

mischief than vice." In our times, it is not so much ignorance as indifference.

It is not often that men of literary merit succeed in the House, and one reason is that they are commonly too fastidious. They who have been studying the niceties of language all their lives, dislike to rush into the bold current of extemporaneous speaking—of incurring the half-finished sentence—the confused grammar—the bald English, into which even the best of Parliamentary debaters are often driven. Another cause of their want of success is, that they are often too refined in their reasonings. An experienced orator, who desires a cheer at some particular moment, will plunge voluntarily into some popular common-place, which in his heart he despises, in order to obtain it. It is seldom that the philosophical, fastidious, contemplative man of letters descends to these arts ; seldom that you hear from him about “the corrupt Boroughmongers” on the one hand, or “the downfall of our sacred institutions” on the other. But these are minor obstacles to success, which a little resolution and a little versatility easily overcome. The greatest obstacle the man of letters has to contend with, is too great a susceptibility to failure. “Is not that a great speech ?” said a member to Charles Fox, of the present Lord D’s maiden effort—“Yes,” answered Fox ; “but before I judge of the speaker, I must see him fail.”

And literary men, above all others, are apt to become disgusted with a career which involves necessarily so many stumbles. One gives it up in despondency, another in disdain ; a third is stifled by a sneer, and a fourth is rendered for ever dumb by a complimentary exposition of a blunder. Literary men, too, have an arch enemy to encounter in their own reputation—a great deal is expected from them on their first *debut*. Now, every one who knows any thing of public speaking, knows that, of all talents, it is the one which requires the most study and the longest practice. With exceptions so few that they may be dismissed at once, no orators permanently great, are great at the beginning. Few literary men have had any previous practice, when they enter the House ; the thousand tricks and mysteries of oratory are utterly unknown to them ; they make what would have been an excellent speech in an unknown member, but which, perhaps, from a mere diffidence, a mere want of address in delivery, is considered a failure for them ; and that failure, perhaps, which ought to excite their energy, only induces their despair. It is a common thing to say, “Men find their level in the House.” It is an unjust observation ; the mind does not always find its level—the tongue does. There is a great difference between the two.

Yet, on the whole, though any very clever man may fail repeatedly, if he have but the hardness of mind to persevere, he is *sure* of success at last : there is scarcely an instance to the contrary. A happy fact happily stated—a broad view—a noble sentiment—even a felicitous expression, will suddenly redeem a series of fail-