

to an opponent of great talent is not to hit him with a sword, but to crown him with a diadem beyond his rank ; while to make quotations for the sake of quoting is to invite to a banquet of choice dishes and fine wines and give nothing but wind and emptiness. If a hand-saw were to break into a smile the sight could hardly be more purposeless or bewildering on the spectator than is on an audience one of those helpless attempts to display a reading which does not exist, and the very suggestion of the existence of which is incongruous.

Reading speeches is a most reprehensible practice, and one which is unfortunately aided by the desks. The theory of the Chamber is that it is a place to think, to consider, to debate, to take counsel one of another. A written speech is an impertinence with the complexion of a fraud—the very name of Parliament shows that it is intended for the interchange of thought by spoken speech, and, therefore, of the man's own thoughts. But if a member is permitted to read speeches, he may employ a secretary to do his writing and his speech-making for him, just as some clergymen have been known to buy sermons at so much a dozen. Reading a speech may be an elaborate imposition on the public, and especially on the constituents of the member. One of the papers says Mr. Blake encourages the practice. If he does, he is, as leader of a party, guilty of a very high crime and a very great misdemeanour against the practice of Parliament and the best interests of his country. But I see no evidence that he does. The most ludicrous spectacle I ever saw was at Washington. A member of Congress, arms akimbo, a pile of printed matter before him, from which, striking a theatrical attitude, to a jabbering house, the 'speaker' read out his 'speech.'

Were the practice permitted, it

would end in speeches being put in as read, which would more than ever transfer the consideration of questions from parliament to the stump. The stump has its use ; parliament has its use. But the utility of both is impaired if their functions are not kept distinct. The real object of meeting in parliament is too much lost sight of. If one of the great fathers of parliamentary discussion were to enter our assemblies, and see the pages running hither and thither, whenever the snap of the fingers is heard, members writing, letters and books being sent off to the post, he would feel as much shocked as if he came on a Presbyterian divine keeping the Sabbath by line fishing and skimming a volume of 'Zola' or 'Ouida.'

I have, or think I have, a great deal more to say. But I must not offend against my own precepts. The audience I have been thinking of while writing these hurried lines is not in Ottawa but Toronto, not members of parliament, but the young men who meet every Saturday night in Osgoode Hall, and of whose generosity I have not been able to avail myself this winter as I did last. Unable to criticize them, I have criticised others for their sake—not less impartially, not less wholly free from all political motives, I hope, than if I were speaking in that convention where no politics are allowed to intrude—and as a pledge that my thoughts have often reverted to them, I dedicate to the Osgoode Legal and Literary Society, this brief essay, which from first to last hints at rather than lays down, and establishes the propositions for which I would fain find a home in their minds, and kindred minds throughout the entire Dominion. The present belongs to older men, and may it long belong to them. But the future is for the young. Let them see to it that they shall be equal to their fate.