

merely enabled the writer to score a point on his adversary by showing that he had plunged deeper into history.

Talking of these displays of immense erudition by editorial writers, I suppose most of us have had the experience of turning back to an article of our own two or three years old, and wondering at its astounding intellectual grasp and knowledge of facts not generally known. The first two or three experiences of this kind are usually depressing. The writer feels that at the present day he could not begin to discourse in this weighty and authoritative manner and that he must be losing his grip. But when the article written to-day acquires, under the mellowing influence of time, the same appearance of infallibility he takes heart again. The explanation probably is that the writer gets up a case as a lawyer does and then forgets all about it, or, at least, packs it away in some lumber room of the brain.

Coming back to the question of water supply. The question may be asked whether there is such a thing as direct inspiration in the production of newspaper opinions. I am inclined to believe that there is, and that the writer sometimes builds wiser than he knows. For instance, during the time of the Venezuelan trouble one of my friends was writing an article of a patriotic and defiant character, much appreciated at the time. After being set up it was found to be not quite long enough to turn over the column, and he added a few sentences, not intended to have any particular meaning but sounding well and fulfilling the required mechanical purpose. A few days afterward a letter was received from a worthy old gentleman, a colonel in the militia, expressing high admiration for the article and especially for the added words, which, he said, were worth 20 000 men to Canada. When my colleague discovered that he possessed the ability of increasing the military power of Canada with a stroke of his pen he felt sorry that he had not made it 50,000.

With the most earnest men a certain cynicism is probably developed by constant writing and the public often take the writer rather more seriously than he intends. At one time I wrote an article intended to satirize what has been called grandmotherly legislation, such as the curfew law compelling children to be off the streets on the ringing of a bell at 8 o'clock. I said that in an obscure State in Europe there was a system called "parental control" under which the management of children was left largely to fathers and mothers. This was intended as a piece of scathing sarcasm but was evidently misunderstood by at least one lady who wrote expressing deep interest in the new plan and suggested that it might be tried in Ontario. A similar fate befell the writer of a humorous article rebuking the practice of talking slang, and purposely couched in slang of the most atrocious kind. The discrepancy was discovered by a lynx eyed correspondent, who went to the trouble of picking out all the slang phrases and making some such comment as "consistency thou art a jewel." Another case was a paragraph supposed to be written on behalf of wheelmen and horsemen desirous of racing on Jarvis street on Sunday evening and complaining that they were obstructed by pedestrians going to church. This elicited a most indignant protest on behalf of the pedestrians.

However light an estimate a writer may place on the intellectual character of his own work, it does involve a certain exhaustion of his mental resources, such as they are, which must be supplied in some way. Experience gained by travel and intercourse with one's fellows is valuable, but involves what may be regarded as a too great expenditure of time in

proportion to the result. As to listening to the opinions of other people, it is to be borne in mind, first, that they are sometimes merely giving you back the things they read in the newspapers, and, second, that the opinion may be valuable, not in order that you may adopt it, but that you may oppose it, especially if it embodies the views of a large number of men. The most valuable of all these opinions are those of men dealing with their own trade or calling, and these are very often the opinions most difficult to obtain. The use of books as a means of replenishing the mind is so obvious, and involves so many considerations, that it is useless for me to enter upon it here. Perhaps the most valuable books are not those which stuff the mind with facts, but those which stimulate and suggest and set the reflective faculties off on journeys of their own style. I might here refer to a certain modern tendency to despise the reflective article and to prefer writing of the class described as crisp, snappy, etc., containing merely the opinions and conclusions of the writer and not the train of thought by which he arrives at them. This is a matter of taste and judgment, but I must put myself down as belonging to the slow and conservative school. The unsupported opinions of a writer seem to me to be of very little value, and the train of thought often more important than the conclusion. However, this is an impatient age, and we may all be compelled before we die to become breezy, bright and jerky. I leave to the last, perhaps the most important of all editorial resources, the exchange list. It would be ungrateful in the extreme to forget the relief which often comes in times of exhaustion or sudden emergency from the paste pot and scissors. My notion at present is that the pile of exchanges of which least use is made by the editorial writer is that which comes from the United States. The American press has a bad name for sensationalism, scrappiness and unreliability; but if one studies those parts of the paper which are prepared away from the hurly-burly, he will find a large amount of interesting and suggestive writing on such matters as social reform, popular science, medicine, sanitation, inventions, agriculture, forestry, road improvement, education, experiments in State legislation, and other matters, some of them homely and perhaps regarded as beneath the dignity of the editorial page, but perhaps of more real and vital importance than things which fill a larger space in the public eye.

The President: "The warm applause you have given Mr. Lewis testifies your hearty appreciation."

THE PRESS AS AN EDUCATOR.

BY REV. J. A. MACDONALD, EDITOR THE WESTMINSTER,
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The newspaper is a commercial enterprise. If it would succeed as a newspaper, it must shun financial failure. If it does not pay its way, it will not go far or go for long. Like all other honest and honorable undertakings, it must pay its debts to workmen and stockholder and subscriber.

But is the newspaper more than a commercial venture? Is the criterion of its success the financial statement of its counting room? Has the press any other or higher function? That is the question involved in the subject assigned to me.

I. IS THE PRESS AN EDUCATOR?

We were told last night by the distinguished public man who was our guest, and whose duty and habit it is to study closely and critically the forces and tendencies in the great world of men, that the press is the greatest force known in human society to-day. He told us that the newspaper is an educator more influential than the school, a power making for