

CHAPTER XXVI. - ARCADIANS AT BAY.

I have said that Jimmy spent much of his time in contributing to various leading waste-paper baskets, and that of an evening he was usually to be found prone on my hearth-rug. When he entered my room he was ever willing to tell us what he thought of editors, but his meerschaum with the cherry-wood stem gradually drove all passion from his breast, and instead of upbraiding more successful men than himself, he then lazily scribbled letters to them on my wall-paper. The wall to the right of the fireplace was thick with these epistles, which seemed to give Jimmy relief, though William John had to scrape and scrub at them next morning with india-rubber. Jimmy's sarcasm--to which that wall-paper can probably still speak--generally took this form:

To G. Buckle, Esq., Columbia Road, Shoreditch .

SIR:--I am requested by Mr. James Moggridge, editor of the Times , to return you the inclosed seven manuscripts, and to express his regret that there is at present no vacancy in the sub-editorial department of the Times such as Mr. Buckle kindly offers to fill.

Yours faithfully,

P. R. (for J. Moggridge, Ed. Times).

To Mr. James Knowles, Brick Lane, Spitalfields .

DEAR SIR:--I regret to have to return the inclosed paper, which is not quite suitable for the Nineteenth Century . I find that articles by unknown men, however good in themselves, attract little attention. I inclose list of contributors for next month, including, as you will observe, seven members of upper circles, and remain your obedient servant,

J. MOGGRIDGE, Ed. Nineteenth Century .

To Mr. W Pollock, Mile-End Road, Stepney .

SIR:--I have on two previous occasions begged you to cease sending daily articles to the Saturday . Should this continue we shall be reluctantly compelled to take proceedings against you. Why don't you try the Sporting Times? Yours faithfully,

J. MOGGRIDGE, Ed. Saturday Review.

To Messrs. Sampson, Low & Co., Peabody Buildings, Islington.

DEAR SIR:--The manuscript which you forwarded for our consideration has received careful attention; but we do not think it would prove a success, and it is therefore returned to you herewith. We do not care to publish third-rate books. We remain yours obediently,

J. MOGGRIDGE & CO. (late Sampson, Low & Co.).

To H. Quilter, Esq., P.O. Bethnal Green.

SIR:--I have to return your paper on Universal Art. It is not without merit; but I consider art such an important subject that I mean to deal with it exclusively myself. With thanks for kindly appreciation of my new venture, I am yours faithfully,

J. MOGGRIDGE, Ed. Universal Review.

To John Morley, Esq., Smith Street, Blackwall.

SIR:--Yes, I distinctly remember meeting you on the occasion to which you refer, and it is naturally gratifying to me to hear that you enjoy my writing so much. Unfortunately, however, I am unable to accept your generous offer to do Lord Beaconsfield for the "English Men of Letters" series, as the volume has been already arranged for. Yours sincerely,

J. MOGGRIDGE, Ed. "English Men of Letters" series.

To F. C. Burnand, Esq., Peebles, N.B.

SIR:--The jokes which you forwarded to Punch on Monday last are so good that we used them three years ago. Yours faithfully,

J. MOGGRIDGE, Ed. Punch .

To Mr. D'Oyley Carte, Cross Stone Buildings, Westminster Bridge Road.

DEAR SIR:--The comic opera by your friends Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan, which you have submitted to me, as sole lessee and manager of the Savoy Theatre, is now returned to you unread. The little piece, judged from its title-page, is bright and pleasing, but I have arranged with two other gentlemen to write my operas for the next twenty-one years. Faithfully yours,

J. MOGGRIDGE, Sole Lessee and Manager Savoy Theatre.

To James Ruskin, Esq., Railway Station Hotel, Willisden.

SIR:--I warn you that I will not accept any more copies of your books. I do not know the individual named Tennyson to whom you refer; but if he is the scribbler who is perpetually sending me copies of his verses, please tell him that I read no poetry except my own. Why can't you leave me alone?

J. MOGGRIDGE, Poet Laureate.

These letters of Jimmy's remind me of our famous competition, which took place on the night of the Jubilee celebrations. When all the rest of London (including William John) was in the streets, the Arcadians met as usual, and Scrymgeour, at my request, put on the shutters to keep out the din. It so happened that Jimmy and Gilray were that night in wicked moods, for Jimmy, who was so anxious to be a journalist, had just had his seventeenth article returned from the St. John's Gazette , and Gilray had been "slated" for his acting of a new part, in all the leading papers. They were now disgracing the tobacco they smoked by quarrelling about whether critics or editors were the more disreputable class, when in walked Pettigrew, who had not visited us for months. Pettigrew is as successful a journalist as Jimmy is unfortunate, and the pallor of his

face showed how many Jubilee articles he had written during the past two months. Pettigrew offered each of us a Splendidad (his wife's new brand), which we dropped into the fireplace. Then he filled my little Remus with Arcadia, and sinking weariedly into a chair, said:

"My dear Jimmy, the curse of journalism is not that editors won't accept our articles, but that they want too many from us."

This seemed such monstrous nonsense to Jimmy that he turned his back on Pettigrew, and Gilray broke in with a diatribe against critics.

"Critics," said Pettigrew, "are to be pitied rather than reviled."

Then Gilray and Jimmy had a common foe. Whether it was Pettigrew's appearance among us or the fireworks outside that made us unusually talkative that night I cannot say, but we became quite brilliant, and when Jimmy began to give us his dream about killing an editor, Gilray said that he had a dream about criticising critics; and Pettigrew, not to be outdone, said that he had a dream of what would become of him if he had to write any more Jubilee articles. Then it was that Marriot suggested a competition. "Let each of the grumblers," he said, "describe his dream, and the man whose dream seems the most exhilarating will get from the judges a Jubilee pound-tin of the Arcadia." The grumblers agreed, but each wanted the others to dream first. At last Jimmy began as follows: