

## CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

THE voice of the North-west is still rather doleful, but if coal has been found in abundance, the future is sure; fuel was the problem, which seems now to be happily solved. Drawbacks there will still be; it is nonsense to say that an intensely cold and very long winter is not among them. What land under any zone is free from them? Agriculture will adapt itself to them, probably by farming on a large scale with such appliances as may secure the harvest. But the settlers declare that the winter and the alkali in the water are not their only enemies. They complain of the Administration. They say that the country is made a political dust-bin. The settlers whom Canada has sent there have been of the very best quality: in truth Ontario mourns the flower of her farmers, whose departure is about the only return which she is likely to receive for all the millions which she has spent on the North-West. But the officials, or some of the most important of them, have been of a different stamp. They have been rapacious politicians sent by Party, and as a reward for party services, to make their fortunes in the new territory. What they went to do, they have done. Speculation ought to have been strictly interdicted to every holder of an office, political or judicial. Nothing short of this could have prevented jobbery injurious not only to the commercial interests but to the political character of the new settlement. Neither Party can reproach the other. Loud are the outcries in some quarters against the administration of Mr. Dewdney, and his conduct will probably become the subject of debate in Parliament: but no appointment could be much more discreditable than were those of Chief Justice Wood and Lieutenant-Governor Cauchon. Party is party, and will act in Manitoba and everywhere in accordance with its nature; it will do this more and more as the struggle grows fiercer until the system is radically changed.

CHANGES of government in Quebec are as frequent as revolutions in Mexico; they are also about as intelligible, and are caused by the action of influences equally pure. The Liberal Opposition having sunk into a state, apparently, of almost hopeless weakness, the Tory party, no longer held together by the pressure of antagonism, and rent internally by a struggle for the plunder, has become, as was said of another party in a similar case, fissiparous, and given birth to two rival factions, one of which bears the singular name of Castors, and which wage against each other a war fully as bitter as that waged by either of them against the Liberals. There does not seem to be any reason why a good citizen should care a straw which of these two factions wins, though the name of Sir Hector Langevin, which is identified with one of them, is, it must be owned, a bright beacon of warning. It is needless to say that the financial gulf yawns wider for the Province every day. Nor is there any prospect of a change for the better, but the reverse. It is in the British and Protestant element alone that any spirit of independence, such as might sustain a struggle against corruption, is to be found; and the British element in Quebec is continually growing weaker. It seems likely at last to be reduced to the mercantile community of Montreal. In the city of Quebec the number of British has dwindled to seven thousand; and it is said that in the Eastern Townships the French race and language are gaining ground. The connection between Old and New France is at the same time being industriously revived, and in the Province itself the spirit of French nationality is being actively stimulated and is displaying itself in more pronounced antagonism to the rival element. While we are politically incorporating Vancouver's Island, we are apparently in danger of morally losing our connection with Quebec.

THE Premier of Ontario congratulates himself from the throne on the adoption of his Library Act. If there were no object more pressing than the supply of light literature at the public expense his jubilation might be echoed without reserve. But Toronto is full of distress, the amount of which is likely to increase; night after night the police stations are beset by unfortunates seeking for a night's shelter; what is still worse, and disgraceful to any Christian community, persons guilty of no real offence, are being sent in greater numbers than ever to the city gaol, where they must herd with criminals, merely to give them shelter and save them from dying of hunger. With these sufferings unrelieved and these scandals unremoved, to spend money in the circulation of free novels, to which nobody has any more claim than to free theatre or excursion tickets, may be the height of liberality and enlightenment, but surely it is not the height of justice. At any rate, if the expenditure is so wise, it ought to commend itself to the unforced judgment of the community and to be made dependent like other appropriations on a free and annual vote. There can be no excuse for taking the power of taxation away from the citizens at large, or their

regular representatives, and placing it in the hands of an arbitrary board. But this is a favourite device of Radical philanthropists, who being haunted, perhaps, in the midst of their enthusiasm by a lurking misgiving as to the self-evident excellence of their scheme, think to place it beyond the control of the unenlightened masses by consigning the power of levying the tax for it to a body specially identified with their policy. The separate power of taxation vested in the School Boards is not unlikely some day to become a matter for discussion. If the Provincial Opposition, instead of fighting against the Province on the Boundary question, and thus giving itself the character of a Bleu garrison in Ontario, would take up a position as the defender of municipal self-government, it would find work to do, and the number of its adherents would increase.

MR. HERBERT SPENCER has written, with his usual attractiveness of style, a curious paper on "New Toryism." His New Toryism is the Radicalism of the present day. Restraint, he says, is the Tory principle; the true Liberal principle is relaxation of restraint, which used to be the aim of all Liberal legislation. But from doing good to the people by relaxation, Liberalism has in these latter days been led on by a false connection of ideas to doing good to the people by coercion; and Mr. Spencer cites a long catalogue of measures such as the Factory Act, the Merchant Shipping Act, the Agricultural Children's Act, the Licensing Act, interfering in various ways with individual freedom. Whatever may be thought of the special theory, Mr. Spencer's paper signalizes a fact about which there can be no question, and the knowledge of which is essential to a right comprehension of English politics. A change of character has of late been undergone by a large section of what once was the Liberal party. Twenty or thirty years ago individual liberty was still the aspiration and the watchword. Mr. Mill, who pushed that principle about to the extent of a worship of eccentricity, some might even think, of lunacy, was the prophet, and his treatise on liberty was the gospel. The paramount object of Liberal endeavour then was to confine the direct action of government within the narrowest possible limits and to secure to each citizen the utmost possible freedom of self-development. But now, in the section of the party headed by Mr. Chamberlain, a complete revolution of sentiment has taken place. Everybody's life is to be regulated by the direct action of a government, paternal though democratic, and vested in the hands of Mr. Chamberlain. Collectivism is now the word; it marks the renunciation of individualism and is separated from Socialism by very narrow bounds. Economy, which, like liberty, was a Liberal watchword, is, with liberty, to be discarded. Taxation, general and local, instead of being reduced, is to be indefinitely increased, and the proceeds are to be applied, under the direction of Mr. Chamberlain, for the benefit of those classes which support him by their votes. Stand in the way, and even if your property is not confiscated, you will be summarily expropriated, and the amount of your compensation will be fixed by the fiat of Mr. Chamberlain. Attempt, as Liberal, to vote for the candidate of your own choice, instead of voting for the candidate designated by Mr. Chamberlain as a pledged supporter of his beneficent policy, and Mr. Chamberlain's caucus will coerce you. What a Jacobin means by liberty is the absence of any restraint, political or moral, on his own will, and Mr. Chamberlain is in temper a Jacobin, though it may be doubted whether a man who has himself made an immense fortune by methods anything but Collectivist, will not soon find the pace of the less opulent Collectivist too rapid for him. Mr. Herbert Spencer is a Liberal of the Old School, and he carries its doctrines, as some people think, to an extreme. There is more of his paper to come, but so far it would seem that he was opposed to any intervention of Government for the protection of the weak, the women and children in factories and mines for instance, against the tyrannical cupidity of the strong. He does good service, however, by challenging a tendency which, in England, is developing itself with formidable rapidity, which receives an artificial impetus from its identification with the aim of a personal ambition, and the rational limits of which should be fixed, if possible, without delay.

As a rule, the people of the United States regard Canada and her affairs with the apathy of ignorance. Our dread of hostile machinations on their part is baseless to a degree which, though reassuring to our fears, is not flattering to our pride. But just at present, owing perhaps partly to the Pacific Railway, partly to the Tariff question, they seem awake to the fact of our existence. It is a pity that their inquisitive minds should be misguided, and therefore it may be useful to tell them that they will hardly be able to study Canadian opinion to good purpose anywhere but on the spot. Our Press is connected with Parties: The Parties like those in the United States are bound as fast as any dogmatic church by their traditions; and the politicians, besides their professional fear of speaking out,