

## CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

MR. BLAKE'S defeat on the question of the grant to Quebec has, as might have been expected, caused uproarious exultation among his victorious foes, who pursue him through column after column of jubilant satire and invective. It was, no doubt, a signal overthrow. Yet Mr. Blake seems to have made an excellent speech, and unquestionably he had right upon his side. Even to Sir John Macdonald it must sometimes occur in the pensive hour of moral reflection that government by intrigue, corruption and gerrymandering, though it may be a sad necessity in his case, as it was in that of Walpole, cannot elevate a nation. But Mr. Blake was forbidden by the fell exigencies of the situation, which he at heart feels as much as does his antagonist, to take the high and strong ground of pure government. Had he done this he would have been deserted, as he too well knew, by the whole of his following, except that part of the Ontario delegation which is true to the interests of its Province. He was therefore obliged to take the less moral and less straightforward course of demanding, formally at least, better terms all round. He thus fell into an inconsistency of which the Arch Enemy did not fail, with his usual adroitness, to take advantage. But as there is sometimes method in madness, so there is sometimes sense in inconsistency. In Mr. Blake's inconsistency on this occasion there was only too much sense. Is he, or is anybody prepared with a policy which shall supersede provincial interests and unite all the Provinces in the common pursuit of a great federal object? Unless somebody is prepared with such a policy there is nothing to be done but hold the discordant elements of the Confederation together, and maintain a basis for a government by influences of the sort employed by Sir John Macdonald; and of that business Sir John Macdonald is a far greater master than Mr. Blake.

THE annual dinner of the St. George's Society is held this year under circumstances of rather more than common interest and importance. As a dispenser of relief to distressed immigrants from England, the Society has, during the past winter, been tasked beyond the usual measure of its burden, indeed almost beyond its resources; and the energies of its ever zealous Secretary, Mr. Pell, have been strained by the multitude of claims on his attention, to the very verge of breaking down. But the political juncture is also such as to lend special significance to an institution which has partly for its object the maintenance of a feeling of brotherhood among all men of English blood throughout this continent. The position of the English in America is peculiar. They represent the country from which mainly the language, the literature, the institutions, the religion, the moulding influences, generally, of society on this continent are derived. The name of New England is the monument of their glory as the founders of that illustrious group of colonies which was destined to be the vital germ of the whole. Yet, of all the nationalities they are the weakest, and politically the most despised. No politician ever thinks of appealing to English feeling or paying court to the English vote. The main reason of this is that the English are not like some of the other nationalities, gregarious and clannish. The leading features of their political character, as of their character generally, are independence and self-reliance, which they too often carry even to the extreme of isolation. Wherever they settle they become citizens in the full sense of the term, identifying themselves thoroughly with the interests of the community which has adopted them, going each of them about his own business, and not seeking to form any sectional combination for the promotion of any separate interest of their race. This, while it is a political virtue, is also under the circumstances of society here, a political weakness, and that it is seen to be so by the worshippers of political force appears from the general tone of the Press, as well as from the demeanour of the politicians. Negative disregard is in fact beginning to assume the form of something like a positive prejudice, and this, strange to say, is more visibly the case in Canada than it is in the United States, where traditional dislike of England is combined with a liking for the individual Englishman. Therefore, men of English blood have a special motive and a justification, not indeed for sectionalism, much less for conspiracy, which it is to be hoped will always remain alien to their natures, but for availing themselves of such centres of friendly union and such opportunities of demonstrating their community of feeling as the St. George's Society affords. The Society is charitable and social, not political; nor will it ever call upon its members to take the field under any political banner. But an occasion may possibly present itself on which they would take the field uncalled. If, for example, an attempt shall again be made by any political tactician to capture the suffrages of Irish Catholics by using the Parliament of Canada as an engine for dealing the Mother Country a dastardly blow in her hour of peril, the schemer will

find that though, happily, there is no such a thing as an "English vote," there are a good many English votes.

It is always fair to form our estimate of the character of a movement from the utterances of its best men, and the character of the Temperance movement, or, as it should rather be called, the Prohibition movement, (for we hope that we are all of us friends of temperance) will certainly suffer no injustice if our estimate of it is formed from the utterances of Mr. Samuel Blake. In him we are sure to find the equity, the impartiality, the calmness of one who has sat upon the judgment seat, combined with the pre-eminent charity of a leading Christian. Especially is he sure to be scrupulous above the measure of the mere laymen, his associates, in respect for the rights of property, of which, as a judge, he was, and as a member of the legal profession still is, an appointed guardian. A special significance therefore, attaches to his words reported in a Temperance journal as to the consideration to be shown to the people whom it is proposed to deprive of their trade. "If there was to be compensation given at all he would like to know from whom it is going to come. The temperance people were really the injured ones; it was they who were entitled to compensation. Liquor dealers had better leave compensation out of the question. It would get them out of their depths. It was a farce to talk of compensation when those men who dealt in liquor were the wealthiest in the country. They had put the city to the expense of building the hospital, the gaol, the central prison, and they had caused the expenditure of \$150,000 or \$200,000 a year for the administration of justice. They had had a monopoly for years, and should now take warning and get out of the business." Mr. Blake's trained sense of justice will assent to the proposition that when it is proposed to turn men, without compensation, out of a trade in which they have invested their property, with the full sanction of the State, and by which they are earning their livelihood and that of their families, the case against them ought to be stated with strict accuracy and perfect candour. Is strict accuracy observed or perfect candour displayed when the liquor trade is charged with causing the expenditure not only of the central prison, but of the hospital and the courts of law. Are there no maladies or casualties, is there no litigation except among drunkards? Is it fair even to hold the trade responsible for the entire cost of the gaol when Prohibitionist Maine both has a gaol and needs it, while she stands above all other communities in the statistics of divorce? However, be the blame what it may, why is it to rest on the dealers alone? A licensed dealer is an agent of the State. The community of which Mr. Blake is himself a member has largely shared, under the form of license fees and excise, the profits of the traffic, and is therefore just as responsible as those actively engaged. To reconcile the moral sense of his audience to measures of violence, the ex-judge compares the trade in liquors to the trade in dynamite for murderous purposes; but the trade in dynamite for murderous purposes has not yet been licensed by the State. Slave-owning is at least as bad as liquor-selling; yet no emancipationist proposed to abolish slavery without compensating the slave-owners, nor would England have any reason to be proud of emancipation if it had been merely an act of philanthropic plunder. The suggestion that it is the temperance men who ought to be compensated by the liquor dealer for his criminal opposition to their views reminds us a little of the French Jacobin, who, when charged with peculation, replied that he could not possibly have been guilty of it since all property of right belonged to the patriots. Among the men whom Mr. Blake thinks proper to treat as felons, almost as fiends, and to put out of the pale of common justice, there are many just as respectable and just as hostile to drunkenness, as the reformers themselves. To say that the daily practice of Christ, the Apostles, and the best men in Christendom down to this hour, is in itself criminal, is rather too much. Mr. Blake, therefore, has to fall back on the assumption that the use of wine must inevitably lead to a craving for stronger liquors and to excess; but the instances already cited are as fatal to one hypothesis as to the other, and the notable absence of drunkenness in the wine-growing countries is as decisive as any experience can be. It seems to come pretty much to this, that views and practice at variance with those of certain eminent philanthropists must be proper subjects of coercive legislation, and that facts, whatever they may be, will be pleaded in vain. This is not a spirit to which, when it indulges in suggestions of high-handed violence, society can afford to give up the reins, nor is it likely to be satisfied with victory in a single agitation. The assertion that drunkenness is spreading with alarming rapidity in Canada is contradicted by the best authorities on our social history, who aver that within their memory, temperance has made great progress. But if strong measures are necessary, let strong measures be taken; only let them be consistent with social morality, which