

**WILLIAM HOWITT'S REPLY
TO MR. SAUNDERS'S
APPEAL TO THE PRESS
AND THE PUBLIC**

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William Howitt's reply to Mr. Saunders's appeal to the press and the public by William Howitt

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WILLIAM HOWITT

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WILLIAM HOWITT'S REPLY.

MR. JOHN SAUNDERS, in direct defiance of the third clause of an Agreement of Dissolution of Partnership, entered into by the proprietors of the People's Journal before the umpire, and signed by our respective solicitors on our behalf, which says — "No person to publish any matters relating to the partnership," — in defiance of the earnest injunction of the umpire, and of his own solicitor, having resolved to rush into print, has done it in such a flood of feeble nothings, that it might well be left to its own inanity, were it not that the world is apt to imagine that a thing that is not answered must have something in it, though it cannot find out what. There *is* something in John Saunders's statement, however, — though not a work of much imagination, it is still a work of much fiction.

The connexion into which, nearly twelve months ago, I inadvertently fell, was a degrading and dangerous connexion; it has brought with it many mortifications, and the fitting punishment for want

of caution. One of these mortifications, is the necessity of having to enter into a degrading defence against a person, who, if he have one faculty, it is that of wily misrepresentation, and who, having occasioned me the loss of a large sum of money, would now gladly rob me of character.

Still, I would ask, why, John Saunders, rush into print? What *can* the public have to do with the partnership affairs of William Howitt and John Saunders? Pay me my good cash, John, that I simply put into thy hands, and let me go, John. Thou hast given it out to many people, that the People's Journal has been long a lucrative project; and so it has, to thee, John. *Thou* hast been in daily and weekly *gain*; but I, unlucky dupe, have been in daily and weekly *drain*. It has been my business to pay, pay, pay, and never to receive. My money is gone — my time is spent — but my *Larning* is *not* most excellent. Pay me what thou owest, John, and then print what thou pleasest; but thy lengthy lines will never *line* my purse as it was lined before I knew thee; thy sovereign contempt of truth will prove no *sovereign* remedy for my grievance. I am choused out of my *gold*, and thy *brass*, John, is a very poor substitute for it. *Pay* what thou owest, and then *say* what thou pleasest. My purse yawns, and the public yawns over thy appeals. If thou art really desirous to prove thyself honest, the thing is very simple, pay me back my money. Dost thou not tell the public every week, that thy Journal "is mercantilely established, and perfectly safe," and art thou not "full of thankfulness and deep joy;" dost thou not affirm that its weekly circulation never was so great — then what honest plea hast thou, John Saunders, or John Slanders, for refusing to refund? But thou dost refuse, and, therefore, how can I honestly call

thee honest, John? Go to, thou art naught, John, —Go to, thou art not the man that Diogenes sought after with his lantern.

Mr. Saunders stated in a circular, issued to the public, December 24th, that he had charges before an Arbitration, which affected Mr. Howitt's moral character and standing in society most seriously. Knowing that grounds for any such charge did not exist; knowing that there is no hour of my existence to which I do not solicit the strictest moral scrutiny; knowing that for five-and-twenty years I have walked openly before the public with enemies enough, as any man, and especially any bold and independent man has, who rises above the crowd, to detect and publish a flaw, I calmly awaited those charges, but they never came. Have they come now, in this long-menaced, widely-advertised, and ridiculous Appeal? On the contrary, like his statement to the Arbitrators, it confirms much that it is my business to prove, namely, that I was grievously dissatisfied with his editorship, and still more with his accounts, or rather, the want of them. The gist of Mr. Saunders's case is this, and it is most true, so far; I was grievously dissatisfied with his not keeping accounts. THE GREAT AND REAL QUESTION BETWEEN US WAS A QUESTION OF ACCOUNTS. I WAS RESOLVED TO HAVE THEM, JOHN SAUNDERS SEEMED AS RESOLVED NOT TO KEEP ANY. I stand firm by my statement in my circular, which has been distributed over the kingdom by hundreds of thousands, and is still in daily and most eager demand.

It matters little, however, how I got into partnership with John Saunders, *unfortunately* I did so. That I had been for six years planning a work of the same kind, Mr. Saunders himself proves, by quoting a letter of mine, at p. 4 of his Appeal; my reason for joining his journal being, that "it was a

thing after my own heart, and accordant with views that I had been holding and maturing for these six years." This was my statement in my circular, and this statement Mr. Saunders thus most completely confirms. So far, so good. But let it be recollected, that some time before I joined it, nay, before the thing was in existence, Mr. Saunders came to me to consult me on the *projection* of it. Had I obeyed my first impression when he entered my library, I had saved myself all future trouble with him; for it struck me, that a man of "a more inauspicious and insalubrious aspect," I never set eyes on. But he came with an honored name, the name of a very dear friend as a passport; and in that, and the ostensible object of his visit, the cause of the people, that premonition was gradually forgotten.

At that time the man had, so far as I could learn, not a single thing in preparation but the name—People's Journal. Of the kind of thing, the size, price, illustration and all the essentials, there were examples before the public, in Chambers's and Sharpe's Journals. It required no originality to project a third; and the only thing that his differed in from theirs was the title, which he was bound to have different. Besides this title, never was there a man so totally destitute of every means, of every necessary degree of education, of knowledge or connexion. Accustomed to snatch his way through the world along the most ordinary paths and by-ways of life, from the hawking of book numbers, and the boards of the country play-house, through various speculations which dropped away under his feet, and from which numbers of innocent people suffered, he did not seem to know a single person of literary eminence. To Mr. Fox, indeed, he had gone with a certain claim,—that of printing his

lectures; having agreed to purchase the copyright of the *Apprentice*, in which they appeared by engagement — a copyright, as it will be seen, not yet paid for; and the payment of which is withheld by a quibble. Mr. Fox, thus by a previous contract, introduced as a contributor, and naturally wishing to have decent company, gave him a letter to Mrs. Leman Gillies, and offered to procure contributions from Ebenezer Elliott. This I happen to know, because lately stating to Mr. Fox that we had introduced to the *People's Journal* all the writers of established name up to a certain period but three — himself, Mrs. Gillies, and Mr. Elliott — he burst into laughter, and said, “*And those two I introduced!*”

This, then, was the sum total of Mr. Saunders's material for a popular journal when he came to us. I candidly told him that I was preparing for such a work myself, as soon as my engagement for “*The Homes and Haunts of the Poets*” was completed; and that Dr. Smiles was to join me; but that the world was wide, the cause of the people was of all causes the dearest to me, and I would give him all the aid I could. At the moment I am writing this, comes in a note from Dr. Smiles, in answer to a question put to him since I have seen Mr. Saunders's Appeal. The prompt and straightforward note, which I give *verbatim et literatim*, is characteristic of its esteemed writer.

Leeds, 24th February, 1847.

MY DEAR SIR,

Nothing can be more true than that you and I had projected, some years ago, a Journal to advocate more thoroughly than any then existing, the cause of Popular Progress. This formed one of the principal topics of our conversation when I saw you in London, in May, 1845. But your literary engagements having delayed the execution of the project, about the end of that year I entered into arrangements here of another kind. So

well aware was I, however, of your intention to carry out your views, that on the announcement of the People's Journal, among the prominent contributors to which I found mentioned your name and that of Mrs. Howitt, I at once concluded this to be *the* Journal so long contemplated by you, and at once wrote—I believe before the publication of the first number—congratulating you on the name you had selected for it, and cordially wishing it success.

It is the least that I can do, in return for your numerous kindness to me, to make this brief statement of facts.

Yours very truly and sincerely,

S. SMILES.

W. HOWITT, Esq.

The aid required, and thus offered, turned out to be everything. Mrs. Howitt and myself at once named to him what was necessary for him to do; and wrote, not to "half a dozen" persons, but to some dozens, and gave him the names of many others, with the liberty to use ours. I gave him a note to Mr. John Darton, of Holborn Hill, as a gentleman better acquainted with the proper bookselling agents all over the country than any man I knew; and Mr. Darton furnished him with the names of these, and even with that of Mr. West, who has ever since been employed by the Journal to collect advertisements, etc. Mr. Darton can testify this.

I introduced him to Mr. Bennett, of the New York Herald, to give him the names of the best agents in America; and the agents he recommended are still the agents of the Journal. We wrote, not to *two* authors, but to those whose names have been so much paraded by Mr. Saunders on vans, on huge posters, on the wooden walls of old England all over the kingdom; viz. Miss Bremer, Anderson, Miss Mitford, Miss Martineau, Barry Cornwall, Dr. Bowring, M. P., Ferdinand Freiligrath, R. H. Horne, Dr. Smiles, Mr. Chorley, Dr. Hodgson, Mrs. Child, and Mrs. Lee, of America, and a host of others, too well recollected in that connexion to repeat. Mr.

Saunders knew pretty well the influence of those names; he made good use of them. They were a ladder of names, which till then he never hoped to climb. They made him giddy, and he has since tried to kick this ladder down. In a letter of April 23d, 1846, however, he asks, fondly, "Shall we be able to make a dash on our *part cover* with the announcements of Miss Martineau, Miss Mitford, Barry Cornwall? If Mr. Chorley consents to write, as I hope he will," etc.

Ah, good man! in those days he was a little, seedy, cadaverous, and very humble body, ready for all the crumbs of good luck that the "*accident*" of a connexion which astonished him, was likely to drop into his mouth. And whence came it that the other good names which he enumerates were afterwards added? It was from the sudden *éclât* which the appearance on the pages of the Journal of this brilliant constellation of names, introduced by us, created. It was the direct, and natural, and inevitable consequence. I say it, then, and I say it fearless of contradiction in the minds of any intelligent people, that they were WILLIAM AND MARY HOWITT WHO REALLY AND ACTUALLY FOUNDED THE PEOPLE'S JOURNAL. Without this, there can be no question that it would have followed all Mr. Saunders's other speculations, and died a speedy, a natural, yet, to various stationers, and printers, a violent death.

And what if Mr. Saunders now turn round and say, "Did I seek you? Did not you thrust yourselves upon me?" That is not the first time. This is but one of several editions of the same proceeding. There was a former affair — an affair of the Messrs. Stevens, of Bell-yard, Temple-bar, of which I shall have to speak anon; and when the Messrs. Stevens had been drawn in to a terrible loss into that unfortunate publication — "Saunders's Political Reform-