

LOCAL PRESS ASSOCIATIONS.

By John Lewis, *The Globe*, Toronto.

THE measure of success achieved by the Toronto Newspaper Club is that it has brought a large number of the working journalists of the city together, under circumstances favorable to the making of friendships and the exchange of ideas. What they shall do, having come together, may be regarded as still an open question. At present the programme is a fortnightly or monthly dinner, held at the usual hour of the evening meal, simple, informal and inexpensive, occupying the two or three hours between the afternoon and evening work of the newspaper writer. The result has been such as to vindicate the wisdom of our British custom of beginning an undertaking with something to eat and drink. People have chatted together at our gatherings who might not otherwise have met in intimate relations in a lifetime. Last week, for instance, we had the editor of *The Catholic Register* sandwiched in between the Methodist minister who conducts *The Christian Guardian* and his Presbyterian brother who edits *The Westminster*. We have also a kind of intercourse of which in my younger days there was very little—between the older and the younger men of the profession. Hitherto the talk has consisted mainly of civilities and pleasantries—good in itself, better as bringing the promise of lasting friendships and of an exchange of the thought that lies below the surface.

To illustrate: at our last gathering we were listening to "reminiscences," and one speaker happened to say that in his youth he had a very exalted idea of the dignity of an editor until the two editors in his town began to bandy personalities and both were dragged from their pedestals. There was food for reflection. Either of these editors would probably have endured a good deal of work and worry to obtain the mayoralty of the town, or an office in a church or secret society, for the sake of the dignity and distinction of the position. But here were both of them wantonly throwing away the respect naturally attaching to their occupation, and thus injuring not only themselves, but all their comrades and successors. For the boyish feeling of awe for the editorial position, exaggerated though it may have been, was founded upon a true instinct. It was exaggerated if we consider our poor performance; it was not exaggerated if we consider our opportunities.

In the reaction from the cant about the "power of the press" we are apt to underestimate the real power of the newspaper as an agent for the transmission of thought. There are newspapers in the United States whose daily circulation is reckoned in hundreds of thousands and yet whose influence, except perhaps for mischief, is very slight. The reason is that in the most exact and literal sense they are sensational—employed not in the dissemination of thought, but in the production of a succession of transitory sensations. They are intended not to nourish the intellect, but merely to tickle the intellectual palate.

The fault of some of these papers is not so much in the space they devote to crime as in their mode of treatment of crime. If it were possible to get a report of a session of the police court from a great criminal lawyer, from a detective, from an eminent penologist, from a novelist like Dickens, from one of

the promiscuous crowd of idlers who amuse themselves with the proceedings, we should have five accounts, which, without any wilful falsification, would vary widely. Now, the newspaper writer may, up to the measure of his abilities, enable his readers to see the proceedings from any or all of these points of view. He may weigh the evidence, he may discuss the causes of crime and their remedies, he may analyze and describe the characters of the frequent occupants of the dock. And no matter how strictly he may be bound to a bare narration of the facts, the bent of his mind, whether it is the mind of an artist, or a lawyer, or a reformer, is sure to show itself in his work. The reporter, just as surely as the editorial writer, will leave the mark of his character and attainments on his work. The more thought and information a man brings into his task, the more thought and information he will bring out of it. And now I find I have wandered all the way from the last gathering to the next, which is to be devoted to the exchange of the experience and the ideas of newspaper reporters.

Newspaper men throughout the province find profit and pleasure in the annual meeting of the Canadian Press Association. The chief fault found with it is that it is annual and too brief; that the members sometimes part just as they realize the benefit of meeting. A system of city, country or district associations would give opportunities for more frequent gatherings, and for the consideration of local interests. Of these associations the Press Association would be, in substance if not in form, a federation; and the annual discussions would be all the better if the ground had already been broken in the local meetings. The form and procedure would vary with the locality; here it might be a social gathering, there a business meeting; the view of the writer might be prominent in one, the view of the proprietor in another; and the Canadian Press Association would be the common friend and helper of all.

MR. GEMMILL'S PARLIAMENTARY COMPANION.

Perhaps none of our Canadian books of reference are as useful to the press as the "Parliamentary Companion." Mr. Gemmill gets into the 450 pages of this small volume a mass of political information which can be found literally nowhere else. The new volume is for 1897, and therefore records the changes in Parliament, Governments and Legislatures which have taken place since the last issue of the book in 1891. Mr. Gemmill beats us all at condensation. There is not a line of space wasted, in fact not an em, and the biographical sketches are filled with dates which are extremely useful to us in many matters outside of politics. For the desk of the editor the "Parliamentary Companion" is simply indispensable, and it, like the desk, should never be lent. The publishers are J. Durie & Son, Ottawa, who can supply copies.

NEW EQUIPMENT.

The Eddy Company, of Hull, are asking tenders for eight new boilers 5 by 14 feet, intending to have the most modern, complete, up-to-date battery in Canada. The new boilers will be auxiliary to those now running, and will be used chiefly to operate some special paper and printing machines and pumps. When these eight boilers are added, the Eddy Company will have in steady operation 32 steam boilers, quite apart from their water power development, which equals about 5,000 horse power. These boilers are being put in to insure sufficient power when the water is low.