

## 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.

ATTENTION is called to French Parties by the physical death—long preceded by the moral death—of the "Danton of the Second Empire," M. Rouher. Let not science undervalue the power of imagination in human affairs. In France two legends have exerted an immense as well as a most sinister influence. One is the Napoleonic legend, to which Rouher, like Morny, Fleury and Persigny owed his elevation. This, embodied in the lying volumes of Thiers, overturned the constitutional monarchy, gave birth to the second empire with all its villainy and corruption, brought upon France the war with Germany, and still seriously disquiets the republic. The other is the revolutionary legend of which the hagiographers are Lamartine, Louis Blanc and other writers of that school, the greatest fabler of all being perhaps Louis Blanc. To the influence of this legend French Society owes half a century of disturbance, the battles of June, the wreck of the Republic of 1848, and the hideous episode of the Commune. The Commune has been carefully studied by the writer of *Les Convulsions de Paris*, and if his conscientiousness equals his minuteness, there can be no doubt as to the character of the outbreak or the degree of sympathy which it deserves. Suffering there was of course, and suffering, even if it be largely the retributive offspring of idleness and intemperance, always demands our pity, and always proclaims the duty of social reform. But, of enthusiasm, even the most misguided, which could claim the slightest respect, there seems scarcely to have been a particle; nothing appears but mania at best, while the predominating elements are savagery, felony, greed and absinthe. A community in the hands of such regenerators of society would be a bedlam and a slaughter house, as Paris under the commune was. But the influence of the revolutionary legend is manifest. Everybody is mimicking some actor in the scenes of the Terror. There are those for whom Robespierre Couthon and St. Just are too mild, and too little men of action: no models will serve them but Marat and Hebert. Imagination enjoys great latitude, for the men of the first revolution passed over the historic stage like a crowd of ghosts in Dante's Purgatory, hurried along in the driving storm so rapidly that individual scrutiny is impossible. Scarcely has history time to bring the telescope to bear on any figure before it has passed beyond the field of vision. Thus there is unlimited scope for romance, as Lamartine and Louis Blanc have shown. Even the faces have almost become mythical. The beauty of Madame Roland and Barbaroux is not entirely beyond question. Madame B., an Ultra-Jacobin lady, and about the only memoir-writer of the party, if indeed a stream of Jacobin sentiment with hardly any facts can be called memoirs, describes the features of Robespierre, who dined at her house, as so attractive that nature could have formed them only to express a noble soul. Serjent, ex-secretary of the Jacobin Club, who lived nearly to a hundred, and passed his old age at Nice, used in conversation to describe the same features as unspeakably mean and repulsive. Napoleon's portrait is probably idealized. Lord Russell, who saw him at Elba, appeared to have been chiefly struck by his extreme obesity and the evil expression of his eye; and as the young Whig was a worshipper he is not likely to have underrated the beauty of the idol. The spell of the revolutionary legend seems not to have survived the catastrophe of the Commune. French Socialists and Anarchists at present do not talk much about Robespierre and Marat. But the Napoleonic legend has the great advantage of being indissolubly entwined with the military vanity which is the leading passion of the people, at least of that section which inspires literature and moulds opinion. The departure of Rouher marks the final exit from the stage of the group of which he was not the most disreputable member, but the column still stands on the Place Vendôme, and there is in Bonapartism a lingering spark of vitality which the factions and follies of the republicans may yet cherish into renewed life.

As it is in Great Britain, Canada and the United States, so it is in Australia, and in every Anglo-Saxon polity in which a body of Irish Catholics exists. All are threatened by the same peril. In Australia they are now discussing the subject of electoral reform. The author of a very careful essay on the subject in the *Melbourne Review* dwells on the evils connected with the balance of parties and the perpetual swinging of the political pendulum. "This state of things," he says, "is aggravated in Victoria by the existence of the Catholic vote, which is used to defeat ministry after ministry. Parties are generally pretty evenly divided, and the Catholic vote unites now with one side, and now with the other. Our

political system will never acquire stability so long as the electoral law leaves such immense power in the hands of a discontented minority." Such power, however, will be left in the hands of a discontented or self-seeking minority so long as the party system and, with it, the fell necessity of finding or buying support for a party continue to exist. The conduct of the Catholic Irish, or of the main body of them (for, of course, there are exceptions not a few) is perfectly natural on their part, while it is fraught with ruin to the state. The church of which they are the liegemen, and which forms at once the object of their religious devotion and the bond of union among them as a race, is and cannot possibly help being the mortal enemy of Protestant civilization, on the organic principle of which the Encyclical and the Syllabus expressly lay their ban. An Irish Catholic, of the distinct type, may by the softening influence of social and commercial intercourse be made, and often is made, like other citizens in all his personal relations; but, politically, he is not like other citizens; he is not, in the proper sense of the term, a citizen at all. He possesses the suffrage like the rest of us; but he uses it not in the interest of the commonwealth, or of any party in the commonwealth, but in the interest of his church and race. Regarding the rest of us politically almost as aliens, in the midst of whom they are encamped, the liegemen of Rome take advantage of our factional divisions, to bring us all under their yoke and compel us to be the instruments of our own political destruction. In this they resemble the Slave-owners, who by playing off parties in the Free States against each other made themselves masters of the Union and secured the interest of their peculiar institution. The same hypocritical servility is displayed by our politicians in cringing to the Catholic, as was displayed by the Northern politicians in cringing to the Southern vote; and the end of those who thus sell themselves and truck the welfare of the commonwealth for the means of climbing into power will be the same in the second case as it was in the first. All this affected sympathy with the Terrorist rebellion in the Catholic provinces of Ireland is, as everybody who is not blind must see, the mask of a party which is angling for the Catholic vote. As in the United States, when the power of slavery was advancing with giant strides, so in these communities of ours, those who point out the growing danger are branded as disturbers of public harmony. The cry of peace is raised where there is no peace or hope of peace, except in timely, united and firm resistance. Another irrepressible conflict begins to cast its growing shadow over the scene. If we wish, as every good citizen must earnestly wish, to avert a struggle, our course is clear. We are not called upon in any way to curtail Irish rights or to withhold a particle of our sympathy from Irish sufferings. We have only to quell the divisions among ourselves by which the hostile influence reigns, put an end to our senseless factions, set the country above party, and let the manœuvring leaders of Irish Catholicism see that they have nothing to rely on but their own force, of the inefficiency of which to reduce us to political bondage they will very speedily be convinced.

A BYSTANDER.

## HERE AND THERE.

IN an editorial synopsis of the character and work of the late Wendell Phillips, the *New York Tribune* points out that Northerners who advocated emancipation before the war were detested, not so much because the right to hold slaves was believed in, as because agitation was bad for trade. The result was that Mr. Phillips' violent attacks made him a social outcast, a political Ishmaelite, and virtually an enemy of society. We give the following cutting, not only as coming from a journal always opposed to slavery and, therefore, friendly to Mr. Phillips on that question, but as a sample of keener writing than is usually found in American papers:—

"We say these things not to disparage Mr. Phillips; nobody questions the value of his services; but to explain why it is that after slavery had been abolished he found himself so often at war with society. To be at war with society was his normal state for half a century. At the beginning of his career he thought that he saw in all the bulwarks of society, in the church, the school, the university, the press, the ballot, the legislature, the organization of industry, the conventionalities of life, one vast compact with hell; everything that was, was wrong; the first principle of human rights, that man shall own himself, could only be secured by attacking the general fabric of American civilization. That he was proved wrong, in one point after another, did not tend to soften his temper. He wrangled over the events which, if they discredited his methods, were the triumphant vindication of his purpose; and at the end of the anti-slavery agitation he was hardly less hostile to the established order of things than he had been when the "broad-cloth mob" was dragging Garrison through the streets with a rope around his body. Like many other apostles of one great idea, he had a very imperfect comprehension of matters outside his special line of thought. Thus, with the disposition grown inveterate to regard the existing arrangements of society as devices for oppression, it is not surprising that he threw himself into one scheme of wild agitation after another, and brought to the service of visionaries and demagogues that unique combination of fervour, elegance, adroitness, integrity, high-mindedness, and fertility in vituperation which made him the most remarkable orator of our times. He has kept very queer company of late years and sustained very bad causes; but nobody has ever doubted the purity of his intentions. His errors will soon be forgotten; his thirty years' war for freedom will keep his memory green."