

“BYSTANDER” ON CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

Just as Australian Confederation was collapsing destiny appears to be providing it with that which historical experience seems to point out as the indispensable incentive to union. A foreign power with an unfriendly aspect has suddenly planted its foot in the neighbourhood, and shown that it intends to claim a share of that oceanic realm which the Australians have deemed their own, and which their prophetic imagination has peopled with the future communities of their race. The German occupation of New Britain and New Ireland and of part of New Guinea assumes a still graver character if the German Government is acting in concert with that of France. There is enough to fire the spirit of the Australians and dispose them to a league, if for no other purpose, for that of mutual defence. But, like all dependencies, those colonies are without military force of their own. They have no idea but that of running for protection to the Mother Country, and berating the Colonial Secretary because he does not take the most formidable power in Europe by the beard. If Confederation is intended to produce a development of military strength, it must be accompanied by independence. It is idle to dream that a thrifty community will tax itself to maintain armaments of its own so long as there is an Imperial country bound, and, as is imagined, capable of protecting it with her arms. Canadians know how much there is in reality corresponding to the boasts in which our politicians indulge at British dinner-tables, or when they are on the trail of Imperial honours. The capabilities of the Mother Country, however, are limited: she is still strong: the panic outcry about the state of her navy has only served to bring out the proof that she is still far the greatest of maritime powers; but she is not as she used to be, the only great maritime power, nor is it possible that she should cope with a world in arms. Summoned at once to confront Germany in the Pacific, the Boers and their Dutch sympathizers at the Cape, France in China, the Medhi with France diplomatically at his side in Egypt, Russia on the Asiatic frontier and perhaps at the Balkans, the United States on the question of the Nicaraguan Treaty and the Fisheries question, with Ireland in rebellion and rumours afloat of an impending crisis in India, how can she suffice for all these things? The Radical Jingo may dream that they can turn all the seas into water streets of a British Venice by some rhetorical process and without the aid, renounced by Radicals, of military force. If they succeed in persuading England to enter on that path, their dream is likely to have a rude awakening.

APART from our special interest in all that concerns the Mother Country, this volcanic eruption of German Colonization threatens us with serious consequences as citizens of the New World. One of the most momentous though the least noted effects of the American Revolution was the diversion of British emigration from America to Australia. Had the parting between the Mother Country and the adult colonies been friendly instead of being hostile, those British cities which now stand in Australia would have risen, with their industries and their wealth, in the United States. What is of still more importance, that element of American population in which the habits and traditions of self-government chiefly reside would have received a large reinforcement. It is pretty clear that the Anglo-American race is declining in numbers; its women have been pampered into a dislike of the burdens of maternity which is deplored by all who write upon these subjects, either from a medical or a social point of view. The question is whether its remaining stock of vitality is sufficient to enable it, before it loses its tutelary ascendancy, to complete the political education of the other races. The other races are the German, the Irish, the French, which is fast extending its borders, and the negro; to which perhaps should be added the Italian, which is now coming in increasing numbers. Of these, the German, especially the North German, is, as material for free citizens, unquestionably the best: its fundamental character is that of the Teuton, and though it has not till recently undergone much training in self-government, it is at worst a blank sheet of paper: it has contracted no evil tendencies or malignity of political disposition. It is steadily industrious, and steady industry, with the possession of its fruits, forms the essential basis of the character of a good citizen. Nor is it the slave of any superstition: for even the Catholic German shows the blood of Luther, and is a Liberal compared with the Irishman, or with the Frenchman of Quebec. There can be no worthier or more valuable citizens than our German population in Waterloo County. Among the Germans the family also remains unimpaired; sexual revolution has not yet touched it or affected the habits of the women, and the race seems likely, in the rivalry of races, to hold its own. The diversion of German emigration from these shores to Africa or Australia, on which Bismarck appears bent, would, therefore, withdraw from this continent

so much of the element on the steady supply of which depend our best hopes for the political future. Whatever may be the gifts and graces of the French or the Irish character, nobody has ever ascribed to either a special aptitude for the creation or the maintenance of free institutions, and the doom of political hopelessness pronounced by Mommsen on the whole of the race to which the vivacious and romantic Gaul belonged, if it is not the final verdict of history, is at least by comparison true. Of the political character of the negro the outcome and monument is Haiti. The Italians are chiefly from Calabria or other districts in Southern Italy, which till yesterday had not seen the face of freedom since the ruin of Amalfi. The French, the Irish and the Italians are alike completely under the sway of a Church which always has been and always must be anti-national as well as hostile in spirit to liberty of every kind, and which is now at open war with popular right and the other organic principles of our new-world civilization. The welfare of the emigrants from Germany themselves will be sacrificed to Bismarck's fancy for keeping them under the German flag. An immense advantage is enjoyed by the emigrant who can find room in a long settled country, where the rough work has been already done for him, and all the benefits of civilization, both material and social, surround him as soon as he steps ashore. The pioneer in a new country, even in the most fertile of new countries, is one of a forlorn hope; he has to wage in loneliness a single-handed contest with nature, and he is fortunate if his body does not help, like those of the Russian soldiers at Ismail, to build the bridge over which happier generations are to advance to the capture of the town. After all, Bismarck is likely, as was said before, to find that distant colonies, whose infancy will long be in need of protection, are nothing like so real a source of strength to him and his diplomacy as the German vote in the United States.

No plea surely can be more righteous than that of the brewers and others interested in the liquor trade for the requirement of a fair proportional majority, as a proof that the opinion of the community is really and deliberately in favour of a sumptuary law. Those who decline to vote for the Scott Act must be counted against it, since they show by their abstention that in their opinion a case has not been made out for this extraordinary legislation; and reckoning thus, it will be found that the Act has almost everywhere been carried by a minority of the constituency. The result of course is that when carried it has no force of public sentiment to sustain it, and the only grant of the measure is the conversion of the liquor trade from a licensed and regulated business into unregulated contrabandism. Fresh evidence appears, and in the columns of a journal which supports the Scott Act, that in Maine you can have as much liquor as you please, only of vile quality, and in an illicit way; while an English writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette* reports that he has been looking in Maine for the good effect of Prohibition on the character and condition of the people, but no such effect is to be seen. The alcohol panic will in time subside; perhaps it will be succeeded by an opium panic, a tobacco panic, or a tea panic; people will get tired of decorating themselves with the Blue Ribbon of Superior Virtue; the political adventurers who are in that line of business will have gathered in their harvest; and the Scott Act will either be repealed or fall into desuetude. We shall then find ourselves in face of an unlicensed liquor trade, while by the suppression of beer and cider the people will have become used to drink nothing but ardent spirits, and the moral agencies which are now successfully combating drunkenness will have fallen into abeyance. These adoptions of the Scott Act are ostensibly measures of local self-government; in reality they scarcely deserve that name. Local opinion is not left to act spontaneously and with freedom. The movement is in fact carried on by a centralized organization, which brings its machinery to bear on one county after another, and some of the chief wire-pullers and stump-orators of which are now Americans, who of course have no compunction in ruining a Canadian trade. The menaced trade has not a fair chance because it may be attacked at any moment, and it cannot be always in a posture of defence or carrying on a counter agitation. It is time that Parliament should do its duty. This abandonment of legislation to agitators, local or general, is mere poltroonery. If it is necessary that a restriction should be imposed on the habits of the people, let the national Legislature impose it and see that it is carried into effect.

An eminent contemporary, in some remarks on independent journalism, of which, as a whole, writers in *THE WEEK* had certainly no reason to complain, noted as drawbacks a want of sympathy with the men engaged in the public life of the country, a tendency to encourage cynicism towards the only political system possible in this country, and the creation of an unhealthy disposition in young men by making them fancy them-