

rule; but at present I am as useless for regular service as one of my own country Indians, or a Don Cossack.

"I must, therefore, keep on pretty much as I have begun; writing when I can, not when I would. I shall occasionally shift my residence, and write whatever is suggested by objects before me, or whatever rises in my imagination; and hope to write better and more copiously by-and-by.

"I am playing the egotist, but I know no better way of answering your proposal than by showing what a very good-for-nothing kind of being I am. Should Mr. Constable feel inclined to make a bargain for the wares I have on hand, he will encourage me to further enterprise; and it will be something like trading with a gipsy for the fruits of his prowlings, who may at one time have nothing but a wooden bowl to offer, and at another time a silver tankard."

In reply, Scott expressed regret, but not surprise, at my declining what might have proved a troublesome duty. He then recurred to the original subject of our correspondence; entered into a detail of the various terms upon which arrangements were made between authors and booksellers, that I might take my choice; expressing the most encouraging confidence of the success of my work, and of previous works which I had produced in America. "I did no more," added he, "than open the trenches with Constable; but I am sure if you will take the trouble to write to him, you will find him disposed to treat your overtures with every degree of attention. Or, if you think it of consequence, in the first place, to see me, I shall be in London in the course of a month, and whatever my experience can command is most cheerfully at your command. But I can add little to what I have said above, except my earnest recommendation to Constable to enter into the negotiation."

Before the receipt of this most obliging letter, however, I had determined to look to no leading bookseller for a launch, but to throw my work before the public at my own risk, and let it sink or swim according to its merits. I wrote to that effect to Scott, and soon received a reply:

"I observe with pleasure that you are going to come forth in Britain. It is certainly not the very best way to publish on one's own account; for the booksellers set their face against the circulation of such works as do not pay an amazing toll to themselves. But they have lost the art of altogether damming up the road in such cases between the author and the public, which they were once able to do as effectually as Diabolus in John Bunyan's Holy War closed up the windows of my Lord Understanding's mansion. I am sure of the thing, that you have only to be known to the British public to be admired by them, and I would not say so unless I really was of that opinion.

"If you ever see a witty but rather local publication called *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, you will find some notice of your works in the last number: the author is a friend of mine, to whom I have introduced you in

I cannot avoid subjoining in a note a succeeding paragraph of Scott's letter, which, though it does not relate to the main subject of our correspondence, was too characteristic to be omitted. Some time previously I had sent Miss Sophia Scott small duodecimo American editions of her father's poems published in Edinburgh in quarto volumes; showing the "nigromancy" of the American press, by which a quart of wine is conjured up to a pint bottle. Scott observes:—"In my hurry, I have not thanked you in Sophia's name for the kind attention which furnished her with the American volumes. I am not the more I can add my own, since you have made her acquainted with much more of Spenser's folly than she would ever otherwise have learned; for I had taken special care that she should never see any of those things during their earlier years. I think I told you that Walter is sweeping the firmament with a feather like a maypole, and indenting the pavement with a sword like a scythe—in other words, he has become a whistled buzzer in the English language."