

CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

In Canadian politics there is a welcome lull which may last some time, unless, contrary to the expectation of many, a renewal of the Conspiracy Trial should vex the summer air. In gladly taking leave of these subjects, let the "Bystander" once more assure his brethren of the press, some of whom appear difficult of conviction, that no shadow of injurious imputation is implied in his view of their position as that not of judges, but of advocates bound to present the case on one side and themselves not committed to any belief in the case which they have to present. Do we not laugh when the defendant in *Bardell v. Pickwick* is shocked at seeing his counsel walking away arm-in-arm with the counsel for the plaintiff? Why then should we be shocked at the supposition that the editors of our two party journals, even after such a war of words as that which has lately preceded and followed, can sit down together in the social hour, and like unprejudiced and easy-going men of the world chat in a light and bantering vein about the tremendous issues of the day, find that they are pretty well agreed about them, and find that they are perfectly agreed as to the nothingness of party politics and the folly of the masses who go mad about them. In the morning you read what you cannot help thinking a very one-sided and virulent editorial: in the evening you meet the writer and are charmed with his openness of mind, his urbanity, his perfect freedom from all the characteristics of his editorial. Do you accuse him of duplicity? No more than you accuse of duplicity the actor who plays *Othello* because you find that he is not black when he is off the stage.

THERE is a point upon which it seems necessary to say a word in a rather more serious strain. Independent writers are sometimes arraigned as being guilty of a breach of allegiance to the Liberal party, of which it is assumed, and perhaps rightly, that they have heretofore been members. But before they can plead guilty to the indictment, they must be convinced that the Liberal party named in it is the same to which their allegiance was originally pledged. If it is not, they will naturally decline to sacrifice their independence to a name. Now, supposing the Liberal party as it at present exists in Canada, to be correctly represented by its ablest and most powerful organs, it must have introduced into its creed certain articles of the most momentous character which did not form a part of the creed of the Liberal party in any country twenty or perhaps ten years ago. One of these is socialism, or something nearly approaching to it, embodied in the proposition that all property beyond the measure necessary to supply the personal wants of the holder is to be considered a quasi public trust. A second is the policy of restraining individual liberty, for which the Liberals of former days fought, by sumptuary and regulative laws. A third is the promotion of sexual revolution, in all its phases, economical, domestic and political. A fourth is agrarianism, which is carried apparently to the length of palliating agrarian murder, and beneath which, as no rational distinction can be drawn between ownership of land and ownership of anything else, lurks a still more extensive principle of confiscation. The merits of this programme are not here discussed, much less are the motives of the eminent journalists who advocate it impugned. It may be the genuine and inevitable birth of time; but unquestionably it is a new birth, and requires to be fully considered in all its parts before it can be adopted, as a whole, by anyone who is not prepared to risk the dissolution of society. Difference of opinion on any one of the points embraced in it must do more to divide, than agreement on any of the ordinary party issues can do to unite. With questions so fundamental the Irish question, perhaps, can hardly be ranked. Yet the dismemberment of the United Kingdom is at least as serious a matter as anything relating to the Boundary dispute or the contract for Section B, not with reference to Great Britain only but to Canada, since the triumph of Irish Catholicism over the Union at home, would surely be followed by an aggravation of its yoke here. The most genuine of Liberals, therefore, if he is a Unionist, may well hold himself aloof from those who for the sake of capturing the Irish Catholic vote in this country, are countenancing an attempt to dissolve the Union, especially if he is one who firmly believes that the result of separation to Ireland could only be confusion and civil war. It is a curious illustration of the remark recently made as to the disregard into which the English race has fallen upon this continent, that when an Englishman protests against being led, with the bitterest enemies of his country, to an attack upon her most vital interests, nobody thinks of giving him credit for being actuated by English feeling. It is taken for granted that his pen must be governed by some clandestine motive connected with the party politics of Canada, and that he must be trying furtively to thwart Mr. Blake or afford underhand assistance to Sir John Macdonald. Yet it is

surely conceivable that he may care very little about any of the party politicians, and very much about his native country. The next general election may possibly throw some light upon this subject.

ON the vote of censure Mr. Gladstone's majority was once more pared down to the minimum, though that minimum is fully sufficient to keep a government alive. The Parnellites, contrary to general expectation and their own apparent interest, voted against the Government which is carrying the Franchise Bill. But their motive is not difficult to divine. They knew that without their votes the Government would be sustained, and they reduced its majority in order to keep it as weak and as dependent on themselves as possible. Their course was profligate, for they had all along been denouncing the war, and the motion was in effect one of censure on the Government for not prosecuting the war with more vigour; but profligacy is a trifle to the terrorists of the Land League. Some of our friends in the Canadian press must feel the advantage of being able to treat discordant themes in separate issues; otherwise they would have some difficulty in combining their ardent support of Mr. Gladstone with their equally ardent support of people who vote against his government and are trying to cut his throat. The treatment of the author of Disestablishment and the Land Act by the Irish agitators will go far to settle the verdict of history on the characters of these men, while it demonstrates with the certainty of scientific experiment that not by benefits or by expressions of sympathy are the hearts of such people to be won. That a party which openly avows as its object not only the dissolution of the Union but the destruction of Great Britain should be able, or even for a moment be allowed to fancy itself able, to wreck the councils of the empire by playing off one British party in Parliament against the other, shows how low politics can bring the greatest and what was once the most high-spirited of nations. Mr. Forster's onslaught upon the Government will no doubt be regarded as the deferred payment of a debt which has been accumulating since the time when he was driven from the Irish Secretaryship by the ascendancy of Mr. Chamberlain, and the liquidation of which might well appear indispensable to a strict man of business. He is, however, an Imperialist; and though as becomes his Quaker origin, he always professes to be an Imperialist of the drab, not of the scarlet order and to eschew as the means of aggrandizement, trusting entirely to philanthropic influences, in practice he admits that philanthropy sometimes requires the help of a pinch of gunpowder. If he has any intention of joining a ministry reconstructed on a moderate Liberal basis after Mr. Gladstone's departure, he would have done better by being quiet or confining himself to amicable remonstrance in the House, and pressing his counsels in private on his destined colleagues. Politicians are rarely as grateful as they ought to be for the attempt of a conscientious friend to put them in a minority.

IT cannot be denied that the situation in Egypt is bad and promises trouble. Mr. Bright, we may be sure, congratulates himself on the foresight which led him to leave the Government rather than take part in the Egyptian expedition. Gordon, it appears, overrated his own influence, as workers of miracles are apt to do. Mr. Gladstone, captivated by the man, shared his illusion, and with the sanction of the Government he has advanced into a position from which it is desperately difficult to extricate him, while nobody can bear to think of leaving him to his fate. The Government which, unlike the Opposition and the journalists, is responsible, naturally and properly hesitates to risk the lives of a British force, and with them the honour of the British arms, in any desperate adventure. To say that it is betraying Gordon, may be left to Lord Randolph Churchill, who compares Mr. Gladstone to Pontius Pilate, washing his hands of the blood of Christ. The whole business, however, evinces the weakness of diplomacy and war carried on, not by the Government, but by the journals and the people at large. Yet the end of a struggle, if there is to be one, between England and a religious impostor at the head of a horde of barbarians, cannot be doubtful; in spite of the difficulties of locality and climate, the steady pressure of a great Power sustained by inexhaustible resources will prevail. The serious difficulty is not the strength of 'El Mahdi, whose overthrow would be only a question of time, but the jealous attitude of France, which seems to grow more pronounced. The soul of Mr. Gladstone, we may be sure, is filled with anguish. But he has the consolation of feeling that he has successfully reversed the Jingo policy in other quarters. What would be the situation of England if to the Irish and Egyptian difficulties were now added a chronic warfare in Afghanistan and an embroilment with Russia? It is something to know that England in Egypt is not like France in Tonquin and Madagascar, a mere filibuster, and a scourge to the country visited by her armies. Her tutelage, if she can only keep herself clear