-General.—My attention has been called to the case mentioned in the question, and the facts appear to be correctly represented. I may state that the judgment summons was issued against the noble defendant to compel payment of an amount of £2 8s. for coal sold to him by the plaintiffs. I do not think it would be becoming in me to pronounce an opinion upon a point of law which has been decided by a Court. The learned Judge of the Brompton County Court is a man of great ability and experience, and I think we may presume his decision was right. With reference to the last portion of the hon. gentleman's question, I should not myself be disposed to extend the power of commitment for the non-payment of debt, or to interfere with the long established privileges of the peerage. It is to be regretted that the privilege should have been relied upon in the case in question. The plaintiffs, however, may be consoled by the reflection that as the noble defendant thought proper, for the purpose of evading the payment of a debt, to envelope himself in the mantle of the privileges of his order, he may be left to resort to the same mantle for the purpose of keeping himself warm. The plaintiffs can refuse again to supply the noble lord with coals. (Laughter.)"

Would it not rather add to than take away from the dignity of the nobility, if a privilege were renounced which is never used save by an unworthy member to bring discredit upon his order? Ought any class to be privileged to act dishonestly?

As we are often visited in these days by members of the nobility, an interesting question might be raised if "the noble defendant" referred to above came to the Province of Quebec, and attempted to use the privileges of his order to swindle our hotel keepers. Would our Judges be bound to take a similar view of the time honored privileges of a peer?