

assistant reporter and sub-editor on the staff of the *Mercury*.

Business seems to continue steady, and the town has not been visited lately by casuals in search of work.

There is some talk of the *Mercury* donning a new dress, and it is confidently expected this step will be the means of greatly augmenting its already large subscription list, as it claims to be the best country paper west of Toronto.

PARAL L.

Reading Rooms.

To the Editor of the Miscellany:

SIR,—Please allow me space for a few remarks on the above subject. Reading rooms are very useful in a certain way, but they afford an opportunity for some well-to-do people to read the newspapers without paying for them. I know a certain gentleman, quite wealthy, who, when asked to subscribe for a local paper, replied that he had the reading of it in the Y. M. C. A. Room. They also tend to lessen the circulation of papers, and then some associations and clubs have the audacity to ask to have the newspapers mailed free, as it is a "benevolent" institution, and a free gift of a paper is only a small donation. It is very true that they afford a good chance for poor people to keep up with the times, as far as literature is concerned; but it is a pity that they satisfy the miserly notions of those who should pay for and support their own paper.

PRINTER.

The Necessity for a Relief Society.

ST. JOHN, N. B., Feb. 15, 1878.

To the Editor of the Miscellany:

SIR,—Common sense, one would suppose, should teach men that self-preservation ought to be the first law to govern their actions; but that there are some who do not realize this fact has been fully exemplified by the printers of St. John.

Some time since I called the attention of the craft to the necessity of establishing a Printers' Relief Society in this city, and endeavored to point out what I thought might be the benefits that would accrue from such an institution, and suggested some ideas relative to its management.

Had such a society been in good working order prior to the 20th June last, would not many of the craft have reaped more or less benefit from it, and to some extent, at least, be placed

beyond immediate want and the necessity of accepting aid from other sources, or asking help from their brother typos abroad. The latter, however, proved a failure, and, in my humble opinion, had better been left undone.

Is there no way of organizing such a society? I mean a society that will admit of no monopoly on the part of any one, and will not permit anything of a sensational character to enter within its limits, or organize "strikes," and such like things, but will have one great end always in view—the welfare, comfort, and sociability of the craft.

Knowing, sir, that you possess a strong desire to better the condition of our workmen at large, and finding that my former suggestions have met with no response, can you not, and will you not agitate this matter, and suggest some good scheme for the formation of such a society.

A SUBSCRIBER.

¹[An article in reference to the above is crowded out of this number.—ED. P. M.]

A Voice from Halifax, N. S.

HALIFAX, N. S., Feb. 12, 1878.

There are at present some fifteen or twenty printers out of employment in this city, and there is not the slightest prospect of better times. Never, since I have been at the business, (twelve years) have I known of such depression.

I think that one quarter of this slackness is caused by the cheap way the daily papers are "set-up." For instance: the *Chronicle* has eight compositors (four for the evening paper, and the same number for the morning paper) and seven boys! They (the *Chronicle* hands) barely support two "subs," while the *Herald*, with only five "regulars," help to support five "subs."

The Nova Scotia Printing Company, who have nearly all the Government work, employ six men and nine boys; and so on in every office in the city, with the exception of the *Reporter* and the *Recorder*, each of which employs five men and two boys.

You will see by these few remarks that the poor "comps" over here have exceedingly hungry times.

HARD UP.

A Serious Matter.

ST. JOHN, N. B., Jan. 28, 1878.

My attention has been called to a very serious matter in connection with the "art preservative" (I make the quotation with all due em-