

*John Murray to the Right Hon. George Canning.*

September 25th, 1807.

SIR,

I venture to address you upon a subject that is not, perhaps, undeserving of one moment of your attention. There is a work entitled the *Edinburgh Review*, written with such unquestionable talent that it has already attained an extent of circulation not equalled by any similar publication. The principles of this work are, however, so radically bad that I have been led to consider the effect that such sentiments, so generally diffused, are likely to produce, and to think that some means equally popular ought to be adopted to counteract their dangerous tendency. But the publication in question is conducted with so much ability, and is sanctioned with such high and decisive authority by the party of whose opinions it is the organ, that there is little hope of producing against it any effectual opposition, unless it arise from you, Sir, and your friends. Should you, Sir, think the idea worthy of encouragement, I should, with equal pride and willingness, engage my arduous exertions to promote its success; but as my object is nothing short of producing a work of the greatest talent and importance, I shall entertain it no longer if it be not so fortunate as to obtain the high patronage which I have thus taken the liberty to solicit.

Permit me, Sir, to add that the person who addresses you is no adventurer, but a man of some property, and inheriting a business that has been established for nearly a century. I therefore trust that my application will be attributed to its proper motives, and that your goodness will at least pardon its obtrusion.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most humble and obedient Servant,

JOHN MURRAY.

So far as can be ascertained, Mr. Canning did not answer this letter in writing. But a communication was shortly after opened with him through Mr. Stratford Canning, whose acquaintance Mr. Murray had made through the

publication of the 'Miniature,' referred to in a preceding chapter. Mr. Canning was still acting as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and was necessarily cautious of committing himself to a project which was meant to embrace political objects, and which might embarrass him in his political position. Mr. Stratford Canning, his cousin, was not bound by any such official restraints. In January 1808 he introduced Mr. Gifford to Mr. Murray, and the starting of the proposed new periodical was the subject of many consultations between them. It was some time, however, before any practical steps could be adopted.

Walter Scott still continued to write for the *Edinburgh*, notwithstanding the differences of opinion which existed between himself and the editor as to political questions. He was rather proud of the *Review*, inasmuch as it was an outgrowth of Scottish literature. Moreover, it kept authors and literary men up to the mark, and though it crushed the seemingly weak, it stimulated the strong. Scott even endeavoured to enlist new contributors, for the purpose of strengthening the *Review*. He wrote to Robert Southey in May 1807, inviting him to contribute to the *Edinburgh*. The honorarium was to be ten guineas per sheet of sixteen pages. This was a very tempting invitation to Southey, as he was by no means rich at the time, and the pay was more than he received for his contributions to the *Annual Register*. But he replied to Scott as follows:—

*Mr. Southey to Mr. Scott.*

June, 1807.

"I have scarcely one opinion in common with it (the *Edinburgh Review*) upon any subject. . . . Whatever of any merit I might insert there would aid and abet opinions hostile to my own, and thus identify me with a system which I thoroughly disapprove. This is not said hastily.