

fretting. By-and-by your friend seems to come to the end of his flow of discourse, not much stimulated, it is to be feared, by your brief and *distract* replies; and you begin to breathe more freely and hope for speedy relief. Not so; your friend calmly remains seated, and, all unwarned by a silence which *you* feel awkward but will not break, he begins again presently on a new subject—this time, perhaps, a pet grievance, on which he can easily go on for an hour, although you know beforehand all he has to say. Perhaps, in sheer desperation, you break away, at last, on plea of pressing engagements, a thing you wish you could have summoned courage to do long before. You try to apply yourself to your work again—not so easy a task however, after the fretting process to which you have been subjected—when in walks another visitor, a lady this time, Mrs. Limpet, who wants your assistance in some new scheme she has devised, and, by way of disposing you favourably towards it, comes to rob you of another half hour of your precious morning. Indeed, you are fortunate if you can get rid of her so soon, as she is one of those women who love to linger over their subject, adorning it with all manner of episodes, which they give with the minutest circumstantial detail, which you find it impossible to cut short. By the time she has run her story out to the last thread, your busy morning that was to be, is all but gone; your mind is wearied and distracted, and you are hardly in a condition to take up again the dropped threads of thought and begin anew. Such interruptions are particularly distracting to people whose work is pure brain-work, demanding, before all things, concentration of thought and freedom from distracting influences. None probably suffer from them so much as clergymen, who, while everybody knows that they are expected to prepare every week two carefully considered sermons on the most import-

ant of all subjects, are yet, besides all the necessary and multifarious demands upon their time, supposed to be the legitimate prey, at all hours, of every idler or busybody who imagines he has business with them, or a subject of importance to bring under their notice. A preacher has, perhaps, just got into a happy vein of thought and flow of composition, when, in the middle of a paragraph, thought out with great care, Mr. Discursive ‘drops in,’ and bores him for an hour with miscellaneous talk, which puts his carefully collected ideas to ignominious flight, and yet which, if a sensitive man, he cannot bear to cut short. One wonders why the idle people can’t inflict their superfluous time on each other, and let busy people alone.

X.

—Few things are more unaccountable than the apathy and indifference with which the people bear the evils connected with the administration of the law in this country. We ask for Government interference in a great many things; we look to it to make or unmake trade, to encourage some kinds of industry by premiums of protective and prohibitory duties, and in the same degree to discourage others, to draw people away from the cultivation of the soil, the business which the country has special facilities for, encouraging them to engage in mercantile business, by releasing them from their contracts through an Insolvent Law. We look to Government to educate our children to inspect and stamp the products of our industry, to make people sober by prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquors; in short we look to it to do many things which it ought not to do, while we do not demand of it the discharge of its chief function—the administration of justice. This, which ought to be the first business—and, in the opinion of many, the sole business—of a Government, and on which social well-being so intimately depends, it turns