

CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

MR. BLAINE'S "Twenty Years of Congress," of which the first bulky volume is before us, derives importance, and will no doubt gain immense vogue and circulation, from the nomination at Chicago. It shows literary ability of the best, because the least artificial, kind, and it has an interest beyond that which any skill in composition or mere knowledge of history could infuse, as the description, by a strong and sagacious politician, of the men with whom he has mingled in public life, and the affairs in which he has borne a leading part, while the section of history which it chronicles is the momentous period of the Civil War. The work is a really valuable addition to political literature. The analysis of character is keen; the judgments calm and fair. In the early portion we feel that the writer is telling us his whole mind: as we advance our confidence in his frankness lessens; the shadow of a coming candidature seems to fall upon the page; inconvenient episodes are omitted or thrown into the background; there is an increasing tenderness of handling, and a visible disposition to conciliate. It was inevitable that the vocation of the writer should appear in his modes of judgment, and that the tribunal before which public character is cited by him should be generally that of popularity rather than of conscience. We follow with intense interest the course of the history as it draws toward the great catastrophe. But it is impossible not to be struck, as we read, with the inherent weakness as well as the improbity of the political characters commonly formed under the demagogic system. Among all these famous stump-orators and intriguers not one was found who could make a bold and strenuous effort to avert the great calamity. That the war might have been averted seems probable, if Mr. Blaine's estimate of the original forces of Secession is true. According to him, its strength was confined to the Gulf States, its real adherents in the other States being so few that the conspirators dared not submit their ordinances to the people, while there was a large party intensely opposed to it in Virginia as well as in North Carolina and Tennessee. It was, in its inception, not a popular movement but an oligarchical plot, and its life centered in a group of men almost all of whom were at Washington and within the grasp of the Federal Government. Yet these men were allowed in open Senate to renounce their allegiance and take their departure for the South with the avowed purpose of organizing a dissolution of the Union and, in case of resistance to their treason, a civil war. The politicians could only look on in helpless bewilderment, pouring forth torrents of stump-oratory, chopping constitutional logic, debating whether it was lawful to coerce seceding States or only to force them to obey the law, and really thinking, each of them, more about his own position and popularity than about the mortal peril of the State. When they did act, all they could do was, in the form of the Crittenden Compromise, to tender to the slave-owner abject submission and the total surrender of every principle on the Slavery question as the price of his continuance in the Union; and even this they did when the time for it was manifestly past, and apostasy could have no possible effect but that of inflating the insolence of Secession and unbracing the moral nerve of loyalty. A rough and resolute West Pointer, with nothing but the country in his heart, would have been worth a great deal more in that hour of peril than all these orators and tacticians. Perhaps, after all, it was well that the war should come, and that slavery should be utterly destroyed; but statesmen are not acquitted when good comes out of enormous evil, which was preventable, and which it was the business of statesmanship to prevent.

THERE is one part of his subject with regard to which it is very hard for Mr. Blaine or any American politician to keep the path of truth and justice. The time seems at last to be approaching when Anglo-Americans in general will cease to pride themselves upon being the transmitters of a foolish feud, or to regard as a part of their national religion a senseless and degrading rancour towards the country from which their blood, language and institutions are derived, whose literature is theirs, and to which, as soon as they personally rise in the world, they always set about tracing their pedigrees. But to the politicians and to the historians, who, with perhaps one honourable exception, are almost as much on the stump as the politicians, common fairness to the English people or Government would still seem a sort of literary sacrilege. They deem it their sacred duty, whether they believe it or not, to speak and write as if they believed that of two branches of the same race which have barely been severed from each other for a hundred years, while one is absolutely upright, disinterested and noble, the other is utterly vile, and never can have any motives but the basest. If England or a British statesman has ever by accident done a right act it must have been for some bad object. Mr. Blaine begins by disparaging the abolition of the slave trade, which he wishes to insinuate was

so timed by British cunning that the trade expired only when the market in the United States was closed, as though the United States had been the only market for slaves. What would Mr. Blaine say if an English writer asserted that the motive of New Englanders for legislating against importation, was the desire to sell their own slaves to the South, as in fact they did before they entered on the crusade against slavery? Calumnious interpretation may taint the best deeds in history. Mr. Blaine seems, like other American writers, to assume that the cause of the North was so evidently that of morality as to challenge the unhesitating allegiance of every moral being. He forgets that in his history of the Crittenden Compromise he has exhibited the North, by the lips of its leaders, renouncing the moral cause, and avowing its willingness, if by the return of the slave-owners to the Union its material interests could be preserved, not only to give slavery new securities, but to enthrone it forever above the constitution itself, and place it, as far as possible, on a level with the ordinances of God. England did make a great sacrifice to the moral cause: she faced the ruin of her greatest industry rather than accept the French Emperor's invitation to open by joint intervention the cotton ports of the South. There was a struggle between parties in England; there was a struggle in the North itself between the Republicans and Democrats; nor could anything which British Tory journals said about the iniquity or futility of the war transcend the language of the Democratic press. But the majority in England was on the side of the Free States, and it prevailed. The escape from British ports of two or three Confederate cruisers which were armed elsewhere, though deeply to be lamented and afterwards rightly atoned for, could not counterbalance the immense service rendered to the Northern cause by the refusal of Great Britain, in face of the strongest temptations, to join France in a recognition of the Confederacy and in an intervention which, for the time at least, must have been decisive. But the American Anglophobist takes no notice of divisions of opinion in England: he always represents her people as a unit in iniquity. At the bottom of his heart he hates the Englishmen who were in the right and who thereby balked his malignity, more, if anything, than those who were in the wrong. Not seldom he has beneath his swaggering Republicanism other lurking tendencies which make him feel that the hostility of the aristocracy is poorly compensated by the friendship of the common people. That the recognition of the confederates as belligerents should continue to appear a wrong to any man of sense, is surprising. What else could have been done? This war was not a civil war in the ordinary sense of the term: it was to all intents and purposes international. The Union had been, for the time, split by a line of cleavage at once social and territorial into two separate nations, the Government of each of which was through the whole length and breadth of its own territory completely established and perfectly obeyed. The Northern nation was trying to conquer the Southern nation, but never for a moment ventured to treat its soldiers or its citizens as rebels. The Federal Government had itself declared the struggle a regular war by proclaiming a blockade of the southern ports. It might have been more courteous to wait for the arrival of the American ambassador; but the defence of the British Government was that recognition of belligerency was inevitable, and that by making it an accomplished fact the possibility of an altercation was avoided. It is very satisfactory to find that Mr. Blaine regards a war between the United States and Great Britain as one of the greatest calamities that could befall the civilized world. There is not the slightest danger of war, or even of unfriendly feeling, except that which arises either from the conspiracies of Irish dynamiters, from the vote-hunting machinations of the demagogue, and the Anglophobia, which is a part of his stock in trade. The better and more high-minded American, happily, is growing ashamed of Tammany domination, Anglophobia, and the demagogue at the same time.

A RENEWAL, which it is to be feared will not be the last, of the conflict between the people and the Jews in Eastern Europe, has brought a revival of the charges against Christianity as a religion of persecution; and the cry is swelled as usual by Christians who are more anxious to cultivate a reputation for liberality than to do justice to the faith of their fathers. Christianity has little or nothing to do with the matter. Even in the middle ages the popular risings against the Jews were social and economical in their character, rather than religious. As a rule, the Jews were protected by the popes and eminent ecclesiastics, as well by the kings whom they served as instruments of fiscal extortion. Their enemies were the people, goaded to revolt by their oppressive usury. Difference of religion added bitterness, no doubt, to the cup of hatred, as did difference of race; but extortion was the chief ingredient. On the subject of Hungary, the present scene of these disorders, there is a good book written before the disturbances or the controversy connected with them began, by