

CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

THE party press is providing curious materials for history. Generally in the conflicting testimony of contemporaries respecting any character or action, there is some element of agreement on which the historian fixes as presumably solid fact; but the future Hallam or Ranke will not easily discern such an element in the conflicting testimony of contemporaries respecting the character and actions of Sir Charles Tupper. In the two valedictory biographies there is hardly any point of identity but the name. That the man has made his way to prominence plainly appears, but in one account his rise is ascribed to a genius which nothing could equal except his purity: in the other to the qualities of a sturdy and daring felon. Once only we find something like concurrence. The Grit organ having called Sir Charles a bull-dog, its adversary accepts the metaphor and improves it by adding that he is a bull-dog who has often torn the pants of the Reform party. As the bull-dog who has often torn the pants of the Reform party Sir Charles may with indisputable accuracy be described, whatever be our estimate of his statesmanship or his virtue; and if he is presented for an honorary degree at one of the English universities the public orator will be safe in adopting that delineation, though to give it a classic turn may somewhat test his Latinity. We are reminded by the same event that the pants of the Tory party, if they have not been torn by any bull-dog with fangs so tenacious as those of Sir Charles, are being rapidly fretted by the tooth of time. Sir John Macdonald himself will soon be the only part of the garment left, while some of the new pieces which are being put into it are not unlikely to illustrate by their effects the truth of the Scripture warning to the menders of raiment. Evidently the life of the politician is trying; he is now called upon to worry and be worried, not only on the floor of Parliament but on a hundred platforms, and one after another of the class breaks down. Yet not one of them, once enlisted, is afterwards ever weaned from the pursuits of a generous ambition; they all die with their teeth in the pants.

It seems that we are in danger of receiving further consignments of the Irish pauperism which gave birth to the miserable colony of Conway street. The agents of the Steam Ship Companies too are at work, no doubt after their usual fashion. It is Toronto that is chiefly threatened, because it is the head, so to speak, of importation, the point to which all the immigrants come and from which the more energetic of them push out westward or into the country, leaving the less energetic and the incapable in the city, to throw themselves on public charity. The Irish in their own island display a passionate desire for the land; but this is only because the land is there their only means of subsistence; they are not farmers, and when they come to this Continent they cling to the purlieus of the cities where, settling clannishly together, they form Irish quarters with the result too familiar to all who know anything of the municipal history of New York. The tramps, so much execrated and dreaded, are comparatively an innocuous tribe; their number, apart from cases of merely casual distribution, is not large; and as they are essentially wanderers, they cannot infect the population or form the nucleus of a bad element in any locality. It is otherwise with Irish pauperism, which, if we do not take care, will inoculate the community with its habits, particularly with systematic mendicancy, a thing hitherto almost unknown in Canada. It is time that Toronto should bestir herself. Representations have been made both by the Combined City Charities and by individuals who foresaw what was coming; but they have hardly been regarded as serious by the Home Authorities, in whose ears the sweet periods of Lord Lorne and others who talk in the same flattering strain have never ceased to sound. There is a foolish notion that the country is injured in its commercial standing by deprecating indiscriminate immigration. On the part of Toronto, at all events, a firm protest should be entered, and the protest can hardly take a better form than that of an address of the City Council to the Governor General, who would no doubt forward it to the Colonial Office. It is the City Council that must act; the Ottawa Government probably is not racked with anxiety about the special interests of anybody in Ontario since the Province has remained in the hands of the Grits; while the city members, as Conservatives, will avoid above all things giving any trouble to the Government. If an effort is not made in time to make it clear to the Home Authorities and to all concerned, that a dumping ground for pauperism Canada cannot, and will not any longer be, we may have, amongst other bad consequences, a dispute with the authorities of the Mother Country and a disturbance of those kindly relations which everybody, especially at a crisis of Imperial fortunes like the present, desires to see undisturbed. If the Mother Country has ever done the Colonies a wrong it has been through ignorance, and ignorance produced in great measure by

the false representations of Colonial courtiers to whose flatteries Downing street has too readily given ear.

AT Washington the bill for the reduction of the tariff has met the fate which, after seeing the ground, the "Bystander" found himself constrained mournfully to predict. Even such of its friends as were sanguine enough to hope that it could pass the House, where the Democrats have a large majority, by a few votes, anticipated its defeat in the Senate. With the Presidential Election impending, everybody is afraid of provoking the wrath of the Protectionist Ring, which has a disciplined force at its command, and arousing the alarm of the artisans, a great many of whom were still possessed with the belief that their livelihood depends upon Protection. Yet the closeness of the division shows plainly that the impatience of unjust and unnecessary taxation is gaining ground, and the minds of the people are so far opened to the truth that any event which brings it home, such as a serious depression of wages, may turn the wavering balance. In the meantime a curious spectacle is before us. A hundred years ago the fathers of these people flew to arms, broke a connection to which most of them had been deeply attached, and faced the calamities of civil war rather than pay a paltry tea-tax which they believed to be unjustly imposed by a single tyrant. They are now bowing their servile backs beneath an enormous load of taxation imposed by a many-headed oppressor, whose objects are at least as selfish as those of any despot. They fancy that in the present case they impose the tax on themselves, but this is an illusion, and one of many of the same kind, which under the democratic system, as it at present exists, haunt the mind of the citizen, who imagines that he is acting freely, and exercising political power, when in fact his wires are pulled by the manager, or he is coerced by some dominant organization. However, the people of the United States are prodigiously rich; they can afford, if their fancy leads them, to lay a hundred millions a year, besides a large portion of the earnings which their industry, if free, would produce, on the altar of native production, and to make away with vast sums in gorging pension agents, building cruisers to protect a mercantile marine which Protection keeps out of existence, and educating the young negroes, or washing them white. But Canada is not prodigiously rich, and her indebtedness will soon be, in proportion to her population, double that of the United States, though she has had no civil war. Yet her Protectionists have made it perfectly clear by the pæan of exultation which they have been chanting through their organs on this occasion that they are ready to play the same game here which is played by their brethren in the United States. Nor are they without a good excuse, since the Government has induced them to overinvest in their special industries by its promises of Protection. They approve a lavish expenditure to keep up the necessity for taxation. They have already inaugurated this policy on a grand scale at Ottawa, and it is evident that they and the railway men, combined with Quebec, which receives a large share of the money, are now able to control the Government. Salvation will come from the North-West, where the Ottawa Government, with the most beneficent intentions, has succeeded in making itself known only as a remote power of evil, and where such a tax as that on agricultural implements, levied not even for the benefit of native manufactures but of manufactures in a country a thousand miles away, and employing not a single Manitoban artisan, must stir, if anything in the way of fiscal oppression can stir, the blood of the taxpayer, who is not only mulcted of his cash but crippled in his one great industry at the same time.

THE two party conventions for the nomination of a President will soon meet, and the quadrennial carnival of intrigue, corruption and slander will begin. To the memory of the framers of the American constitution it is due on these occasions always to proclaim anew the fact that they never intended to establish that which, if they had intended to establish it, would have been the most pestilent institution ever deliberately adopted by man. Nothing was further from their minds than a popular election. They meant that a college of electors should choose in calm conclave the fittest man in the Commonwealth. Their only fault consisted in failing to perceive that when the college itself was to be elected only for the turn, the result must inevitably be a mandate, and that thus the election of the President would be practically given to the people at large. For this fatal oversight they are no doubt undergoing a thousand years of Purgatory. They may perhaps, plead as a further extenuation, that they did not anticipate a reign of organized party, though, both in their own country and in England, they had before their eyes that which ought to have awakened their misgivings on that head. Unsearchable are the riches of evil in the system of an elective Presidency: the least of them is the cost of the election to the country, which must greatly exceed the annual expense of any royal court