

"BYSTANDER" ON CURRENT EVENTS AND OPINIONS.

[THE "Bystander Papers" are not editorial, but are the opinions, expressed without reserve, of an individual writer. Those who hold the opposite opinions are equally at liberty to advocate their views in the columns of this journal. It was the special object of the founders of THE WEEK to provide a perfectly free court for Canadian discussion.—EDITOR.]

THE discussion of the Spanish American Treaty in the Board of Trade at St. John, N. B., seems likely to have important effects. It must bring home even to the mind of official optimism the unwelcome fact that, though Confederation has now been in existence for eighteen years, Union is yet to come. It is idle to deny that among the different Provinces politically linked together in the Confederation there is a lack of that which is the almost indispensable bond of such leagues: identity of commercial interest. The defect is signalized by the coal tax, which, though the most injurious of imposts to Upper Canada, is inflicted upon her for the purpose of reconciling Nova Scotia to a common Tariff. No one can visit the Maritime Provinces without learning that they are disappointed with the practical results of Confederation; that they believe it to have done their trade harm rather than good; that they still look upon Canada as a distinct, almost as a foreign, country; and that another turn of the screw of commercial depression would be enough to produce symptoms of positive disaffection. The commercial connection of each of the Provinces composing the Dominion is not with the other Provinces but with the adjacent States of the Union. This is the ordinance of Nature; and expel Nature as you will with Protective Tariffs and political railways, she returns and asserts her rights. Free Trade with our own continent, therefore, must come. It must come, because without it the people of Canada cannot receive the fair earnings of their industry or enjoy their destined measure of prosperity. Politicians may be, and no doubt are, opposed to it; they have, as a body, special interests of their own, of which, as they fancy, the Customs' line between us and the States is an outwork; but in time the manifest interest of the people will find its champions and will prevail. Free Trade with the continent it is that is needed and that is coming, not a partial measure of Reciprocity. Partial measures of Reciprocity, as experience has shown, are difficult to frame amidst the conflict of commercial interests on both sides. When framed they are precarious, for a gust of international animosity upsets them with all that is built upon them; and they leave untouched the Customs' line with all the expense which it entails and the estranging influence which morally, as well as physically, it exercises upon trade. But the greatest objection to partial Reciprocity is that it cannot be obtained. American statesmen have made up their minds against it. Commercial Union can be obtained, and is now visibly approaching. In it, as was said before, our Protectionist manufacturers, who cannot possibly hope to keep things as they are in this country, will find their best available shelter and their longest respite. They cannot for a moment imagine that Protection in Canada would ever survive Protection in the United States. Our perfect freedom of action in fiscal matters has been decisively asserted both in language and in action by our Conservative Premier; and it has been proved that by severing the tie of fiscal dependence we have in no degree weakened the bond of affection which links us to the Mother Country. It is a satisfaction to think that instead of the ordinary bickerings of Party we shall soon be dealing with a really great question, and one the right solution of which will bring a substantial increase of wealth and happiness to the Canadian people.

THEY were strangely mistaken who fancied that Mr. Gladstone was likely to lead an attack on the House of Lords. Apart from his age and weariness, which must make any fierce conflict unwelcome, his social connections and tendencies lead him quite in the opposite direction. The Tennyson Peerage might have sufficed to show what was the real bent of his mind; and he has since confirmed that proof of the value which he sets on titles by several more creations. His words of warning to the Lords, though emphatic, were friendly as well as measured, and his real object unquestionably was to avert the mortal struggle. Averted for the present the struggle is; yet the House of Lords, as an exclusively hereditary assembly, has probably received its death wound. The question between it and the nation has at length been opened never more to be closed. That the Upper House must be mended or ended is not merely the cry of the Radicals and Destructives, it is now the settled conviction of some of the most sober-minded and the least revolutionary of Englishmen. It is the opinion of rational Conservatives, who plainly discern that an assembly inherently and incurably obstructive, instead of safely regulating national progress, will only accumulate the materials of revolution. In the minds of such men it is not social prejudice, it is political experience

that prevails. They see that the House of Lords is practically condemned by its record, which in the course of the controversy has been presented in a telling form and has thoroughly taken hold of the mind of the people. It is a record of the unvarying and indiscriminate resistance of a privileged order, in the interest of privilege, not to revolutionary innovation merely, but to the natural and healthy progress of the nation. Not on the suffrage question only, but in every legislative sphere, the House of Lords has to the utmost of its power opposed every measure of reform. Could it have prevailed, Rotten Boroughs, a gagged Press, the hideous inhumanity of the old criminal code, the system of religious intolerance, arbitrary imprisonment and Slavery itself would be in existence at this day. The notion that it has discharged the duty of a Senate by acting as an impartial court of legislative review has fled before the array of facts to return no more. Its history is one of blind obstruction never yielding to reason or justice, but on questions of first rate importance, when the nation was excited, yielding at last to fear; while many secondary reforms about which there was no great excitement have either been stifled by its known hostility or found in it their grave. The only great measure of change to which this moderating organ of mature wisdom ever willingly consented, curiously enough, was one described by its own author as a leap in the dark; and this it passed in the desperate and wicked hope of swamping the progressive intelligence of the nation by the enfranchisement of ignorance. If once or twice, in the course of the struggle with the Stuarts, it took for a moment a Liberal course, the motive was plainly selfish and the Liberalism expired with the motive. That it ever, in the times of tyranny, stood between the Crown and the people is a baseless fiction. In economic questions it has been simply a house of great landlords, and in the Railway epoch it exemplified patrician disdain of base lucre by acting unblushingly as a Landlords' Ring. The period of its political ascendancy in the eighteenth century was that of the deepest and most sordid corruption in British annals. Nor has obstruction been its only political offence. To it, or the order of which it is the organ, England owed the war against the French Revolution, which was carried on with the blood and at the expense of the people, while a chivalrous aristocracy revelled in increased rent-rolls and a mass of patronage and sinecures. So low is the sense of duty in the modern aristocrat that there is hardly ever a decent attendance in the House of Lords. On a few men, whom nature has formed of finer clay, hereditary wealth and rank may operate as a spur; on most they operate as opiates. The Old English Baron underwent a severe training and lived a life of toil, civil and military: he, and the rough services which he rendered to society, sleep in the grave of the Middle Ages. These facts the controversy has brought into full view and thoroughly impressed upon the people. There is in the House of Lords a certain proportion of good Conservative matter which reform will set free to act a useful part in a happier sphere; in its present limbo it is ostracized, as is clearly seen by some Radicals, who on that account deprecate the reform of the House of Lords. But the proportion of mere worthlessness and class-selfishness is far larger. Reform in England always comes slowly, nor can we foresee in this case which of several shapes it will assume: but the eyes of the nation have been opened: an unreformed House of Lords can enjoy its respect and confidence no more.

THAT brilliant and enterprising journal, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, made a great hit the other day by an alarm about the state of the navy. Its rivals, apparently, are now trying to do as much for themselves with an alarm about India. Unluckily, while alarms about the navy, however unfounded, cannot make its condition worse, alarms about India, though imaginary, may beget real danger. It is difficult, apart from newspaper enterprise and rivalry, to understand the cause of this sudden fright. We have heard of no mutinous tendencies among the Sepoys; the fatal system of pampering, combined with neglect, which bred mutiny in the Bengal army twenty-seven years ago has, since that lesson, ceased to prevail, nor has anything been said of late about greased cartridges or any apprehended aggression upon caste. Some of the native powers—especially the great Mahratta powers, Scindia and Holkar—have armies, large and well-drilled enough to be formidable if their masters are hostile; but no sign of hostility on the part of their masters has yet appeared, and the fidelity of the Indian princes to the alliance during the mutiny seemed to prove that they regarded their interests as compatible, if not identified, with those of the British Empire. The Hindoo peasantry are, as they always have been, an indigent and suffering class; they have multiplied rapidly under British rule, which has suspended war and mitigated local famine; with their numbers, the pressure on their means of subsistence must have increased; taxation no doubt draws heavily on their scanty earnings. But politically they are mere sheep, and about as likely as sheep to rise in