



147 Strand

Nov 17

1847

My dear Sir

Mrs Chambers and I
 accept of the number
 please your obliging
 invitation to dinner on
 Thursday at five o'clock
 With compliments to her

Birkbeck I am

Yours truly

M. Chambers

H. Birkbeck Esq

London

CHAMBERS, William and Robert, two eminent Scotch publishers, whose practical good sense and high moral rectitude of taste have been directed to the elevation of the people, through the means of their numerous publications.

CHAMBERS'S EDINBURGH JOURNAL.

Edinburgh, March 25, 1871. 744

IN the notice respecting my brother Robert, which appears in this day's *Athenæum*, there occurs an error, which, in justice to myself, I trust you will allow me to correct. Speaking of the *Penny Magazine*, the writer says—"A copy of the prospectus (which appeared a very long time before the periodical itself) having been seen by

DEATH OF SIR W. CHAMBERS.

Sir William Chambers, one of the publishers of *Chambers's Journal*, died in Edinburgh yesterday, aged 83. The baronetcy which he accepted a few days ago had not been formally conferred upon him. The deceased, who was one of the firm of the eminent publishers, W. and R. Chambers, was born in 1800. In consequence of reduced circumstances in early life the two brothers were in a great measure thrown upon their own resources, and a love for reading made them take to the business of bookselling, William serving an apprenticeship to the trade from 1814 to 1819. After this, with only a few shillings in his pocket as his capital, he began business on his own account, and shortly afterwards added printing to it, having taught himself that craft, and obtained sufficient money to buy an old press and some used types. The large letters he himself cut out of wood. In 1830 William Chambers published the "Book of Scotland," containing an account of the distinctive usages, laws, social and educational system, religious and municipal institutions of that part of the United Kingdom. In 1832 the *Edinburgh Journal* was projected by the deceased, and on the 4th of February—six weeks before the *Penny Magazine* appeared—*Chambers's Journal* was in the hands of the public, and the immense circulation it has now attained proves the popularity and genuineness of the work. Its success induced the brothers to join in partnership, and under the new style the firm may be said to have taken the lead among all the Scotch publishing houses. In 1849 William Chambers purchased the estate of Glenormiston, in Peebleshire, and interested himself in promoting public improvements. In 1859 he presented Peebles with a public reading-room, a library, a lecture hall, museum, and gallery of art, known as the Chambers Institution. In 1864 he completed his "History of Peebleshire." The following year he was appointed Lord Provost of Edinburgh, and five years later he was re-elected to the same office. Robert Chambers, who was born in 1802, died March 17th, 1871. The crowning effort of the firm in cheap literature was *Chambers's Encyclopedia*.

May 83

William Chambers—who had long been gestating similar schemes,—he forwarded to one of the chief promoters several suggestions which, in his judgment, would have improved the chances of the project. No answer was vouchsafed to his letter, and his self-love was wounded. He determined to realize his unappreciated ideas himself; and they took the form of *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*. The first number appeared on the 4th of February, 1832—six weeks before the ponderous Society in London fulfilled its promise of a *Penny Magazine*." The following is the simple truth. In the beginning of January, 1832, I conceived the idea of a cheap weekly periodical devoted to wholesome popular instruction, blended with original amusing matter, without any knowledge whatever of the prospectus of the *Penny Magazine*, or even hearing that such a thing was in contemplation. My periodical was to be entitled *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, and the first number was to appear on the 4th of February. In compliment to Lord Brougham as an educationist, I forwarded to him a copy of my prospectus, with a note explaining the nature of my attempt to aid as far as I was able in the great cause with which his name was identified. To this communication I received no reply, but the circumstance wounded no self-love. My work was successful, and I was too busy to give any consideration as to what his lordship thought of it, if he thought of it at all. The first time I heard of the projected *Penny Magazine* was about a month after the *Journal* was set on foot and in general circulation.

W. CHAMBERS.