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THE EDINBURGH, THE NORTH BRITISH, THE BRITISH QUARTERLY, AND THE PROSPECTIVE REVIEWS.*

The following sketch of the Editors and principal contributors to some of the great English Reviews, taken from a recent number of the *London Critic*, will prove highly interesting to our readers:—

Although *The Edinburgh* still preserved a title which seemed to connect it intimately with Scotland, it had, some time before 1842, ceased to be in any sense a Scotch Review. Not only was it published in London, but its editor was an Englishman, and never in any way very peculiarly Scotch, especially under the influence of a light cosmopolitan thinker like Jeffrey, it was now in no way to be distinguished from the professedly English *Quarterly*, save by the difference of its political tone. But in 1842 there happened an event which shook Scotland from its circumference to its centre. In the May of that year, two or three hundred members of the General Assembly took sad and solemn leave of their old ecclesiastical parliament, and, with Dr. Chalmers at their head, set up the "Free Kirk." The chief "organ" of the disruption was an Edinburgh newspaper called *The Witness*, conducted with considerable nerve and talent by Hugh Miller, of *Old Red Sandstone* notoriety, a man great no less in theology than in geology, whom his native abilities and Lady Gordon Cumming, of Altyre, herself geological, and mother to the South African lion-hunter, had helped up from a

very humble obscurity. *The Edinburgh*, of course, looked coldly, and *The Quarterly* inimically on the seceders; and the friendly zeal in their behalf of Mr. John Robertson, in the pages of *The Westminster*, was of too purely secular a kind for the chiefs of the Free Kirk. After two years, when it had been found that the most potent furtherer of the secession was not any minister, however eloquent, or any layman, however influential, but a mere newspaper like *The Witness*, it was resolved to start a quarterly organ, and to call it *The North British Review*. Noblemen and gentlemen, enthusiastic for the Free Kirk, like the Marquis of Breadalbane, and Mr. Campbell of Monzi, subscribed funds. Mr. Blackie, the Glasgow publisher, and Mr. Cowan, the Edinburgh paper-maker, gave their aid. It was this Mr. Cowan that ousted Macaulay at the last Edinburgh election. He guaranteed the carrying on of the speculation for a certain period.

A Dr. Welch, who had suffered losses in the cause of the Free Kirk, who was a writer in *The Edinburgh Review*, and the biographer of Dr. Thomas Brown, was selected as the editor. Indeed, it was something done to him that heated the Free Kirk enthusiasm so as to boil over and form *The North British Review*. Dr. Welch, when the disruption took place was "Moderator,"—that is, President or Speaker of the General Assembly, Professor of Church History in the University of Edinburgh, and Secretary, with a salary of five hundred pounds per annum, to the Scotch Bible Board. At the secession he of course cheerfully surrendered the Moderatorship and the Professorship, but saw no reason to surrender the lucrative Secretaryship, of which, however, Sir James Graham took the liberty of forcibly relieving him. Whereon *The North British* was hastened into existence. Welch was a man of ability and tact, and began operations with a promising staff of veterans and others. He did not fall into the error which, in his circumstances, might have easily been committed, that of making his review too theological. His great gun, Dr. Chalmers himself, fired off articles chiefly on politico-economical subjects, his first being one on Sterling's *Philosophy of Trade*; but his most famous was that on Morell's *History of Philosophy*, which was considered as an annihilating manifesto against Continental speculation. In physical science, the biographies of its heroes, and books of scientific travel, Sir David Brewster, the noted *savant*, was mainly depended on; he wrote the papers on Cuvier, Humboldt's *Cosmos*, Watt, Cavendish, and the like, and is still a contributor. Hugh Miller led off his series of performances by a vivid paper in which herring-fishing was made poetical. Mr. Moncrieff, now Lord Advocate, reviewed Jeffrey's *Essays*, the first of a set on the light literature of the day. Dr. Heugh, of Glasgow, recommended "Christian Union," and Welch himself dealt with Archbishop Whately. Among the early contributors too, if we are not mistaken, was Dr. Samuel Brown, of Edinburgh, a singular and gifted individual. With the zeal of an old alchemist (but with a purer enthusiasm), he has been occupied many years in endeavoring to effect the mutual transmutation of some of the primary chemical elements, and by some of the good people of Edinburgh is looked upon as one in search of the philoso-

* *The Westminster Review*, we regret to say, has become the bold champion of infidelity, having in two or three of the latest numbers, ridiculed, assailed and denied the solemn verities of revelation and the Christian faith.—[Ed. J. of Ed.]