

“BYSTANDER” ON CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

It was decided, with the general approbation of the country, that the Canadian Pacific Railway should be constructed by a Company; and the leaders of the Opposition, who themselves had attempted, when in office, to form a Company, and afterwards supported the application of Sir W. Howland's Syndicate, are precluded by their own actions from protesting against the decision. That a great national work should be done by the nation itself would, no doubt, have been the more natural and, in the abstract, the better course. But this was rendered impossible by the infirmities of Party Government. Every one felt sure, indeed there had already been fatally conclusive proof, that if the undertaking, with its immense expenditure and all its contracts, were left in the hands of Government, a reign of boundless corruption would ensue. Besides, a Government would have been hampered at every step by the factious criticism of the Opposition, and would have been unable to operate with the freedom, vigour and forecast essential to the success of this vast enterprise. It would hardly even have ventured to pay a salary high enough to secure the indispensable services of a first-rate manager. At the same time it was most unlikely that a body of private capitalists would be found wealthy enough, or commanding sufficient resources, to carry out so colossal an enterprise entirely without the help or support of the State. That assistance in some form would be required was morally certain from the first, and the hostility of the Grand Trunk, by closing the English money market against the Syndicate, rendered the certainty doubly sure. That the measure of aid granted was not excessive must at least be allowed by those who are exulting in the belief that the Company is already in fresh difficulties and again a clandestine applicant for relief. The creation of a lien on the whole property of the Company was a mistake, and greatly impaired the assistance given; but the Government in insisting on it was moved by regard for the opinion of the country. It was a most unfortunate necessity, as all allowed, which brought the Government again into close relations with the railway. A necessity, however, it was, and the choice manifestly lay between the grant of temporary assistance and the abandonment of the national undertaking. As yet we have had no reason to complain. The behaviour of the Company in relation to the political parties has been closely watched by jealous eyes; yet there has been so far no proof whatever, nor even any definite charge, of interference in elections or of political intrigue of any kind. The neutrality which wisdom as well as rectitude prescribed as the proper attitude of a commercial interest, seems throughout to have been scrupulously observed. Other imputations have been thrown out in Parliament by the Opposition, which, committed by its own irresolution to the policy of constructing the road, and debarred from assailing the Government on that side, yet bent on a party attack, had no alternative but to turn its guns against the Company. Even the commercial honour of the president was not spared, though the stories circulated against him proved to be absolutely baseless. But it can hardly be said that the charges were distinctly formulated, much less that they were sustained, nor was any adverse impression of a serious kind left on the minds of impartial men who made due allowance for the desperate conflict with rival interests to which, in the British money market and elsewhere, the Company had been exposed. That the work has been done with extraordinary rapidity, and at the same substantially and well, is admitted on all hands: the difficulties are immense, but they have been so far encountered with skill, energy and success. The commercial prospects of the stockholders are their own affair; but it is impossible that the Company can at once have shamefully overreached the public and made a bad bargain for itself: that its coffers can be empty and at the same time filled with the money of the plundered State. At the hands of independent men, and men who are opposed to the whole policy of which the Canadian Pacific Railway is the embodiment, the Company, as a faithful and efficient contractor for a national work, has received justice—at the hands of the political opposition it has not.

THE full report of the London meeting of Imperial Federationists having now arrived, it appears that the resolution affirming Confederation to be indispensable in order to avert the disintegration of the Empire was, on the politic advice of Sir Charles Tupper, withdrawn. It remains, nevertheless, the recorded opinion of the conveners of that important meeting. The resolution is true and it is not true. It is not true, inasmuch as the mutual citizenship, which is our chief political bond, is in no way threatened, any more than are the moral ties of blood, language, history, and sympathy which for ever unite the members of the English-speaking race. It is true, inasmuch as in the case of the most advanced colonies, and notably of Canada, the tie of dependence is now worn to so slender a thread, and would need so little to snap it, that, to those who regard depen-

dence as the only unity, disintegration may well seem near. Space suffices not to follow the speakers through all the mazes of the Colonial question; to insist again that “a family union” may exist in full intensity without dependence, and may include not only the dependent colonies, but the fifty millions of English-speaking people in the United States, whom Imperial Federation would exclude; or to protest anew against the unreasonableness of treating the cases of Canada, Australia, South Africa and the West Indies, with their widely-differing circumstances, as though they were the same. One speaker averred that if the present political connection with the colonies ceased to exist the necessary consequence must be that the teeming population of Great Britain and Ireland would be shut up in the two islands; the English, Irish, German and Italian emigration to the United States apparently not having fallen under his notice. It is disappointing to find that the Federationists after all decline either to give us the details of their scheme, or to name a time for its introduction; their visionary project remains a formless cloud. They only propose that we shall set to work to “cultivate the federal sentiment,” as though it were possible to cultivate among the people at large the sentiment connected with an institution while the institution itself does not exist. In the meantime events march, and Sir Charles Tupper himself represents a Canadian Government which has formally and finally broken the commercial unity of the Empire by giving Canada a national tariff. All the English journals applaud, as in duty bound, the generous aspiration. A generous aspiration it will remain.

It is curious, however, in connection with the Imperial question, to note the violent oscillations of sentiment in England. Some change seems of late to have come over the national character, and, instead of the staid and deliberate march of British opinion, we see a volatility which used to be thought peculiar to the French. Only a few years ago moderation was the policy of the whole Liberal party, as it is still that of Bright and probably also of Gladstone. But now the Radicals have all at once enthusiastically embraced Drab Imperialism, as we may perhaps call it, in contradistinction to the ordinary variety, of which military scarlet is the native hue. So sudden is the revolution that the Radical *Pall Mall Gazette* holds up to derision as fossil Anti-Imperialist doctrines, which its own editor, Mr. John Morley, was advocating a few months ago in *Macmillan*. Scorn is poured upon the Liberals of yesterday, who, however, are at least able to say for themselves that their achievements were not confined, as those of their successors have hitherto been, to misty speculation or talk, since they brought about large concessions of self-government to the colonies, the withdrawal of the troops, and the termination of those petty colonial wars which had ingloriously consumed so many millions and so many gallant lives. Some of them might also with truth aver, when taunted by their quondam friends with want of patriotism, that they are at all events showing their patriotism in their own misguided way by standing up for the integrity of the United Kingdom, which their Radical vituperators are willing to barter for the Irish vote. The Drab Imperialists think it due to their consistency to keep up their abuse of the Scarlet Imperialists, whom they designate as swash bucklers and brigands. The Scarlet Imperialists may reply that at any rate they are not dreamers; they do not imagine that Quakerism is compatible with Empire; they know that, in a world full of war-powers armed to the teeth, distant dependencies require military force for their protection. They do not build a policy on the fancy that oceans which may any day be covered with an enemy's cruisers are “water streets of a world-wide Venice.” We are called upon to note that the advent of Drab Imperialism coincides with the triumph of Democracy in England. Let Democracy first make its triumph sure, and provide itself with a stable constitution on its own principles; then let it think of turning oceans into the water-streets of a British Venice.

THE national development of New France and the renewal of her connection with her Mother Country are now beyond question as facts, and are, perhaps, at this moment the most important features of our political situation. One of the many symptoms of this is the appearance of a “History of Canada and the French Canadians,” by M. Reveillaud, a citizen of Old France, whose aim is to turn the eyes and hearts of his countrymen from colonies to be founded in far distant lands to “one already founded, full in face of their own coast, in a land which appeals to their affection, which is theirs by blood, by language, by attachment, and where French emigrants might be a happy reinforcement to French nationality in its struggle against the ascendancy of the Anglo-Saxon.” This design and the significance attaching to it constitute the chief importance of the book, of which otherwise the principal merits are the clearness and neatness which never desert a French writer, whether his