

# THE WEEK.

Vol. XII.

Toronto, Friday, August 30th, 1895.

No. 40.

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## Current Topics.

**Westmoreland Bye-Election.**

The recent bye-election in Westmoreland was watched with considerable interest by adherents of both political parties, as likely to afford some indication of the prospects of the Government at the approaching general election. The result—the return of the Government candidate, Mr. Powell, by a majority of about 800—cannot, however, be considered as having much significance in relation to that question. The Liberals, contrasting it with the majority of 2,148 obtained by the Conservatives in that constituency at the previous election, and recalling the fact that Moncton, the centre of the Intercolonial Railway system, is in that constituency, claim that the Government has received a severe check—a “moral” defeat, as it is termed. The Government supporters, on the other hand, remembering the peculiar conditions under which the previous battle was fought, the Liberal candidate being one whom hundreds of Liberals refused to support, claim, with equal plausibility, that the majority is larger than could have reasonably been expected, and that they have reason to be well satisfied with the outcome. We have had an opportunity of conversing with late residents of Westmoreland, representing both political parties, and their analyses of the situation agree substantially in saying that nothing can safely be inferred from the present election, with regard to the results in the general election. The constituency is considered uncertain. In certain contingencies which are explained, touching candidate and other matters, our informants agree in saying that the Liberal chances would be sure to win. Much also depends, our informants freely admit, upon the impressions which may at that time be abroad with regard to the political probabilities, many of the Westmoreland voters, like those of other constituencies, we suppose, having strong objections to being found on the losing side.

**The French in Newfoundland.**

terion applies equally, we suppose, to the righteous nation. If

the successive Governments of Great Britain, Liberal and Conservative alike, really believe that France is fairly within her treaty rights in the extraordinary claims she so boldly puts forth and so steadfastly maintains, not only on the coast but within the very territory of Newfoundland, those Governments are doing only what is honest in submitting, with all meekness, to the rather humiliating situation, however exasperating and damaging to the British citizens who have been accustomed to suppose that they were living on British soil. But if the British statesmen do so believe and admit it would be a kindness to their faithful subjects in that Island if they would plainly say so, and would give their reasons for so interpreting the terms of treaties which seem to the ordinary colonial mind to mean something quite different. Nor is it to the colonial mind alone that the claims made and maintained by France seem to extend egregiously—might we not say outrageously—beyond the plain terms of the treaty. The following words of a British statesman, no less prominent than the late Lord Palmerston, pertinently recalled by the *Mail and Empire*, in a recent editorial, are a noteworthy example. They occur in His Lordship's despatch to Count Sebastiani, of July 10, 1838, in which he denies that the rights of the French are exclusive, and says:—“French fishermen have the periodical use of a part of the shore of Newfoundland for the purpose of drying fish during the fishing season; but the British Government has never understood the declaration to have had for its object to deprive British subjects of the right to participate with the French in taking fish at sea off that shore, provided they did so without interrupting the French cod fishery. If the right conceded to the French was intended to be exclusive the treaty would have said so.”

**The Latest Aggression.**

The latest instance of French domination in the Island itself is given in the despatch which informs us that the French warships have forbidden the completion of the railway which is being constructed. They will not permit, we are told, that it shall have a terminus on the coast, over which they claim territorial rights. Now, we suppose that every citizen of Newfoundland, of British origin, and, we may safely add, with the same limitation, every Canadian citizen, denies utterly that France has any territorial right, or any semblance of a just claim to any territorial right on any shore of Newfoundland, save so far as such right may be involved in the concession which secures to her fisherman whatever privilege is necessary to enable them to land and dry their fish on certain specified portions of the coast. Under these circumstances, if the statements of the despatch above mentioned are true, it is, perhaps, as well for all concerned that this last claim has been made. It will probably bring the matter to an issue. If the Colonial Office tacitly admits this claim, the people of Newfoundland will know where they stand. They will be forced to comprehend that but a part of the Island is theirs, or is exclusively British territory at all. It is French soil. They occupy it, if at all, on sufferance. This will be the last nail in the coffin of the Islanders, as British