

THE CHEAP NEWSPAPER.

In resuming this subject from our last issue, we will speak first of

THE MECHANICAL DEPARTMENT.

The work of putting the type together for the morning paper does not commence until four o'clock in the afternoon, when what is called the "night hands," or the printers who set up the paper, come, and without going into precise figures, we may say that upon each Montreal daily paper some forty persons are employed in the various departments, counting editorial staff, reporters, clerks, compositors, and machinists, not forgetting the occasional contributor, like your humble servant. The night hands, when they arrive find their wooden "cases" filled for them with type distributed from the morning's or previous morning's impression, by a number of printers called the "day hands," who begin work at 7 A.M., continuing till 6 P.M. As distributing type is a process from three to four times faster than setting it up, it of course does not require nearly as many hands to throw in the metal letter as to compose it into columns.

"Copy" is ready for the night hands the minute they arrive, swarming punctually into the office like so many bees. And no pile of bread and butter, cut up for hungry school-boys, could go down faster under their operations, than does that pile of reports, telegrams, reprints (or extracts from the English and Provincial papers) and correspondence prepared for them, which the foreman divides and dispenses among them. People cry out when they see an error in a daily paper; but if they saw the way all this miscellaneous intelligence is scattered over a whole office, like the fly sheets at the mouth of the Sybil's cave, they would rather wonder so much order from so much apparent confusion, could morning after morning spring. Sometimes, it is true, a baby (or a birth) will find itself prematurely amongst the marriages, or a newly-wedded couple start to discover the chronicle of their auspicious event, by an ill-omened accident, appearing in the list of deaths; but if you watched the multitudinous scraps of type being "emptied" or deposited by the compositors in quick succession from their "composing sticks," your marvel would be, not that there was now and then a trifling displacement when all was put together, and the forms and pages of the paper were placed upon the machine, to be worked off; but that each morning, the broad sheet, which you opened at your breakfast-table, did not prove the "Chronicle of Chaos." Yet all moves on regularly, silently, and I may say solemnly, during the long night in the large printing room; the proof passing on to the reader, whose low muttered examination of slip after slip with the copy-holder, you may just catch a faint sound of from the adjoining apartment.

About 9 P.M. the night hands are in need of refreshment; after that, they remain until the last of the latest intelligence—midnight telegrams—is in type, and all ranged together, to be rolled off by a different set of hands.

THE REPORTING DEPARTMENT.

You have seen the mechanical side; but the literary, political and compiling processes have yet to be noticed. If the midnight hands are asleep when the ordinary public is beginning the day, the world is awake. The business of meetings and talking, and of the local courts, begins at 10 o'clock, and from that out until (it may be) midnight, the short-hand writers are abroad in the city, or, it may be, in the country, or back in their room writing out their reports for the sub-editor, who regulates their length according to the space at his disposal; and as the pressure upon each day differs with the number of meetings, inquests, "accidents by flood and field," terrible railway smashes, and crimes which occur, the local town councillor or post-prandial orator, finds himself curtailed or lengthened out accordingly. A murder of a peculiarly sensational character has thus often been

the death of a long orator, and city rhetoricians, when public "palavers" crowd too numerously together on the same day, elbow one another out of print, as a newspaper, like a quart bottle, will only contain a certain quantity. It is, however, a comfort to reflect that those who suffer most by the unavoidable abbreviations referred to are the orators, and my experience is that the reports could never be too long for the speakers, or too short for the readers. There is, or ought to be, a book kept in the reporter's room, in which the "engagements" of each day, as they are announced by advertisement or otherwise, are entered, the sub-editor allotting the work amongst the stenographic staff, so that each, on looking in the diary, sees "what he is down for," as the phrase is. Of course there are numerous other incidents daily and hourly occurring, in the city and out of the city, of which the world, or even the newspapers, have no intimation. Those who commit burglaries and slaughters, get drunk and assault the police, do not give the journals notice of their intentions. Destructive fires take place suddenly, the public and the reporters are both taken by surprise, "dreadful accidents" are rarely or never premeditated, so that the "living intelligencers" must be on the alert for them, as well as for more formal occurrences. Perhaps the reporter is going home towards midnight, after a hard day's work, when he is arrested by the sound of the fire-bells, or it may be the sudden cry of solitary or mingled voices, which Macbeth declared was even too much for his nerves—

The time has been my senses would have cooled,
To hear a night-briek: and my fell of hair
Would at a dismal treatise raise and stir,
As life were in't.

All these alarms, however, which to others are so exciting, to the reporter simply means business, and sound on his ear as a summons to some sensational scrap of news. Or, perhaps, his last visit to the police stations—the last round usually made at night—may disclose a dreadful crime just committed, which causes the work of the night to recommence just as he hopes it was ended.

Two or three strangers were one day going over the establishment of one of our contemporaries, when they paused at the door of the reporter's room, when the greater part of the staff were at the table "writing out." One of the latter had a particularly grave and almost gloomy expression of countenance, which was noticed by one of the party, a lady. "What department," she whispered to the conductor, "is that sad-faced gentleman engaged in?" The conductor having a proclivity for a joke, and seeing a favourable opportunity for indulging in it, immediately answered, "That, madam, is the murder and manslaughter reporter: his is the sanguinary department, and the harrowing character of his work has fixed that chronic expression of horror which you observe in his face."

"Dear me," exclaimed the lady, quite satisfied and deeply interested. Then, pointing to another, with an anxious and alert, I might almost say, painfully intense look, she asked with bated breath, "And that gentleman with red hair; what is his speciality?"

"He is kept for fires and street robberies," was the reply, "and the expression which you notice is contracted from his always keeping his ears open for the sound of the "alarm bell" or "stop thief!"

The lady remembered reading in Lavater that the occupation of a person stamped itself upon the lineaments, and was convinced by "this curious but most remarkable instance of the confirmation of an ingenious theory."

THE EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

Besides the editor, there is the sub-editor, and sometimes an assistant-editor. The assistant-editor is usually the summary writer. He has to skim the English papers as they arrive, and keep himself *au courant* with the telegrams as they come in during the day and night, giving the hasty reader who likes the heads, and does not care to be hampered with the details of in-

telligence, the cream of the political, domestic and foreign news. He, however, is not always necessarily engaged in this, he may occasionally, too, be traced under the headings of "The Drama," "Music," and the "Fine Arts"—as fortunately in this city, not much patronized—Music being generally confined to vulgar minstrels (with the honourable exception of Colonel Fane's promenade concerts,) and the fine arts in the public exhibitions in the windows of Dawson Brother's and Pell's establishment, and a coloured photography from the studios of Henderson and Notman. True, there are at times the productions of important and celebrated artists, as Duncanson and Friend. The line of demarcation between the assistant-editor and the editor, too, is not so finely or tensely drawn as to prevent the two being mutually co-operative.

The editor, besides his other avocations, is the individual who conventionally bears the sins of the whole establishment. The public blame him for everything that goes wrong in the office or out of it, and he accepts the responsibility with charming resignation, though he is probably as innocent with the details of intelligence furnished, or of many effusions attributed to him, as the man in the moon. A sorer sharpship to him is, when, having finished a "leader," and read his revise, he puts on his hat to go home, just as the telegram boy comes trotting into the office, and places in his hand a law-telegram, which upsets his leading article, or, what is the same thing, the calculations on which it was based, and compels him to begin again, or at least to undertake a severe revision. This is peculiarly the case in war times, when military commanders will suddenly, and at the last moment, win or lose battles, without the slightest consideration for the clever and convincing conjectures in which newspaper writers (like special correspondents) will frequently indulge. But there is an end to everything, and there is an end to each day's publication, when all engaged on it may go to bed; though unfortunately, one issue follows another so quickly, that if it were not for the pause of Sunday—or the interval of twenty-nine hours rest which it represents—I believe Beauport Luncheon Asylum would be filled with newspaper people, the almost ceaseless wear and tear of nerve and fibre being so very trying. If this paper serves to give the reader any idea of the labour employed to photograph passing events on a broad sheet of paper, to be placed each morning before them, it will have fulfilled its purpose. The Montrealers now get a larger sheet, containing more matter, for a penny, than our forefathers did for sixpence; and, strange to say, do not appear to be at all affected with remorse at taking *so much for so little*. Nay, more—grumble at there being nothing in the papers. One blushes for an ungrateful public.

TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

We have much pleasure in informing our friends and subscribers, that Mr. R. Worthington has purchased this journal from the creditors of the estate of the late publishers. As the sale is but just completed, as we go to press, we can merely add, that Mr. W.'s well known energy and enterprise are a sufficient guarantee that the business management of the SATURDAY READER will in future be in good hands.

LONDON LETTER.

LONDON, October 18th.

Queen Victoria still remains in her beloved Highland retreat, from which, however, she emerged for one day in order to open the new works for supplying the city of Aberdeen with water. This she did literally by means of an arrangement of machinery which made the operation as easy as could be wished. On that occasion Her Majesty spoke in public for the first time since her husband's death, and I therefore send you her speech, which, though short, is suggestive enough. The Queen said: