cognized place. They sigh for a code, to whose procrustean sections they may refer every complicated knot in human affairs for solution. Failing this, they would disentangle every such knot by an appeal to first principles only, not also by researches into the manner in which deft fingers have before untwisted similar strands. We shrewdly suspect the majority of such objectors are not gifted with that faculty so useful to the working lawyer, a memory for cases, and that their want of this faculty has much to do with the vehemence with which they disparage it. Be this as it may, it is certain that the law of England is, and will long continue to be, based on a respect for precedent, that is, previous decisions. For instance, the works of eminent writers on the law are often referred to in argument, as throwing light upon the subject before the Court; but the opinion of any such writer is as dust in the balance against the weight which the Court will attribute to the decision of a Court of co-ordinate jurisdiction, provided it is unreversed and can be appealed from. In the language of Chief Baron Pollock, 'The rule is this: that wherever there is a decision of a Court of concurrent jurisdiction, the other Courts will adopt that as the basis of their decision, provided it can be appealed from. If it cannot be appealed from, then they will exercise their own judgment.'

Such being the respect paid by our law to authority, one of the chief matters into which our Courts inquire, in all questions of law which come before them, is whether or not the point at issue has been before decided in a manner which is binding upon the Court where it is now mooted. If it has, the point is said to be concluded by authority, and the Court gives judgment accordingly.

The labours, then, of the law reporter not only furnish the chief staple of forensic argument, but upon them mainly hinges all judicial determination. Whence it is obvious that it is of the highest importance to the community at large that the law reports should be accurate and authentic; also, that they should be published with all possible expedition. The present system of reporting is charged with a failure to secure these desirable results. Accuracy and authenticity, it is said, are rendered impossible both by the number of reports of the same cases and the method by which they are produced. Judges are enabled to disclaim having used the expressions attributed to them, and no one can predicate whether they will follow this, that, or any version.

Those who thus condemn the present system have a panacea to suggest for all its alleged mischiefs. The State, say they, is bound to take the duty of law-reporting upon herself. Let, therefore, a staff of barristers be appointed for each Court, as its official reporters, with fixed salaries, paid by the country; and let them give up private practice at the bar, devoting themselves entirely to their official duties. Let there be some revision of the reports which they draw up, before publication, whether by the judges of the Court, or by a permanent board, to be appointed as editors. Let the judges revise all judgments which are to go forth under the sanction of their names; and let them deliver none but written judgments in all cases, as is now the practice of the judges of the Roman rota, and of our own judges in India. Let the Courts allow only the official reports to be cited as authoritative and authentic. Let a complete report of each decision be published, written, at most, three months after the Court pronounces it, and a short abstract of it be issued by the reporters at an even earlier period. Let, lastly, the price of the Reports be such as to bring them within the reach of the most moderate means.

Many, on the other hand, take exception to these proposals. In their opinion, the system now prevailing best secures faithful and impartial reports. *Nescit vox missa reverti*, as now uttered by the judges in the ears of independent chroniclers: if revocable after utterance, would it not cultivate an *animus revertendi*? Again some, at all events, of a multitude of independent chroniclers must chronicle aright; all of a paucity of official chroniclers may often chronicle wrongly. Indolence, distaste, and carelessness are ever plants of rapid growth in an official bosom; and can such plants put forth healthful printed leaves?

For our own part, we doubt whether the discrepancy of the reports, as at present compiled, *inter se*, is not much exaggerated. That they necessarily vary greatly in precision and completeness must be admitted. The advantages of a single authentic version, prepared by gentlemen in whom the profession—and therefore the public—could feel confidence, would be undeniably great. We doubt, however, whether reporters ought not to remain, as at present, independent of the control of judges; and we should assuredly hesitate long before approving their conversion into mere officials, debarred from that private practice which is not only their best teacher, but their strong incentive to excellence. (Reporters have often been elevated to, and proved distinguished ornaments of the Bench. We may instance the names of Jervis, Cresswell, Alderson, amongst the past; of Crompton and Blackburn amongst present Judges. Also Sir C. H. Scotland, Chief Justice of Madras.) Again, it appears to us that the business of the Courts could scarcely be carried on, were