

THE WEEK.

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Current Topics.

Canada and
Newfoundland.

It is quite evident that there is no longer any hope of an immediate union between Canada and Newfoundland. It is equally certain that the Island will find it extremely difficult to recover from the effects of the dire mistakes or misfortunes, whichever they may be, by which the little colony has been brought into her present unhappy position. From the animus which seems to underlie the utterances of Mr. Bond and other members of the Island Government, as well as from what can be learned of the tone of the majority of her people, it seems probable that it is better for both parties to remain separate for the present. Had a union been affected the indications are that it would have had its roots in financial rather than in cousinly considerations, or in the mutual confidence and esteem essential to a real unification. Mutual distrust would form a bad foundation for fraternal relations. The Island Government seems to have been suspicious that Canada would take advantage of circumstances to drive a hard bargain. Possibly the Canadian Ministry, in its turn, may have been a little too sharply on the lookout lest, in their desire to round out the Confederation, they might be drawn into making larger concession than could be afforded in this time of deficits or than would be approved by the tax-payers. It is pretty evident, too, that, in addition to these influences, there was, and is still at work in the minds of Newfoundlanders, a deep-seated resentment of the action taken by Canada to prevent the Bond-Blaine treaty from being sanctioned by the Home Government—an interference with the autonomy of a sister colony which, we are bound to confess, has always seemed to us to be hard to reconcile with any very high conception of cousinly kindness, or even neighbourly fair play, to say nothing of the Golden Rule. It is most likely that Mr. Bond's failure to negotiate a loan in Canada will be repeated in the United States. The ultimate result must pretty surely be a return to the status of a crown colony, or some other form of maternal management. This, in its turn, would be pretty sure to result, by completion of the circuit, in union with Canada, at some future day, and let us hope under better auspices.

May a Lord Sit
in the Commons?

This question, which it was thought, a week or two since, would be settled by a legal decision, seems now to have been virtually determined in the negative by the action of the Commons in accepting Sir William Harcourt's motion for the appointment of a special committee to deal with the matter. It was understood that this committee, after a little formal deliberation, would bring in a report declaring the seat lately held by Viscount Wolmer vacant. Thereupon that gentleman, as the Earl of Selborne, will, it is thought, immediately apply for his writ of summons to a seat in the House of Lords, thereby accepting the theory which he had purposed to contest. According to an article in *The Spectator*, the whole question depends upon what vacates a seat in the House of Commons. As a fact it is known that, among other causes, the reception of a writ of summons to a member of the House of Commons to sit in and be a member of the House of Lords, causes that member to vacate his seat. But is it really the issuance of the writ, or the mere fact of elevation to the peerage, which vacates the seat? On this point the question hinges. If it is the issuance of the summons to the Upper House which vacates the seat in the lower, it follows that, as that writ is never issued unless applied for, any member of the Commons who has been elevated to the peerage, may remain in the Commons by simply declining to apply to Lords for his writ of summons to come up higher. According to the other, and, as it appears, the prevailing opinion, the issuance of the Peers' writ has nothing whatever to do with the vacating of the seat. That takes place, as a matter of course, the moment that the ancestor is dead, and the member who inherits the title has become transformed into a peer of the realm. Although the *Spectator* makes an elaborate argument in support of the former view, the latter seems really the most logical, inasmuch as the whole system of aristocracy seems to rest on the theory that the Peers and the Commoners are two distinct classes of citizens and that the mere fact of membership in the higher class elevates the individual out of the ranks of the Commoners, and so out of the sphere of membership of the legislative body which is representative of that class. Lord Selborne's first purpose was, probably, to decline to apply for his writ of summons to the Lords, to retain his seat in the Commons, and by voting on some unimportant motion expose himself to a friendly persecution, which would serve as a test case. He has evidently been convinced by the tone of the Commons that his case was hopeless. Since the foregoing was written the Committee have reported that succession to the peerage, *ipso facto*, vacates the seat in the Commons.

The Duke of
Cobourg's Annuity.

The question of the continuance of the Duke of Cobourg's annuity, which bids fair to become one of the perennial ones in the British Commons, came up a couple of weeks ago, on the motion of Mr. A. C. Morton that the largess be discontinued. The money is payable, it will be remembered, under a statute passed on the occasion of the Prince's marriage. Having in view, no doubt, the possibility of Prince Alfred's succeeding to the throne of the German duchy, a clause was inserted in the statute, providing that the annuity might be revoked on the application of the Queen, if ever the Prince should suc-