

## CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

THE "Bystander Papers" are not editorial, but the opinions, expressed without reserve, of an individual writer. Those who hold the opposite opinions are equally at liberty to advocate their views in the columns of this journal. It was the special object of the founders of THE WEEK to provide a perfectly free court for Canadian discussion.—EDITOR.

SUCH a demonstration as the University dinner can hardly have failed to impress upon the minds of the people of the Province the fact that a question of real importance has come to a head. Universities, like professions, do not exist for themselves but for the community. That they are merely places of education for the rich, though a prevalent, is a totally fallacious notion. In the first place, if properly organized, they afford the ladder by which aspiring merit, even when born under the lowliest roof, may mount to eminence, wealth, and fame. But, in the second place, if they are provided with sufficient means for advancing learning and science, a function not less proper to them or less important than that of education, they make their beneficent influence felt by every grade and in every department of society. Honour to labour by all means; only let us not forget that the work of Bacon's or Newton's brain is labour, and worth more than the labour of ten thousand hands, not only to philosophers or astronomers, but to humanity. Fate sometimes has agreeable as well as disagreeable surprises for us. Ten years ago university confederation seemed to be coming. There were speeches and conferences; there was in different quarters a most hopeful manifestation of interest in the subject. But local jealousies, pecuniary difficulties, denominational fears interposed. Provincial opinion was at the time under the influence of a narrow, selfish, and ignoble dictatorship, to which all generous aspirations, and all who shared them or tried to give them expression were alike hateful; the movement flagged and expired; there appeared to be no hope of its revival; we seemed to have sunk back finally into the "one-horse" system. Only a great university can be a good university; only a great university can support a worthy staff, library, apparatus; only a great university can confer degrees which will be of any value or afford an assurance of competency to the nation; only a great university can do anything of importance for the advancement of learning and science; only a great university can produce the atmosphere in which learning and science flourish; only a great university can be a powerful organ and focus of intellect in the community—all this continued to be affirmed, though in desponding tones, and it all remained unconfuted, but it also remained ineffective, and the advocates of high education had begun to turn their minds elsewhere. Suddenly the movement is renewed, and with greater vigour than before. A wealthy and generous man holds out, as it is understood, to a denominational university the hope of a large addition to its endowments if it will migrate to Toronto; a proposal to give assistance out of the Provincial funds to the college which is identified with the Provincial University, gives birth to a debate which excites interest in the general subject; and we find ourselves in a moment almost on the threshold of confederation. Even at Trinity, where it might be supposed that the spirit of religious separation would be strong, the tone of the discussion which took place the other day, though adverse to the endowment by the State of a "mammoth college," was far from adverse to confederation. To men trained as the Trinity staff have been, in the English universities, a federal university with colleges enjoying autonomy within their own gates, is the familiar model. They know that under such a system the life of the college is not lost in that of the university, but on the contrary is rather the stronger of the two, and gains in intensity by the emulation with other colleges. Probably when their thoughts recur to Oxford or Cambridge, it is not the image of the Sheldonian Theatre or of the Senate House that rises in their minds so much as those of the quadrangle, chapel, and hall of their own college. Not a sentiment, not an association, not a memory, except such as are purely local, will be disturbed by confederation. In truth, the vitality of colleges may be said to depend on the adoption of that policy, for as universities some of the existing institutions assuredly will not live forever. Sectarian enthusiasm is waning; support from that source will fail; and in the end the choice will lie between decay and migration to the centre. For religion, all the security possible is afforded by the control of each college over the religious teaching within its own walls, and the fair representation of each in the governing body of the university, which will give a veto on any professorial teaching adverse to religion: though the truth is that, as a lecturer generally wishes to please, not to affront, his audience, offences of this kind are not likely to be often committed. Each denominational college may continue to exercise its university power by granting its own theological degrees. This is an age of religious disturbance, of a free press, and of open book-stores. A university protected by tests is now like a city with gates of brass, but

without walls. Maynooth excludes doubt by immuring the student's mind; but no system less monastic, none which a Protestant or Anglican College could enforce, would shut out the intellectual influences of the age. There will of course be difficulties, and serious difficulties, in the process of confederation; there will be rival interests to be adjusted, jealousies to be removed, misgivings to be allayed; but the policy itself presents no inherent obstacle; it is the one which seems to meet, as no other policy can, at once the intellectual and the religious needs of our time. Nothing else can give us a great university; for it is evident that the further endowment, on anything like the necessary scale, of any one college by the State, if the Government could be induced to propose it, would meet with insurmountable resistance. In one of the debates on the extension of the British franchise, Mr. Lowe spoke with horror of the dreary and monotonous level of democracy, on which any mole-hill was a mountain. The orator was a strong Conservative; and to buy political picturesqueness by the retention of unjust privilege is to buy it much too dear. Yet a democratic society has its liabilities as well as its blessings. We cannot have here the historic grandeurs of the old world; but we may have grandeur in the shape of institutions which, by attracting the free and rational allegiance of the people, and by presenting centres of national pride and attachment, shall reconcile the justice of democracy with the loftier and richer sentiment of the old *regime*. Nor is there any institution more likely to play this part than a university, of which the honours are open to all merit and the benefits universal. Destiny offers to the members of the Provincial Government an opportunity which it is to be hoped they will not want the spirit to embrace. There have been junctures in Canadian history when the occasion called for the man, but the man did not appear.

THE intervention of Mr. Houston in the debate respecting co-education seems to show that the "Bystander" was, at all events, right in connecting that plan with the general movement of sexual change and perhaps with some other schemes of beneficent innovation which society, at least that part of it which is not gifted with flashing insight, must be allowed a little time to consider. Mr. Houston thinks it unnecessary to state, what everybody must know, that the "Bystander," in his notes respecting co-education, has contented himself with dogmatizing on the subject and has not cast on it a ray of helpful light. We are all, perhaps, rather apt to take the reasoning of others for dogmatism and our own dogmatism for reasoning. Mr. Houston, no doubt, believes that he is reasoning when he peremptorily dooms to derision and contempt as "fossil anachronisms" all universities which fail without further deliberation to embrace his view. It may surely be doubted whether a male university, such as the great universities of Europe, with a world-renowned staff, leading the van of intellectual progress and promoting literature and science as well as teaching thousands of students, even if it should take a little more time to ponder over the question of admitting female students, will be in very imminent danger of sinking into derision and contempt. "Ludicrous" as it may be, nothing is more certain than that in the United States co-education has hitherto failed as a general system, the immense majority of parents having continued to prefer separate to mixed places of education for their daughters. The fact is patent and rests not upon the personal evidence of President Eliot, though there is not a man living whose evidence on these subjects is worth more than his. But the "Bystander's" attitude on this question is somewhat misinterpreted by Mr. Houston. He does not obstinately oppose an experiment which a certain number of worthy people desire; he only prays that it may be tried in the safest, not in the most hazardous, manner, and that it may not, by the fanaticism and petulance of a tyrannical minority, be violently thrust upon all the universities at once. He proposes that female students shall be placed under some special guardianship. In the United States, it may be, thanks partly to the new turn given by co-educationists and sexual revolutionists generally to female ideas, there are young ladies who, under any system or absence of system, are as safe as icebergs. But all young ladies are not as safe as icebergs; at least Mr. Charlton does not think they are. If they were, why should not our female colleges redeem themselves from the reproach of fossilism and anachronism by the admission of a few young men? Has nature placed the duty and happiness of women in the line of domestic affection or in that of intellectual ambition? That is the question which demands a distinct answer before we plunge into fundamental change. If it is wrongly answered, and the error is carried into practice, a false direction will evidently be given to the aspirations of women. That intellectual ambition is higher than domestic affection, and that learning is worth more than beauty of character are positions tacitly assumed by sexual revolutionists, which some of us still take leave emphatically to deny. At all events