

ters, however, that he may, if possible, have warning not to continue this absurdity.¹

September 14. — I should not have forgotten, among the *memorabilia* of yesterday, that two young Frenchmen made their way to our sublime presence, in guerdon of a laudatory copy of French verses sent up the evening before, by way of "Open Sesame," I suppose. I have not read them, nor shall I. No man that ever wrote a line despised the *pap* of praise so heartily as I do. There is nothing I scorn more, except those who think the ordinary sort of praise or censure is matter of the least consequence. People have almost always some private view of distinguishing themselves, or of gratifying their animosity — some point, in short, to carry, with which you have no relation — when they take the trouble to praise you. In general, it is their purpose to get the person praised to puff away in return. To me their rank praises no more make amends for their bad poetry, than tainted butter would pass off stale fish.

September 17. — Rather surprised with a letter from Lord Melville, informing me he and Mr. Peel had put me into the Commission for inquiring into the condition of the Colleges in Scotland. I know little on the subject, but I dare say as much as some of the official persons who are inserted of course. The want of efficient men is the reason alleged. I must of course do my best, though I have little hope of being useful, and the time it will occupy is half ruinous to me, to whom time is everything. Besides, I suppose the honor is partly meant as an act of grace for Malachi.

¹ Lady Scott had not been quite four months dead, and the entry of the preceding day shows how extremely ill-timed was this communication, from a gentleman with whom Sir Walter had never had any intimacy. This was not the only proposition of the kind that reached him during his widowhood. In the present case there was very high rank and an ample fortune.