

by an irresponsible executive up to 1847, when Lord Elgin arrived as Governor General with Responsible Government in his pocket. A general rejoicing of the Reform party took place on the event. The country was saved. We were to have a new creation—a political Millennium—"legislation according to the well-understood wishes of the people"—"legislation by the people and for the people." But our visions in this respect soon vanished. Then commenced the tug of war for office and the spoils, which has raged and increased in fury up to the present time. They were freed from the control of a Governor General—he was become a nonentity—the political axe-grinders were to have full swing from that time forth—and Responsible Government was knocked on the head by those who had clamoured the loudest for its establishment. The first blow fell on the municipal institutions of the Province. The country was divided off into districts, with a Council in each elected by the townships and villages composing it. This simple machinery worked smoothly and economically, the members paying their own expenses, and giving their time gratis. It gave every satisfaction to the people—not a word of complaint was uttered against it. It was in successful operation, when the Grit wing of the Reform party, having managed to obtain the power they had for long laboured to secure, proceeded to try their hands in experimenting in legislation, and one of them, the staunchest advocate of Responsible Government, who had reached the top rung in the Ministerial ladder in Lord Elgin's Government, took it into his head that—like the three tailors who embodied in themselves the people of England—he embodied in himself the well-understood wishes of the people of Ontario, and legislated the District Councils out of existence, and established in their stead County Councils with a Council in each township—the latter preparatory schools for log-rollers, axe-grinders and pot-house politicians, and the veriest nuisance the people could be afflicted with, and at a cost of several hundred thousand dollars a year to the Province, and thus the Responsible Government machine was started on the down grade by its chief builder, whence it proceeded with increasing velocity through the Rebellion losses, and \$2,000,000 paid Lower Canada landlords, till it rushed into a mass of corruption engendered by Confederation, and there it sunk out of sight; that was the last of it. Since that time legislation has been according to the well-understood wishes of political tricksters, Government contractors, lobby members, better-terms' men, wire-pullers, chisellers, axe-grinders, log-rollers and stealers in,—all welded together in rings to control the Government and plunder the people, who are not allowed to have a word to say on the subject, no matter which party is in power. And this is "the new era of enterprise and progress developed by Responsible Government and the Confederation of all the Provinces," so highly eulogised by the Imperial Federationist, M. Bourinot.

(To be continued.)

"PUBLICITY THE BEST CURE OF PUBLIC EVILS;" A DEFENCE OF NEWSPAPER REPORTS.

There is a subject upon which the conductors of newspapers are frequently addressed by persons whose motives and feelings they cannot but respect, although it is impossible to give them entire satisfaction. These correspondents—usually the very best and warmest supporters of the journals of which they complain—are estimable heads of families, not merely scrupulous but delicate and sensitive in their moral tone, persons to whom the very mention of any sort of sin, and especially sexual sin or its surroundings, is sincerely abhorrent, and who both for themselves and others would be glad if all evidence of the existence of vice could be for ever kept out of sight—especially out of sight of the young. It is the darling idea of these excellent persons to bring up their children, above all, to bring up their daughters, as far as possible in ignorance of the fact that there are improper people or improper occurrences in the world around them. As newspapers have become a necessary of modern life, and no one, young or old, is content without seeing them, our scrupulous friends jump to the conclusion that newspapers ought as far as possible to exclude from their columns anything that reveals to uncorrupted minds the existence of those evils which it is so much desired to conceal. Their ideas of how this is to be done are very vague, and they would not in regarding the subject generally lay down for the conductors of newspapers any restrictions that could on the face of them be considered unreasonable. Their demands are made in the concrete, not in the abstract. When anything appears in the paper they take for the family which they would rather their daughters should not see, they are up in arms. So that in reality if editors and sub-editors wish to satisfy these good people, there is only one rule, and that is to exclude everything that can either make Miss Podsnap blush or reveal to her that anybody else had anything gross to blush about. Unfortunately, the principle of concealing gross evil is one that cannot practically be adopted, and upon investigation it will be found that moderation in the length and prominence of such news and an entire avoidance of coarse expressions and obnoxious details constitute the whole amount of concession that can be made. There are duties devolving on the Press which are much more important to the community than the preservation in Miss Podsnap of that ignorance of the existence of evil

which is so often a sham, and which, if carried to an extreme, would be a curse instead of a boon.

Publicity is not only, as a well-known motto says, the best cure of public evils; it is the best purifier of private morals. For one person of the male sex kept right by love of virtue ten are kept right by the fear of exposure. The publication of cases in which the contingency of exposure has been defied or attempted to be evaded is often a very unpleasant proceeding. But if it lessens the amount of existing moral danger and contaminating influence in society, the unpleasantness of the operation is no argument against what on a balance of considerations does good to the community. We shall not hesitate to name an extreme case. Some years ago the most horrible rumours haunted society of the shameless obtrusion, if not prevalence, of symptoms which pointed to the existence among the baser sort of our gilded youth of vice of a very unusual and hitherto unsuspected kind. Names were mentioned in connection with the matter which it was shocking to find associated with unnameable errors. Even junior members of the nobility were sullied with reproach by the talk of the day, and when occurrences took place which brought the matter before the courts of justice, those implicated were found to belong to families of honour and respectability, and to be themselves persons of credit and education, from whom a *virus* might easily have spread pretty widely through society. The proceedings were protracted, and nothing ever gave the newspapers more trouble. The "unco guid" are not unco charitable, and many of them will say without hesitation that the newspaper people were glad to get a good sale by giving nasty details. Happily, every member of the profession is conscious of having been actuated by precisely opposite feelings. But to have indulged the emotions of disgust which universally possessed newspaper men, as others, to the extent of excluding the matter entirely from the public journals would have frustrated the objects of justice and injured the best interests of society. At last a long trial took place before the Lord Chief Justice, in which he displayed perfect patience, temper, and judgment, and there can be no doubt that in the end a threatening plague-spot was eradicated as nothing but judicial exposure aided by Press publicity could have eradicated it. This, we say, was an extreme case. All the stronger is the argument for publicity where the frailty is of a more ordinary kind, into which common human nature may more easily be betrayed, and temptations to which are more frequently met with. It is in reference to matters such as these that the publicity of newspapers does most good by putting all who can possibly come into danger on their guard. Nor is there any fear that the remedy will be worse than the disease.

Vice as it appears in the newspapers does not present an alluring aspect. It does not get into their columns until it is discomfited, chap-fallen, disgraced. Every such instance, depend upon it, is a warning; not a temptation. But this is not how it strikes many people. They are not really thinking of either temptation or of warning when they protest against news matter of this kind appearing in public journals. They are simply maintaining their impracticable principle of concealing all such matters from the innocent readers for whom they are chiefly concerned. We call the principle impracticable for two reasons: first, because society cannot dispense with the great benefits, moral and social, which are derived from the publication of such matters when they come under the cognisance of the law; secondly, because the true way to deal with uncorrupted minds is not to rely upon ignorance of evil, or what is called obscurantism, but to trust to the effect of moral instruction and the good instincts of right-minded persons, neither of which will ever be interfered with by the publication in decorous language of the material points of cases in which vice or immorality has incurred the exemplary penalty of exposure. There are other points deeply affecting the public good which are well worthy of consideration in this matter, and they may be illustrated by a case published lately in the whole Press of the country, from the *Times* downwards. It was a case of alleged abduction, in which a young girl was said to have been induced by a gentleman to stay the night with him at the Langham Hotel. For publishing this we were gravely remonstrated with by a most respectable and intelligent correspondent, who lamented that we should give such a "detailed account of criminal lewdness." He saw no public service to be rendered by it, nor any object to be served by a pandering to improper feelings. In all such complaints we observe two things. They are written as if the line were easy to draw, whereas every practical newspaper man knows that to draw the line of exclusion justly with due regard to the public interest is most difficult; and such critics generally make an attempt to draw the line, which is a most conspicuous and egregious failure.

For instance, the correspondent just referred to says: "The vilenesses revealed in our local police courts ought surely to suffice for our local papers; that collections should be made of the garbage of the London courts seems to me disgraceful." Everyone must feel that the distinction here made is purely arbitrary, and that any editor who should act upon it would make his paper ridiculous. In fact, making a newspaper purely local would not make it free from objectionable matter, as our correspondent perceives, but it would make it useless, as our correspondent does not perceive. Now, the reasons for publishing the Langham Hotel case are legion, and each one seems to us