

South Africa, but the state of things is very bad in that quarter also. The Boers have occupied and annexed British territory, killed British subjects, hauled down the British flag, insulted British Commissioners, and threatened to drive the British authorities with contumely out of a country just placed under British protection. Of course the confidence of the aggressors and the danger increase daily, and unless the force of the Empire is soon put forth, there is every prospect of a conflict more serious than the Zulu War. Nominal disclosures have been obtained from the filibusters, but they are evidently of no value. The habitual cruelty of the Boers to the natives makes the repression of their inroads necessary in the interest of humanity as well as in that of the colony. The delay is excused on the grounds that England is preoccupied, that the colony is not at heart loyal, and that the British lion "is not a centipede and cannot put down his foot in a hundred places at once." That the British lion cannot put down his foot in a hundred, or even in three, places at once is a very pregnant truth, and one upon which all dependencies will do well to meditate. The Cape Colony is relying on the Mother Country for protection which the Mother Country cannot afford.

"BYSTANDER" ON CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

IN the British Parliament there is plenty of wisdom, but the critical question is whether, in the momentous session now approaching, that wisdom will have fair play. The struggle of centuries by which supreme power has been gradually transferred from the Crown and the aristocracy to the people now touches upon its close. Democracy has come, so all clear-sighted men in England and in Europe say. How to organize it and provide it with such safeguards that it may be a reign of public reason, not of popular passion, is everywhere the question of the hour. But the British Government and Parliament approach that question under two misleading influences, each of fatal strength—fiction and faction. Constitutional fiction laps them in the belief that the Crown is still, as in past ages it was, the Government; and that upon its authority and stability they may rely for the maintenance of political order and the regular conduct of the administration, whatever may be the condition of the House of Commons. What faction does with them it is unhappily needless to explain. Every member of them at this moment sees the present and the future, more or less, through its angry and distorting haze. The task imposed on them by destiny is no less than that of revising the Constitution; we might say, without much exaggeration, it is that of founding a Government; for at present, paradoxical as the assertion may seem, there is no legal government in England. The Crown and the Privy Council, which the law recognizes, are politically mere shadows of the past; the Cabinet, which is the real executive, is not recognized by the law. It is nothing but a committee of the leaders of the dominant Party. Party is its sole basis, and the sole basis of whatever Government there is. But Party is in a state of manifest and hopeless disintegration, not in England only, but in all other countries, including the United States. Nor is there any prospect of its restoration, the mental independence which spurns at Party discipline being the inherent tendency of the age, while in the British Parliament the Irish section is now completely outside all regular combinations. When the Franchise Bill shall have been passed, the only authority left will be that of an assembly elected almost by universal suffrage, large enough to be in itself a mob, and already preserved from anarchy only by the personal ascendancy of a man of seventy-five. Of the new electorate, the Irish portion avows beforehand its intention of using the vote for the destruction of the Commonwealth. What the honest but ignorant peasantry of England will do, no man can say. But the die will have been cast, the leverage of Conservative reorganization will have been lost. The social soil, meantime, is heaving with revolutionary movements of all kinds. All who look upon this scene with patriotic eyes must long to see, amidst all those wrangling partisans, some neutral statesman step forth, with a clear view of the situation, with no tie but the country, and no object but its welfare, to impose a truce on faction while the great problem is being solved, and the nation is being provided with a stable Government. But the wish is futile. No such man is there. The country is in the hands of Mr. Gladstone, whose ascendancy in England evidently remains unimpaired, whatever may be his position abroad, or the results of his administration in Egypt, in South Africa, or even in Ireland: and to the mind of that illustrious man, at this decisive hour, apparently no idea is present but that of a popular and philanthropic extension of the suffrage, without regard to fitness or loyalty, which shall "unite the whole nation"—Tories, Whigs, Radicals, Parnellites and Communists—"in one compact body round their ancient throne."

It appears certain that the "important business" which took Sir John Macdonald suddenly to England was no other than his health. He finds it necessary once more to consult that wizard of medicine Dr. Andrew Clarke. That Sir John's malady is caused or aggravated by the pressure on his conscience of the long train of his political misdeeds is a "devout imagination," to use John Knox's phrase, of the Opposition organs; but it involves two assumptions—one as to the reality of the sins, the other as to the moral sensibility of the alleged sinner, to one of which at least some might be inclined to demur. There is no reason for believing that the disease is organic, or that the Premier may not be spared for some years to repent of his wickedness in excluding virtue for so long a time from office. But he is seventy as well as sick, and we have been reminded that he has borne for forty years the heavy burden of power. It is melancholy work to dig a man's grave; to dance upon it by anticipation is indecorous. But since this sudden and ominous announcement the eyes of all men, and especially of all Tories, have inevitably been turned to the future, where they encounter nothing but clouds and darkness. In ordinary cases, when a government loses its chief, though there may be a doubt about the succession, a settlement of some kind there is sure to be: one party or the other at length forms an administration, and for better or worse the government goes on. But the case of Canada is not ordinary. It is that of an uncemented or ill-cemented Confederation, the jarring and disjointed members of which have so far been held together by the qualities, arts, experience, and accumulated influence of one man. When he departs the bow will be left without Ulysses, or rather the fiddle will be left without Paginini. The immediate succession will in all probability be grasped by Sir Charles Tupper, who is the greatest gladiator in the Ministerial Party, and altogether next the Premier its strongest man. Sir Leonard Tilley will hardly be a competitor; his character commands respect, but it is understood that his health has suffered from the toils of office, and it is certain that his star as a financier has paled. It is impossible that a devout liegeman of the Roman Catholic priesthood like Sir Hector Langevin should be accepted by the Protestant Provinces. But Sir Charles Tupper's hold upon the Party is uncertain; still more uncertain is his power of holding all the heterogeneous elements of the Tory league together, and making the Orangemen of Ontario march to the poll with the Roman Catholics of Quebec. Nor is the Opposition in better case. Its condition, like that of the other Party, seems to show that among the blessings of Party Government is not to be counted a plentiful succession of statesmen. It has been seeking reinforcement of late in rather dry places, and not much reinforcement has been found. Mr. Huntington's return to political life, if his health permits it, would be a more valuable accession than any yet gained, and at the same time a much better pledge of a truly Liberal policy. The world has moved on since the days when mere Gritism was a basis for a government. It is not unlikely that the Governor-General may be called upon to play a more active part than usual; and if he is, neither impartiality nor judgment will be wanting. However, Sir John Macdonald is not yet dead.

IN the last WEEK "Caxton" propounded the question why more respect is not shown to journalists in this country. One reason he has himself supplied—they do not show sufficient respect to each other. When you see two men with furious countenances and torn clothes puffmelling each other as they roll together in the mud, you do not feel inclined to seek their acquaintance with the view of asking them to dinner. If members of the Press wish to obtain their natural standing in the estimation of society, their mutual personalities must cease. That they should obtain an artificial position, socially or politically, is not to be desired. There ought to be no mystery or pretence about this any more than about any other calling. A man does not, by buying himself a font of type, invest himself with a public mission, or with any special jurisdiction over the actions and characters of his fellow-citizens. If a journalist does his duty to society, honourably and like a gentleman, society will give him his due. It will give him his due likewise if he sells his journal to an interest or a faction, uses disgraceful language, or, worst of all, invades private life and traduces private character for the purpose of vending to prurient readers a filthy and criminal sheet. In some countries, notably in France and Spain, journalism has commonly been the stepping-stone to public life. It is more than doubtful whether in the interest of the community or in that of journalism itself the extension of the system is to be desired. At all events, the first day of public life ought to be the last of journalism. The functions of the statesman and those of the political critic are distinct, and cannot be combined without detriment to both. We have had enough of journals which were the personal organs and the private guillotines of politicians constituting themselves, beneath the mask of