

M. FERRY, who recently permitted himself the luxury of indulging in visions of inexhaustible revenue to be derived from the conquest of Tonquin, finds himself on the brink of a yawning deficit of eight millions of francs, and conquest, still in the distance, is not to be achieved without an unknown future expenditure. M. Ferry has been bitten by the rabies of colonial empire, the foundation of which in the East is to be laid at the expense of China. To his prophetic vision, "the future is to the nations that seek expansion abroad." A sober view of the situation would lead one to look for the future of the new Indo-China Empire in the past achievements of the French in that quarter of the world. The French obtained possession of three of the six provinces of Lower Cochin China nearly a quarter of a century ago, and of the remainder, by an admiral's proclamation, five years later. When, in 1862, Tu-Duc ceded three provinces by treaty the French also exacted from him, under the name of indemnity, 20,000,000 francs. The "indemnity" now demanded, and over which the fight is now going on, has been stated at eighty millions of dollars, an amount which would pay the general deficit in the French budget five times over. This, apparently, is the "inexhaustible revenue" after which M. Ferry sighs. By such exactions, the French, if successful, could undoubtedly make money. But revenue extorted by filibustering, if we leave out of view the morality of the process, would not be found to prove a perennial spring; and the operation could not be repeated without new conquests, which could only be achieved at great expense. The harm which would be done by brigandage, distinguished by the name of war, would be infinitely greater than all the good the "indemnities" would do the conquerors. It would be vain to look for any regular profits after the expense of the forays was paid. Revolt against French rule in the conquered country would be constantly liable to break out. In the first and second years after the treaty of 1862, revolt did occur in different parts of the country. If M. Ferry were asked to-day for a balance-sheet of the whole enterprise for twenty-four years, it is probable that he would have to confess to a deficiency. The only legitimate source of revenue to which the French could look, is its trade with the country of which it claims possession. But in this direction failure must be confessed. Last year France sent to Cochin China less than one-seventh of the goods which the country imported—\$1,800,000 out of a total of \$14,000,000—and received a little more than one-fiftieth of the exports, its share being represented by a value of \$300,000 out of \$16,000,000. A cool examination of this result should convince any one disposed to take a sober view of the situation that in no legitimate way can the filibustering expedition, which France is now carrying on against China, be made to pay.

#### "BYSTANDER" ON CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

A CONFEDERATION embracing British Columbia and Jamaica, with the Continental Provinces straggling from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with two thousand miles of sea between the Continental Provinces and the Islands, and containing among other varieties of population a French nationality and a community of negroes, is such a nightmare that, in discussing it, a journalist is afraid of being the victim of a hoax. The commercial question, though it is being discussed with conscientious industry, hardly deserves attention as an element of this preposterous scheme. We can surely buy our pound of sugar without annexing the grocery and its coloured denizens. Nor need we pay tribute to the grocery in the shape of Subsidies and Better Terms, which Jamaica annexationists already scent as gratifying incidents of their plan. If Jamaica finds herself weighted in the commercial race by the Protectionism of the foreigner, let her persuade the British Free Trader to relax his purism, and try what a little retaliation will do to bring the foreigner to his senses. It is suggested that the Black Vote might be a welcome addition to the Blue, and there is nothing which may not be done by Party in quest of votes. Otherwise it could scarcely be needful to renew the protest against any dealings with Canadian nationality behind the back of the Canadian people. The Governor-General will see what the feeling here is upon the subject, and he will tell the Home Government the truth. The one thing which plainly appears is that the British Government wishes Jamaica off its hands. Well it may; the island when taken by Cromwell had its use as an outpost for English enterprise in the Spanish Main; but in later times it has been a burden, an expense, and a scandal. Its slave-owning planters corrupted British society with their vulgar extravagance; a great sum had to be paid to redeem its slaves; and since emancipation the ill-assorted and uneasy union of the two races has been a constant source to the Colonial Office of anxiety or worse. The Island, on the other hand, no doubt suffers by subjection to the fiscal system of a country to which it does not naturally belong. Nor is Jamaica the only dependency

of which, in spite of the visions of Expansionists, the British Government at this moment manifestly wishes itself rid. In the case of South Africa, as in that of Jamaica, the original motive for the occupation has ceased to exist. British communication with India is no longer by way of the Cape. As a colony the Cape, though happy in its soil and climate, is not very prosperous: the reason being, as we are told, that the native labour is bad and at the same time drives British labour away. Seven millions sterling were spent in Kaffir wars, besides the loss of many gallant lives in inglorious bush-fighting; and to troubles of this kind there appears to be no certain limit, since fresh native tribes are always coming down from the central region of the continent. There is also the Transvaal Republic, a somewhat turbulent and filibustering community with which there seems to be little hope of a stable peace. Left to itself the colony would dismiss Lord Carnarvon's fancy of a South African Empire, which is the immediate source of all its present troubles, confine its ambition to its own territory, shape its policy by its own interest, settle by a rough and practical diplomacy its relations with its neighbours, and deal with the native question in its own fashion. It would in this way probably enjoy a larger measure of prosperity, and enjoy it in greater security, than it does while it is entangled with British politics and made the sport of British parties. That British statesmen and the British nation are beginning to be sick of its concerns is apparent from symptoms which betray themselves in significant quarters, and the upholders of an Imperial policy evidently feel themselves thrown on the defensive. Turning oceans into "the water streets of a world-wide Venice," without any force but that of poetry, may be a pleasant dream; but the Colonial Office knows that an armada of iron-clad gondolas such as two Englands could not maintain would be an indispensable part of the reality.

It is almost impossible for a partisan to understand a neutral. He naturally takes him for a disguised partisan of the other side, occasionally dropping the mask and disclosing the hateful lineaments which it conceals. Surely it is possible without being particularly unfriendly to the Grits or particularly friendly to their opponents to lament their weakness and discuss its cause. Their weakness is a national evil. We have Party Government; it is devoutly to be hoped that we shall not have it forever; but we have it now; and all are agreed that to render it in any way consistent with the public good, there must be an effective opposition. An effective opposition at present there is not; the majority at Ottawa votes away tens of millions with a light heart, and walks over the Independence of Parliament Act as though it were an Act about a street tramway. We have no practical security against any excesses of legislative power. The reason of this is that the Opposition puts forth no intelligible policy and has no definite ground whereon to appeal to the people. Its leader, in his speeches, touches everything, and touches everything with skill; about his oratorical excellence there is no question any more than there is about the purity of his public character; but he leaves no broad impression on the minds of his hearers, nor does he give them any strong motive for an effort to change the Government. Let those of his followers who are exasperated at being told this inquire in the Lower Provinces, and they will learn that, in his tour there, he excited general admiration as a speaker, and yet failed to produce much practical effect. In that Midlothian campaign which overthrew a powerful government with a strong majority, the speeches of Mr. Gladstone were not discussive and panoramic; they filled the mind and heart of the audiences and of the country with the leading idea of pulling down Jingoism and setting up moderation and righteousness in its place; those who heard or read them burned to go to the poll; and in the same mood, when the election came, to the poll they went. Whether swaying popular feeling is ideal statesmanship, is another question, but this is the way in which popular feeling is to be swayed. Be the object reform of the Tariff, reform of the Senate, purification of the public service or what you will, it must be advocated in a broad way, and the importance of gaining it must be pressed home, so that the people may be led to feel that its attainment is worth a struggle. No man at present can tell at what our Opposition is aiming, or, supposing a change of Government to take place, what alteration in our policy it would bring. Angling for sectional votes goes on, now in the quarter of Fenianism, now in that of Labour or something else; but the gains of this industry are small, and they are partly countervailed by the revulsion excited in other quarters as well as by the embarrassments which equivocal connections in the end entail. In the meantime the Party organs, for want of a distinct and authorized issue, are committing themselves to semi-socialism, sexual revolution, and prohibitive legislation, any one of which, if the leader identified himself with it, would infallibly split the Party.