

# THE WEEK.

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## Current Topics.

Lord Rosebery as Prime Minister.

The cable gave us some intimations of the importance which was attached in advance to Lord Rosebery's Bradford speech, by reading Radicals and Nonconformists in Great Britain, but it is only with the arrival of the newspapers that we are able to get a clear conception of the spirit in which that speech was awaited by large numbers of his whilom admirers. In the eyes of these it was looked forward to as a test of his fitness to continue in the leadership of the party, or rather parties, on whom the Government depends for its slender majority. The *British Weekly* did not hesitate to declare beforehand that this was his last opportunity, that it would decide his political future. The fact is that Lord Rosebery had up to that time managed to dampen the enthusiasm of his Radical adherents to an alarming degree. Up to his accession to the premiership, his course had been one of almost unbroken appreciation and success. He was looked up to by many of the would-be innovators as the rising star of advanced Liberalism. But almost from the moment of his elevation, the scene changed. He made a succession of blunders for which it is hard to account on any theory consistent with a belief that he is a thorough-going Liberal by conviction. By a sentence or two in the House of Lords he brought his sincerity as a Home-Ruler under suspicion. At Edinburgh he, as the *Weekly* puts it, "commenced the disestablishment campaign by avowing himself an Erastian." Even in the field of foreign diplomacy, in which he was believed to be especially strong, he has aroused serious doubt in regard to both his wisdom and his firmness. The writer from whom we have already quoted probably hits the mark when he suggests that Lord Rosebery has injured himself by attempting to play to some extent the part of a Melbourne or a Palmerston, posing as one who takes his politics lightly and easily, instead of showing that he regards them as the intensely serious business they always are, and unquestion-

ably are at the present moment. His Bradford speech has helped him with the more ardent of his party for the present. In any case it is hard for the man who comes after the king. It is not unlikely that his career may enable students of history to learn by contrast the power of intense convictions in democratic politics.

By a cablegram last week the Canadian High Commissioner in Britain is represented as having said to a deputation of farmers who waited upon him in Scotland, that "no matter how clearly proved, apparently, no contagious pleuro-pneumonia ever existed in Canada," and that "the British Government had come to a foregone conclusion not to admit Canadian cattle into the United Kingdom, and intended to persist in the great wrong which was thus done to Canada." It is hard to believe that Sir Charles Tupper would permit his zeal for the interests of Canadian commerce to so far outrun not only his discretion but his civility and courtesy, as to make such a remark. The words, as reported, would be a distinct imputation upon the good faith and the truthfulness of the British Government, or individual members of it, whom he is further said, in some versions of the report, to have mentioned by name. It may be sincerely hoped that the words ascribed to our national representative will be authoritatively denied. The words "no matter how clearly proved, apparently," if correctly reported, contain in themselves a sufficient vindication, if any were needed, of the honesty of the members of the British Government who are responsible for the action. Indeed, if the existence of the disease was clearly proved, even *apparently*, it would be manifestly impossible, under the circumstances, for the British Government to admit our cattle to their markets, without a serious dereliction of duty. If Canada is the victim of circumstantial evidence in this matter, as is probably the case, her manifest duty is to set patiently and persistently at work to establish the truth, however hard it may be to prove the negative required.

## An Electoral Summer-sault.

The bye-election in London has resulted in the choice of Mr. Thomas S. Hobbs by a majority of eight hundred. It is a remarkable event. The change from a Conservative majority of one hundred and thirty-five to a Liberal majority of eight hundred is of no small significance however it may be interpreted. No doubt more causes than one contributed to Mr. Essery's overthrow, and local conditions are imperfectly understood save by those immediately concerned. Amongst minor matters it shows pretty conclusively that Mr. Meredith's personal popularity was stronger even than party feeling, that the people are not very much in earnest about prohibition, and that the P.P.A. is not a great factor in Ontario politics. The most important result of this interesting contest is that the Government has now a majority of two over the combined forces of Conservatives and Patrons, and Sir Oliver Mowat must breathe with considerably greater freedom and ease. But his majority is a very narrow one, and will be still further reduced by the appointment of a follower to the Speaker's chair. Some of our contemporaries seem to think that Sir Oliver can now afford to snap his finger at the Patrons, but this would hardly be wise—just yet.