

OBITUARY.

James Gordon Bennett.

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of Mr. JAMES GORDON BENNETT, the founder and proprietor of the *New-York Herald*, in the seventy-seventh year of his age. Mr. BENNETT died at his residence, in this City, at 5:25 o'clock yesterday afternoon, after a lingering illness. On the 25th ult., he sustained a brief convulsive attack, accompanied by epileptic symptoms, though not so marked, as to excite apprehension. Twelve hours after the attack was repeated in a more decided form. From that moment the medical attendants, Drs. CECCARINI, HAMMOND and LUSK, saw there was no hope for their patient, though they continued to make every effort to sustain life. On Tuesday last, at the request of Mr. BENNETT, Archbishop McCLOSKEY visited his bedside, and administered to him the last sacraments of the Church. Since that date the patient remained in a semi-unconscious state, and death came to him easily and without pain.

The career of Mr. BENNETT may be not inaptly likened to one of those Spring days whose morning is dark with overhanging clouds, and inclement with tempestuous winds and storms, while the remainder is warm and bright with all the splendor of sun-shine. There have been few men so absolutely self-made as he. In the outset of his career he was absolutely isolated, without home, without friends, without even a cent to buy him bread. But there was within him a more than Roman fortitude which not only enabled him to bear privation, but also taught him to laugh at it. This combination of gayety and stoicism he probably derived from his parents, who were French Catholics of the town of KEITH in the County of Banffshire, Scotland. Mr. BENNETT was born at New-Mills in the year 1797, and his boyhood was passed at a time when the terror of NAPOLEON filled all the English lands, when the windows of every print-shop teemed with caricatures of the Corsican leader of the French, and when every hill-top along the coast was provided with beacon fires to announce the approach of his dreaded army of invasion. To a youth of warm imagination and poetic feeling the character of the great conqueror must have possessed an unusual charm.

At that period when the mind takes in eagerly impressions of good and evil, he heard continually of the victories of the great man whom in his secret heart he could not but regard as a countryman. Educated by his parents in the pleasant French language, he doubtless read with avidity all the rumors and the gossip and the romances that were published about his hero, and the disaster of Moscow must have been a terrible shattering of all he worshiped. At that time JAMES GORDON BENNETT, whom we of the present generation knew as so cynical, so pulseless, so cold, was an ardent, soft-hearted, romantic young fellow, with a brain teeming with ambition and a heart full of love and trust. NAPOLEON'S downfall seems to have had a strong effect upon him, for shortly after the retirement to Elba he went to the Catholic Seminary at Aberdeen to be educated as a priest. There he picked up a little Latin, enough to be able to read VIRGIL in the original, and to quote him on occasions in after life in the columns of his paper. There also he learned to write and speak Spanish fluently. But the most important part of his studies, as far as their influence on his future life was concerned, were the poetical works of SCOTT and BYRON. Mr. BENNETT had a poetic temperament, which, like many other young men, he mistook for poetic capacity, and there can be little doubt that his belief in his poetic powers led him, after three years' study in the Seminary, to reject the priestly life which he had proposed to himself, and to return to the great world, in which he hoped to earn some measure of fame akin to theirs. He had then, indeed, a boundless ambition, and was only undecided as to the particular path in which he should gather the laurels of fame. The army was impossible, for after Waterloo the world was gorged with the blood of battles, and a very long peace was inevitable. In poetry there was a bright galaxy of geniuses who occupied all the avenues, but Mr. BENNETT, undismayed, tried his hand at a few fugitive poems, which appeared in the Banffshire County paper, and fell still-born upon the public ear, then vibrating to the impassioned strains of BYRON, thrilled by the soul-singing of the wonderful SHELLEY, and spell-bound by the weird imagery of COLERIDGE. Beyond these efforts, he did nothing. His preternaturally active mind, condemned to enforced inactivity, remained fallow for two years. In 1817, when twenty years of age, a gleam of light broke in upon his darkness. An edition of *Franklin's Autobiography* was issued in Scotland and fell into his hands. He literally devoured it, for it showed him the way to the future which his ambition had dreamed of. Here was a printer's boy, friendless and penniless, working his way upward, by his literary abilities, from the humblest position to the gilded palaces of Kings and the honors paid to Ambassadors. There was much in the little volume that commended itself to the young Scoto-Frenchman, who had not read AROUET DE VOLTAIRE without imbibing some of the irreligious notions which the Philosopher of Ferney scatters so profusely in all his writings, even those which are considered classics, and confided by pious fathers into the hands of youth in Catholic seminaries. FRANKLIN, the self-taught, was a friend of the great VOLTAIRE, and besides this there was a broad under-current of keen practical sense which appealed to the Scotch instincts that he had derived from his associations and surroundings. There was also an egotism that charmed him, and a superficial gayety that completed the conquest. From that moment young BENNETT dreamed of the New World, and looked upon it as the probable theatre where he was to win fame and fortune, honors and estates. We cannot say what influences held him back, but it is certain that though America was continually in his thoughts, he did not leave his native heaths until the beginning of 1819. In May of that year he landed in Halifax with \$25 in his pocket, a valise stuffed with good comfortable clothes, a brain full of poetry, and a heart that contained a resolution superior to all rebuffs of fortune. There he gave lessons in book-keeping for a few weeks just to get acclimatized, and if possible to pick up the Yankee intonation. But this he never succeeded in doing. To the day of his death, he spoke French like a Parisian and English with the broad brogue of a Highlander. From Halifax he advanced to Boston, where he was greatly charmed with the beauties of the surrounding scenery, and gave vent to his feelings in verse modeled upon the flowing stanzas of Lord BYRON, but which may be fairly described as poetic rather than poetry. Verses of such a calibre were as poor a support then as now, and in a very little while his scanty stock of money was expended, and under the dire promptings of want the contents of the valise, and finally the valise itself, were disposed of. Then being penniless he was turned out of the house of the pious Puritan with whom he boarded, and wandered about the streets in an agony of spirit which none can conceive save those who have also been compelled by fortune to pass under the yoke. Friendless and hungry he wandered about the City, entering all the stores and soliciting employment in his broad Scotch accent, and with beseeching, honest eyes. For two days his efforts were fruitless. On the evening of the second day he strolled toward the Common which was temporarily his bedroom, with weary languid limbs, with hunger gnawing at his stomach, but a sublime hope and self-confidence in his heart. "In spite of all this," he thought to himself, "I shall be rich and famous." As the words flashed through his mind, his boots touched something hard and metallic. He stooped down and picked it up. It was a shilling. "Thank God for that," the unfortunate young man muttered, as he turned hastily toward the town and sought, in a bye-street an unpretending bakery, where he had a comfortable meal. Superstitious, like

free-thinkers, he accepted the incident seriously as an omen of better days. In the morning, he renewed his search for employment, and this time with success. He entered the book-store of WELLS & LILY, who liked his demeanor and engaged him, though not at a very great salary. He was to act as salesman, for which he showed no great aptitude, so he was transferred to the publishing house of the firm as a proof-reader. And here he began to see with the eyes of the mind, and to understand, to observe, and to store up for future use the results of his observation. WELLS & LILY published books that suited them. They were refined and scholarly. Naturally, the class they appealed to at that time was very scanty, even in the intellectual Hub of the Universe, and bankruptcy was the inevitable result. Their shelves were loaded with admirable works, far in advance of the age, which nobody bought, while meaner men made fortunes by printing rubbish. This was the second disenchantment of the young mind. BENNETT now learned that he who wishes to be known as a prophet must prophesy what is going to happen to-morrow, not what will happen next month or next year. He also learned that the man who caters for the public must have for them what they like, not what he likes; and he saw this exemplified in the journal called the *Galaxy*, edited by a Boston journalist named JOS. TAILOR BUCKINGHAM. The lesson did not fall upon a heedless mind, and the future journalist shed another coat of romance.

BENNETT had now been two years in Boston, and had saved a little money. He had no vices—he drank little, he smoked less. When young men offered him dissipation, he hurled Roman apothegms at their heads. “I eat,” said he to the dumbfounded Bostonians, “to live; I do not live to eat and drink.” Then they gave him up in despair. With such a temperament saving was a matter of course. It was not that he was miserly, for, on the contrary, his hand was ever an open one, but his money was never frittered away in small wants and mean habits. So the “sill-r” stayed by him. Being thus fore-handed, he resolved to leave Boston and visit New-York, which, even at that day, had acquired predominance as a commercial centre. Hardly had he arrived in the City and presented the letters of recommendation which he had received from his old employers than he was introduced to the publisher of a Charleston paper—the *Courier*—who engaged him to make translations from French and Spanish papers. This was in the beginning of 1823. And now he was at length embarked in that career of journalism in which he was to attain such eminence and to work such changes. The editor of this Southern paper was, in his way, a man of enterprise. He had a fast sailing schooner in which he used to meet vessels many miles from the harbor to get their files of newspapers. This was young BENNETT’s work. After the French or Spanish vessel had been boarded and the files obtained, he esconced himself in the cabin and worked away at translating the subjects of interest which his principal had indicated. This made a deep impression on his mind, and, years afterward, when the victory had been won, and the *Herald* became a prominent paper, he established a steam-yacht for the same purpose. In Charleston he stayed a year—observant, reticent, but not quite so isolated, for he received considerable attention at the houses of the wealthy aristocrats of the South, who relished his conversation and appreciated his light, sarcastic wit. His wages were, no doubt, not very magnificent, but certainly very much higher than they had been as a proof-reader, for he had to keep up the appearance of a gentleman and to associate with gentlemen. Altogether considered, this was probably about the sunniest part of the first epoch in Mr. BENNETT’s life.

Returning to New-York in 1824, he found no opening on any journal and determined to teach. He advertised his intention to open near the site of the present *Herald* office a Permanent Commercial School, in which all the English branches and sciences were to be taught, and also the French and Spanish languages if required. Application was to be made to J. G. B., No. 148 Fulton-street. It would seem that neither the English branches and sciences, nor the French and Spanish languages were required, for not a solitary application was made, and young BENNETT in disgust gave up the idea of being a pedagogue. Then he tried his hand at lecturing, and advertised a course of lectures upon political economy at the old Dutch Church, in Ann-street. But SHAKESPEARE and the musical glasses were then all the rage, and nobody came to be enlightened on that abstruse subject. Resistance was in vain. He had given himself to journalism in Charleston, and it claimed him in New-York. Whichever way he turned, there was no opening for him but in that direction; so reluctantly he resigned himself to that tide which was to bear him onward to a success which he had never dreamed of in his wildest castle-building in the old school-boy days of the Seminary at Aberdeen. He became attached to the *National Advocate*, a Democratic organ of the good old stamp, on which he was a reporter, paragraphist, editor and jack-of-all-work. He wrote very much in the same style as when he afterward astounded the world in his *Herald*, but the chiefs took excellent care that everything which would have given a sensational stimulus to their columns should be rigidly excluded. But still there was too much fire in the young man to be quite hid by the conventional bushel that was put over him. He reported trials, he wrote dramatic criticisms, the latter not without value, and he was an industrious and ardent politician. So he began to be known. He attached himself to the party of Gen. JACKSON, being a Democrat by conviction, and a free-trader by commercial instinct. It has been said that he never had any beliefs, political or otherwise, and that he was a Mephistophiles laughing at the fools who did believe. But this is unjust. He was not only heartily a supporter of JACKSON, but he was faithful to him when others deserted him, and it was the cold ingratitude with which his services were rewarded by the men he served so well that turned his heart into ice. When the *Advocate* deserted its old love, and espoused the cause of JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, BENNETT, who was faithful to the party of MARTIN VAN BUREN, left the paper rather than earn bread by writing against his convictions.

And now, in his thirtieth year, having left the *National Advocate*, he became, through the influence of some political friends, the Washington correspondent of the New-York *Enquirer*, which was then on the topmost round of the journalistic ladder. It is related of him that during his stay in this position he came across a copy of WALPOLE’s Letters, and resolved to try the effect of a few letters written in a similar strain. The truth of this is doubtful. It is more probable that the natural style and genius of the man was now unfettered, and he wrote without fear of censorship, and with all the ease which a sense of freedom inspires. He was naturally witty, sarcastic and sensible. These letters, however originated, were undoubtedly a great hit. They were lively, they abounded in personal allusions, and they described freely not only Senators, but the wives and daughters of Senators. This sort of thing was a novelty then. The descriptions of toilettes, the cravats of the President and the hunting saddle of his niece tickled not only the fools, but also wiser people, who liked the sensation. These same letters established Mr. BENNETT’s reputation as a light lance among the hosts of literature, and he found a ready sale for the poetry and the love stories which flowed from his pen during his leisure hours. By these exertions he contrived to earn the then enormous sum of twelve dollars a week, and was an object of admiration and envy to other reporters who had known him in New-York.

Fired by a great idea, he returned to New-York and urged upon Gen. WEBB, the proprietor of the *Inquirer*, the policy of uniting it with the *Courier*, which he advanced with so much force that the measure was actually carried. These were the palmy days of that paper. Its circulation was considered enormous. Men of

the Tammany Society which it represented boasted over their Santa Cruz that it printed thirty-five hundred copies daily. And its advertising amounted to \$55 a day on the average all the year round. From 1829 to 1832 BENNETT remained with the paper, hobnobbing with Senators and on the friendliest terms with VAN BUREN. The idea has crept into some heads that BENNETT was no writer, but only a brilliant manager of journalism. This is a great mistake. During these three years article after article, brilliant, and witty, poured from his pen, and he was accepted as one of the bright particular stars of what was called journalism in those days. Nay, more, he caused the great prosperity of the *Courier & Inquirer*. The literary analyst who shall dissect those old milded files, will find, without a doubt, that BENNETT was at the bottom of their huge circulation. When Gen. WEBB resolved to desert Gen. JACKSON, and to espouse the cause of NICHOLAS BIDDLE, this man with a full heart again threw up his bread and butter, because he would not write against his convictions. BENNETT, perhaps, had some hopes that his Senatorial friends would assist him, so, in 1832, at the age of thirty-five, he started the *Globe*, a paper devoted to the interests of Gen. JACKSON and MARTIN VAN BUREN, though his experience of politicians might have taught him differently. Still that he did not intend his paper to be altogether the slave of party is proved by his introductory editorial, in which he wrote: “If I make up my mind to establish a paper, I wish you to understand that I shall ask no man the liberty of doing so. Offering to aid the party and establishing a paper are not one and the same thing. If I see fit, I am at liberty to start a paper on my own responsibility, and leave the party to judge for themselves what confidence to give it.” These were brave words, but they met a cool reception. The party put no confidence in the *Globe*, and it died after thirty issues. The paper of the future only gradually shaped itself in BENNETT’s mind. He refused to be a party hack, and yet had not thought of going to the people. The leaders of the party distrusted him. They admitted his services, they feared his biting sarcasm, but they would not help him. So they let the *Globe* die. Still one more experiment did the fearless man try to be supported by the party and yet be independent of it. He had some money left out of the savings of the three years on the *Courier & Inquirer*, and he invested that in the *Pennsylvanian*, a Philadelphia paper which should, from an independent stand-point, advocate the measures of the Democratic Party. But as it began to die upon his hands he had recourse to MARTIN VAN BUREN for a loan of \$2,500 for two years. “Help me to this,” he said, “and the paper shall be on a self-supporting basis.” It was politely refused, and the *Pennsylvanian* went the way of the *Globe*. This made BENNETT almost despair. He had fought so hard for the party that he could not bear to be rejected by them in this fashion. JOHN MUMFORD, he knew, had been helped by the leaders to the amount of \$40,000, and they refused him, a man who had done ten times as much for them, a paltry \$2,500. It was gall and wormwood. He wrote to a friend in the following year: “I am sorry to speak harshly of any one, but really I think there is something like ingratitude in the way that I have been treated.” But this was enough. His education as a journalist had now been completed. He had cut loose from party discipline, and he resolved to cut loose from party altogether. And now, at last, in his teeming brain the paper of the future began to assume shape and coherence. He resolved to make a paper that should have no master but the public, and should stand by public favor alone. So he returned to New-York in the Winter of 1834, after battling with his *Pennsylvanian* for nearly two years, and expending every cent he had in the world.

On the 6th of May, 1835, BENNETT, with the aid of two young printers, published the first number of the morning *Herald*, price one cent. It was written, published and sold in a cellar in Wall-street, whose sole furniture was a counter which served as a desk, consisting of a plank stretched across two flour-barrels. There was a chair in the centre, in which sat Mr. BENNETT, now thirty-eight years of age, writing busily and selling newspapers, taking advertisements and even writing them for advertisers who had not the faculty of composition. But in that dingy cellar, and behind the chair of that sturdy battler with the world, stood Success, invisible to the common herd, who had neither eyes to see her radiant form, nor ears to hear the musical rustling of her wings. The paper was not much larger than a sheet of letter-paper, but it gave much light, minute and cheerful news. It was full of short paragraphs, printed in small type, and was an eminently saleable article. It sold well from the first day, but still BENNETT had at first a terrible time. The extreme cheapness of the paper rendered him absolutely dependent upon his advertisers, and yet he dared not charge them more than fifty cents for a square of sixteen lines. So he had to cut down the expenses to a minimum. He did everything himself. He swept out his cellar, he carried the paper to the few subscribers it possessed in the morning, he wrote the editorials, the news, the criticisms. He did the reporting and the book-keeping—all, in fact, that was done. He sat behind his barrels and his plank, placidly writing, and when any one came for a paper, he never looked up, but just said, “put the money on the counter and take one.” His working-day was sixteen hours. In the morning, from 5 to 8, he wrote editorials in his bedroom. During the business hours he was in the cellar engaged in ordinary routine of editorial work. About 1 o’clock, having provided abundant copy for the compositors, he sallied forth into Wall-street to compile stock-tables, and to get matter for spicy paragraphs. From 4 to 6 he was at his office again, winding up the business of the day. In the evening he was abroad—at the theatres, or concert, ball, or public meeting, which were faithfully written up and handed to the printers before he went to bed. He thus, like Atlas, bore the whole weight of his world upon his own brave shoulders.

The stock lists and the money article were a great sensation, and gave the little *Herald* a kind of standing among brokers and bankers. It told them just what they wanted to know, but what no other journal had thought of telling them. At the end of the third month the receipts were greater than the expenditures. But during the fourth month the printing-office was burned down, and the printers, his partners, were quite discouraged and abandoned the enterprise. But not BENNETT. He felt that he had touched bottom, and that the worst was over for him. He “raked the *Herald* out of the fire,” to use his own language, and issued it alone. Fortune was now tired of persecuting the brave man, and turned in his favor. Four months after the *Herald* fire came the great fire which laid Wall-street and all the adjacent business streets low in one common ruin. And here BENNETT at once showed the world what he knew about journalism. He engaged every reporter he could come across, (there were not many in those days,) and he spent half the day himself in the ruins, note-book in hand, writing down what he had gleaned during the other half. He spread before the public a mental bird’s-eye view of the whole scene, with such happy descriptions, and in such easy language that it was a grand success. He went to the expense of getting a wood cut of the burning Exchange, and presented a map of the burned district, which made a sensation. It is simple justice to say that the spirit and enterprise displayed upon that occasion has always continued to mark Mr. BENNETT’s paper. This dashing journalism opened commercial eyes to the value of the *Herald* as an advertising medium, and Dr. BRANDRETH entered into a contract with the paper, which made it a paying concern. BENNETT, in the fifteenth month, ventured to raise the price to two cents. That day the *Herald* took its place in the journalism of the country, and has kept it steadily. In the editorial which he wrote announcing the increase of price, he sketched the course which he intended to pursue, and the expenses he was going to incur. People doubted then, but every part of the programme was carried out to the letter. Finding the ordinary course of collecting and transmitting news too slow, he organized a force of carrier-pigeons and a staff of mule messengers to beat the mails. So when the Mexican war broke out, the *Herald* was able to give the news of battles, the lists of killed and wounded, and all the points of the campaign not only before other papers, but before the official accounts had been received in Washington. This naturally gave to the paper an enormous impetus, and its wonderful enterprise was quoted even in Europe as something next to marvelous. During the war of the rebellion Mr. BENNETT strove to outstrip his competitors in getting news, though he did not always succeed. This idea was the ruling one in his journalistic life, and nobly did he carry it out.