

## CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

WHEN men are in the hands of public justice and are about to be brought to its bar for a serious offence, the commonest regard for propriety forbids the publication of anything which can prejudice the question of their guilt or innocence. Above all it is unfair to pillory as a convicted criminal a man who has not yet been tried. The objection is strongest of all when the accused person is a foreigner; indeed, his government would, in such a case, have a good ground for complaining that his trial had not been fair. To the "Bystander" therefore, it appears that silence upon the subject of the Ontario Bribery Scandal till the verdict shall have been pronounced, is a plain dictate of duty. Most cheerfully does he submit to it, since it exempts him, for the present, from the necessity of dealing with a case no part or incident of which can be touched without pain by anybody who has a regard for the character of our public men or for the honour of the country. The taint, however, ought not to be spread to more reputations than the disclosures affect. The existence in the hands of one of the accused of a note from the Minister of the Interior consenting to reward some subaltern services to the party with a petty appointment in no way justified the introduction of Mr. Macpherson's name into the present case. The object was apparent, but the act was unwarrantable. That the persons accused, if fairly convicted, may receive the punishment due to such offenders is the common desire of all good citizens. But the real moral of the whole affair is one which the "Bystander" has so often drawn that he is almost ashamed to draw it again, even under circumstances which give it so much force. This is the outcome, the inevitable outcome, of party government. When the two parties are evenly balanced, the excitement of the game becomes intense, and the party out of power seeing the prize so close within its reach makes desperate efforts to turn the scale by drawing over to its lines a sufficient number of the supporters of the Government. This happened at the opening of the session of the Ontario Parliament which saw the fall of Sandfield Macdonald's Ministry; and though bribes were not then offered, expectations were at least tacitly held out, and in one far from creditable instance, were ultimately fulfilled. When organic questions are out of the way and no real principle of division between the two parties any longer exists, the only agency by which they can be held together is corruption of one sort or other. Nor are the more refined and subtle kinds of corruption less injurious in their effects to the public than the coarser and more open kinds. A man who sells himself for a place or a so-called honour is likely to be fully as great a knave as the man who sells himself for money, while his influence for evil will be greater. Nothing, indeed, is practically more noxious than hypocritical solicitation of the "vote" of some section or church which has to be purchased by a sacrifice of public interests on the largest scale. Sir Richard Cartwright, in the debate on the Budget, bitterly deplored the condition into which our political morality had fallen, and declared that the government of the country was not only corrupt but corruption incarnate. He intended, no doubt that his description should be confined to the character of his opponents; but common sense will recognize no such limitation; the men on both sides are drawn from the same social element, have undergone the same training, and are subject to the same influences; the object of all alike is the possession of power; between individual politicians there may be wide differences, but between parties the difference can never be wide. The longer the factions fight the more violent the conflict will be, and the more desperate and the more corrupt will be the expedients to which, especially at the turning points of the struggle, they will have recourse. The larger, also, will be the train, on each side, of professional agents of corruption. Nothing will put an end to the consequences of the system but that which puts an end to the system itself. In the general history of this session of the Ontario Parliament we have an argument against party almost as cogent as the scene of scandal in which it closed. It opened with the waste of a fortnight of public time in the debate on the address, each member in turn reproducing in a diluted form the editorials of the party press; and throughout its course it has been little but a continuous broil. Of genuine deliberation upon public business, with the single object of promoting the interest of the Province, there has been almost none. If the affairs of any commercial company were managed in this style the end would infallibly be ruin. Why, in the case of the community, should we expect a better result?

THE President of the United States has obeyed the call of national honour by issuing instructions against the exportation of dynamite. The explosive being so easy of concealment, it is not likely that the instructions will be very effectual, but at least they are a tribute to humanity, the

payment of which, if the character of the American people was to be kept stainless before the world, no longer brooked delay. This is the cause not of England but of civilization, threatened in all its kingdoms and commonwealths by a domination of murder. The Government of the French Republic is exerting itself in earnest to put down by a vigorous application of the criminal law the plots and the preaching of the assassins; and the most liberal organs of the European press, even though not friendly to England, are loyal to morality. If the Americans continue to permit the open advocacy of murder at public meetings and the public raising of subscriptions for dynamite, their republic will be an oasis in the map of moral civilization. Mr. Godkin, of the *New York Post* and the *Nation*, is considerate enough to suggest that if assassins were not allowed to conspire and collect money for their work publicly, the English police might be deprived of useful information. What Mr. Godkin as an Irish Nationalist wants is that the Fenians should be left unmolested in their operations, and that they should succeed. His sympathy is the source of counsels which will lead America to dishonour. No man of sense can have any doubt as to the moral effect of licensing the open advocacy of crime. When any native American journal pretending to respectability meets with scoffs the remonstrances of England against dastardly attempts to butcher her unoffending citizens, we know what the motives are: they are that ignoble hatred of the Mother Country which is still the cherished heritage of the meaner Americans and, still more, the fear of the Irish vote: they are, that is to say, malignity and cowardice, the common seducers of men and communities from the path of rectitude. The Americans may rest assured that the struggle between their civilization and Irish Catholicism is as inevitable in the United States as it is in Great Britain, in Canada, in Australia and in all the other communities where the two elements confront each other; it is as irrepressible as was the conflict between Freedom and Slavery; and as in the case of Freedom and Slavery, the more the hostile power is courted and flattered the severer in the end the conflict will be. The sacrifice of national honour to Slavery was bootless; it only entailed in the end a large sacrifice of national blood. It may be wholesome to American patrons of Fenianism, though it is not pleasant to anybody, to reflect that on the occasion of the Draught Riots, American repression shed in one day a good deal more Irish blood than British repression has shed in fifty years.

MR. BLAKE'S speech against Orange Incorporation and against the "Secret Societies" in general is said by good judges who heard it to have been one of his highest efforts, though its effect was drowned in the "Scandal." But the whole strength of his case lay in one point of his argument. The Orange Association has allowed itself to be used as the vassal ally of a political party; it has given itself into the hands of leaders whose object was not Protestant liberty, but place; it has laid its head in the Delilah lap of patronage; it has even, by an unnatural and ignominious league with the Bleus, promoted that Roman Catholic ascendancy which it was the Orangeman's professed mission to restrain. These charges Orangeism cannot deny. It can purge itself for the future only by withdrawing itself from the leadership of intriguers, by renouncing mercenary aims, by re-kindling its fire at the original altar, by acting once more in the spirit of William of Orange, with proper regard for altered circumstances and without forgetting that the illustrious defender of Protestant freedom against Rome and her vassal despots was also the steadfast upholder of toleration. But when Mr. Blake assails Orangeism as a secret society, his foot is on less firm ground. There is a fallacious ambiguity about the term secret. It is loosely applied even to the Greek Letter Societies of the American Universities, which have nothing secret about them except a grip and a password, being in truth merely social clubs. Orangemen do not, any more than Freemasons or Oddfellows, make a secret either of their membership or of the object of their association; they parade in public; their aims are avowed, and whether expedient or inexpedient, are not illegal; they do not, like the secret societies of Europe, conspire against the Government or the law; they are now in Ireland actually engaged in defending the Government, the law, and the union against rebellion. Mr. Blake, on the other hand, by coming forward, with a motive not to be mistaken, to advocate Home Rule, that is, as he must well know, Disunion, and by forcing, as he unquestionably did, the Canadian Parliament to throw its moral weight into the scale of the Land League at the very time of the Phoenix Park murders, connected himself politically with an association which is secret indeed, walking in darkness, doing the works of darkness, and aiming at the subversion of the Government by terrorism and assassination. Recourse to private associations for the defence of public liberties is always in itself an evil; but when public liberties are deserted or bartered away by the cowardice or the selfish ambition of