

It was some time, however, before arrangements could be finally made for bringing out the first number of the *Quarterly*. Scott could not as yet pay his intended visit to London, and after waiting for about a month, Murray sent him the following letter, giving his further opinion as to the scope and object of the proposed Review :—

John Murray to Mr. Scott.

November 15th, 1808.

DEAR SIR,

I have been desirous of writing to you for nearly a week past, as I never felt more the want of a personal conversation. I will endeavour, however, to explain myself to you, and will rely on your confidence and indulgence for secrecy and attention in what I have to communicate. I have before told you that the idea of a new Review has been revolving in my mind for nearly two years, and that more than twelve months ago I addressed Mr. Canning on the subject. The propriety, if not the necessity, of establishing a journal upon principles opposite to those of the *Edinburgh Review* has occurred to many men more enlightened than myself; and I believe the same reason has prevented others, as it has done myself, from attempting it, namely, the immense difficulty of obtaining talent of sufficient magnitude to render success even *doubtful*.

By degrees my plan has gradually floated up to this height. But there exists at least an equal difficulty yet—that peculiar talent in an editor of rendering our other great sources advantageous to the best possible degree. This, I think, may be accomplished, but it must be effected by your arduous assistance, at least for a little time. Our friend Mr. Gifford, whose writings show him to be both a man of learning and wit, has lived too little in the world lately to have obtained that delicacy and tact whereby he can feel at one instant, and habitually, whatever may gratify public desire and excite public attention and curiosity. But this you know to be a leading feature in the talents of Mr. Jeffrey and his friends; and that, without the most happy choice of subjects, as well as the ability to treat them well—catching the “manners living as they

rise"—the *Edinburgh Review* could not have attained the success it has done; and no other Review, however preponderating in solid merit, will obtain sufficient attention without them. Entering the field too, as we shall do, against an army commanded by the most skilful generals, it will not do for us to leave any of our best officers behind as a reserve, for they would be of no use if we were defeated at first. We must enter with our most able commanders at once, and we shall then acquire confidence, if not reputation, and increase in numbers as we proceed.

Our first number must contain the most valuable and striking information in politics, and the most interesting articles of general literature and science, written by our most able friends. If our plan appears to be so advantageous to the ministers whose measures, to a certain extent, we intend to justify, to support, to recommend and assist, that they have promised their support; when might that support be so advantageously given, either for their own interests or ours, as at the commencement, when we are most weak, and have the most arduous onset to make, and when we do and must stand most in need of help? If our first number be not written with the greatest ability, upon the most interesting topics, it will not excite public attention. No man, even the friend of the principles we adopt, will leave the sprightly pages of the *Edinburgh Review* to read a dull detail of staid morality, or dissertations on subjects whose interest has long fled.

I do not say this from any, even the smallest doubt, of our having all that we desire in these respects in our power; but because I am apprehensive that without your assistance it will not be drawn into action, and my reason for this fear I will thus submit to you. You mentioned in your letter to Mr. Gifford, that our Review should open with a grand article on Spain—meaning a display of the political feeling of the people, and the probable results of this important contest. I suggested to Mr. Gifford that Mr. Frere should be written to, which he said was easy, and that he thought he would do it; for Frere could not only give the facts upon the subject, but could write them better than any other person. But having, in my project, given the name of Southey as a person who might assist occasionally in a number or two hence, I found at our next interview that Mr. Gifford, who does not know Mr. Southey, had spoken to a friend to ask

Mr. S. to write the article upon Spain. It is true that Mr. Southey knows a great deal about Spain, and on another occasion would have given a good article upon the subject ; but at present *his* is not the kind of knowledge which we want, and it is, moreover, trusting our secret to a stranger, who has, by the way, a directly opposite bias in politics.

Mr. Gifford also told me, with very great stress, that among the articles he had submitted to you was Hodgson's Translation of Juvenal, which at no time could be a very interesting article for us, and having been published more than six months ago, would probably be a very stupid one. Then, you must observe, that it would necessarily involve a comparison with Mr. Gifford's own translation, which must of course be praised, and thus show an *individual* feeling—the least spark of which, in our early numbers, would both betray and ruin us. He talks of reviewing *himself* a late translation of 'Persius,' for (*entre nous*) a similar reason. He has himself nearly completed a translation, which will be published in a few months.

In what I have said upon this most exceedingly delicate point, and which I again submit to your most honourable confidence, I have no other object but just to show you without reserve how we stand, and to exemplify what I set out with—that without skilful and judicious management we shall totally mistake the road to the accomplishment of the arduous task which we have undertaken, and involve the cause and every individual in not merely defeat, but disgrace. I must at the same time observe that Mr. Gifford is the most obliging and well-meaning man alive, and that he is perfectly ready to be instructed in those points of which his seclusion renders him ignorant ; and all that I wish and mean is, that we should strive to open clearly the view which is so obvious to us—that our first number must be a most brilliant one in every respect ; and to effect this, we must avail ourselves of any valuable political information we can command. Those persons who have the most interest in supporting the Review must be called upon immediately for their strenuous personal help. The fact must be obvious to you, — that if Mr. Canning, Mr. Frere, Mr. Scott, Mr. Ellis, and Mr. Gifford, with their immediate and true friends, will exert themselves heartily in every respect, so as to produce with secrecy

only *one* remarkably attractive number, their further labour would be comparatively light. With such a number in our hands, we might select and obtain every other help that we required ; and then the persons named would only be called upon for their information, facts, hints, advice, and occasional articles. But without this—without producing a number that shall at least equal, if not excel, the best of the *Edinburgh Review*, it were better not to be attempted. We should do more harm to our cause by an unsuccessful attempt ; and the reputation of the *Edinburgh Review* would be increased inversely to our fruitless opposition. . . . With respect to bookselling interference with the Review, I am equally convinced with yourself of its total incompatibility with a really respectable and valuable critical journal. I assure you that nothing can be more distant from my views, which are confined to the ardour which I feel for the cause and principles which it will be our object to support, and the honour of professional reputation which would obviously result to the publisher of so important a work. It were silly to suppress that I shall not be sorry to derive from it as much profit as I can satisfactorily enjoy, consistent with the liberal scale upon which it is my first desire to act towards every writer and friend concerned in the work. Respecting the terms upon which the editor shall be placed at first, I have proposed, and it appears to be satisfactory to Mr. Gifford, that he shall receive, either previous to, or immediately after, the publication of each number, the sum of 160 guineas, which he is to distribute as he thinks proper, without any question or interference on my part ; and that in addition to this, he shall receive from me the sum of £200 annually, merely as the editor. This, Sir, is much more than I can flatter myself with the return of, for the first year at least ; but it is my intention that his salary shall ever increase proportionately to the success of the work under his management. The editor has a most arduous office to perform, and the success of the publication must depend in a great measure upon his activity.

I am, dear Sir,

Your obliged and faithful Servant,

JOHN MURRAY.