

"BYSTANDER" ON CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

In the United States the danger of a disputed election, which at one time seemed impending, is at an end. But if among the public men there are any truly worthy of the name of statesmen, they will surely accept the warning which has been now a second time given, and cast about for some means of rescuing the country from a series of periodical convulsions such as if prolonged must be the ruin of any commonwealth. In the meantime Mr. Cleveland comes to the Presidency under circumstances unusually auspicious. He is the nominee of the Democratic Party; he mainly owes to it his election, and of course he can be guilty of no perfidy to his friends. His Cabinet will no doubt be formed of Democrats, nor will it be inferior on that account if it is composed of such men as Mr. Pendleton and Mr. Bayard. But he is the nominee of the purest section of the party, which avowed that it loved him because the corrupt section was his enemy. The Irish Nationalists violently opposed him, and Tammany betrayed him for the sake of Republican support in the municipal elections: he is therefore free from any obligation in those quarters. The scale was turned in his favour by the Independent Republicans, who supported him solely on the ground of his personal probity. Faction has as little hold on him as possible; he will be more at liberty than any of his predecessors since Washington to play the part of a patriot President and govern in the interest of the whole nation. By honestly giving effect to the Civil Service Act, by making at his accession to office as few removals in the public service as possible, he may commence the abolition of the spoils system and thereby earn a measure of honourable fame as great as is the infamy of those by whom the system was introduced. The long exile of his party from power will make it easier for him to break through the evil custom of a clean sweep, because there is not an ex-placeman ready for every place. An exercise of great moral firmness will no doubt be necessary to resist sinister demands; but in moral firmness Governor Cleveland seems not to be wanting. The President is an executive officer, and so long as the balance of parties, political or commercial, in the Legislature is not materially altered, and the Republicans retain their ascendancy in the Senate, no immediate changes in legislation are to be expected. That there will be a sudden reversal of policy with regard to the South is merely the nervous apprehension of the negro. Slavery is dead, and no one desires, even if it were possible, to revive it. A recognition of the Rebel Confederacy in the shape of the assumption of debts or the payment of pensions would at once re-awaken the war sentiment, heal the division in the Republican Party, and put the nation on its side. The chief issue will be the Tariff, which the reduction of the debt and the growth of the surplus will, of themselves, force upon the attention of Congress. President Cleveland, we may be sure, will not veto Tariff Reform.

Our protectionists are elated by good news from two quarters at once. In France an import duty is to be laid on cereals, and in England there is a Protectionist, or as it is there called a Fair Trade, movement among the work-people who are suffering from depression. With the good news from France comes an invidious rumour that the French Premier, though ostensibly legislating in the interest of the French farmer, is really in the hands of a "syndicate" of speculators who are "long of wheat." But supposing this to be a Free Trade calumny, would Canadian Protectionists like to see all governments paying their homage to the sound economical principle by laying an import duty on cereals? The Protectionist seldom tries to realize the consequences of Protection all round. The movement in England, so far as at present appears, is nothing more than a feeble reproduction of that which some years ago was set on foot in the suffering districts, but no sooner assumed a definite form and fairly challenged public opinion than it expired. Its chief seat was Bradford, which at that time appeared hopelessly depressed, but is now prospering again, though in a somewhat different line, entirely through the natural revival of industry and without any help from Fair Trade. The manufacturers will never allow the farmers to lay a tax on bread, nor will the farmers allow the manufacturers to lay a tax on clothes or ploughs. At present the region of the worst depression appears to be the ship-building trade on the Clyde and Wear. Jarrow is its special scene, though there the workmen seem to have made their own case worse by a suicidal strike against employers who are carrying on their business at a loss to save the town from ruin. But it would be difficult by any exercise of ingenuity to show how Free Trade had injured ship-builders. The repeal of the navigation laws, instead of being followed by the ruin of the Mercantile Marine, has been followed by a great increase of tonnage and extension of the Carrying Trade. Foreign bounties may have done it some mischief; but foreign bounties are not Free Trade. Nor is it Free Trade that has annihilated the Mercantile Marine of the United States.

People in pain are always ready to swallow quack medicines; but no swallower of a quack medicine shows more of the sick man's credulity than he who thinks that he can restore the health of a trade by making the workman's food and clothes dear. The "Bystander," for his part, has never professed to be a purist of free trade; he sees plainly that every nation must have its tariff, and adapt it to its own industrial circumstances; nor is there anything in his creed which interdicts retaliation, in case of necessity, as an instrument for forcing open foreign ports, and thus promoting, not Monopoly but Free Trade. He is willing enough to call himself a Fair Trader, provided that Protection is not allowed to slip in beneath that name. Protection is taxation, not for the purpose of revenue, but for that of giving encouragement to certain trades, which are thus pampered at the expense of the community. Practically the masters get all the profit; the men are merely shifted by this forcing process from one employment to another, and from employments which, being natural, are stable, to those which are artificial and insecure. When commercial enterprises have been called into existence, when capital has been drawn into them and labour has been made dependent on them, by the action of the State, whether wisely or unwisely, they are entitled to considerate treatment. This is the ground on which Canadian manufacturers, if they are well advised, will take their stand. Wisdom also bids them lose no time in declaring for Commercial Union. The victory of the Democratic Party is no doubt practically that of a revenue tariff, though in the platform the issue was ostensibly declared. But the influence of the vested interests is so powerful and the fear of bringing on an industrial crisis by sudden change, is so great even among those who are no friends to the system, that reduction is sure to proceed with caution, and the day of grace will be long.

THE Hon. J. B. Finch, of Nebraska, has been brought over to open a campaign in favour of the Scott Act in Toronto. Our acknowledgments are due to a distinguished foreigner who is so good as to take an active interest in our legislative affairs. But in inaugurating the agitation the Hon. J. B. Finch strikes an unhappy key-note. His speech is instinct with that uncharitable and tyrannical spirit which is the bane of the movement, as it is apt to be the bane of all crusades. No man of sense can really believe that a trade is criminal which has been expressly licensed by the State, nay, in which the State has actually been a partner, since it has taken a share of the profits in the form of license fees. You may think that the articles sold by the wine merchant, the brewer, or the dealer in cider, are unwholesome, as the vegetarian thinks the articles sold by the butcher unwholesome, as the homœopathist thinks the articles sold by the druggist unwholesome, as many people think the articles sold by the confectioner unwholesome; but you cannot, without violating reason and justice, designate the trade as criminal or deem yourself at liberty to deal with those engaged in it as felons. This, however, is what the Hon. J. B. Finch does. He puts liquor-selling on a level with horse-stealing and other things which bring the proprietors within the grasp of the police. "The State," he says, "has no business to license great lazy louts to stand behind bars and wage war against the wives and children of the land." The State, however, has done it; it has the license fees in its treasury; and it is bound, by considerations higher than the objects of any particular movement, to observe towards all classes of its citizens rules of equity which the platform orators in the transports of rhetoric are ready to give to the winds. When you propose to turn out of their calling and their livelihood a number of people guilty of no offence against the law, the least you can do is to show them some Christian compassion and, at all events, to refrain from wounding their feelings by reckless and insolent abuse. It is a matter of much less importance, but nevertheless it is a fact, that the party use of the word Temperance instead of Prohibition, by implying that prohibitionists alone are temperate, casts an unjust slur upon all those who use wine without abusing it, as did the founder of Christianity, as do the immense majority of Christians throughout the world. Canadians are perhaps better qualified than a gentleman from the States to judge whether drunkenness is so rife among the Canadian people, and moral influences so weak, that arbitrary legislation is necessary to save Canada from perdition. If it is, every good citizen will acquiesce in it. Every right-minded man will be ready to give up a trifling indulgence when it is proved to him that his fellow-men cannot otherwise be rescued from moral ruin. But we cannot afford to allow fancy additions to be made to the Decalogue for the gratification of anybody's moral vanity; still less can we afford to allow legislative philanthropy to disregard common justice.

AUSTRALIAN Confederation appears to have miscarried, and its failure, following that of South African Confederation, shows once more that