

## ANSWER

BY

“THE AUTHOR OF WAVERLEY,”

TO THE

FOREGOING LETTER

FROM

CAPTAIN CLUTTERBUCK.

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DEAR CAPTAIN,

Do not admire, that, notwithstanding the distance and ceremony of your address, I return an answer in the terms of familiarity. The truth is, your origin and native country are better known to me than even to yourself. You derive your respectable parentage, if I am not greatly mistaken, from a land which has afforded much pleasure, as well as profit, to those who have traded to it successfully. I mean that part of the *terra incognita* which is called the province of Utopia. Its productions, though censured by many (and some who use tea and tobacco without scruple) as idle and unsubstantial luxuries, have nevertheless, like many other luxuries, a general acceptance, and are secretly enjoyed even by those who express the greatest scorn and dislike of them in public. The dram-drinker is often the first to be shocked at the smell of spirits—it is not unusual to hear old maiden ladies declaim against scandal—the private book-cases of some grave-seeming men would not brook decent eyes—and many, I say not of the wise and learned, but of those most anxious to seem such, when the spring-

lock of their library is drawn, their velvet cap pulled over their ears, their feet insinuated into their turkey slippers, are to be found, were their retreats suddenly intruded upon, busily engaged with the last new novel.

I have said, the truly wise and learned disdain these shifts, and will open the said novel as avowedly as they would the lid of their snuff-box. I will only quote one instance, though I know a hundred. Did you know the celebrated Watt of Birmingham, Captain Clutterbuck? I believe not, though, from what I am about to state, he would not have failed to have sought an acquaintance with you. It was only once my fortune to meet him, whether in body or in spirit it matters not. There were assembled about half a score of our Northern Lights, who had amongst them, Heaven knows how, a well-known character of your country, Jedediah Cleishbotham. This worthy person, having come to Edinburgh during the Christmas vacation, had become a sort of lion in the place, and was led in leash from house to house along with the guissards, the stone-eater, and other amusements of the season, which "exhibit their unparalleled feats to private family-parties if required." Amidst this company stood Mr. Watt, the man whose genius discovered the means of multiplying our national resources to a degree perhaps even beyond his own stupendous powers of calculation and combination; bringing the treasures of the abyss to the summit of the earth—giving the feeble arm of man the momentum of an Afrite—commanding manufactures to arise, as the rod of the prophet produced water in the desert, affording the means of dispensing with that time and tide which wait for no man, and of sailing without that wind which defied the commands and threats of Xerxes himself.\* This potent

\* Note by Captain Clutterbuck.

Probably the ingenious author alludes to the national adage!

The king said sail,  
But the wind said no.

Our schoolmaster (who is also a land-surveyor) thinks this whole passage refers to Mr. Watt's improvements on the steam-engine.

commander of the elements—this abridger of time and space—this magician, whose cloudy machinery has produced a change on the world, the effects of which, extraordinary as they are, are perhaps only now beginning to be felt—was not only the most profound man of science, the most successful combiner of powers and calculator of numbers, as adapted to practical purposes—was not only one of the most generally well-informed,—but one of the best and kindest of human beings.

There he stood, surrounded by the little band I have mentioned of Northern literati, men not less tenacious, generally speaking, of their own fame and their own opinions, than the national regiments are supposed to be jealous of the high character which they have won upon service. Methinks I yet see and hear what I shall never see or hear again. In his eighty-fifth year, the alert, kind, benevolent old man, had his attention alive to every one's question, his information at every one's command. His talents and fancy overflowed on every subject. One gentleman was a deep philologist,—he talked with him on the origin of the alphabet as if he had been coeval with Cadmus; another a celebrated critic—you would have said the old man had studied political economy and belles-lettres all his life,—of science it is unnecessary to speak, it was his own distinguished walk. And yet, Captain Clutterbuck, when he spoke with your countryman Jedediah Cleishbotham, you would have sworn he had been coeval with Claver'se and Burley, with the persecutors and persecuted, and could number every shot the dragoons had fired at the fugitive covenanters. In fact we discovered that no novel of the least celebrity escaped his perusal, and that the gifted man of science was as much addicted to the productions of your native country, (the land of Utopia aforesaid;) in other words, as shameless and obstinate a peruser of novels as if he had been a very milliner's apprentice of eighteen. I know little apology for troubling you with these things, excepting the desire to commemorate a delightful evening, and a wish to encourage you to shake off that modest diffidence

which makes you afraid of being supposed connected with the fairy-land of delusive fiction. I will requite your tag of verse, from Horace himself, with a paraphrase for your own use, my dear Captain, and for that of your country club, excepting in reverence the clergyman and schoolmaster :—

*Ne sit ancillæ tibi amor pudori, &c.*

Take thou no scorn,  
Of fiction born,  
Fair fiction's muse to woo ;  
Old Homer's theme  
Was but a dream,  
Himself a fiction too.

Having told you your country, I must next, my dear Captain Clutterbuck, make free to mention your own immediate descent. You are not to suppose your land of prodigies so little known to us as the careful concealment of your origin would seem to imply. But you have it in common with many of your country, studiously and anxiously to hide any connexion with it. There is this difference, indeed, betwixt your countrymen and those of our more material world, that many of the most estimable of them, such as an old Highland gentleman called Ossian, a monk of Bristol called Rowley, and others, are inclined to pass themselves off as denizens of the land of reality, whereas most of our fellow-citizens who deny their country are such as that country would be very willing to disclaim. The especial circumstances you mention relating to your life and services, impose not upon us. We know the versatility of the unsubstantial species to which you belong permits them to assume all manner of disguises ; we have seen them apparelled in the caftan of a Persian, and the silken robe of a Chinese,\* and are prepared to suspect their real character under every disguise. But how can we be ignorant of your country and manners, or deceived by the evasion of its

\* See "The Persian Letters," and "The Citizen of the World."

inhabitants, when the voyages of discovery which have been made to it, rival in number those recorded by Purchas or by Hackluyt ?\* And to show the skill and perseverance of your navigators and travellers, we have only to name Sinbad, Aboulfouaris, and Robinson Crusoe. These were the men for discoveries. Could we have sent Captain Greenland to look out for the north-west passage, or Peter Wilkins to examine Baffin's Bay, what discoveries might we not have expected ! But there are feats, and these both numerous and extraordinary, performed by the inhabitants of your country, which we read without once attempting to emulate.

I wander from my purpose, which was to assure you, that I know you as well as the mother who did *not* bear you, for Mac-Duff's peculiarity sticks to your whole race. You are not born of woman, unless, indeed, in that figurative sense, in which the celebrated Maria Edgeworth may, in her state of single blessedness, be termed mother of the finest family in England. You belong, sir, to the editors of the land of Utopia, a sort of persons for whom I have the highest esteem. How is it possible it should be otherwise, when you reckon among your corporation the sage Cid Hamet Benengeli, the short-faced president of the Spectator's club, poor Ben Silton, and many others, who have acted as gentlemen-ushers to works which have cheered our heaviest, and added wings to our lightest hours ?

What I have remarked as peculiar to Editors of the class in which I venture to enrol you, is the happy combination of fortuitous circumstances which usually put you in possession of the works which you have the goodness to bring into public notice. One walks on the seashore, and a wave casts on land a small cylindrical trunk or casket, containing a manuscript much damaged with sea-water, which is with difficulty deciphered, and so forth. † Another steps into a chandler's shop to pur-

\* See "Les Voyages Imaginaires."

† See the history of Automathes.

chase a pound of butter, and behold! the waste-paper on which it is laid is the manuscript of a cabalist.\* A third is so fortunate as to obtain from a woman who lets lodgings, the curious contents of an antique bureau, the property of a deceased lodger.† All these are certainly possible occurrences; but I know not how, they seldom occur to any Editors save those of your country. At least I can answer for myself, that in my solitary walks by the sea, I never saw it cast ashore any thing but dulse and tangle, and now and then a deceased star-fish; my landlady never presented me with any manuscript save her cursed bill; and the most interesting of my discoveries in the way of waste-paper, was finding a favourite passage of one of my own novels wrapt round an ounce of snuff. No, Captain, the funds from which I have drawn my power of amusing the public, have been bought otherwise than by fortuitous adventure. I have buried myself in libraries to extract from the nonsense of ancient days new nonsense of my own. I have turned over volumes, which, from the pot-hooks I was obliged to decipher, might have been the cabalistic manuscripts of Cornelius Agrippa, although I never saw "the door open and the devil come in."‡ But all the domestic inhabitants of the libraries were disturbed by the vehemence of my studies;—

From my research the boldest spider fled,  
And moths, retreating, trembled as I read.

From this learned sepulchre I emerged like the Magician in the Persian Tales from his twelvemonth's residence in the mountain, not like him to soar over the heads of the multitude, but to mingle in the crowd, and to elbow amongst the throng, making my way from the highest society to the lowest, undergoing the scorn, or what is harder to brook, the patronizing condescension

\* Adventures of a Guinea.

† Adventures of an Atom.

‡ See Southey's Ballad on the young Man who read in a Conjuror's Books

of the one, and enduring the vulgar familiarity of the other,—and all, you will say, for what?—to collect materials for one of those manuscripts with which mere chance so often accommodates your countrymen; in other words, to write a successful novel.—“O, Athenians, how hard we labour to deserve your praise!”

I might stop here, my dear Clutterbuck; it would have a touching effect, and the air of proper deference to our dear Public. But I will not be false with you,—(though falsehood is—excuse the observation—the current coin of your country) the truth is, I have studied and lived for the purpose of gratifying my own curiosity, and passing my own time; and though the result has been, that, in one shape or other, I have been frequently before the public, perhaps more frequently than prudence warranted, yet I cannot claim from them the favour due to those who have dedicated their ease and leisure to the improvement and entertainment of others.

Having communicated thus freely with you, my dear Captain, it follows, of course, that I will gratefully accept of your communication, which, as your Benedictine observed, divides itself both by subject, manner, and age, into two parts. But I am sorry I cannot gratify your literary ambition, by suffering your name to appear upon the title-page; and I will candidly tell you the reason.

The editors of your country are of such a soft and passive disposition, that they have frequently done themselves great disgrace by giving up the coadjutors who first brought them into public notice and public favour, and suffering their names to be used by those quacks and impostors who live upon the ideas of others. Thus I shame to tell how the sage Cid Hamet Benengeli was induced by one Juan Avellaneda to play the Turk with the ingenious Miguel Cervantes, and to publish a second part of the adventures of his hero the renowned Don Quixote, without the knowledge or co-operation of his principal aforesaid. It is true, the Arabian sage returned to his allegiance, and thereafter composed a genu-

ine continuation of the Knight of La Mancha, in which the said Avellaneda of Tordesillas is severely chastised. For in this you pseudo-editors resemble the juggler's disciplined ape, to which a sly old Scotchman likened James I., "if you have Jackoo in your hand, you can make him bite me; if I have Jackoo in my hand, I can make him bite you." Yet, notwithstanding the *amende honorable* thus made by Cid Hamet Benengeli, his temporary defection did not the less occasion the decease of the ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote, if he can be said to die, whose memory is immortal. Cervantes put him to death, lest he should again fall into bad hands. Awful, yet just consequence of Cid Hamet's defection!

To quote a more modern and much less important instance. I am sorry to observe my old acquaintance Jedediah Cleishbotham has misbehaved himself so far as to desert his original patron, and set up for himself. I am afraid the poor pedagogue will make little by his new allies, unless the pleasure of entertaining the public, and, for aught I know, the gentlemen of the long robe, with disputes about his identity.\* Observe, therefore, Captain Clutterbuck, that, wise by these great examples, I receive you as a partner, but a sleeping partner only. As I give you no title to employ or use the firm of the copartnery we are about to form, I will announce my property in my title-page, and put my own mark on my own chattels, which the attorney tells me it will be a crime to counterfeit, as much as it would to imitate the autograph of any other empiric—a crime amounting, as advertisements upon little vials assure us, to nothing short of felony. If, therefore, my dear friend, your name should hereafter appear in any title-page without mine,

\* I am since more correctly informed, that Mr. Cleishbotham died some months since at Ganderleugh, and that the person assuming his name is an impostor. The real Jedediah made a most christian and edifying end; and, as I am credibly informed, having sent for a Cameronian clergyman when he was *in extremis*, was so fortunate as to convince the good man, that, after all, he had no wish to bring down on the scattered remnant of Mountain folks, "the bonnets of Bonny Dundee." Hard that the speculators in print and paper will not allow a good man to rest quiet in his grave! 8

readers will know what to think of you. I scorn to use either arguments or threats; but you cannot but be sensible, that, as you owe your literary existence to me on the one hand, so, on the other, your very all is at my disposal. I can at pleasure cut off your annuity, strike your name from the half-pay establishment, nay, actually put you to death, without being answerable to any one. These are plain words to a gentleman who has served during the whole war; but, I am aware, you will take nothing amiss at my hands.

And now, my good sir, let us address ourselves to our task, and arrange as we best can the manuscript of your Benedictine, so as to suit the taste of this critical age. You will find I have made very liberal use of his permission, to alter whatever seemed too favourable to the Church of Rome, which I abominate, were it but for her fasts and penances.

Our reader is doubtless impatient, and we must own, with John Bunyan,

We have too long detained him in the porch,  
And kept him from the sunshine with a torch.

Adieu, therefore, my dear Captain—remember me respectfully to the parson, the schoolmaster, and the Bailie, and all friends of the happy club in the village of Kennaquhair. I have never seen, and never shall see, one of their faces; and notwithstanding, I believe that as yet I am better acquainted with them than any other man who lives.—I shall soon introduce you to my jocund friend, Mr. John Ballantyne of Trinity-Grove, whom you will find warm from his match at single-stick with a brother publisher.<sup>9</sup> Peace to their differences! It is a wrathful trade, and the *irritable genus* comprehends the bookselling as well as the book-writing species.—Once more adieu!

THE AUTHOR OF WAVERLEY.