

## CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

INTEREST in the Presidential contest deepens. At the same time the number and complexity of the eddies and backstreams makes it very difficult to say in which direction the current is really setting, and renders prediction unusually hazardous. On one hand there is the Republican Bolt; on the other there is Tammany in dudgeon and there are the Irish wavering between allegiance to the Democratic standard and the attractions of the Jingo and anti-British policy supposed to be represented by Mr. Blaine. Butler, though he ignominiously failed to control the decision at Chicago, is still apparently manoeuvring in his own interest, and if he can keep his Greenbackers and the rest of his virtuous train together, he may possibly prevent either Cleveland or Blaine from having a majority and throw the election into Congress. It can hardly be doubted that there will be some lukewarmness, if not disaffection, among the Protectionists of the Democratic party; for though the Democratic platform declines the Tariff issue, and does not differ ostensibly from the Republican platform in its language on that subject, nothing is more certain than the truth of Mr. Blaine's assertion that the fate of the high-tariff is about to be decided. Moreover, fanatical Prohibitionism has started a candidate of its own, who, of course, will stand no chance of election, but will probably draw away support mainly from the Republican side. On the whole, appearances are propitious to Cleveland. The critical question seems to be whether the Republican Bolt will be determined and strong enough to carry New York and Massachusetts against Blaine. At present there is every sign of its determination and of its strength. It has had a meeting, attended largely and by men of mark, at New York, and put forth an address to the country, penned by Mr. Geo. W. Curtis with his usual moral force. The address founds the action of the Bolters solely on the objection to the personal character and proclivities of Mr. Blaine, the blot of corruption on his record, and his presumable hostility to administrative reform. Its keynote is that, "as there is no distinctive issue upon public policy presented for the consideration of the country, the character of the candidate becomes of the highest importance with all citizens who do not hold that party victory should be secured at any cost." In it and in the chairman's speech, Jingoism and Magnetism are glanced at, but character is held up as the main issue. These stalwart upholders of public morality are doing a great service to their country. Perhaps they are doing a greater service than they think, for little as they know or desire it, they are rebelling not only against party corruption, but against party.

WHAT says the address? "Parties now cohere mainly by habit and tradition, and since the great issues which divided them have been largely settled, the most vital political activity has been the endeavour of good citizens in both parties to adjust them to living issues and to make them effective agencies of political progress and reform." In other words, the grounds upon which these parties were formed, and which made adherence to one or the other of them rational and moral, have in great measure ceased to exist; but parties the community must have at any price: and, therefore, the chief business of the good citizen must be, the old quarrels having been settled, to invent new subjects of dissension which may take their place. In the meantime and pending the elaboration of these fresh issues, what is to be the bond of the party? What can it be, in the case of ordinary partisans, but corruption? And what is the natural fruit of corruption but the leadership of men such as the Bolters from the Republican ticket allege the Republican candidate to be? According to the framers of the address the patriotic endeavour to find new grounds of division has been unsuccessful. "No position," they say, "taken by one platform is seriously traversed by the other; both evidently contemplate a general agreement of public opinion upon subjects which have been long in controversy, and indicate an unwillingness to declare upon other and cardinal questions views which, in the present condition of opinion, might seriously disturb the parties within themselves." Would it be possible to declare in much more explicit terms that no justification for divisions into parties or for party action of any kind is any longer in existence? Are patriotic and intelligent citizens to bind themselves together in antagonism to their fellow-citizens and wage political war upon them merely out of blind deference to habit and tradition? There are still cardinal issues, says the address, but the parties are afraid to touch them. Then the parties are clearly defunct, and the organizations which have survived all reasonable and patriotic objects ought to be at once dissolved. The dissolution of one of them, perhaps of both, commences with the appearance of the Independent address.

IMPERIAL Federation seems at last about to emerge from the nebular state and present itself in a definite form. A meeting in England which

must have been important, since Mr. Forster, Mr. W. Smith and Lord Rosebery took part in it, has passed a resolution, moved by Lord Rosebery, that federation is indispensable to arrest disintegration and preserve the unity of the Empire. It is implied that, in the opinion of the meeting, unless federation can be brought about, that final step in the concession of self-government to the colonies which the meeting calls disintegration and others call emancipation is at hand. It was high time that this question shall take a practical shape and be brought to a decisive issue. Lord Rosebery and his eminent associates will no doubt give us that with which we have not hitherto been furnished—a working plan of federation, with the structure of the federal legislature, its relation to the legislatures of England and to those of the several colonies, the representation which the colonies respectively are to have in it, the subjects with which it is to deal, and the contributions of money and armaments which the colonies are to be expected to supply. They will also, it may be presumed, tell us plainly what are the specific benefits to be reaped by this huge agglomeration and what inducement is to be held out to the colonists to part with their independence, incur new liabilities, and submit to the obvious inconvenience of being under the jurisdiction of a legislature separated from some of them by half the globe. Of the leaders of our own political parties, both have declared themselves: the Liberal, curiously enough, in favour of Imperial Confederation, the Conservative against it. Sir John Macdonald's assertion of Canadian Home Rule has been decided and almost defiant. It is needless to repeat what has been more than once said in these papers. Mutual citizenship exists between the people of the colonies and those of the mother country. The "Bystander" trusts that it will never cease to exist; he even hopes that at some distant day, when the last traces of a senseless feud shall have vanished, it may be extended to the old colonists of England in the United States; and that thus not only the moral but to some extent the political unity of the English-speaking race may be restored. That he cherishes the moral unity of the race, which to him appears the one bond of real value, it is hardly necessary to assure any who have done him the honour to follow what he has said. More, he has never believed, and does not believe, it to be practicable. He cannot think that the current of events which has hitherto set so steadily towards independence will all at once change its course, or that communities which have nationality now full in view, will suddenly abjure that aspiration, and consent to become forever subordinate members of an enormous frame, the head and heart of which are to be far away.

It is perhaps more under the influence of custom and routine than in pursuance of a settled policy, that the Liberal Prime Minister of England, while he is plying his battering ram against the House of Lords, continues to propagate a titled class in the colonies. In this department, too, it is time that self-government should be conceded. The only true fountain of honour is that which springs from the national soil. A British Minister cannot discern merit across the Atlantic. He cannot tell who has done most for Canada, though he may be able to tell whose professions of loyalty to the Colonial office are loudest, and whose solicitations for the title are the most assiduous. It is needless, as it would be disagreeable, to scrutinize the annals of Canadian knighthood, and to inquire how far, in politics or in commerce, our chivalry has been the means of maintaining among us an exceptionally high standard of honour. The general effect of looking for a reward to a distant authority cannot be doubtful, and if attestation were needful, would be well attested by experience: a man will not serve Canada with his whole heart when the highest object of his ambition is elsewhere. The dispenser of these coveted baubles will always be able to exercise on our public men an influence separate from, and possibly at variance with, the interest and the opinion of their own country. Independent Australians are perfectly agreed with independent Canadians on this point. The plea that the presence of bearers of minor titles among us refines our manners, though it has been again urged on this occasion, will not bear a moment's scrutiny: our manners rest upon the more substantial basis of that mutual respect which is the offspring of equality. This is not the home of title any more than it is the home of etiquette, nor can the graces, whatever they may have been, of old world aristocracy be artificially created here. All that is really valuable in the character of the English gentleman, we may fairly hope that we shall always possess; and even in the old country an English gentleman would take fire if he were told that his sense of honour and his good breeding depended for their existence on the presence of a baronet in his neighbourhood. Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Blake have both found it more consistent with their self-respect, more patriotic, and better for their political position to refuse knighthood. To both, no doubt, the offer appeared what it really is, a subtle form of corruption. Their verdict is not less decisive against the