

## CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

From certain references which have been made to the "Bystander" papers, it appears to be necessary once more to repeat that they are not editorial, but are the contributions of an individual writer, and the free expression of that writer's own opinions. THE WEEK is an open field for all opinions, provided they are expressed with courtesy towards opponents and with sufficient literary merit.—ED.

MR. BLAINE'S letter of acceptance is largely, as might have been expected, an echo, in well-written and vigorous paragraphs, of the Republican platform, including all its electioneering appeals to prejudice, such as the tirade against the Mormons and the denunciation of foreign purchasers of lands. But in one respect the letter is highly notable and is likely to herald the opening of a new epoch in the history of American parties. It makes the Tariff question the grand issue, and upon it offers decisive battle. The grand issue of the immediate future the Tariff question will probably be. But this is a new line of party cleavage, and if it is to prevail, the Pennsylvanian Democrats must become Republicans, and the Republicans of Illinois must become Democrats. Mr. Blaine is a really able man, and it would be very difficult to suppose that he was, himself entirely a victim to the fallacies of the cause which he has espoused. Indeed he judiciously declines to discuss the principle, and appeals to the prosperity of the United States under protection as a practical and sufficient proof of the soundness of the system. He can scarcely fail to see, what must be evident to a child, that the prosperity of the United States is due to the unparalleled development of immense national resources combined with a vast industrial immigration. If he wants to estimate the real effects of protection, he should turn his eyes to the commercial history of some country where its action was not countervailed by any exceptional influences of this kind, to that of Spain, for example, under her old regime. The United States are not an ordinary country; they are a continent in themselves, producing almost everything except tea and coffee, and the inhabitants of the whole of this continent internally enjoy Free Trade. This fact Mr. Blaine points out, and he fails to observe that in doing so, he destroys the force of his own reasoning, and at the same time recognizes the beneficence of Free Trade: for why should that be economically good between States which is economically evil between nations? He slurs over the miserable decay of the mercantile marine, throwing out a hint of encouragement by bonus, that is, of paying with one hand for the creation of that which you are destroying with the other. "Evidently," he says, "a protective tariff has not injured our export trade, when, under its influence, we exported in twenty-four years forty per cent. more than the total amount that had been exported in the entire previous history of American commerce." Here again the increase is due, not to the fiscal system, but to the growth of the number of producers, of the amount of articles to be exported, and of the general activity of the world's trade. The main exports are not the manufactures which it is the aim of Protection to foster, but grain and cotton, the producers of which receive no encouragement from the tariff, unless dear clothes and implements are encouragements. A great amount of capital has been invested in manufactures under the Protective System; this might be placed in jeopardy by any sudden alteration, though, in all probability, the intelligence and energy of American industry would soon hold their own and more than their own in a fair field. Circumspection, therefore, is desirable in reduction, and it may be prudent to reduce internal taxation first. If Mr. Blaine and his party would embrace this as their policy, they would be standing on tenable ground. But of the war to which they have committed themselves against common sense and nature, the end is as certain as the rising of to-morrow's sun. The surplus is an argument against which sophistry will contend in vain. The American people must have fallen into their dotage if they can be persuaded that it is for the interest of the community that government should yearly take from them by taxation a sum far in excess of that required by the expenses of administration and squander it in pensions or in educating the Southern negroes. Mr. Blaine includes the expenditure in pensions, which seems likely, in the aggregate, to amount to hundreds of millions, among the honourable and profitable ways of disposing of the surplus. He must know perfectly well that not a cent would ever have been spent in that way except for the purpose of making away with the surplus and at the same time buying the soldier's vote. Compared with this gigantic waste, what was the heaviest pension list of the most corrupt of European monarchies in the evil days? To put the interest of labour into the foreground and screen that of capital as much as possible behind it, is an obvious device of strategy to which the astute tactician does not fail to have recourse: but American artisans, though liable like other people to mystification, are not without brains; and they will in time, perhaps at some moment of industrial depression, begin to calculate for themselves whether the price of clothes and other manufactured articles which they have to

buy being taken into account, their wages are really raised or their condition in any way improved by Protection. In his book, Mr. Blaine, treating of the history of tariffs, has gone more into the question of principle, and he has there reproduced those reasonings against which it is as needless for the economist again to argue as it is for the astronomer to confute the Ptolemaic System. But, by a curious stroke of rhetoric, he has sought to connect Free Trade with Slavery, and Protection with Free Labour. "Zeal," he says, "against slavery (at the North) was necessarily accompanied by an appreciation of the dignity of free labour; and free labour was more generously remunerated under the stimulus of protection laws. The same considerations produced a directly opposite conclusion at the South; where those interested in slave labour could not afford to build up a class of free labourers with high wages and independent opinions." To force labour, as the protective system does, away from the more profitable into the less profitable employment, is a singular method of setting it free. Perfect liberty in the choice of a trade is surely an essential part of industrial freedom. Slavery was an exclusive and domineering interest with a powerful organization, which long coerced the community for its own selfish purposes; but it had its philosophy, and Colburn was not less plausible than Mr. Blaine.

IN an article of which the very title, "The Reduction to Iniquity," trumpets controversial strife, Mr. Henry George makes a furious onslaught on the Duke of Argyll, whom he seems to hold responsible for all the sorrows of humanity. The star of Mr. George is evidently declining, and its lustre will not be repaired by the present outbreak, which is simply a rabid declamation against the inequalities and evils of society without any serious attempt to prove that they flow from private ownership of land or would vanish if agrarian communism were introduced. There are tribes in Afghanistan among whom private ownership in land does not exist. Why are not these tribes supremely blessed? Why was not mankind blessed in the primæval days before private ownership had come into fashion? If you dissect the bodies of a duke and a peasant, says Mr. George, you will find that both are land animals of the same kind and with like organs. Hence "it is evidently the intent of nature that both shall live on land and use land in the same way and to the same degree." Dissect a horse, and you will find that it is a land animal, with organs in that respect similar to those of the duke and the peasant; hence the same sapient inference may be drawn. Such are the reasonings of a man who has been proclaimed a regenerator of the economical world. All the seamen as well as all the factory hands ought, of course, according to the zoological theory, to be landowners and farmers, and so ought all the women. Suppose Mr. George's portion of the land was given him to-morrow, what would he do with it? Would he exchange authorship for agriculture, or would he give his principles to the wind and let his land to a tenant? When he is asked why his plan of confiscation is not to be extended to other property besides land, no property having been recognized by the State more solemnly than that in land, his answer in effect is, that other property is the product of individual labour, whereas the land is given to us all by nature. Raw land is given by nature, but cultivated land is not, nor would the land ever have been cultivated had not individual interest impelled the plough. Nature gives man the raw material of everything. She gives the raw materials of Mr. George's hat, to which it would seem, by his method of argument, everybody has an equal title whose head it will fit, "such being the evident intention of nature." "Those," contends Mr. George, "who say it would be unjust for the people to resume their natural rights in the land without compensating present holders confound right and wrong as flagrantly as did they who held it a crime in the slave to run away without first paying his owner his market value." When the land runs away from its owner like the slave, perhaps this question of casuistry may require attention; but a State which takes away slaves from their owners, if it is like England, governed by the rules of common honesty, pays the owners compensation. The land being the habitation of the people, as well as the means of supplying them with food, it is necessary that the commonwealth should retain over it certain sovereign rights, such as that of expropriation with fair indemnity; and this the commonwealth already does. That the land would be better tilled or would yield more bread for the people if all the freeholds were confiscated and a set of politicians under the name of the State were to become the universal landlords, Mr. George has never attempted to show, though this evidently is the great practical question for the bulk of the community. He also leaves us in the dark as to what is to be done when more people are born than the land can feed. Nor has he attempted to explain how it has come to pass that all civilized nations have been led with one consent to discard the true principle of land ownership, leaving it to be preserved only by a few barbarous or half-