

at Abbotsford a few years previously, and by the favourable opinion he had expressed to others of my earlier writings. I accordingly sent him the printed numbers of the Sketch Book in a parcel by coach, and at the same time wrote to him, hinting that since I had had the pleasure of partaking of his hospitality, a reverse had taken place in my affairs, which made the successful exercise of my pen all-important to me; I begged him, therefore, to look over the literary articles I had forwarded to him, and, if he thought they would bear European republication, to ascertain whether Mr. Constable would be inclined to be the publisher.

The parcel containing my work went by coach to Scott's address in Edinburgh; the letter went by mail to his residence in the country. By the very first post I received a reply, before he had seen my work.

"I was down at Kelso," said he, "when your letter reached Abbotsford. I am now on my way to town, and will converse with Constable, and do all in my power to forward your views—I assure you nothing will give me more pleasure."

The hint, however, about a reverse of fortune had struck the quick apprehension of Scott, and, with that practical and efficient good-will which belonged to his nature, he had already devised a way of aiding me. A weekly periodical, he went on to inform me, was about to be set up in Edinburgh, supported by the most respectable talents, and amply furnished with all the necessary information. The appointment of the editor, for which ample funds were provided, would be five hundred pounds sterling a year, with the reasonable prospect of further advantages. This situation, being apparently at his disposal, he frankly offered to me. The work, however, he intimated, was to have somewhat of a political bearing, and he expressed an apprehension that the tone it was desired to adopt might not suit me. "Yet I risk the question," added he, "because I know no man so well qualified for this important task, and perhaps because it will necessarily bring you to Edinburgh. If my proposal does not suit, you need only keep the matter secret, and there is no harm done. And for my love I pray you wrong me not." If, on the contrary, you think it could be made to suit you, let me know as soon as possible, addressing Castle-street, Edinburgh."

In a postscript, written from Edinburgh, he adds, "I am just come here, and have glanced over the Sketch Book. It is positively beautiful, and increases my desire to *crimp* you, if it be possible. Some difficulties there always are in managing such a matter, especially at the outset; but we will obviate them as much as we possibly can."

The following is from an imperfect draught of my reply, which underwent some modifications in the copy sent.

"I cannot express how much I am gratified by your letter. I had begun to feel as if I had taken an unwarrantable liberty; but, somehow or other, there is a genial sunshine about you that warms every creeping thing into heart and confidence. Your literary proposal both surprises and flatters me, as it evinces a much higher opinion of my talents than I have myself."

I then went on to explain that I found myself peculiarly unfitted for the situation offered to me, not merely by my political opinions, but by the very constitution and habits of my mind. "My whole course of life," I observed, "has been desultory, and I am unfitted for any periodically recurring task, or any stipulated labour of body or mind. I have no command of my talents, such as they are, and have to watch the varyings of my mind as I would those of a weathercock. Practice and training may bring me more into

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