

class are very innocent of Elocution, and apparently have no desire or intention to improve themselves. If they persist in their disregard for their own welfare, and for the honor and success of the Church in which they are to minister, the one effective antidote is in the power of the authorities, *i.e.*, to make Elocution an obligatory subject.

LETTERS IN NEWSPAPERS.

The liberty of the press is, on the whole, a great boon to any people. It is difficult to see how abuse could be remedied, how this government could be pointed out and corrected, how real progress could be perpetuated, if the press were gagged. Yet this like all other liberties, has its limitations. The liberty of the individual is good and right and useful when it does not interfere with the liberty of other individuals. It is no unlawful abridgement of a man's liberty when he is forbidden to fire a gun down a crowded street, when he is prohibited from letting off his revolver promiscuously in a crowd. Such a liberty would involve the destruction of the liberty of many, and without any benefit accruing to the community, but the reverse.

So the law forbids men to flourish the tomahawk in the pages of a newspaper, magazine, or review. A writer may no more stiletto a character, or pistol a reputation than a highwayman may cut a purse or a throat. This is not only the law of civilized nations, but is the expression of the convictions of all reasonable and responsible human beings. When Mr. Edmund Yates was sent to Holloway gaol a few weeks ago, he went not merely by virtue of the verdict of the jury, and the sentence of the judge, but with the full consent and approval of the whole country. We have not heard that even the readers of the *World* have complained that the sentence was unjust. Not even a democratic or socialistic or aristocratic club (as far as we know) has taken any steps to bring about an alteration in the law. And certainly the vindictive feeling which Mr. Yates has since displayed towards the victims of his paper and the judge, whom he was tried will only emphasise the satisfaction with which the public will give their verdict of "serve him right."

There is, however, another species of annoyance to which men, public and private, are subject, which is sometimes more offensive and more difficult to deal with than attacks in society papers, or in the editorial articles of newspapers. We are far from wishing to protect men, especially public men, from fair and legitimate criticism. Public men must not be too thinskin. For the most part it is by their own choice that they occupy public posts; and they must take the ordinary consequence of their position. Good taste will generally prescribe responsible editors the limits within which they may exercise their criticism. Public opinion will often restrain

those who are not endowed with good taste. In any case the editor of the paper is accountable for all that appears in his department.

But there is one portion of the newspaper, daily and weekly, for which the editor is only remotely responsible, and into which communications often find their way, without their contents being duly scrutinized. We refer to the column occupied by letters to the editor, a column from which men have often been wounded, more gravely, than from any other part of the worst conducted newspaper.

It is so easy to write a few stinging words of a public man, or even of a private person in such a way as to identify him clearly without mentioning his name. It is quite easy (for a man or a woman without a conscience) to insinuate all kinds of things against an enemy, or even (as the thing has often been done) against one whom the writer professes to regard as a friend. No one knows that the writer is some abject creature whose spoken words would harm no living being, but only reveal the viperous nature of the speaker. But written by an unknown hand they assume an importance which they could never derive from their author.

It is marvellous that the public put up with this. We know that men think of a wretch detected in writing an anonymous letter, calculated to wound the person to whom it is addressed, or, to injure another in his estimations. He is summarily sent to Coventry by all honorable men. But the offence of which we are speaking is a double crime. It is an attack on another by an anonymous hand; and this same hand also publishes the attack.

We are aware that editors are often placed in difficulties with reference to contributions of this kind. It cannot be doubted that many useful letters have been sent to newspapers which would never have found their way thither, had it been a requirement that the writer's name should appear. But we are not condemning anonymous letters in papers universally. When these letters deal with public questions and argue them on grounds of principle and public utility, they may be of great value. But this can never be said of anonymous attacks of a personal character. They are base, cowardly, contemptible.

While the writer of these lines was arranging in his mind the points which are here brought forward, there came into his hand a copy of the *Globe* newspaper containing a most cowardly and scurrilous anonymous attack on a much respected clergyman of this city. How the editor of that generally well conducted paper could have allowed such a production to appear in his columns, we cannot understand. Probably he never read the whole letter, until he saw it in print. We refer to it here for the purpose of illustrating our meaning. No letter of that nature ought to have appeared *without the name of the writer*. If he chose to discuss the affairs of St. James' Church apart from personalities, then he might properly do so in such a letter. But the contents of this production were grossly and offensively personal. We must not carry these remarks to a greater length, but will simply conclude by mentioning what we regard as a remedy for this evil. If men will discuss public questions on public grounds, apart from personal attacks, let them do so anonymously to as great an extent as the dimensions of the newspapers may allow. But whenever a man makes any kind of personal attack upon his fellow man, let him put his name to his letter.

FIDES.