

CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

THE grave and memorable words of Chief Justice Hagarty in his charge to the Grand Jury on the Conspiracy case against the violence of party feeling, must have been uttered with special reference to the organs of party press. Violent indeed the language of those organs has been; violent to the verge of frenzy and beyond; for they have not shrunk from charging political opponents with having laid dynamite in the Parliament buildings. But what can we expect? Is this anything but the inevitable outcome of the established system? It is not the business of a party journalist to be judicial: his business is that of the advocate, and we must be thankful if he keeps his advocacy tolerably within the bounds of truth and decency. He would be guilty of usurpation or hypocrisy if he played or pretended to play the judge. The writers on whose public utterances the merited censure of the Chief Justice falls, when you meet them in private are found to be not only able and highly educated but genial, candid, and open-minded men, whose conversation you enjoy and whose judgment you respect. When duty calls they take up their pens in the party quarrel, as the soldier shoulders his musket in the quarrel of his sovereign, and like the soldier in storming Badajoz they sometimes forget the humanities of war. They are only supplying what the public taste demands. The people of Canada have become absolutely besotted with party: no milder term will adequately express this state. They are like the Blue and Green factions at Constantinople, whose fury was in direct proportion to the futility of the quarrel. They cannot be induced to look at anything but party politics of the narrowest kind, and the vast majority of them probably read only one paper. The soul of the community is absorbed in the national cockfight; and these poor birds, when they drive their spurs into each other, do nothing but what they have been trained, fed up and tarred on to do. By the equitable mind and the feeling heart they will be regarded with pity as they lie after the fray with torn plumage and bleeding crests. Something, however, has been gained. We hope some day to have better things in the press than organs of party passion, but we have had things which were a good deal worse. We have had powerful journals used not for any public purpose however narrow, but as the engines of personal interest or malignity, and in those interests systematically assassinating character, and deliberately crushing independence of thought. This at all events is numbered with the past, and we can work, with less damage, even through a cyclone of that sort of mutual vituperation which comes, perhaps, more from the pen than from the heart.

If there has been nothing to hinder the "Bystander" from condemning Sir John Macdonald's dealings with the franchise, his appointments to the Senate, and his choice of agents for elections and other political purposes, in language which the Grit journals have deemed it worth their while to reproduce, what is there to hinder the same pen from criticizing with equal freedom all the other parts of the same man's public conduct? Why should the "Bystander" be deemed by any unbiased reader open to the suspicion of covertly supporting Sir John Macdonald's policy under the mask of independence? A partisan's idea of impartiality, of course, is entire agreement with his opinions and prejudices; any agreement short of entire he regards as a mere cloak for treasonable sympathy with the other side. The Government of Sir John Macdonald is sustained by questionable, or worse than questionable, means; he has too often employed bad men as well as sinister influences; such a system as that of which he is the head is demoralizing, and right minded men must desire to see it brought to an end. But his policy is not the offspring of Tophet. It is the offspring of a Confederation called into existence without a strong popular movement, by a deadlock among the politicians, and which, being made up of jarring interests, and ill cemented, cannot be held together without the free use of intrigue and sometimes of corruption. All that has been said in these papers for Sir John Macdonald is that circumstances are more to be blamed than he; that he is not devoid of patriotism; that he has done what he thought best for the country so far as the necessities of party would allow him; that he has kept at least one pair of hands clean amidst great temptations; and that by his rare address and powers of management he has probably spared us a good deal of corruption, and generally minimized the evil. People who hold out for blackmail till the division bell has rung are not to be governed by appeals to principle; and the question is whether any Prime Minister would have brought us off with a smaller amount of blackmail than Sir John Macdonald. Nobody commends Walpole's corruption, but everybody makes allowance for the necessities of a Minister who had to contend with the dangers of a disputed succession, with the fury of unscrupulous factions, and with a House of Commons as venal as the politicians of Quebec. Perhaps, after all, Walpole's worst offence was

not his purchase of votes, but his allowing himself, rather than resign office, to be drawn against his conscience into war with Spain. Mr. Blake knows as well as anybody that to give Ireland Canadian Home Rule, in other words, to put her on the footing of a transatlantic dependency, is impossible, and that to foment the revolt against the Union is to sound the trumpet of civil war; yet, to capture the Irish vote in Canada, he foments the agitation against the Union. The coarser crime is not always the greater or the more serious in its consequences to society. If to bribe with money is bad, to bribe with confusion and bloodshed is worse. In all this "Bystander" may be mistaken; and he may be mistaken in thinking that the reason of Mr. Blake's ill success as a leader, notwithstanding his high reputation, his ability and his excellence as a speaker, is that he has no rival policy to oppose to the policy, or the system, of his astute antagonist. But the error does not proceed from political leaning to either side. "The Bystander" heartily wishes that he was a fourth part as sure of the correctness of his own judgment as he is that he is free from partisan feeling, as well as from the shadow of personal interest in these affairs, and that, apart from any public objects which may be at stake, he would not hold up his hand to give one party an advantage over the other.

SCARCELY had the last words been written when another strong appeal was made on Mr. Blake's behalf to the Irish vote by a writer whose articles everybody believes to be of more importance than those of an ordinary journalist, and who by claiming for Mr. Blake the credit of having forced Sir John Macdonald's hand in the case of the Home Rule Resolutions, partly exonerates Sir John. Paddy has probably the wit to see that necessity rather than affection is the parent of these caresses; and if Paddy has not, his spiritual adviser has. The Catholic vote is always the last refuge of statesmen in distress. Mr. Blake will receive in return for his self-abasement just so much support as may enable him to effect any object which the priests may have in view, and he will then be bidden to depart in peace. If he doubts this he had better consult the experience of the Liberal party on the other side of the water. Nor will he have reason to complain of perfidious treatment unless, laying his hand upon his heart, he can sincerely declare that he is himself actuated by no motive but genuine sympathy with the Irish Catholics and their cause. Had he, in the decisive moment of his political career, grasped the hand of Destiny instead of dallying with it, and been steadily true to the cause of which he had assumed the leadership, and to the friends who had enlisted under his banner and shown that they were ready to follow him with devotion, he would not now be sitting in the political gate and holding out his hand for an obolus to the Archbishop of Toronto or to the Jesuits of Quebec. But he has the name, without the habits, of the Puritan sea king who founded the naval tactics of England. He allowed the *Globe* to "whip him into the traces," and since that time, though he has been always showing ability both as a speaker and as an administrator, he has never had any policy on which he could found an effective appeal to the intelligence or the heart of the country. He has been forced to fall into the ways of the ordinary political strategist and cultivate the art of vote-hunting, of which his adversary is an incomparably greater master than he is. Perhaps he may congratulate himself on his inferiority in a black art. At all events he does not possess the skill which can capture one vote without fatally estranging another, and at the next general election he will find that he has not only made all the Orangemen and many members of the other societies his mortal enemies, but roused from their electoral apathy a good many Englishmen who, if they do not wish to dominate, do not choose to be trampled on, and are determined not to be made accomplices in the dismemberment of the United Kingdom. In the meantime it would be shameless to call on a Liberal, by his allegiance to his cause, to follow a leader who is bidding for the favour of the Irish Catholics, which he cannot win without rivetting upon us the yoke of a power radically hostile to every article of the Liberal creed.

IT is not in the least likely that any practical step will be taken during the present session of Congress in the way of commercial legislation. Henceforth serious attention will be given to nothing except the preparation of the two parties for the coming Presidential election. But Reciprocity is evidently alive. The presence, the other day, of a member of the Canadian Government at Washington seemed to indicate that the negotiations opened between the two Governments had not been abandoned, and members of Congress inclined to liberal opinions on commercial subjects are moving in the same direction. The American lumbermen do not oppose, they appear to favour, the free admission of Canadian lumber; probably not a few of them have an interest in timber limits on this side of the Line. To the Protectionists, who must now be beginning to feel that