

in one of his violent assertions, declared the "man who was afraid of anything must be a scoundrel, sir!" Though admitting that the man who is afraid of a newspaper will generally be found to be rather something like it, I still must freely own that I should approach my parliamentary debates with infinite fear and trembling if they were so unskilfully served up for my breakfast. Ever since the time when the old man and his son took their donkey home, which were the old Greek days, I believe, and probably ever since the time when the donkey went into the ark—perhaps he did not like his accommodation there—but certainly from that time downwards, he has objected, to go in any direction required of him—(laughter);—from the remotest period it has been found impossible to please everybody. (Hear, hear.) This institution has been objected to, but the whole circle of the arts is pervaded by institutions between which and this I can descry no difference. It is urged against this particular institution of all that it is objectionable because a parliamentary reporter, for instance, might report a subscribing M.P. in large and a non-subscribing M.P. in little. (Laughter.) Now, apart from the sweeping nature of this charge, which it is to be observed, lays the unfortunate M.P. and the unfortunate reporter under pretty much the same suspicion—apart from this consideration, I reply that it is notorious in all newspaper offices that every such man is reported according to the position he can gain in the public eye, and according to the force and weight of what he has to say. (Cheers.) And if there were ever to be among its members one so very foolish to his brethren, and so very dishonourable to himself, as venially to abuse his trust, I confidently ask those here the most acquainted with journalism whether they believe it possible that any newspaper so ill conducted as to fail instantly to detect him could possibly exist as a thriving enterprise for one single twelvemonth. (Cheers.) No, the blundering stupidity of such a journal would have no chance against the acute sagacity of newspaper editors. But I will go further, and submit to you that the offence, if it is to be dreaded at all, is far more likely of commission on the part of some recreant camp follower of a scattered, disunited, and half recognised body than when there is a public opinion established by the union of all classes of its members for the common good, the tendency of which union must, in the nature of things, be to raise the lower members of the press towards the higher, and never to bring the higher towards the lower. (Cheers.) I am not here advocating the case of a mere ordinary client of whom I have little or no knowledge. I hold a brief to-night for my brothers. (Loud and continued cheering.) I went into the gallery of the House of Commons as a parliamentary reporter when I was a boy not eighteen, and I left it—I can hardly believe the inexorable truth—nigh thirty years ago; and I have pursued the calling of a reporter under circumstances of which many of my brethren at home in England here, many of my brethren's successors, can form no adequate conception. I have often transcribed for the printer from my shorthand notes important public speeches, in which the strictest accuracy was required, and a mistake in which would have been to a young man severely compromising, writing on the palm of my hand by the light of a dark lantern in a post chaise and four, galloping through a wild country all through the dead of the night at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour. The very last time I was at Exeter I strolled into the castle yard, there to identify, for the amusement of a friend, the spot on which I once "took," as we used to call it, an election speech of my noble friend Lord Russell in the midst of a lively fight maintained by all the vagabonds in that division of the country, and under such a pelting rain, that I remember two good-natured colleagues who chanced to be at leisure, held a pocket handkerchief over my note-book after the manner of a state canopy in an ecclesiastical procession. (Laughter.) I have worn my knees by writing on them on the old back row of the old gallery of the old House of Commons; and I have worn my feet by standing to write in a preposterous pen in the old House of Lords, where we used to be huddled like so many sheep—(laughter)—kept in waiting till the woolsack might want re-stuffing. (A laugh.) Returning home from excited political meetings in the country to the waiting press in London, I do verily believe I have been upset in almost every description of vehicle known in this country. (A laugh.) I have been, in my time, belated on miry by-roads towards the small hours, 40 or 50 miles from London, in a rickety carriage, with exhausted horses and drunken postboys, and have got back in time before publication, to be received with never-forgotten compliments by Mr. Black, in the broadest of Scotch, coming from the broadest of hearts I ever knew. (Hear, hear.) Ladies and gentlemen, I mention these trivial things as an assurance to you that I never have forgotten the fascination of that old pursuit. (Cheers.) The pleasure that I used to feel in the rapidity and dexterity of its exercise has never faded out of my breast. Whatever little cunning of hand or head I took to it, or acquired in it, I have so retained as that I fully believe I could resume it to-morrow. (Cheers.) To this present year of my life,

when I sit in this hall, or where not, hearing a dull speech—the phenomenon does occur—(laughter)—I sometimes beguile the tedium of the moment, by mentally following the speaker in the old, old way; and sometimes, if you can believe me, I even find my hand going on the table cloth. (Laughter.)

In the course of the evening subscriptions were announced amounting in the whole to about £1200.

3. THE DECAY OF CONVERSATION.

The ancient art of talking is falling into decay. It is an ascertainable fact that, in proportion to an increased amount of population, the aggregate bulk of conversation is lessening. People nowadays have something else to do than talk; not only do they live in such hurry that there is only leisure for just comparing ideas as to the weather, but they have each and all a gross quantity to do, which puts talking out of the question. If persons remain at home, they read; if they journey by rail, they read; if they go to the seaside, they read; we have met misguided individuals out in the open fields with books in hand; young folks have been seen stretched underneath trees, and upon the banks of rivers, pouring over pages; on the tops of mountains, in desert, or within forests—everywhere men pull printed sheets from their pockets, and in the earliest, latest, highest occupations of life, they read. The fact is incontestably true, that modern men and women are reading themselves into a comparatively silent race. Reading is the great delusion of the present time; it has become a sort of lay piety; according to which, the perusal of volumes reckons as good works; it is, in a word, the superstition of the nineteenth century.—*Chambers' Journal*.

VIII. Miscellaneous.

1. SUMMER WIND.

It is a sultry day; the sun has drunk
The dew that lay upon the morning grass.
There is no rustling in the lofty elm
That canopies my dwelling, and its shade
Scarce cools me. All is silent, save the faint
And interrupted murmur of the bee,
Settling on the sick flowers, and then again
Instantly on the wing. The plants around
Feel the too potent fervours: the tall maize
Rolls up its long, green leaves; the clover droops
Its tender foliage, and declines its blooms.
But far in the fierce sunshine tower the hills,
With all their growth of woods, silent and stern,
As if the scorching heat and dazzling light
Were but an element they loved. Bright clouds,
Motionless pillars of the brazen heaven,—
Their bases on the mountains—their white tops
Shining in the far ether—fire the air
With a reflected radiance, and make turn
The gazer's eye away. For me, I lie
Languidly in the shade, where the thick turf,
Yet virgin from the kisses of the sun,
Retains some freshness, and I woo the wind
That still delays its coming. Why so slow
Gentle and voluble spirit of the air?
Oh, come and breathe upon the fainting earth
Coolness and life. Is it that in his caves
He hears me? See, on yonder woody ridge,
The pine is bending his proud top, and now,
Among the nearer groves, chestnut and oak
Are tossing their green boughs about. He comes,
Lo, where the grassy meadow runs in waves.
The deep distressful silence of the scene
Breaks up with mingling of unnumbered sounds
And universal motion. He is come,
Shaking a shower of blossoms from the shrubs,
And bearing on their fragrance; and he brings
Music of birds and rustling of young boughs
And sound of swaying branches, and the voice
Of distant waterfalls. All the green herbs
Are stirring in his breath; a thousand flowers,
By the road-side and the borders of the brook,
Nod gaily to each other; glossy leaves
Are twinkling in the sun, as if the dew
Were on them yet, and silver waters break
Into small waves, and sparkle as he comes.