

REPORTERS AND THEIR WORK.

BY ONE OF THEM.



IN a recent issue we laid before our readers an account of the work done in the sub-editor's room. We now propose to submit some few details of the life of a newspaper reporter, and the difficulties under which he has often to labour. Commencing at once, then, we would observe that but few callings present such variety and constant change as that of a reporter for the Press, and very few indeed entail such a continued strain, both mentally and physically, and demand such sacrifice of self.

Take the reporter engaged on the staff of a morning newspaper. As a rule, he arrives at the offices of his paper not later than 10 a.m., and, turning to the diary, sees for what event he is "marked" by his superior. It may be a morning meeting in town, or perhaps some trial in an assize court many miles away, and for which the public are anxiously waiting.

Off he goes at once after studying his railway timetable, sits in court till six or seven o'clock at night, without any interval for refreshment—save the few minutes he can snatch at a point when he has "written-up"—and then he has to hurry back to head-quarters with what remains untelegraphed. Perhaps he has not finished his transcript, and so he has to go on for two or three hours after his arrival back in town until he has completed his report. It may be that he cannot then go home, weary as he is, as it is his "night on;" or he is just in the act of leaving, conscious of having done a good day's work, when, in the absence of a colleague, he receives instructions to hunt out the details of some horrible tragedy, a disastrous fire, boiler explosion, or railway catastrophe. Having gleaned all the information he possibly can, he returns to his own room to "write out," and finishes only in time for the making-up of the type, at two or three o'clock in the morning. He then gets to his bed as best he can, and after a few hours' sleep begins another day. He is out early, probably writes a record of events coming under his notice in the day-time, and night sees him at a great public meeting where thousands of persons are hanging on the utterances of some minister of the Crown. In conjunction with others, he must have his full share of note-taking, the transcribing and the responsibility resting, consequently, on him and the firm he serves.

Saturday comes, but with it probably no rest. The reporter must take a morning or noon train for a town or city scores of miles distant, to be ready for more speeches; or, word having come in that a colliery disaster has occurred, he must hasten to the vicinity. All this, and much more, he is called upon to do.

The reporter for the evening newspaper is not obliged to undergo fatigue and suffer inconvenience in exactly

the same way. If not connected with a leading metropolitan or other widely-circulated evening paper, his field of labour is confined to a much more limited area than that traversed by our morning newspaper reporter. His duties lie mainly in the town where his paper is published each afternoon or evening. Nevertheless, his work is laborious, his hours are long, and constant worry is often his lot.

The reporter for the "weekly" is perhaps more happy, for though long reports of comparatively unimportant events are expected from him, he is not hurried in the same way for "copy," except it be on the same day, or day before, the newspaper is published. If not making "calls" or reporting, possibly he is proof-reading, and, in such a case, his liberty is considerably curtailed.

Whether he be on the staff of the daily, the bi-weekly, or weekly, the reporter must be prepared for anything and everything. It not infrequently happens that while in the morning he views the bodies of those from whom life has suddenly been taken, at night he is in the midst of life and gaiety, recording festivities and merry-making. He must be able, too, to describe anything, from the smallest machinery to the largest erection, and from the insignificant to the imposing. Should danger beset his path in the search for items of news he is undaunted, should difficulties stand in his way he defies them, ever ready, ever willing to spend and be spent for the profession he has at heart.

Innumerable stories of adventure could be told by the reporter, and many are the tales that could be related of episodes arising out of friendly rivalry between men of the same cloth. With one example this brief sketch must be brought to a close. The time was one of great political excitement, when the elections throughout the country were to tell whether the electors approved or otherwise of the policy pursued by the Government that had just resigned. The writer of this article, with a reporter from an opposition paper in the same town, had gone to await the result of the counting of votes taken in an important division of a Northern county. The announcement was made in due course, and immediately, and without any warning to me, away rushed my "friend" to a cab-stand close by, and directed Jehu to drive with all speed to the telegraph office. Being unable myself to find a cab disengaged, I followed on foot and arrived at the telegraph office as the reporter was handing in his telegram. Judge of my astonishment next day when my chief asked me whether the reporter of the — was "first on the wire?" I could not deny it, much to my chagrin, and I was almost wild on seeing my superior turn up the — newspaper of the previous day and point to the words following the result of the election, "First on wire!" Was it not human to determine in my own

mind I would be revenged? My opportunity soon came, and I took it. In the course of a few days we were away together in another division of the county. Notwithstanding the fire of indignation within me through having been "sold," I remained friendly towards my fellow-reporter, though I firmly, albeit courteously, declined to "join" with him in sending off a telegram giving the town we had left news of how the voting had gone. Without his knowledge, I had written out as far as I could the words of the telegram I intended to despatch, so that when we entered the returning officer's room I had only to insert opposite the name of each candidate the number of votes polled for him. My friend pressed eagerly forward when the figures were being read out, while I remained quietly behind,

and, having inserted the figures in the proper places in my telegram-form, sped away to the Post Office. I fought my way through an excited populace, unheedful of the questions asked of me, and arriving, breathless almost, at my destination, I handed in my telegram and had the exquisite satisfaction of knowing my message was away before he who had so lately "sold" me arrived in the Post Office with other reporters. Need I say I added at the foot of my despatch, "First on wire"? or need I attempt to describe how I revelled in the idea that my friend would see the words in my journal the following day? I trow not. To say the least of it, here was a Roland for an Oliver!

Such are the little trials and triumphs of a provincial newspaper reporter.

THE FAMILY PARLIAMENT.

[THE RULES OF DEBATE will be found in the December or January Part. The Editor's duty will be to act as a kind of "Mr. Speaker;" consequently, while preserving due order in the discussion, he will not be held to endorse any opinions that may be expressed on either side, each debater being responsible for his own views.]

QUESTION V.—OUGHT TRIAL BY JURY TO BE ABOLISHED?

(Debate continued.)

REV. C. B. BRIGSTOCKE:—Sir, the question brought before us now is one of the gravest importance, and when one finds the Lord Chancellor's Legal Procedure Committee and the Committee of the Incorporated Law Society on one side, and Blackstone, the renowned exponent of English law, on the other, the members of the Family Parliament may well be excused if they hesitate before they give in their votes on one side or the other.

We are dealing here with one of the existing institutions of the country, one that dates back to the times of Alfred the Great, and which is admitted by the Opener of the debate to have done "good and true service for the past ten centuries," and in olden times to have "often rescued the oppressed from the oppressor, the defenceless from the tyrant." From its very antiquity it claims at our hands gentle treatment. It is, moreover, a serious thing to shake the public faith in one of the established institutions of the country, nor is the Opener's case made out till he has not merely convicted it of certain defects, for all human institutions are imperfect, but shown that it has been fruitful in glaring abuses and thwarted the great ends of justice.

The system may be cumbersome and expensive, but this is after all but a small price to pay, assuming that we thereby gain the impartial administration of justice, for on this depend the nation's life and prosperity. On the other hand, we may dismiss as irrelevant the fact of its benefiting the jurymen themselves. No doubt it does give them "valuable legal training," but as the system originated, not for the benefit of the jurymen, but for the protection of the oppressed, its value must be measured by the degree in which its great object is promoted, not by any incidental advantages it may confer upon the jury.

Opener does indeed contend that jurymen are often incapable, and as often partial, and here he touches the very root of the matter. Proved inability to weigh the force of evidence, or a constant bias in favour of persons, must indeed interfere very seriously with the due administration of justice, and lead to disastrous results; but if such miscarriage of justice had been

common, it is not easy to understand how the institution could have existed so long.

That trial by jury "has become a farce and a mockery" in Ireland recently is only too well known, but to contend that it should be abolished in England on that account is as illogical as it would be to demand the repeal of the Habeas Corpus Act because it has been found necessary occasionally to suspend it.

I cannot, then, think that the days of trial by jury are numbered. We need clearer evidence of the incompetency and partiality of common juries than we possess at present, and till that is forthcoming I for one must vote in favour of the existing system of trial by jury.

J. A.:—I am in favour of the abolition of trial by jury, and there can be no doubt, I venture to think, that such trials are now inappropriate. It is all very well to say that they have done good service in the past, but that is nothing to the purpose. We might just as well say that the stage-coaches should not have been superseded by the railway, and yet no one now denies that the change was really imperative. When jury trial was first established, our laws, and indeed our people, were in an entirely different condition, and such trials no doubt served the purpose. But law has been gradually expanding until it has become quite a science, and my contention is that only those who have studied the law are able properly to administer it. In medicine we never seek outside help to assist the physician in dealing with the cases under his charge—why then should a jury be needed to assist in applying the law? No one will say that our judges are not impartial, and the fact that they are entrusted with presenting the case to the jury in a consecutive form, and ridding it of all unnecessary matter, is a strong reason why he should be allowed to determine what the decision is to be.

J. T. MARPLE:—Mr. Speaker,—A celebrated statesman once said that "some men make speeches better without facts than with them," and I think, Sir, the Opener of this debate is one of that number. I quite agree with his hon. Opponent that he must be a professional man, for his speech from beginning to