

"BYSTANDER" ON CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

WHILE our neighbours set aside party to restore by the election of Cleveland integrity and purity to their government, Canada has been called upon to do special homage to the veteran manager of a great party machine. To Sir John Macdonald's social character no one who has been in his company refuses a tribute; nor are the social qualities separable from the other qualities which mark a man as a political leader. Without them, at least only the most towering genius can command allegiance. Enmity itself cannot deny that Sir John has been a most successful head of his party; that he has managed to found its power on an unstable combination of heterogeneous elements which scarcely any hand but his could have held together; that he has kept it in place with little interruption for an extraordinary length of time, and, when it was defeated, has been able to retain his ascendancy over it, to rally its broken forces and to lead it again to victory. Before his triumphal car gaily move to the sound of patriotic hymns a hundred holders of lucrative situations, while thrice the number of holders of promises pace with demurer mien behind. All this implies Parliamentary skill, power of organization, address, tact, patience, energy, elasticity, knowledge of the country and of mankind. Nor has the knowledge of mankind been, under the circumstances, the less available because it has been gathered by a somewhat exclusive observation of one side of human nature; so that, like the veteran diplomatists who were taken in by telling them simple truth, of which they had no experience, Sir John Macdonald's sagacity might be at fault if ever he should encounter disinterestedness in man. Tolerance, credit for which all will concede to our Premier, is at least a negative virtue, and even where its parentage may be open to cavil, it has advantages, particularly in the case of one who has to attract ability into the public service, over the persecuting orthodoxy which, styling itself Liberal, offers you conformity or the sword. In this respect it may be thought that his reign has been practically more favourable to progress than that of some of his rivals might have been. If he has been the political corruptor of others, his bitterest opponents must allow that he has himself been incorrupt; and, though such praise is not the highest, it is something, amidst boundless opportunities and in a moral atmosphere by no means bracing, to have aimed at no sordid prize. There is reason for surmising that even in the distribution of patronage Sir John would have been more patriotic, had not the fell maw of party always ravened for its prey. Speakers at the party feast of course go far beyond this; they laud and magnify without measure, not only the man and the leader, but the system. Colder critics only consider how far the system is the creation of the man and chargeable to his account, how far it was imposed by necessity upon a statesman who had to hold together the members of a league united by no strong bond of material interests, and including Provinces whose delegations haggle with the Government for better terms till the bell has rung for a division. Much has been forgiven to Walpole because he had to deal with the difficulties of a disputed succession; not a little may be forgiven the minister who has had to deal with Canadian Confederation. But we, too, look forward to reform and to better times.

To criticize speeches made at a party Banquet would be a platitude. On such occasions eloquence spurns the ground and soars into regions far above fact and sense. The Latin adage that in wine there is truth had reference to blabbing, not to veracity. Besides, who can undertake to discuss a complete Tory version of the political history of Canada? We must leave the curious to compare it with the Grit version given us the other day at the Banquet of the Conquering Hero, and to make what they can of the result. The Chieftain showed the resources of his constitution, not only by the length and vigour of his speeches, but by keeping his place to the very end. Yet the question of succession must have been present to the thoughtful minds with an interest in the future. Sir Hector Langevin, touching that theme with delicacy, bids us observe with pious thankfulness that Providence always has in store a leader for the Tory Party. The counsels of heaven, however, are at present unrevealed. The child of destiny can hardly be Sir Hector himself. His efficiency as an administrator, which is unquestionable, and his questionable command of Quebec, are fatally countervailed, not only by his peculiar connection with some unfortunate passages of history, but by his ecclesiastical relations. The Orangemen, so long as they are following a Protestant chief in the person of Sir John Macdonald, may be content to wink hard at the fact that he has a large Popish contingent in his camp; but it is more than doubtful whether they would follow a Roman Catholic, and not only a Roman Catholic, but one of the most pronounced type and reputed to enjoy the special favour of the Society of Jesus. To Virtue Sir Leonard Tilley's

name is dear; but she must bewail the declining glory of her favourite's financial policy, and it is understood that Sir Leonard himself is weary of toil, strife and receptions of commercial deputations. For some reason difficult to assign the name of Sir Alexander Campbell is never mentioned in speculations on the succession to the leadership, and that of Mr. Dalton McCarthy is insufficiently known to the people of the Dominion. Mr. Chapleau bears away the palm of after-dinner eloquence, but he is only a rising star. The strongest man of the party in debate, the man to whom in the day of battle the party looks for effective championship of its cause, is evidently Sir Charles Tupper. In the Pacific Railway conflict of last Session his presence was felt to be indispensable, not only on the ground of his acquaintance with the special subject, but on that of his personal force, and it largely contributed to the victory. True, there is a section of the party which does not love or trust him; but necessity is an eloquent pleader and will persuade submission when the alternative is dissolution. Sir Charles' health is said to be doubtful; perhaps his chances of political life may not be better than those of the present incumbent; but if he survives, he will most likely grasp the succession. Such speculations, however, rest altogether on a most uncertain basis. The probability is that the heterogeneous combination, united by no natural bond either of principle or interest, but only by Better Terms and other ties of an equivocal kind, when it ceases to be held together by the master hand which formed it, instead of receiving another leader, either from Providence or from any other quarter, will break up and crumble into dust.

THE only point on which it was at all likely that light would be thrown at the party gathering was the Chieftain's position with regard to Imperial Federation, which, his reported sayings in England, compared with his Home Rule utterances here, had involved in some mystery. With the deftness of one of the Davenport Brothers he slips out of his inconvenient bonds. Not only are these hands always clean, but they are always free, tie them with as many knots as you will. He is not for a Parliamentary or Legislative Federation but for a union by "treaty." A treaty between an Imperial country and its dependency! A treaty between a man and his wife! How can treaty relations possibly exist, except between independent nations? Sir John's explanation adds another cloud of fog to the most nebulous of controversies. In the transports of the festive hour the Chieftain shouldered the musket of his martial days, and pointed it at the traitors who would disturb the existing connection. He must take care that the venerable firelock does not go off through the breech instead of through the muzzle, and singe somebody who with his Protectionist Tariff has been breaking up the commercial unity of the Empire, and declaring for Home Rule to the hilt. He must take care also that he does not hit Mr. Chapleau, who holds it to be "evident to any attentive observer that the next generation will solve the problem of the future mode of existence of our country, either by the political federation of Great Britain and its colonies, or by the peaceful assumption of an independent power by this Dominion." And now let the question sleep till the London Federation Committee brings up its report, an event which no one who was present at the Banquet, except the youthful Chieftain himself, has a chance of living to see. The Schoolman's "chimera buzzing in a vacuum" was hardly a more unprofitable subject of debate. The very attempt to impose on the free colonies the yoke of Federation, as it would at once raise irritating questions respecting the distribution of power, the appointment of burdens, and the fiscal system, would place in jeopardy that bond of affection of which freedom is the best preserver and which is not least cherished by those who look forward most confidently to the day when the measure of freedom shall be complete.

WHEN the heavily burdened ratepayer presumes to criticize municipal administration he is generally told that if anything is wrong the fault is his own and that he ought to show more interest in his own affairs. The Citizens' Municipal Reform Association of Toronto is a response to this appeal. It is formed at a critical juncture of the city affairs for the purpose of stimulating the citizens to do their duty in the municipal elections, and thus pave the way, through an improved composition of the Council, for ulterior measures of reform. That reform is needed, appears to be the almost universal conviction. To impute or suspect corruption without good reason is not right; random accusations of this kind debase instead of raising the tone of public life; but without corruption, or any wilful dereliction of duty, there may be incapacity, want of system, and waste. Moreover, where contracts are numerous and large, interests may form adverse to that of the public and beyond the effectual control of an annually elected and ephemeral government. But it is from the Council itself, in conjunction with the more active-minded of the citizens, that reform