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Confused and Ill-Arranged: Reading Miscellaneity with *Enquire Within*

JAMES MUSSELL

If there be any among my readers, who, having turned over the pages of *ENQUIRE WITHIN*, have hastily pronounced them to be confused and ill-arranged, let them at once refer to “THE INDEX,” or for ever hold their peace.¹

The preface published with the final number of *Enquire Within* reassured its readers that, having now reached its end, the publication would finally make sense. What had up to that point been a bewildering miscellany of domestic advice presented in numbered paragraphs without any overarching order was transformed by the index into a resource in which readers could look up what they wanted. The preface, published along with the index in the final number, introduced a conceit that would be repeated each time *Enquire Within* was subsequently reprinted: “The Index is, to the vast congregation of useful hints and receipts that fill the boundary of this volume, like the DIRECTORY to the great aggregation of houses and people in London. No one, being a stranger to London, would run about asking for ‘MR SMITH.’ But, remembering the Christian names, and the profession of the individual wanted, would turn to the DIRECTORY, and trace him out. Like a house, every paragraph in *ENQUIRE WITHIN* has its number,—and the INDEX is the DIRECTORY which will explain what Facts, Hints, and Instructions *inhabit* that number.”²

Linking headings to numbered paragraphs, the index did indeed allow readers to find what they wanted within the otherwise disordered pages of *Enquire Within*. However, as the index was not

provided until the final number, they had to collect the parts for almost a year while knocking door to door, not knowing who they might find.

Enquire Within was a miscellany of domestic hints and tips compiled by the former Chartist Robert Kemp Philp (1819–82). It was published in ten tuppenny numbers from January to October 1855 with a last double number for four pence appearing in November. On completion, *Enquire Within* was also published as a bound volume for half a crown in cloth covers and gilt lettering. It was an instant success, and new impressions, which Philp called editions, were published each time one was exhausted. By 1857 there had been six editions and Philp was claiming 60,000 copies had been sold.³ When the nineteenth edition appeared in 1863, Philp announced sales of 196,000.⁴ The first revisions to the text were made for the twenty-seventh edition in 1865, and Philp was now boasting 277,000 had been sold.⁵ Philp died in 1882, but sales of *Enquire Within* continued to rise: the sixty-fifth edition, published in 1887, claimed total sales had reached a million.⁶ In 1903 the hundredth edition was published, advertising that 1,330,000 copies had been sold.⁷ The final edition of *Enquire Within* appeared in 1973.

While the preface and index brought retrospective order to miscellaneous content, the subsequent editions underscored the provisionality of such acts of closure. In her classic essay, “Toward a Theory of the Periodical as Publishing Genre,” Margaret Beetham suggests we might understand periodical form as a productive tension between the open and the closed.⁸ Openness can be found in how the composite nature of the periodical, in terms of both the diversity of content and combination of authorial voices, licenses readers to roam over the text and make their own associations between its constituent parts. It can also be found in the open-ended nature of periodical publication itself, which defers the point at which the periodical can be understood as a whole. Closedness, on the other hand, is provided by the continuities of “format,

shape and pattern of contents from number to number” that limit interpretation by maintaining a regular appearance over the run.⁹ Such continuities form an important part of the periodical’s address—the combination of features and tone that figure its imagined reader—and so provide a consistent framework through which to approach changing content. For Beetham, the genre’s relationship to time—“the central characteristic of the periodical”—has a privileged place in structuring this tension.¹⁰ With another issue on its way, there was a constant demand for novelty; yet, because each issue had to situate itself in the run, representing in part a whole that should never be realised, repetition was at the heart of periodical publication. Repetition made past issues present in the issue to hand while anticipating those to come.

Enquire Within was not a periodical but a work published in parts. Nonetheless, the tension between its commitments to miscellaneity and closure makes it a suitable case study through which to examine serial form. My focus is on how closure makes miscellaneity generative: in other words, how openness depends upon prior acts of closure. There is something deeply unsettling about the miscellaneous unless it is subject to limits. With no way to orient oneself, pure randomness is illegible, a version of the real that both thwarts signification and denies the necessity of any originating, intentional intelligence. It is also impossible to fabricate. Even if in combination they are random, cultural objects—whether words, texts, or other recognizable components—are always already laced with meaning. Readers, too, are well versed in meaning-making and predisposed to see narrative closure even where none is intended. Yet miscellaneity retains something of pure randomness’s subversive, disruptive nature. Rather than posit an author or editor that can serve as an originary source or authorizing agency, the miscellaneous offers instead a series of unrelated items, comprehensible in themselves but not as a whole. And in the striking juxtapositions that inevitably occur, miscellaneity can become even

more uncomfortable. Not only does it deny any organizing principle, concealed presence, or key that can account for the apparently random, but miscellaneity also suggests that meaning need not be intentional at all.

For the miscellaneous to yield its pleasures—to produce novelty, for instance, rather than confusion—it must be situated in a broader structure, enclosed by limits, and marked as a recognizable type. The miscellany was a recognised genre in the nineteenth century, both in itself and as a component of other kinds of text. For instance, the literary anthology gathered examples of the literary even while challenging the notion of the coherent literary work.¹¹ As Beetham, amongst others, has set out, the form of the domestic miscellany emerged from its compilation of recipes and tips often culled from older works that, in their reprinting, endorsed their ongoing utility and constituted tradition.¹² Similarly, newspapers designated parts of their page as spaces for miscellaneous content, such as short snippets of news sourced through the agencies or articles that consisted simply of filler, whether light-hearted jokes, assorted facts or pieces of information, or the newsy curiosities designated by Roland Barthes as *fait-divers*.¹³ In each case, miscellaneity was subjected to limits, classed as a collection, or demarcated as a distinct type of content. In each case, miscellaneity was so structured that it appeared a species of the miscellany.

What follows is in two parts. In his *National and International Bibliography* (1896), Frank Campbell complained that too many authors paid little regard to how they might systematically structure their texts, preferring instead the principle of “*first making a muddle, and then indexing it.*”¹⁴ My paper follows accordingly, first examining the miscellaneous and then how it is subjected to order. With no editorial comment in the individual parts of *Enquire Within*, its sustained and explicit miscellaneity required framing in the wrappers to break up what would otherwise be a single miscellaneous text into manageable pieces while keeping the end in

view. The index, when it finally appeared, retrospectively transformed the unstructured content into something known and knowable and lent coherence to a work now bounded like a book.

Enquire Within was a miscellany, its content a muddle selected to appeal to a particular readership; however, as a serial in parts rather than a newspaper or periodical, its randomness was tolerated because of the promise of closure to come.

Making a Muddle

Malcolm Chase has recently set out Philp's life, uncovering how he spent the period 1863–69 as an off-course betting agent under the assumed name of John Denman.¹⁵ Philp was born to a Cornish Unitarian family and apprenticed as a printer. By the time he was eighteen, in 1837, he was partner in a Bristol printer-publisher's business. He was also becoming increasingly involved in Chartism. In 1840 he was prosecuted for selling newspapers on the Sabbath and for seditious libel as a vendor of the *Western Vindicator*; in the same year, he was elected to the Chartist Convention and National Charter Association, playing a key role in drafting the 1842 charter. As Chase sets out, Philp's sympathy for Joseph Sturge's National Complete Suffrage Union prompted a rift with Feargus O'Connor that led to Philp leaving the movement. He had remained active in printing and publishing, founding the weekly *National Vindicator* with Henry Vincent in 1841 and the tuppenny monthly *Union Advocate* in 1842. Philp had also become interested in temperance (the *Union Advocate* was a "Monthly Record of the Chartist, Complete Suffrage, and Temperance Movement") and he directed his political energies in this direction while working first on the liberal and Anti-Corn Law *Sentinel* and then as assistant editor on the *People's Journal*.¹⁶ At the 1846 World Temperance Convention, he met the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and quickly became a supporter, but when William and Mary Howitt withdrew from the *People's Journal* the following year, Philp once more found himself looking for work.¹⁷

In 1849 Philp began a long but not entirely happy relationship with the publishers Houlston and Stoneman. He became the founding editor of their *Family Friend*, initially a tuppenny monthly, which provided domestic advice to a working-class readership of men and women. The success of the journal (Chase notes the preface to the first volume claimed 50,000 subscribers) enabled Philp and his publishers to produce a number of complementary publications.¹⁸ A companion volume, the *Family Pastime*, was published in time for Christmas 1850, and in the following January a tuppenny fortnightly, the *Family Tutor*, began publication “uniform with the *Family Friend*.”¹⁹ Later, in May 1851, Philp founded the tuppenny weekly *Parlour Magazine of the Literature of All Ages*, which was printed within the Great Exhibition, and in November he started the *Home Companion*, a penny weekly that lasted until 1854.²⁰ Houlston and Stoneman sold the *Family Tutor* in 1853 and appointed a new editor to the *Family Friend*, allowing Philp to launch two new serials, the *Family Treasury*, a tuppenny monthly containing domestic information for working women, and the *Shopkeeper’s Guide*, a half crown volume that Chase has argued was aimed more at shopworkers than their employers.²¹ The year 1853 also marked the first of Philp’s failures. In January he launched *Diogenes*, a satirical, illustrated tuppenny weekly (thruppence with the stamp) based on *Punch* and published by Piper, Brothers and Company. It was an ambitious publication for a different market and met with some success, garnering favourable comparisons to its better-established rival and having its content reprinted in the newspapers.²² However, it did not sell in sufficient numbers; Philp was bankrupted in 1854, and the journal ceased publication the following year.²³

The failure of *Diogenes* prompted a return to Houlston and Stoneman and the domestic miscellany. The first issue of *Enquire Within* appeared in January 1855 and, like the *Family Friend*, was a tuppenny monthly. However, as Chase notes, despite his previous success with the

firm, Philp was “in no position to negotiate the terms” and thus sold the copyright to them for fifty pounds.²⁴ Comprising two sheets octavo, each number was thirty-two pages and came in a four-page paper wrapper. Its title, which took up much of the front cover, set out both the aims of the publication and its intended readership (figure 1). According to its subtitle, *Enquire Within* was “A Work of Practical Instruction Upon Literally Everything that a Housekeeper Ought to Know, For the Use or Ornament of a Home and the Comfort of Its Occupants.”²⁵ While this description oriented the publication towards women, the rest of the wrapper complicated this address by figuring its readership in entirely masculine terms. On the inside cover was an introductory article, “A Few Words While Opening the Door,” which presented both the enquirer and the person answering the door as men. The person who answers the door does most of the talking, dispensing homilies while also setting out the plan of the work. Asked by the enquirer what it will contain, the host answers, “About anything that you seek information upon,” before quickly qualifying this as “those subjects that a Father, a Mother, a Son, or a Daughter should understand, and which have relation to the comfort, convenience, health, and cheerfulness of domestic life.”²⁶ He explains that the contents of *Enquire Within* will be divided into four sections: (1) “Things that are Absolutely Necessary,” (2) “Things that, though not Absolutely Necessary, are Desirable,” (3) “Things that are rendered Necessary by Sickness,” and (4) “Things that are rendered Essential by the Usages of Society.”²⁷ The host then offers a long anecdote intended to illustrate what *Enquire Within* will not do. With a whiff of misogyny, he tells the enquirer of “an old duchess of eccentric habits” who feigned one illness after another to obtain medicines, keeping them and mixing them together to produce her own “cure-all.”²⁸ Rather than “compile information upon *this* principle,” the host says, everything prescribed in *Enquire Within* “will be from the best authority, well tried, and thoroughly approved by persons

of practical experience.”²⁹ When the enquirer asks whether this “information [is] to be confined to matters of Medicine alone,” the host replies, “Decidedly not,” explaining:

That constitutes the Third Section of my plan. Whether you wish to model a flower in wax, to ornament a vase by the art of Potichomanie, to serve up a new relish for breakfast or for supper, to supply a delicious *entrée* to the dinner table, to plan a dinner for a small party or a large one, to cure a head-ache, to get married, to have your child christened, to bury a relative, to establish acquaintances according to the rules of etiquette; whatever you wish to do, to make, or to enjoy—provided your desire has relation to the necessities and desires of *domestic* life—I shall be ready to assist you. And, therefore, I hope that on all such occasions you will not fail to “*ENQUIRE WITHIN*.”³⁰

Although this promised structure never transpired, the broad range of content did. The four sections were intended to structure the index, but when it appeared as part of the final double number it was a single alphabet with no subdivisions at all. Nevertheless, this paragraph with its encyclopaedic sweep of topics was quoted on the frontispiece to the 1856 volume and reprinted on every edition that followed. *Enquire Within* commenced with ambitions of structure but ultimately promoted the diversity of its miscellaneous content, exploiting its form to present a capacious definition of the domestic that would broaden its appeal.

Beetham has described how the bound volume allows a periodical to pretend that its existence in parts was merely a transitional form on the way to becoming the book it was always intended to be.³¹ *Enquire Within* made its destiny clear from the publication of its first part, announcing on the cover that it was “To Be Completed in Twelve Monthly Numbers.” As the index would be published with the final part, bringing the end into view allowed readers to calculate the total cost of the work (two shillings) and anticipate when they could finally pose a

question and look up the answer. The text itself also anticipated retrospective reading. Each article was numbered so that the index, when published, could refer to paragraphs rather than pages. While there was some structure, with large and small caps differentiating headings and subheadings, each paragraph was numbered in series and so undermined this vertical hierarchy with relentless linear sequence.

By referring to paragraphs rather than page numbers, the index was independent of the final print form of *Enquire Within* and so suggests the work was completed in its entirety before it was serialised. There is further evidence too. First, there was no effort to craft individual numbers. While most of the articles in the first issue, for instance, were about food—it opens with “1. Choice of Articles of Food” and about two-thirds of the remainder concern its purchase, preservation, and preparation—this was only an emphasis and not evidence of deeper structural order. The issue also included articles on the meanings of common names, how to live down scandal, printmaking, how to kill rats and mice, and how to walk, and it ends not only midway through an article but midway through a sentence (figure 2).³² Secondly, there was little correlation between the contents of the parts and their moment of publication. The January number appropriately included “Food in Season,” which looked ahead over the year listing produce month by month, but “1021. Gardening Operations for the Year,” which also started with January, was not published until May.³³ Finally, *Enquire Within* made use of cross-references to allow readers to find articles on similar topics before the index was published. Tellingly, these give the paragraph numbers not just of articles in the parts already published but also those yet to appear.

The result was a curiously self-contained text that paid no regard to the passing moment. Barthes offers self-sufficiency as the defining characteristic of the *fait-divers*. For Barthes, these

miscellaneous items inserted to fill leftover space on the newspaper paper are “the unorganised discard of news.”³⁴ Whereas the significance of the real news, according to Barthes, is established by reference to well-established grand narratives—politics, nation, or nature, for instance—the *fait-divers* is isolated and explicable on its own terms. The *fait-divers*

is total news, or more precisely, immanent; it contains all its knowledge in itself; no need to know anything about the world in order to consume a *fait-divers*; it refers formally to nothing but itself . . . on the level of reading, everything is given within the *fait-divers*; its circumstances, its causes, its past, its outcome; without duration and without context, it constitutes an immediate, total being which refers, formally at least, to nothing implicit; in this it is related to the short story and the tale, and no longer to the novel. It is its immanence which defines the *fait-divers*.³⁵

Marked as purposeless and without duration, context, or narrative coherence, each item in the *fait-divers* stands alone. While *Enquire Within* had a clear ideological orientation—it endorsed domesticity, a rigid distinction between masculinity and femininity, and most of all, thrift—its contents also had a peculiar integrity, seemingly generated from a store of internal common sense rather than reference to the world beyond the pages.

According to Barthes, the self-sufficiency of the *fait-divers* also lends it a degree of autonomy. The same can be seen in the pages of *Enquire Within*. Despite the host’s claim that information will be derived from “the best authority,” there are very few citations in *Enquire Within*.³⁶ As a result, its content apparently springs from an unknown repository of sound advice. The text was actually compiled by Philp and Mary Bennett (her husband was the printer of the *Family Friend*) and, as was common in the period, derived in part from the contents of other publications. Indeed, as Chase has shown, in 1857 Philp would land Houlston and Stoneman in

legal difficulties when it was found that another of his serials, *Reason Why*, obtained much of its content from E. C. Brewer's *Guide to the Scientific Knowledge of Things Familiar* (1848). In this instance Philp's financial circumstances proved fortuitous: having sold the copyright, he escaped prosecution.³⁷

Lacking any internal structure, there was nothing to map the content of *Enquire Within* onto its form in print, whether taken as the serial parts or the projected book. Without subdivisions or classes, for instance, there was little internal coherence; and without a beginning, middle, or end, there was nothing to indicate why the text began where it did or when it should draw to a close. The result was a text that was arbitrarily enclosed by the limits of the work but did not seem to belong exclusively to it. Susan Stewart has argued that a quotation dispossesses an author of his or her text, recognising instead "only the authority of use."³⁸ Quotation marks, she writes, "textualise the utterance, giving it both integrity and boundary and opening it to interpretation."³⁹ *Enquire Within* contained very little direct citation but, in its fragmentary and unstructured presentation, placed everything in quotation marks. Its authority accrued from the way its contents were manifestly from somewhere, but without direct references *Enquire Within* endorsed transmission and circulation rather than the authored and fixed. With the possibility that every article derived from elsewhere and might, in turn, be reprinted again, to read *Enquire Within* was to be reminded of print's capacity for reproduction and the mobility that this technology conferred on textual content. The appeal of *Enquire Within* was that it brought so much together, but the way it did so underscored the essential provisionality of the printed word.

Indexing It

Enquire Within differs from Barthes's *fait-divers* in one important way. For Barthes, the structure of the *fait-divers* allows it to gesture to an underlying meaning that it simultaneously

disavows. Each item consists of two statements brought into some sort of relation, the existence of which provides a tantalising hint of occulted connection and so mitigates against pure randomness. Barthes offers two possible sets of relations: first, there are those that imply a causal link but do nothing to account for it; second, those that present a coincidence so compelling it hints that it could not have arisen from chance alone. In both cases, these suggested connections give rise to the uncanny possibility of structure, some explanation or point of origin that could account for this disparate content. As Barthes puts it, “A god prowls behind the *fait-divers*.”⁴⁰

The contents of *Enquire Within* do not share this form, but they do create a similar effect. Rather than present the “certainty of a relation” within each article, the miscellaneity generates it between them. For instance, pages 178–79 contain a transition between three series of articles (figure 3). Starting on page 177 was “1647. Punctuation,” a series which ran from 1651 on the comma to 1662 on the asterisk. The next article, “1663. Hints Upon Spelling,” initiated another series that ranged from when to use double “l” (1664) to when “y” changes to “i” in compound words such as “loveliness” (1677). The shared interest in language suggests a link between the two series; however, the next article, “1678. Quadrilles,” seems to mark a distinct change of subject by introducing a series of articles on dances. Even this, though, ends with “1713. Terms Used to Describe the Movement of Dances,” a return to language that re-establishes the connection with the previous two series. Dance, *Enquire Within* seems to suggest, becomes punctuated movement; punctuation makes language move.

Miscellaneity is haunted by the possibility of an occulted meaning, a unifying logic hidden beneath seemingly random content. Difference and discontinuity are the safeguards of chance, ensuring that the eye of the reader remains upon each article’s surface rather than seeking the connections beneath. Accidental correspondences, however, can create the

impression of intention, turning miscellaneous content into something purposeful that demands interpretation. Maybe those who assembled the text were attempting to convey something in addition to the content of any individual article, a hidden commentary or subtext perhaps? Or might the cause of such correspondences be found in the wider culture, the result of subtle cultural forces or those that can be ascribed to discourse more generally? Something must be assigned to explain away the agency suggested by such correspondences. For Barthes, the *fait-divers* present what he calls “paradoxes of causality”: the impression that everything is really interconnected (and so ultimately comprehensible) is entangled with the suspicion that such connections might result from the nature of signs rather than the world they represent.⁴¹ The important point is that it is readers who turn miscellaneity into sign. We might not believe the world is ultimately meaningful, that sorting out the signs will allow us to understand it all, but at the same time we do not want to concede that meaning might result from chance alone.

There is no shudder of the uncanny when reading *Enquire Within*, no suggestion of unanchored meaning, because the editor function is always within reach to explain away such hints of concealed order. Each part’s wrappers, for instance, provided both structuring limits for miscellaneous content and space for editorial commentary upon it. The inside cover of the third number reported on the progress of the work while also elaborating its broader scheme. The top half of the page was dominated by a table of “General Heads,” from “Adulterations” to “Wax Flowers,” demonstrating the range of subjects that would eventually be covered. The columns of headings, however, ensured that the eye was drawn to the centre of the page where, in bold type, the number “3600” boasted as to the volume’s eventual size. The notice also announced that there were to be two indexes, one alphabetical (“pointing to every paragraph by its initial letter”) and the other classed (“showing at one glance all the information scattered through the volume

relating to any one subject”).⁴² By advertising these bibliographical technologies, from alphabetical subject headings to indexes, *Enquire Within* was able to celebrate the bewildering range of articles found in its pages while, at the same time, reassuring readers that they were under control.

The inside cover of number six offered another update. “Half-way” told readers of the challenges of assembling something like *Enquire Within* but turned them into a boast. “We have to exercise great care,” they write, “to prevent information already given from being repeated; and we have to see that NOTHING likely to be required for domestic purposes is omitted from the volume.”⁴³ Both the risk of duplication and the aspiration to completeness depended on the forthcoming enclosure of the volume. Only when there was no more to come could its editors be sure nothing would be repeated; equally, while they could not be certain nothing useful would be left out, this would become a possibility only when serial publication had ceased. The forthcoming completeness of the volume was also evoked by another promise of the indexes, “one simply alphabetical, and the other classified,” and the details regarding binding.⁴⁴ Although they had “not yet determined the price” of the bound volume, they were able to tell those collecting the parts how much they would have to pay to have them bound.⁴⁵ “Neat covers” were offered for sixpence and, as it would cost another sixpence for the binding itself, “the cost to the Monthly Subscriber will be only THREE SHILLINGS for a Volume containing nearly *Four Thousand Items of Useful Information, which may be found of advantage every day of the Subscriber’s life.*”⁴⁶

The sixth number was also the first to modify the claim that *Enquire Within* was “to be completed in Twelve Monthly Numbers,” dropping the “Monthly” in anticipation of the final double number. When it eventually arrived, the final number contained entries ranging from

“2762. *Cantharides*, or Spanish flies” (this had commenced in the previous number and was part of a series on drugs) to “3031. Insurances—(Life and Fire)” (one of a series of articles that tabulated information). It also provided the matter necessary for transforming the parts into a single volume. However, while there was a title page and preface, there was only one of the two promised indexes. Rather than the classified index, which was to gather together disparate articles on similar topics and list them under general heads (“Enquiries Upon Cookery,” for example), the only index to appear listed articles by headword in a single alphabet (figure 4). Because the entries abbreviated and reformatted article titles, organising them by the main substantive word, the index provided a degree of structure by grouping articles on similar subjects under the same heads (as long as that subject was indicated by a word in the title, of course). However, without cross-references, the index could only associate an article with a single subject and had no means to establish further links between them. So, for instance, a search for “cookery” reveals the following:

Cookery, for Children	204
Cookery, Camp	765
Cooking, Leading Instructions	239
Cooking, Time Required for	239. ⁴⁷

While these entries offer a selection of articles about cookery, they by no means encompass the range of relevant articles in *Enquire Within*. Indeed, the same column of the index also lists “Cold Meat, Garnish for” and “Cold Meats, Cooking.”⁴⁸ Equally, the two entries that refer to 239 direct readers to “239. III. Cooking,” which is just the second part of a whole series on how to cook beef, the rest of which is not listed under this head.

Just as the paper wrappers enclosed the parts and the cloth covers did the same for the volume, the index provided a way for readers to grasp the contents as a whole. Referring to paragraph numbers rather than pages, though, it asserted the textual integrity of the work independent of the book in which it was embodied. This link between the index and the work was further underscored by the table printed on the index's final page (figure 5). The table correlated parts with article numbers, allowing readers with incomplete runs to still use the index to look things up.⁴⁹ There were further attempts to regulate the miscellaneity in the editions that followed. For instance, the twenty-seventh edition, published in 1865, includes an additional contents page in the front matter (figure 6). Although numbered twenty-seven, this edition was actually the first revision of the text. Its advertisement claimed, "Classification has been improved, in accordance with many friendly suggestions, and Additions have been made, both modern and interesting."⁵⁰ Despite claims that "no really useful part has been omitted," the reconfiguration of content resulted in fewer articles: 2,522 rather than 3,028.⁵¹ The new contents list reflected these changes, pointing to articles on a similar subject that were now grouped together. It appeared as part of the front matter, displacing the index which was now at the back and paginated as part of the main sequence. In some ways the contents list realised the initial plan to have a classified index: providing an alphabetised list of subjects, it both set out the scope of the work and allowed readers to turn directly to areas of interest. However, like the main index, the list also embodied something of the miscellaneity it tried to regulate. Presumably because there would be too many to be useful, the subjects listed represented only a small selection of the topics covered. Furthermore, to help readers find what they were looking for, the subjects were listed alphabetically rather than in the order in which they appeared. This meant that unlike the main alphabetical index, which listed every article in the volume, the contents list

could only offer an impression of what the volume contained. It also meant that because entries were listed alphabetically, readers had to anticipate how whatever they were interested in might be described then scan the list accordingly.⁵² A reader looking for information about food under “F,” for instance, would find “Food of Various Kinds, When in Season” but might also be interested in “Adulterations of Food, Tests for” and “Choice of Food, Marketing”; equally, “Correct Speaking, Hints on Writing” might be of interest to someone uneasy about social situations, but there are also sections on “Etiquette, Forms and Ceremonies of” as well as “Rules of Conduct: Counsels, Hints, Advice.” The omissions and repetitions register the difficulty of classifying such diverse content; the references to pages ranging across the volume make clear the extent to which the text itself remained unstructured.

Enclosure rendered a formless and ongoing miscellaneity into a miscellany, its content marked as both known and knowable. Yet, as the attempts to assert bibliographic control make clear—whether over content as it was published in serial parts, that same content as it was represented in volume form, or the many subsequent editions—the pleasures of randomness were still to be found. Readers of *Enquire Within* encountered a bewilderingly diverse range of content often presented in striking combinations. Even just skimming the index would produce surprises and unlikely associations. No matter how regulated miscellaneity becomes, no matter how much occulted meaning is ascribed an origin, there always remains the possibility of meaning arising from nothing but difference.

Muddles Indexed

The seventh number of *Enquire Within* made an appeal to its readers. In the inside cover, it called for 2,000 ladies “to fall in love with THAT DEAR LITTLE BOOK, *ENQUIRE WITHIN UPON*

EVERYTHING, each Lady to talk about it amongst her acquaintances, to mention it in her letters, and to circulate it in her family,” and most importantly:

EACH LADY TO LOOK THROUGH ITS PAGES TO SEE WHAT IS WANTING, AND TO SEND A GOOD AND TRIED RECEIPT FOR THAT WHICH IS AT PRESENT UNPROVIDED, SO THAT NOTHING BE OMITTED. AND ALSO THAT WHEN THE VOLUME BE COMPLETED, EVERY ONE OF THE TWO THOUSAND LADIES MAY SAY,

WE EDITED IT!

And afford a personal guarantee of its accuracy and excellence.⁵³

In parenthesis, husbands had already been requested “*not to be alarmed*” and now they, too, were invited “to send such useful Hints and Directions as they know to be valuable: for doing which they also shall be entitled to claim a share in the Editorship, provided they do so in the presence of the Ladies, who will, of course, feel very jealous of the honour.”⁵⁴

This was a curious request. Not only did it appear on the wrapper of an issue almost three quarters into the work, but it also asked for additional content for a work already written. The remainder of the notice provides a hint as to what might be afoot. It encourages the gentlemen to be quick or “THE TWO THOUSAND LADIES will occupy the whole of the remaining space of the Volume,” but then it notes that in January they will commence “a charming little Magazine, in the production of which THE TWO THOUSAND LADIES and THE TWO THOUSAND GENTLEMEN shall also participate, if they acquit themselves well in their contributions to *ENQUIRE WITHIN*.”⁵⁵

A notice in the next issue of *Enquire Within* made these motives even clearer. Both ladies and gentlemen were now thanked for their contributions and assured that they were “undergoing Editorial Classification and Arrangement and will appear in the concluding numbers of *ENQUIRE WITHIN*.”⁵⁶ While it is possible that some were inserted, it is also possible that none were, the

lack of citation meaning those whose submissions did not appear might simply assume that others' were published. The notice continues, however, that "the lengthier papers . . . will be produced in our Monthly *INTERVIEW*" and asks readers "who are preparing manuscripts for us, be good enough to forward them without any delay"; the notice ended by stating that the *Interview* would be tuppence monthly and "uniform with *ENQUIRE WITHIN*."⁵⁷

On the back cover, a full-page advertisement situated the new monthly alongside *Enquire Within*: "The editor of *ENQUIRE WITHIN*, finding that this work has been received with considerable approbation, is ambitious to continue in the enjoyment of the public favour already awarded to him. But remembering his pledge to complete *ENQUIRE WITHIN* in twelve numbers, he will not depart from that promise."⁵⁸ Perhaps anxious to avoid this irrevocable end, the *Interview* was to be a periodical rather than a work in parts. It would differ from *Enquire Within* in terms of its social aspirations too. Though "devoted to the promotion of domestic happiness," the *Interview* would pursue this goal "through the diffusion of sound information upon matters of social refinement and utility" and would grant its favoured contributors the status of "Literary Associates" (with medals to prove it).⁵⁹ Philp knew the market for cheap monthlies was competitive—he had been instrumental in making it so—and he disparaged his rivals, remarking that "many of them are deficient in the chief elements of useful efficacy, viz. originality and earnestness."⁶⁰ According to Philp, the editors of these low-quality monthlies were mere weavers: each "has a specified number of yards or pages to spin, and he throws the shuttle accordingly—mechanically, without soul."⁶¹ The editor of the *Interview*, however, "purposes LIVING in the pages of his work—watching and weighing every line thereof; *so that the reader may feel that what is said in the Magazine is just what the editor would have said in person*."⁶² This "editorial PRESENCE," as Philp describes it, would lift the *Interview* from the inky world of

cheap print by providing a point of origin to account for the stray meanings produced by the inevitable miscellaneity.⁶³

When the first number appeared in January 1856, the *Interview* did nothing of the sort. While it continued to describe itself as a monthly journal, there were no regular sections and, as with its predecessor, editorial comment was restricted to the wrappers. In the eighth number of the *Interview* Philp came clean. Due to the “very great success” of *Enquire Within*, he claimed, “together with the correspondence that has arisen with purchasers of that volume,” they had decided to “COMPLETE THE *INTERVIEW* IN TWELVE NUMBERS, and to make it a companion volume to *ENQUIRE WITHIN*, supplying all those useful matters it was found impossible to include in the single volume of *ENQUIRE WITHIN*.”⁶⁴ It never really was an open-ended periodical but instead a miscellany, its contents demanding enclosure to provide identity and order. And it was not alone. Two further volumes were derived from the contents of *Enquire Within: Things that Everyone Should Know* (priced at a penny) and *Enquire Within Upon Needlework* (tuppence). There were also two further publications designed to be uniform with it: *Useful Things*, “a description of every improvement in Domestic Apparatus and Furniture introduced in the last twenty-five years,” and *Notices to Correspondents*, “a Collection of the most Curious and Useful EDITORIAL REPLIES TO CORRESPONDENTS.”⁶⁵ The *Corner Cupboard*, another serial in twelve parts at tuppence each, began the following January.

To make miscellaneity viable it must be enclosed in some way, classed as miscellany, and made navigable. While there was a market for Philp’s various publications as serials, they were ultimately designed to become volumes. Once these muddles were indexed, the proliferating publications enabled what might be one miscellaneous text to become many. Yet even structured as they were, with their contents carefully oriented towards distinct sets of

readers, they remained celebrations of miscellaneity. Such texts were by definition corporate, composed of many parts and compiled by many hands, and while each item had meaning in its own right, meaning was produced between them too. As Beetham has shown, miscellanies such as *Enquire Within* demonstrate the vibrant and innovative market for cheap print. They also point to something profound. In the unsettling way in which miscellaneity produces meaning, we glimpse the generative power of togetherness.

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NOTES

¹ Preface, iii. I would like to acknowledge here the work of my colleague, the late Malcolm Chase. It was he who first alerted me to the existence of *Enquire Within* and he kindly shared an early version of his article, “An overpowering ‘itch for writing’: R. K. Philp, John Denman and the Culture of Self-Improvement,” when I first began to research the publication.

² Preface, iii.

³ “Preface to the Sixth Edition,” vi.

⁴ “Advertisement to the Nineteenth Edition,” iii–iv.

⁵ “Advertisement to the Twenty-Seventh Edition,” iii.

⁶ “Publishers’ Preface to the Seventy-Fifth Edition,” v.

⁷ “Publishers’ Preface to the Ninety-Sixth Edition,” v.

⁸ See also Beetham, “Open and Closed.”

⁹ Beetham, “Towards a Theory,” 28.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See Piper, *Dreaming in Books*, especially chapter four; Price, *Anthology*. For an account of a different kind of miscellany, see Ferris, “Antiquarian Authorship.”

¹² Beetham, “Good Taste and Sweet Ordering.” See also Damkjær, *Time, Domesticity and Print Culture*, especially chapter four.

¹³ Barthes, “Structure of the *Fait-Divers*.”

¹⁴ Campbell, *Theory*, 11; italics in the original.

¹⁵ See Chase, “Overpowering.”

¹⁶ “To the Political,” 1. For the *People’s Journal*, see Maidment, “*People’s Journal* (1846–1848)”; Fraser, Johnston, and Green, *Gender*, 111–20; and Maidment, “Magazines of Popular Progress.” A good account of the Howitts (and researching the Howitts) can be found in Shattock, “Researching Periodical Networks.”

¹⁷ See Chase, “Overpowering,” 351–56. See also Fell-Smith and Roberts, “Philp.”

¹⁸ Chase, “Overpowering,” 358.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*,” 358. See “The Family Friend.”

²⁰ Chase, “Overpowering,” 358; “Printing in the Crystal Palace.” *Parlour Magazine* was also available in monthly parts for eight pence or ten pence and volumes for five shillings. See for instance, “Useful Household Works.”

²¹ Chase, “Overpowering,” 358–59. The advertisements for the *Shopkeeper’s Guide* give the table of contents, for instance “Important to Shopkeepers.”

²² The *Glasgow Sentinel* thought *Diogenes* “quite up to the *Punch* mark” while the *Dublin Evening Packet* thought it “must become a formidable rival to *Punch*” (“*Diogenes*,” 2; “*Diogenes*. Part 9,” 3). For an example of a newspaper reprinting from *Diogenes*, see “Bits from *Diogenes*” in the *Leeds Times*, which appears directly above “Bits from *Punch*.”

²³ Chase, “Overpowering,” 359–60.

²⁴ *Ibid.*,” 360.

²⁵ The British Library volume for 1856 contains wrappers. All citations to this edition are to the BL volume.

²⁶ “A Few Words While Opening the Door,” unpaginated.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.; italics in the original.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Beetham, “Towards a Theory,” 23.

³² See “140. Significations of Names”; “111. Scandal. Live It Down”; “46. Impressions from Prints”; “80. Phosphorous Paste for Destroying Rats and Mice”; and “68. Walking.” This number also included the only article to address dealing with servants, “110. Servants.” That this is the only reference suggests its readers were not imagined as employing servants themselves; however, in perhaps a fit of aspiration, the article is listed in the index twice, see “Enquiries Upon,” xxiii. For a discussion of such breaks between issues, see Damkjaer, *Time, Domesticity and Print Culture*. I was unable to obtain images of the first edition due to the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, so illustrations are taken from copies in my private collection.

³³ See “Food in Season” and “1021. Gardening Operations for the Year.”

³⁴ Barthes, “Structure of the *Fait-Divers*,” 185.

³⁵ Ibid., 186–87.

³⁶ “A Few Words While Opening the Door,” unpaginated.

³⁷ Chase, “Overpowering,” 361–62.

³⁸ Stewart, *On Longing*, 19.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Barthes, “Structure of the *Fait-Divers*,” 194.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁴² “Enquire Within,” unpaginated.

⁴³ “Half-Way,” unpaginated.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.

⁴⁷ “Enquiries Upon,” xi.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ See “Table.”

⁵⁰ “Advertisement to the Twenty-Seventh Edition,” iii.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² There are striking omissions. A great deal of *Enquire Within* deals with medicines and their application but there is no heading for this in the contents. Due to the coronavirus pandemic I was only able to obtain an image of the “Contents” from 1904. While there are quite a few changes from 1865 (it has thirty-nine entries while the first list had thirty-four), about half the headings appear unchanged. Medicine, still, is not a main heading.

⁵³ “Wanted Two Thousand Ladies,” unpaginated; emphasis in original.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ “Progress!,” unpaginated.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ “The *Interview*,” unpaginated.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ “To Our Subscribers,” unpaginated.

⁶⁵ “Companion Volumes to *Enquire Within Upon Everything*,” unpaginated.

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