

about changes in races, the evolutionary philosopher will not attempt to do more than deflect very slightly the actions of these forces; whence will result a maxim of political conduct something like this: Aid only such changes as are either inevitable or else both natural and beneficial; and so act that those changes may be brought about with the least total harm. If we were to write *integral* in place of *total*, it would make the formula sound more mathematical; and sound is almost everything in matters like this.

Huxley himself has clearly put his finger upon that one of his qualities by virtue of which he has for so long commanded the respect and admiration of the public. It lies "in the conviction which has grown with my growth and strengthened with my strength, that there is no alleviation for the sufferings of mankind except veracity of thought and of action, and the resolute facing of the world as it is when the garment of make-believe by which pious hands have hidden its uglier features is stripped off." The hopes and consolations of religion will, we believe, never be reinstated in their position of authority (if at all) until this lesson of intellectual integrity has been thoroughly learned and accepted with humility.

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SCOTT'S FAMILIAR LETTERS

Familiar Letters of Sir Walter Scott.

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CSP, identification: Haskell, *Index to The Nation*. See also: Burks, *Bibliography; List of Articles*; MSS L 159.40, L 159.50-51; MSS 1390, 1390(s) (drafts).

These letters unequally cover the time from 1797, when Scott, twenty-six years old, was known only as a young barrister of fair prospects and the author of some poetical translations from the German, down to 1825, the year before his earthquake of calamity. They are conveniently separated into chapters, mostly of one year each; and at the beginning of each chapter is inserted a little chronological table of family events and literary achievements. The initial letter urges his suit to Miss Carpenter, whom he married on Christmas eve, three months later; and there are two other love-letters, tender, rational, and honest. Announcing his approaching marriage to one of the friends who might be useful to him, he thus describes his *fiancée*:

"A smart-looking little girl with dark brown hair would probably be her portrait if drawn by an indifferent hand. But I, you may believe, should make a piece of work of my sketch as little like the original as Hercules to me."

He wrote in 1810:

"Mrs. Scott's match and mine was of our own making, and proceeded from the most sincere affection on both sides, which has rather increased than diminished during twelve years' marriage. But it was something short of love in all its forms."

The earliest period, extending to the publication of the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' in January, 1805, is scantily illustrated by three old-fashioned epistles from Scott (besides the love-letters) and one note. To most of the events of this part of his life there is no allusion. His 'Border Minstrelsy' is referred to in a remarkable letter from Hogg, the Ettrick shepherd, from which we copy the first sentence:

"DEAR SIR: I have been perusing your *Minstrelsy* very diligently for a while past, and it being the first book I ever perused which was written by a person I had seen and conversed with, the consequence hath been to me a most sensible pleasure; for, in fact, it is the remarks and modern pieces that I have been delighted most in, being, as it were, personally acquainted with many of the antient pieces formerly."

In chapter ii., embracing 1805 and 1806, we find interesting correspondence with Wordsworth and Southey. The following, addressed to Miss Seward, is noteworthy because it was written when Southey was approaching his culmination as a poet without having begun his other career, or indeed having written any prose to speak of except his delightful 'Letters from Spain and Portugal,' while Wordsworth, having published only his 'Lyrical Ballads,' had in his portfolio and must have read to Scott both "Peter Bell" and other pieces that have been passionately liked by some lovers of poetry as poetry, but which have not won the suffrages either of the great public or of the fastidious few:

"My poetical friends, Wordsworth and Southey, are certainly men of very extraordinary powers. Wordsworth in particular is such a character as only exists in romance—virtuous, simple, and unaffectedly restricting every want and wish to the bounds of a very narrow income, in order to enjoy the literary and poetical leisure which his happiness consists in. Were it not for the unfortunate idea of founding a new school of poetry, these men are calculated to give it a new impulse; but I think they sometimes lose their energy in trying to find, not a better, but a different path from what has been travelled by their predecessors."

The same letter contains this:

"Many good-natured country Tories (myself, for example) take great pleasure in coursing and fishing, without any impeachment to their amiabilities, and probably Jeffrey feels the same instinctive passion for hunting down the bards of the day."

There is a letter from Jeffrey about his recent loss of his wife. It is curious to see this cold and superficial mind under deep emotion. Southey's impressions are thus expressed: "Of Edinburgh society I think very little. Jeffrey . . . is a mere *homunculus*, and would do for a major in Gog and Magog's army. . . . [Compared with Coleridge and Wordsworth] the Scotch *literati* are very low indeed. But Scott is a much superior man." Scott writes to Lady Dalkeith to recommend "our Ettrick shepherd" as a valuer of sheep-land, "in which he has given great satisfaction to those who engaged him, being a remarkably intelligent, clever fellow in the line of his business." The offer being refused, Scott again writes: "I am sure that your sympathy with his situation and extreme delicacy of expres-

sion must tend greatly to alleviate his feelings of disappointment, if he, indeed, harbors any.”

A letter to Miss Seward (February 20, 1807) gives a bit of criticism, with a just estimate of Scott's own verse:

“As for poetry it is very little labor to me; indeed 't were pity of my life should I spend much time on the light and loose sort of poetry which alone I can pretend to write. Were all the time I wasted upon the *Lay* put together—for it was laid aside for long intervals—I am sure it would not exceed six weeks. The last canto was written in three forenoons, when I was lying in quarters with our yeomanry. I leave it with yourself to guess how little I can have it in my most distant imagination to place myself upon a level with the great Bards you have mentioned, the very latches of whose shoes neither Southey nor I are worthy to unloose. My admiration of Chaucer, Spenser, and Dryden does not blind me to their faults, for I see the coarseness of the first, the tediousness occasioned by the continual allegory of the second, and the inequalities of the last; but, my dear Miss Seward, ‘in those days were giants in the land,’ and we are but dwarfs beside them.”

Another letter to Miss Seward, November 23, 1807, when she was about to write a review of Hogg's poems, illustrates Scott's warmth of favor for every fellow-craftsman in poetry, and also his skill in the fine art of graceful hinting, which was surpassed only by (what, unfortunately, from the nature of things, it is impossible here to illustrate) his wonderful power of expressing a thing in such a way that, of two persons who were to read his letter, the one whom he wished should see what his meaning was and the other not. The whole of this letter to Miss Seward is good, but we can quote only the following:

“I do not at all like the task of reviewing, and have seldom myself undertaken it; on Poetry never, because I am sensible there is a greater difference of tastes in that department than in any other, and that there is much excellent poetry which I am not nowadays able to read without falling asleep, and which would nevertheless have given me great pleasure at an earlier period of my life. Now I think there is something hard in blaming the poor cook for the fault of our own palate or deficiency of appetite. . . . My reason for transporting *Marmion* from Lichfield was to make good the minstrel's prophecy of Constance's song. Why I should have taken him there I cannot very well say. . . . I am quite glad you have seen Southey. Delighted with him you must be, yet in conversation (great as he is) he is inferior to Wordsworth, perhaps because he is a deeper and more elaborate scholar. Southey rarely allows you any of those repose of conversation when you are at liberty to speak, as the phrase is, ‘whatever comes uppermost.’ . . . I am a pretty hard worker when I once set about it, and, in fact, my literary life resembles the natural life of a savage, absolute indolence interchanged with hard work.”

But Scott made a pretence to indolence—a Tory quality to which he was not honestly entitled.

Next following the above letter comes the first of a series of fifteen from Lady Louisa Stuart, known to the public by her admirable introduction to the works of her grandmother, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

'Marmion' was felt by the author as a great effort: "As turnips," he says, "come after wheat according to the best rules of agriculture, I take it that an edition of *Swift* will do well after such a scourging crop as *Marmion*." But when Lady Abercorn suggests that the poem was too hastily written, he hastens to admit it:

"No one is so sensible as I am of what deficiencies occur in my poetry from the want of judicious criticism and correction, above all from the extreme hurry in which it has hitherto been composed. The worst is, that I take the pet at the things myself after they are finished, and I fear I shall never be able to muster up the courage necessary to revise *Marmion* as he should be revised. But if I ever write another poem, I am determined to make every single couplet of it as perfect as my uttermost care and attention can possibly effect. In order to secure the accomplishment of these good resolutions, I will consider the whole story in humble prose, and endeavor to make it as interesting as I can before I begin to write it out in verse, and thus I shall have at least the satisfaction to know where I am going, my narrative having been hitherto much upon the plan of *blindman's buff*."

He tried this plan afterwards, and the result was that he found himself with a manuscript to burn up. All his novels were written in the same headlong way. Of course, they had been thought *about* beforehand; but that they had not been thought *out*, is proved by Scott's positive testimony, backed by demonstration from the rapidity with which they were composed. Another of the world's greatest historical story-tellers, Alexander Dumas, wrote with even more railroad speed; and though some of his collaborateurs pretended, and perhaps thought, they had written his novels, it is certain none of them unaided could ever write conversations at all like his.

We may add concerning Scott's method of working, what he wrote to Lady Louisa Stuart in 1816 about 'Tales of my Landlord': "As no man that wrote so much ever knew so little what he intended to do when he began to write, or executed less of the little which he had premeditated, I totally altered my plan before I had completed my first volume." Again: "I quarrelled with my story, and bungled up a conclusion, as a boarding-school miss finishes a task which she had commenced with great glee and accuracy." In 1810, he writes: "The truth is there are weeks and months in which I do not only not use pen and ink, but have a sort of horror of the very sight of them." In 1808: "I believe no man now alive writes more rapidly than I do (no great recommendation), but I never think of making verses till I have a sufficient stock of poetical ideas to supply them." Finally: "The enclosed jangling verses are the only effort I have made in rhyme since I came to Edinburgh for the winter. They were written within this hour."

In 1809, the conduct of the *Quarterly Review*, just launched in London, in Tory opposition to the *Edinburgh*, was not Tory enough to suit Scott. He writes:

"A good deal happened when I was in London to show me that Gifford wants much of that tact which is necessary to conduct with spirit the work he has undertaken. . . . There is a lame and cowardly caution which prepares all the world for the defeat of the combatant who exhibits such a suspicious symptom. When the

sword was once drawn I would have hurled the scabbard into Thames. . . . All Gifford's excellent talent, and no less excellent principle, will do little to save the *Review* unless he will adopt a more decisive tone of warfare and greater energy in his mode of conducting it."

However, after the circulation of the *Quarterly* had passed 5,000, Scott never, in this correspondence, again refers to Gifford at all. The 'Lady of the Lake,' begun, apparently, in September, 1809, and finished the following January, was composed with more care than the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' or 'Marmion.' Yet when Scott's friend Morritt remarked that, after a great fuss had been made over the birth of Brian, it was rather disappointing not to hear of him in the dénouement, the poet makes a reply which shows the inconsiderate manner in which even this poem was written. He says:

"Your criticism is quite just as to the Son of the dry bone, Brian. Truth is, I had intended the battle should have been more detailed, and that some of the persons mentioned in the third canto, and Brian in particular, should have been commemorated. I intended he should have been shot like a *corbie on a craig* as he was excommunicating and anathematizing the Saxons from some of the predominant peaks of the Trossachs. But I found the battle in itself was too much misplaced to admit of being prolonged by any details which could be spared. For it was in the first place *episodical*, and then all the principal characters had been disposed of before it came on, and were absent at the time of action and nothing hinged upon the issue of consequence to the fable."

Concerning the dramatization of it, he writes:

"As for the metamorphosis of the *Lady of the Lake* into drama, or rather three dramas, for the same adventure is to be tried at Dublin, London, and Edinburgh, I would not willingly have you believe either that I affect or possess stoicism enough to be insensible to the applause of a crowded theatre; on the contrary, I think that of all kinds of popular plaudits this is the manner in which an author has his most satisfactory, and perhaps intoxicating, draught of success. But I shall have no more honor, supposing any of these attempts successful, than the cook who roasted a turkey yesterday has for the caporata (I think housewives call it so) . . . presented us to-day out of the reliques of the feast."

If a *capitolade* was really called a *caporota*, that would seem to settle the derivation of the word.

In 1811, not yet moved to Abbotsford, Scott brought out the 'Vision of Don Roderick.' The Spenserian metre being objected to, he writes September, 1811: "I agree with you respecting the lumbering weight of the stanza, and I shrewdly suspect it would require a very great poet indeed to prevent the tedium arising from the frequent recurrence of rhymes." In the following January, the first two cantos of 'Childe Harold' appeared; whereupon Lady Abercorn asks Scott how he likes it. He replies: "Very much. There is more original strength and force of thinking in it, as well as command of language and versification, than in almost any modern poem of the same length that I have happened to meet with." Miss Bailie thought "Lord Byron has Walter Scott perpetually in his eye."

In December, 1812, 'Rokeby' appeared and was treated as a wonderfully great poem by Scott's Edinburgh worshippers. In 1813, he published anonymously the 'Bridal of Triermain.' July 7, 1814, was the date of the publication of 'Waverley'; and now for several years the letters fall off in quantity, and still more in quality, while Scott is fresh at his new *métier*. In January, 1815, appeared the 'Lord of the Isles,' in February 'Guy Mannering'; then a 'Memoir of the Somervilles' in two volumes, a description of the 'Field of Waterloo,' in November 'Rowland's Poems,' and in December 'The Ettrick Garland.' These, with two articles for the 'Encyclopædia Britannica' and a review of Miss Austen's 'Emma,' did not suffice for his year's work, for he also began 'Harold the Dauntless' and wrote 'Paul's Letters to His Kinsfolk' and the 'Dance of Death.' In 1816 came 'The Antiquary,' 'The Black Dwarf,' and 'Old Mortality,' with several other things. He also wrote "Pibroch an Donnail Dhu." This will suffice as a specimen of the years when the novels were appearing.

The second volume contains four letters of Lockhart to Sir Walter, chiefly about the affair of John Scott, and the duel which resulted. There are also seven letters from Lockhart to his wife, Scott's daughter. These are full of incident if not of wit. The following is characteristic of describer and describee:

"This morning met Sir Humphry Davy, in the highest glee, and a spick and span new white waistcoat, on his way to Connemara, etc., to fish. Broad-brim white Beaver, lined green as of yore. He told a story of an Irish steward of a steamboat from Holyhead, who was endeavoring to be very polite to a distressed Lady passenger. He said the best thing was whiskey. Lady said she had an idea that whiskey *could* not agree with her stomach. 'And is that against it?' quoth Paddy; 'won't your Ladyship have all the pleasure of tasting it over again in its way up?' . . . He told *once more* the story of the late Pope asking him, in 1814, if he thought there was anything in his (the P.'s) power to do for the good of the government of England in testimony of his gratitude. Sir H. wrote Mr. W. Hamilton to tell Castlereagh now was the time if they wished to get the Pope to give the King the nomination of the Catholic Bishops of Ireland; but they were busy, and nothing done. Probably 'Sromfridevi' overrated the value of his Holiness's pretty words; but it may be otherwise."

We will close with another specimen of Lockhart's epistolary power:

"We [Scott, daughter Anne, and himself], with Wordsworth and his daughter, went to Keswick, he spouting his own verses very grandly all the way. It was a fine sunshiny day, only too hot, and we certainly saw and heard many fine things. This I remark once for all, that during all these rides, etc., the Unknown [Scott] was continually quoting Wordsworth's Poetry and Wordsworth ditto, but that the great Laker never uttered one syllable by which it might have been intimated to a stranger that your Papa had ever written a line either of verse or prose since he was born. . . . Wordsworth spoke kindly, I think on the whole, of Hogg, . . . of Byron contemptuously; of Shelley well and rightly, saving that (as is the custom of all one edition clubs) he said Shelley was a greater genius than Byron (*i. e.*, a less successful one). . . . Wordsworth says Crabbe is always an addition to our classical literature, whether he be a poet or not."