

assumption that change and development would only bring progress and profit. It was this policy which guided Macmillan in assenting to publish another new journal.

The experience of the *Reader*, the persistence of Huxley and Tyndall at the X-Club and the visible demand for a professional voice, a growing market for a frequent and authoritative review, were catalysed by the presence of an ambitious young scientific journalist of intellectual distinction who had already won the confidence of an aggressive publisher with sufficient capital, an appreciation of science, a willingness to take risks and a strong sense of social mission. Some time near the middle of 1869, Macmillan took the initiative, and agreed to produce the new periodical, with Lockyer as editor². The new periodical was to combine the critical and literary standards of the *Reader* with the timeliness of *Chemical News*, and the format of the *Scientific Record* and *Scientific Opinion*.

The year 1869 was auspicious for Lockyer. In August 1868 he had observed the solar prominences and had discovered helium spectroscopically. In February 1869 he gave a lecture in a series at University College, London, led by Huxley and Ruskin; in April he was elected to the Royal Society. In May he gave a Friday evening lecture in the Royal Institution and had become a young lion in scientific circles. Lockyer, aged 33, had reached a crest in his new career.

The year was also auspicious for a new journal. The only real competitor, *Scientific Opinion*, was losing money and would not last long independent of a publishing house. There were, however, rumours of plans by John Murray to launch a new journal under Charles Appleton, to be called *The Academy*. Having made the decision in principle, Macmillan decided to act swiftly. The deadline for the first issue of his new journal was set for October 1869.

Macmillan and Lockyer began to enlist promises of support and subscriptions. Lockyer had the advantage of more personal experience than anyone who had preceded him. His list of eighty-six intending contributors was virtually ready. It had only to be made up from the *Quarterly Journal of Science*, the *Natural History Review*, the *Record*, the *Opinion* and—the easiest of all—the *Reader*. The prospectus was virtually identical with that in the “revised” *Reader* of 1865. The pitfalls awaiting any young scientific journal were not new. Editorially it had to avoid religion and politics and an appeal to any particular class of research or researchers. It had to be a weekly and appear on time. For this, it required a

responsible paid editor and paid contributors. It should aim to educate as well as inform; it should be suitable for science masters in schools throughout the Empire as well as for scientific men in the universities. For this it required cooperation from the United States, the continent and the colonies. For this, in turn, it needed “contacts” and an aggressive distribution system. Here, of course, Alexander Macmillan was in his element.

While Lockyer was offering³ free subscriptions to foreigners such as Spencer Baird, the director of the Smithsonian, if he would allow his name “to appear among the supporters of the journal and inform us from time to time of the progress of science in [his] neighbourhood”, Macmillan was cultivating his friends in the schools, like James Wilson of Rugby, in the universities of England and Scotland, in India—in short, wherever Macmillan’s books were read. Thus he wrote⁴ to William Thomson (later Lord Kelvin):

... Lockyer is going to start a weekly journal of Science which we are to publish. It is meant to be popular in part, but also sound, and part devoted specifically to scientific men and their intercourse with each other. Balfour, Stewart, Wilkinson, Tyndall, Roscoe and almost everyone else who is about London have given him their names, and he very greatly wishes yours as among those who promise support. May I tell him you consent?

Similar letters went to Sir George Airy, Lyon Playfair (who approved but declined to contribute), to Sir Benjamin Brodie, William Crookes, Thomas Graham, Nevil Story-Maskelyne, Charles Pritchard, P. G. Tait and Alexander Williamson, all of whom offered their support. Of his scientific friends, only one, Joseph Hooker, was outspokenly pessimistic. Ironically, Hooker was among the few who had actually tried to run a journal himself. “By all means make public my goodwill to Mr Lockyer’s periodical”, he wrote to Macmillan,

I fear, however that scientific support is a broken reed and that it will be difficult to supplant the *Athenaeum* . . . as it is, the failure of scientific periodicals patronized by men of mark has been dismal—e.g. the *Reader*, *Natural History Review*, my father’s *Botanical Journal* and so forth . . .

But the essence of his despair⁵ was this:

I do not see how a really scientific man can find time to conduct a periodical scientifically; or brains to go over the mass of trash that is communicated to it and requires expurgation.

An editor would either sacrifice his science for his journalism or else ruin the journal by giving it second place to science in his life. Lockyer presumably knew this but was not to be put off. After all, Hooker had not considered the one possibility remaining—that a journal could be so representative of the whole community of science that it could actually be run by that community. The editor’s job was not that of a clerk but a clearing house.

By June, the name of the new journal was decided. Where the decision took place or who made it is not clear. The word *Nature* appeared often enough in Lockyer’s own writings. It was in common usage and thus, in the *Reader*, he referred almost instinctively to the “open book of *Nature*”. But the use of the word as a title was inspired.

Commercially the word was easily understood and translated into every major European language. Philo-

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Literary and Philosophical Society, October.—Mr. E. W. Binney, F.R.S. in the Chair. The following extract of a letter from Dr. Joule, F.R.S., dated Southport, October 5th, 1869, and addressed to the Chairman, was read:—“I enclose a rough drawing of the appearance of the setting sun. Mr. Baxendell noticed the fact that at the moment of the departure of the sun below the horizon, the last glimpse is coloured bluish green. On two or three occasions I have noticed this, and also near sunset that just at the upper edge, where bands of the sun’s disk are separated one after the other by refraction, each band becomes coloured blue just before it vanishes.”