

JULIUS REUTER.

In October, in the year 1858, one morning a gentleman called on me. His accent, though he spoke English well, at once indicated his German nationality.

"Have I," he said, "the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Grant?"

I said that Grant was my name.

"Would you favor me with a few minutes of your time, as I have what I regard an important proposal to make to you?"

"O, certainly," was my answer. "Take a seat," and so saying I handed him a chair.

"My name," he continued, "is Reuter. Most probably you have never heard of it before."

I said I had not had that pleasure.

"I am," he resumed, "a Prussian; and have been employed for many years as a courier to several of the Courts of Europe, from the Government of Berlin; and in that capacity have formed personal intimacies with gentlemen connected with most of the European Governments. It has occurred to me that I might, therefore, be able to supply, by telegraph, the daily press of London with earlier and more accurate intelligence of importance, and, at the same time, at a cheaper rate than the morning journals are now paying for their telegraphic communications from the Continent. But," Mr. Reuter added, "before bringing under your consideration my proposals and plans, it is right I should mention, that previous to coming to you, I called on the manager of the *Times*, as the leading journal, to submit my views to him."

"That was perfectly proper," I observed. "The *Times* is not only the leading journal of Great Britain, but of Europe and the world. Did the manager of the *Times*," I inquired, "entertain your proposals?"

"He listened to them," said Mr. Reuter, "and to my exposition of the grounds on which I felt I could carry them out, and said that he had no doubt I felt confident I could accomplish all that I was willing to undertake; but, he added, that they generally found they could do their own business better than any one else. That, of course, I regarded as a negative to the proposals I had made to the *Times*. I have therefore come next to you, as editor of the *Morning Advertiser*, to lay my plans before you, and submit my proposals for your consideration."

Mr. Reuter accordingly entered into full particulars relative to what he proposed to do, the grounds on which he expected to be able to carry out his plans, and the arrangements he had already made by which he could immediately furnish a proof of the practicability of all he was prepared to undertake.

On carefully listening to all that Mr. Reuter said, I remarked, as the manager of the *Times* did, that I had no doubt whatever that he was fully persuaded in his own mind of his entire competency to accomplish all he was prepared to undertake. I added that I would even go farther than that. I had, I said, no hesitation in saying that, after attentively listening to his statements, I had faith in his ability to carry out all he was ready to engage to do; but, I added, that as certain arrangements existed which I had made some time before with our Continental correspondents to receive telegraphic information of anything of importance which transpired in any of the European countries, I should think it unwise to break up those arrangements until absolutely certain, from experience, of the success of Mr. Reuter's plans. I should here remark, that before this he knew, because I had told him, that the average sum we were paying monthly for our telegrams from the Continent was £40, and he had offered, while pledging himself to transmit to us, as a rule, "earlier, more ample, more accurate, and more important information from the Continent," to charge only £30 per month for it all. Of course,

this was a great consideration; but though I told Mr. Reuter that the difference in the expense was a very important matter, yet even that consideration must give way to the efficiency of the manner in which that department of the *Morning Advertiser* must be conducted. If, I said to Mr. Reuter, I had any absolute guarantee that he could accomplish all that he undertook to do, I would at once accept his proposals, in connection with the terms which he mentioned; but that while renewing the expression of my belief that he would be able to do all which he undertook to accomplish, still that was only my opinion, and that I would not feel justified in giving up the existing arrangements to a mere opinion, however firm my faith in its soundness. Mr. Reuter, I saw from a single word he said, heartily responded to the reasonableness of this representation of the case, characterizing it as a business-like view of the matters under our joint consideration. His countenance brightened up on my saying that if I were satisfied that all he proposed was practicable, I would at once agree to his terms; and like one who had full faith in his ability to do all that he had undertaken, he immediately answered, "Nothing could be more reasonable than that you should not think of giving up your existing arrangements for receiving telegraphic communications from the Continent, until you were furnished with practical proof that better arrangements could be substituted for them; but so thoroughly satisfied am I that my plans would be found better, as well as cheaper, that I am willing to make this proposal to you—that I shall send you daily for a fortnight my telegraphic communications from the continent without making any charge for them, and you can, in the meantime, go on receiving your own as before. In this way," Mr. Reuter added, "you will be able to institute a comparison between the value and the number, as well as the relative cheapness of my telegraphic messages from the Continent, and those which you receive from your correspondents under existing arrangements."

I not only at once admitted the liberality of this offer, but intimated my acceptance of it. Mr. Reuter, on my doing so, expressed the great pleasure, and added, "As I am going to make the same proposals to all the other papers—the *Telegraph*, the *Morning Herald*, and the *Standard*; the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Morning Star*—both the latter journals being at that time in existence—and the *Morning Post*—will you permit me to say to the respective managers of these journals that you have accepted my proposals? Because," he continued, "that may have the effect of inducing them also to accept my offer." "With great pleasure, on the understanding," I answered, "that you state to them the conditions on which I have done so—that is, provided that after receiving your telegrams for a fortnight without any charge, I am satisfied that you do the business much better, as well as cheaper, than it is done under the existing system, as worked by our own private correspondents."

Mr. Reuter renewed the expression of his gratification at the result of our interview, and before leaving said to me—and this is the great point to which I wish to direct attention—that if I had declined to accept his proposals as the *Times* had done, he would not have called on the managers of any of the other papers, but would have abandoned the idea altogether of organizing a system of telegraph communication from abroad, because, he added, if the *Morning Advertiser*, or any one of the then existing morning papers, had declined to accept his proposals, the acceptance of them, even by all the others, would not have sufficed to meet the expenses which it would be necessary to incur in the efficient carrying out of his plans. But all the other morning papers, except, as I have said, the *Times*, accepted the same conditions as those to which I agreed, namely, that if they were satisfied, after a fortnight's trial,

that his organization was superior to their own, they would permanently adopt his.

Mr. Reuter—in terms of the understanding not only come to between him and myself, but between him and the other managers, with the one exception I have mentioned—at once applied himself to the carrying out of his engagements; and most certainly the result of the comparison between his organization and that of the morning papers at the time proved the very great superiority of his. Not only did I at once give a permanent acceptance to Mr. Reuter's proposals, but the managers of the other journals did the same; and from that day is to be dated the wonderful organization now known throughout the world as "Reuter's Agency." The *Times*, I ought to mention, soon after joined the other morning journals in accepting Reuter's telegrams.

The simple facts which I have stated will, I am sure, be regarded as constituting one of the most striking illustrations which ever were furnished of the saying before alluded to, that great events sometimes spring from causes which seem to be of the most trivial kind.

No one can read what I have thus written without being struck with the fact, that not only one's reputation in the world, but his fortune sometimes, depends on the slightest conceivable incident. That was the turn of the tide in Mr. Reuter's fortune; and since then the tide has flowed with an increasing and rapid power, until he has become, as he deserves to have done, the possessor of a magnificent fortune—one, too, whose proportions are still daily growing greater.

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