

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE "LONDON REVIEW."

ON my return from America, in June 1858, I found that unpleasantness had arisen in my absence between Mr. Ingram, the founder of the *Illustrated London News*, and his two brothers-in-law, Messrs. Cooke and Little, his partners, in consequence of family disputes, into which it is not my business to enter, and into which I would not enter if it were. I also found that Mr. Ingram had proposed to sell that journal for a large price to a rival in the trade. Altogether the state of affairs was so uncomfortable, so precarious, and so personally unpleasant, as to make me desirous of terminating my connection with the paper while I could do so of my own free will, and without sacrifice of my personal dignity. My connection with it ceased at the end of 1859; and, in conjunction with Mr. Little, who had also seceded from his brother-in-law's journal, I took measures to establish a weekly paper of my own, which should consist of wholly original matter, from the office of which the sub-editorial scissors and paste-pot should be entirely

banished, and which should appeal to readers already familiar with the news of the day, and not needing their repetition after they had grown old and stale in the columns of the morning and evening papers.

When I was a lad of seventeen at Brussels I had read for the first time, with all the delight that imaginative youth generally takes in the wild, the wonderful, and the supernatural, Balzac's fantastic, and to me fascinating, tale of the *Peau de Chagrin*. Filled even at that early time with literary ambition, I was particularly struck by the description of the inaugural dinner given in Paris, in celebration of the establishment of a great new journal in that city, and pictured to myself what a delight it would be to me, at some future time, if I were fortunate enough to become the founder of a powerful political and literary Review in London, and to give a sumptuous repast in honour of the occasion. The whirligig of Time, in its incessant gyrations, sometimes, but not often, brings us to the point in the circle of our fate which we wished to attain, though the point when we actually attain, or seem to attain, it, is less brilliant and less favourable to the accomplishment of our desires than we expected it would be. The wish of my seventeenth year was granted in my forty-seventh, and, after thirty years of literary struggle, I found myself in the coveted position of being able to start a weekly journal

aspiring to high political and literary influence in the first city of the world.

The birth of the new journal was painful and protracted, but it promised to be a healthy child. It came into existence under seemingly favourable auspices; and the inaugural dinner—the dream of my youth—actually took place, with myself in the chair, supported by five gentlemen, my partners in the venture, and about twenty of the leading literary men of the time, and influential private friends. It took place at the Reform Club, by consent of the Committee, on the appearance of the first number on the 20th of July 1860. Among others of less note who attended as my guests on the occasion were Mr. Monckton Milnes, M.P., afterwards Lord Houghton, Mr. Stirling of Keir, M.P., afterwards Sir William Stirling Maxwell, Mr. William Jackson, M.P., afterwards Sir William Jackson, Mr. G. Moffat, M.P., Mr. Joseph Parkes, Mr. Robert Bell, Mr. E. S. Dallas, of the *Times*, and Mr. F. Pollock. I append a copy of the Bill of Fare or Menu, drawn up under the superintendence of the celebrated Francatelli, then the *chef* of the Club. The Signor exerted himself to the very utmost on the occasion to produce a banquet which, he said, Apicius himself, whoever was his *chef*, would have found it difficult to surpass in taste and true luxury, however much he might have surpassed it in costliness and extravagance.



## THE "LONDON REVIEW."

20 JULY, 1860.

2 *Potages.*

A la Reine.                      A la Servigné.

4 *Poissons.*

Le Saumon recrépi à la Hollandaise.    Le Turbot à la Vatel.  
 Les Filets de Soles à la Dièppoise.    Les Ablettes Frites.

*Hors d'Œuvres.*

Les assiettes de petites Bouchées à la Reine.  
 Les assiettes de Kromeskys à la Russe.

4 *Relevés.*

Le Jambon glacé aux petites fèves.  
 Les petits Poulets à la Montmorency.  
 La Tête de Veau à la Financière.  
 Le Filet de Bœuf piqué à la Jardinière.

8 *Entrées.*

2 Les Côtelettes d'Agneau à la Dreux.  
 2 Les Suprêmes de volailles à la Belle-vue.  
 2 Les Ris de Veau piqués à la Monarque.  
 2 Les Cailles en compôtes à la St. Lambert.

## SECOND COURSE.

3 *Rôts.*

Les Chapons.    Les Levrauts.    Les Canetons.

3 *Relevés de Rôts.*

Le Pudding glacé à l'ananas.  
 Les petits Biscuits glacés à la fraise.  
 Le Baba à la Polonaise.

12 *Entremêts.*

Les Haricots verts sautés.	Les petites Pois à la Française.
La Mayonnaise de volaille.	L'Aspic à la Royale.
La Célestine de fraises.	La Gélée de pêches.
Le Flanc d'abricôts à la cintra.	Les Tartelettes de cerises.
La Charlotte à la Russe.	Le Suprême d'ananas.
Le Gateau à la Napolitaine.	La Meringue à la Parisienne.

*Side Table.*

Salads. Cucumbers. Roast Mutton. Vegetables.

My partners in the venture numbered five—Mr. William Little, brother-in-law of Mr. Ingram, and once a partner in and cashier of the *Illustrated London News*; Mr. Thomas Page, the eminent civil engineer, architect of the new Westminster Bridge, and who was employed under Mr. Brunel in the construction of the Thames Tunnel; Mr. James Berkeley Thompson, a wholesale paper dealer in Long Acre—all three deceased; and two other gentlemen still living—one a solicitor, and the other, Mr. Lawrence Oliphant, a literary gentleman of much celebrity, which he has much increased since that early period of his career. The name of *London Review* was not adopted until after long consideration, and after many objections on my part. My objections were that the title was old, had often been used, that it had always been borne by failures, and that there was already in existence a *London Review* published quarterly, and that we could not legally adopt the name

without breach of copyright. This objection was overruled by Mr. Little, on his ascertaining, on the authority of its proprietors, that the current number of that quarterly periodical was to be its last, and that its copyright in the title would cease before our weekly journal could make its appearance. This was not my only objection to the paper with which my name was to be prominently associated. I thought it commonplace, unattractive, dull, suggestive rather of ponderosity than of liveliness, or of the sparkling style which was more to the taste of the men and women of the present age. But these and many other objections were overruled by the men of money who were associated with me in the enterprise, and I was reluctantly compelled to yield my judgment to theirs.

Four out of my five partners, unaccustomed to newspaper business, having undue faith in the immediate success of the speculation, and not taking into reasonable calculation the immense competition which has to be faced in London by every new aspirant to literary favour, especially in journalism, expected that the seed which they had sown with much care and labour and at great expense to-day would grow into a large tree to-morrow, or at the latest the day after. At the inaugural dinner, Mr. Monckton Milnes, who was invited to the symposium as my friend, in proposing my health, and prosperity to the new



journal, went out of his way, unintentionally, no doubt, to throw cold water upon the hopes of its promoters. With an attempt at wit, of which he had a proper appreciation in others, he expressed his doubts whether the *London Review* could succeed unless more wit, humour, and fun were infused into it, as if he had expected, as he probably did, that it was established as a rival to *Punch*. In my reply I attempted to turn the tables on my "friend" by hinting that the one dull article in the new journal was probably of a parentage not wholly unknown to the candid critic. Nor were the supplies of cold water from other sources infrequent, or insufficient to damp the energies of the timid capitalists who had put their guineas into the concern. Three months had scarcely passed over our heads before they all began to lose faith, to cut down necessary expenses, and to quarrel among themselves as well as with me. The *Review* all this time was steadily, but not very rapidly, growing in public favour, and only needed a larger and more enterprising expenditure of money to strike its roots deeper in the ground and to expand into the tree of wide circumference which they wished it to become. One great mistake was made before the commencement, from the effects of which the proprietors never took the proper means to recover it. Mr. Little, whose long connection with the *Illustrated London News* had

accustomed him to large expenditure and to the doing of things on a grand scale, having *carte blanche* from his then hopeful co-partners, expended, more than three-fifths of the subscribed capital in exhibiting large placards on all the vacant walls and hoardings of the metropolis and the great towns and cities of the provinces. Among the districts peculiarly favoured by his liberal expenditure were the un-literary slums of the populous East End of London, including such unpromising quarters as Whitechapel, Stepney, Poplar, Blackwall, Silver-town on one side of the Thames, and Southwark, Bermondsey, Horseleydown, and Deptford on the other, where the flaring announcements of hair-oil, soothing-syrup, and quack medicines might have had a chance of being seen and understood, but where the announcement of a literary review had not the slightest chance of attracting attention, and where it was extremely doubtful if one person in a hundred, either male or female, had even the vaguest knowledge of what a literary review meant, or took the slightest interest in it even if they had the comprehension of it. To spend some thousands of pounds in appealing to the literary curiosity of poor people, whose only idea of literature is a penny paper in which to read the accounts of "awful murders," "shocking accidents," "fearful shipwrecks," or "daring robberies," varied, in the case of domestic servants and sempstresses, by the



"penny dreadfuls," containing romantic stories of "seduction," "betrayals," "suicides for love," and handsome mysterious youths of low estate who turn out to be dukes, or at least baronets, in disguise — is about as certain a method of wasting money as to throw it into the sea. This in the main was the preliminary course pursued by the business manager of the *London Review* in his mode of advertising—seventy-five per cent. of the advertising fund expended uselessly, and only twenty-five per cent. finding its way into the periodicals and newspapers where publicity had any chance of being of benefit.

Another error—for which I, and not the proprietors or financial managers of the *London Review*, was responsible—was the departing from the custom of anonymity in the conduct of a political and literary journal. The publishing my name or allowing it to be published in every issue of the paper as the Editor was an innovation, and an experiment of which the result was watched with interest by literary men. But the public were indifferent; and beyond the quidnuncs of society, who seek to know the name of everyone who writes a leading article in a powerful daily journal, or a spiteful critique in the *Weekly Malignant*, no one greatly cares to penetrate into the inner secrets of journalism. On the contrary, on the principle involved in the hackneyed Latin adage of taking

all that is unknown for magnificent, the anonymous article carries more weight than one signed by the writer. The opinions of Smith are the opinions of Smith only—and Smith is not omniscient; but the opinions of the great WE—the unknown, the impenetrable, the invisible, the irresponsible—may be the opinions of a learned *conclave* or *coterie* of wise men who have debated and duly considered every sentence in which their judgment is delivered. *Wegotism*—if I may coin the word, and be pardoned for using it—and not *egotism* gives an authority to the opinions of the *press* on all matters of criticism, whether political, literary, or artistic, in England, where literary men, unless they are very rich, which they seldom or never are, or of high aristocratic and fashionable connections, which they sometimes are, do not attain the social pre-eminence which falls to their lot in France, the United States, and other countries where intellect is not overshadowed by a proud and exclusive aristocracy of rank and title. The rule, however, only holds good in the expression of opinion, and does not apply to creative works, to the poem, the history, the romance, the novel, or the scientific treatise, which are the products of the individual mind. We like to know the name of the sculptor whose statue stands in the public way to be admired, but we do not care to know the names of the passers-by who think either

ill or well of a work which they have not the taste, the skill, or the genius, even if they had the inclination, to produce.

The apple which had hung so temptingly on the tree of my imagination, ripe, red, juicy, and delicious, fell into my grasp, it is true; but, like the fabled apples that grew on the shores of the Dead Sea, it yielded me but dust and ashes when I had plucked it. The story of my disappointment would be tedious to tell, and would not interest anybody but myself—not even myself after an interval of a quarter of a century; so I refrain from bestowing more than a passing allusion upon it. Suffice it to say that, after six months of worry and discomfort, I found I had made a mistake, and resigned my editorial sceptre to an unliterary autocrat, who ruled by right of his banking account, and was in a position to purchase anonymous opinion at the small market prices then current among the tyros of the press. And it was well I did so. An editor, whether anonymous or not, must be *aut Cæsar aut nihil*. He must not only be despotic, but he must suffer no rival near his throne. Republicanism in the management of a journal is fatal to efficiency, and verifies the homely old proverb that "too many cooks spoil the broth." The capitalist of a newspaper should either be his own editor, if he have the tact, the experience, and the literary ability that are essential to the post, or



he should be the sleeping partner in the concern, and pay his quota of the inevitable expenses. If he lose confidence, he should either retire or compel the editor to retire. The medium course of interference is certainly unachievable, if it do not prove fatal to the stability of an undertaking that is not wholly dependent upon it, but is not wholly dependent upon it, of which the main supports in the world are courage, honesty, and superior intel.

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