

ways excuse himself for what he is about to say or read ; when, if what he states be true, he ought, by every law of good sense and ethical propriety, to sit down and leave the more room for somebody who *is* prepared. Every speaker should make the very best preparation possible, and then plunge *in medias res*, from his opening sentence giving his hearer something that has cost thought and is worth thought. We remember to have heard a man of no little distinction rise to address a large assembly on a great occasion ; and, though appointed to the duty months previous, calmly inform his auditors that he " had made no preparation save that which he had made on his way to the meeting," in a ten minutes' ride on a tram-car ! If true, that was an insult to the assembly : and unfortunately his speech proved that it was only too true.

A grievous blunder it is to *bring in irrelevant matter*, especially where brevity, condensation and concentration are essential. There is an impassable gulf between having to say something and having something to say. Those who easily took hold and firm ; kept hold of those great audiences were invariably those who spoke, keeping most closely and clearly to the subject. The more direct the track, straight to the heart of the theme—*recte viam secare*—and the more vigorous the handling of it, the closer and more absorbed the attention. It was observable that matter, interesting in itself but foreign to the discussion, was ruled out by an impatient or listless audience, if not by a watchful and impartial moderator. Some of the papers were simply specimens of riding hobbies. Some writer, who had been studying a topic, or making a book, would take opportunity to inflict on his helpless hearers a treatise, having only a nominal connection with his theme, and sometimes so foreign to it as to appear such to the most casual and careless observer. Sydney Smith said that " in preaching, the crime against the Holy ghost is *dullness*." It is very nearly an unpardonable offense to intrude and obtrude before such a body as that which met in Exeter Hall any address or paper which has not been carefully prepared on the subject under discussion, or which lacks the pith of sensible suggestion or the point of fitness and applicability. Speakers should be chosen, competent to treat these great themes, and conscientious enough to take pains in preparing ; and only such should be heard.

Even in the voluntary remarks that followed the papers there was no real reason why a law of judicious selection should not have been followed. Cards were sent to the secretary indicating a desire to be heard, and the parties were called upon in the order of application. The consequence was that not infrequently the most forward rather than the best furnished speakers engrossed the priceless moments of that great gathering. That a man wishes to be heard is not always a sign that others wish to hear him. To the happy conduct of such