

was doomed to a short existence. It was not until some ten years later, when the intellectual life of Scotland was making a new effort to rouse itself to battle with the ignorance of the times, that the *Edinburgh Journal* was established. At this time popular literature was unknown. *Blackwood's Magazine*, and the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews* had been set on foot by the literary giants of those days, but no attempt to educate the masses or to cater for the instruction and recreation of the people at large had been thought of. The late Lord Brougham seeing the necessities of the times and the importance of "diffusing useful knowledge" was initiating, in the Southern Metropolis, with the help of Charles Knight and others, a series of popular Manuals.

In London, however, the progress of the movement was most discouraging. Marked by frequent failure, disappointments and heavy loss, the business of publishing seemed a delusion and a snare. Soon again, the awakening thought and stimulated enquiry of the times was invoked in support of the 'Penny Cyclopaedia'; but this and other ventures met with nothing but disaster.

It was at this time that the brothers Chambers, bringing only to their task the fruits of self-taught studies and the energy of high resolves, though with many misgivings, inaugurated the *Journal*. Misfortune and poverty had, however, schooled them to endurance and perseverance. Successive failures and the sharp discipline of many disappointments only added stimulus to their efforts. At length through the grinding process of slow and wavering struggles the light of prosperity dawned. The *Journal* became a success, and the stirrup to the saddle was reached. Then follows the successive steps in their remarkable publishing career. New projects were started, further enterprises entered upon. In quick succession, came the "Miscellany," "Papers for the People," "Information for the People," &c., &c., and rapidly the house that had but a poor, meagre beginning, rises year by year into brighter and more prosperous days as the intelligence of each succeeding epoch emerges into clearer light. Then come the days contemporary with the publication of the "Encyclopædia," and with them renown and affluence to the House—the fitting rewards of early and unsparing toil and unflinching discharge of duty. This biography has all the elements of romance. Its attractiveness, too, is enhanced by the personal reminiscences of the surviving brother. The whole book is entertaining and delightful in the extreme, and all readers will lay it down with thanks to the writer and admiration for the men whose lives have been so useful and whose example is so noble.

THE EDUCATION OFFICE BOOK-SHOP.

Against all monopoly and illegitimate interference with trade there is always a potent and sound remedy—severe and competent criticism. Unfortunately, in regard to the abuses and injustice of the Government Book-Shop, and the follies and expense of its management, criticism and invective have, hitherto, been

levelled at them in vain. For around this monopoly, so vicious in principle and so indefensible in practice, its conductors seem always to have been able to throw the gloss of plausibility and the fiction of the public good. Hence, its management has, for many years, become responsible to no one; its rules and regulations have been freed from all higher interference, and its accounts and balance-sheets held sacred from the vulgarity of an audit.

Possessing no claim, for the last ten years at least, of public necessity, and essential to no educational requirement, while in principle and expediency utterly unjustifiable and a gross departure from the policy which the plainest justice and common sense prescribe, its repression and abolition have been loudly called for; and as, unquestionably, not a solid argument can be advanced, in these late years, for the continuance of this Government book-depository, except the personal benefit of those directly interested in its maintenance, it is with no surprise that we learn that there is every probability of the institution soon being swept away and its peripatetic vending functions, at last, brought to a close.

We have no desire, in view of the likelihood of this being the case, to comment further on this benevolent literary institution, the proud boast of which is that, (with the aid of a government 100 per cent. grant, besides the maintenance of the book-shop at the public cost) it undersells the legitimate book trade of the country. Neither do we wish to notice the foolish position taken by its Organ in ascribing to the members of that trade, (whose bread it takes out of their mouths,) the meanness of *personal motives* in desiring to have abolished such an illegitimate and an unwarrantable interference with their business! But before leaving the Establishment (which, in its existence and continuance, defies every sound maxim of political economy) to its fate, we may be permitted to remark that such an aspersion of "interested motives" on the part of the trade, comes very fitly from behind departmental pay rolls. Its claim, moreover, of underselling the trade—an honourable boast! but not a fact, leaving the Government grant out of consideration—is highly creditable to a Government trading department, free from rent, taxes, fuel, and salaries; free from bad debts and interest on capital invested, though not free from bad stocks—which it has had, furtively, to send to auction—yet the loss on which has to be borne at the public expense! But need there be anything further said to show the absurdity of this Departmental trading scheme, the result of which, unquestionably, is to discourage legitimate industry and enterprise, and to prevent the expansion of a trade which it is important to foster in all parts of the country?

Can it be argued that there is a necessity for this system of Government trading? Can it be shown that there is any incapacity in private enterprise, or that book-stocks can be bought cheaper with Government funds than with private means? Can it be shown that Departmental machinery is necessary to do what legitimate trade is established to do? Can it be shown that the trade have no facilities, no enterprise, no capacity