

In the end they agreed to draw lots for the house, and Murray had the good fortune to remain at No. 32, Fleet Street. Mr. Highley removed to No. 24 in the same street, and took with him, by agreement, the principal part of the medical works of the firm. Mr. Murray now started on his own account, and began a career of publication almost unrivalled in the history of letters.

Although he consulted many surgeons, Murray never regained the sight of his right eye. "What?" said Chantrey the sculptor to him one day, after a long acquaintance, "are you a brother Cyclops?" To a sculptor, the loss of the sight of one eye must have been a very formidable hindrance, but to a publisher of books, provided he have brains enough, the loss is not nearly so great. As his nephew, Robert Cooke, afterwards said: "Mr. Murray could see sharper with one eye than most other people can with two."

Before the dissolution of partnership, Mr. Murray had seen the first representation of Colman's Comedy of "John Bull" at Covent Garden Theatre, and was so fascinated by its "union of wit, sentiment, and humour," that the day after its representation he wrote to Mr. Colman, and offered him £300 for the copyright. No doubt Mr. Highley would have thought this a rash proceeding.

*John Murray to Mr. Colman.*

"The truth is that during my minority I have been shackled to a drone of a partner; but the day of emancipation is at hand. On the twenty-fifth of this month (March 1803) I plunge alone into the depths of literary speculation. I am therefore honestly ambitious that my first appearance before the public should be such as will at once stamp my character and respectability. On this account, therefore, I think that your Play would be more advantageous to me than to any other bookseller; and as 'I

am not covetous of Gold,' I should hope that no trifling consideration will be allowed to prevent my having the honour of being Mr. Colman's publisher. You see, sir, that I am endeavouring to interest your feelings, both as a Poet and as a Man."

Mr. Colman replied in a very pleasant letter, thanking Mr. Murray for his very liberal offer.

*Mr. Colman to John Murray.*

"But," he added, "I am more pleased (strange as the assertion may be from a poor poet) by the *manner* of your proposition than by its solidity. . . . When a play has passed the public ordeal, it is the custom to offer the refusal of the copyright to the proprietor of the theatre in which it has been produced; and in addition to considerations of custom, I owe this attention to Mr. Harris on other accounts."

The result was, that the proprietor of the theatre retained the copyright of "John Bull," and thereby disappointed Mr. Murray in the publication of the play as his first independent venture in business.

Six days after the dissolution of partnership, Murray addressed the Rev. Edmund Cartwright, already mentioned in the previous chapter, in these terms:—

*John Murray to Rev. E. Cartwright.*

March 31st, 1803.

DEAR SIR,

I have much pleasure in acquainting you that my partnership being dissolved, the obstacle which has hitherto prevented me from entering upon any works of merit is now removed, and I should be very happy, if it be agreeable to you, to make some arrangement for the publication of a new edition of 'Armine and Elvira,'\* with a

\* The legendary tale of 'Armine and Elvira' originally appeared in 1787. Mrs. Fletcher, in her Autobiography, thus refers to the author:—"While visiting Doncaster (in 1788) I incidentally became acquainted with the Rev. Edmund Cartwright, who had lately pub-

selection of your other poems. It has cost me so much more than I could well afford to pay to retain the house of my father, that I am not over-rich at present. But I am willing, if you please to take one half of the risk of publication, and divide with you the profits which may arise when the impression is sold. The actual profit upon so small a work will not be much, but it will serve to keep your name before the world as a favourite poet.

The times, however, were very bad. Money was difficult to be had on any terms, and Mr. Murray had a hard task to call in the money due to Murray and Highley, as well as to collect the sums due to himself. To the Rev. Mr. Hodgson of Market Rasen he wrote :—

“ That he had already exceeded the term of credit which he could allow ; and really the times press so heavily by reason of taxes, failures, and the stagnation of trade, that he should feel very thankful for an early remittance. Besides, many of the books he had sent to Mr. Hodgson more than a year before had been old and scarce, and that he (Mr. Murray) had already paid for them in ready money.”

Mr. Joseph Hume had not been very prompt in settling his accounts ; and Mr. Murray wrote to him accordingly, on the 11th of July, 1804 :—

“ On the other side is a list of books (amount £92 8s. 6d.), containing all those for which you did me the favour to

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lished a legendary tale, ‘Armine and Elvira,’ along with other poems of considerable merit. . . . He was a grave-looking man, considerably turned of forty, of very gentle and engaging manners. He was acquainted with the family with whom we had spent the day, and he accompanied us to their house to pass the evening ; and the next day he took us to see some power-looms of his invention—set to work, not by steam or water, but by a large wheel turned by an ox. . . . He honoured me with his confidence and friendship so far as to wish me to become the mother of his five amiable children by uniting my fate to his. I had not confidence in my own worthiness for such a trust, but in refusing it, I neither forfeited his good opinion nor his friendship.”

write : and I trust that they will reach you safely. . . . If in future you could so arrange that my account should be paid by some house in town within six months after the goods are shipped, I shall be perfectly satisfied, and shall execute your orders with much more despatch and pleasure. I mention this, not from any apprehension of not being paid, but because my circumstances will not permit me to give so large an extent of credit. It affords me great pleasure to hear of your advancement ; and I trust that your health will enable you to enjoy all the success to which your talents entitle you."

He was, for the same reason, under the necessity of declining to publish several new works offered to him, especially those dealing with medical and poetical subjects.

On one occasion he wrote to Mr. Bidlake, who asked to have his remaining poems published.

" The threat of invasion, and the magnitude of our taxes, fill the mind with apprehension, and swallow up the sums that have been usually appropriated to literature. . . . I am really so hemmed in by literary engagements, that I do not think I shall be able to publish any more on my own account for some time ; and I expect to lose considerably from the present unfavourable aspect of the times."

Mr. Archibald Constable of Edinburgh, and Messrs. Bell and Bradfute, Mr. Murray's agents in Edinburgh, were also communicated with as to the settlement of their accounts with Murray and Highley. " I expected," he said, " to have been able to pay my respects to you both this summer (1803), but my *military duties*, and the serious aspect of the times, oblige me to remain at home." What Mr. Murray's " *military duties* " were, may be easily explained.

Napoleon Buonaparte had declared war against England. He had arrested and imprisoned about 10,000 British subjects then residing in France. His " Army of England "

was then assembled on the heights near Boulogne ; and the broad-bottomed boats were in readiness to ferry over the French troops to the shores of England. The most enthusiastic patriotism was exhibited throughout the country. No less than 300,000 men enrolled themselves in volunteer corps and associations. In London alone, the volunteer corps numbered 12,500, at a time when the metropolis contained less than half its present population. They were reviewed in Hyde Park in the summer of 1803 ; and amongst them was John Murray, Ensign in the 3rd Regiment of Royal London Volunteers.

Although Mr. Murray necessarily gave much of his time to drill and military work, he continued to take increasing interest in his publishing affairs. Being desirous of extending more widely the knowledge of Dr. Jenner's great discovery of vaccination for the prevention of the ravages of Small-pox, he wrote the following letter to Dr. Ring on the subject :--

*Mr. John Murray to Dr. Ring.*

August, 1803.

DEAR SIR,

I am so fully convinced of the advantages that would arise to the cause of vaccination, from any publication from the pen of Dr. Jenner, that I am more than ever surprised that he is not induced to give to the public a less expensive edition of his useful treatise, in a more portable form. At present its size and price preclude it from general circulation, and the consequence is, that it is superseded by numerous other publications, to the authors of which accrue that honour and emolument which otherwise might have rested with the glorious discoverer alone.

Should Dr. Jenner allow himself to be persuaded of the truth of this remark, I should feel myself much flattered to be employed in the execution of a plan which might be made to answer the end that I propose, without occasioning to Dr. Jenner either expense or trouble. I will undertake

at my own cost to print a large impression of Dr. Jenner's work in a popular form, and will cause it to be circulated through the medium of my correspondents, in England, Scotland, Ireland, and the Continent; and when the whole is sold, I will give Dr. Jenner two-thirds of the clear profits. In this proposal I have considered the cause which I should serve and the honour of being Dr. Jenner's publisher, rather than my own immediate emolument; and I should not feel displeased if it were mentioned to any other bookseller.

At the same time I can assure you with great sincerity, that I do not think there is in the whole trade a more regular or more respectable man than Mr. Hurst; but as I am professedly a Medical Bookseller, I am really anxious to be the publisher of so important a work.

Dr. Jenner's work does not appear to have been brought out by Mr. Murray, but he published about this time Dr. Graves's 'Pharmacopœia.' When it was proposed that the name of his late partner Highley should be included in the imprint, Murray objected.

"I cannot," he said, "suffer my name to stand with his for two reasons—first, because he advertises himself as 'successor to the late John Murray,' who died not less than ten years ago, with the intent to make the public believe that I, his son, have either retired from business, or am dead. That this wicked insinuation has had this effect, I have the letters of two or three persons to prove. And secondly,—because he undersells all other publishers at the regular and advertised prices."

In conclusion, Mr. Murray said :—

"Make the case your own—'utrum horum mavis accipe.' However you may determine in this matter, you may rely upon my interest to promote the sale of your work; and I request that you will do me the favour to send me 100 copies as soon as it is ready, for which I will pay you whenever you call upon me."

Publishers suffered much from the general depression of trade during the war. Among other failures was that of Mr. Murray's friends, Messrs. G. and J. Robinson. In order to assist them, he corresponded with the booksellers throughout the country, offering to take care of their interests, until the Robinsons had arranged their affairs so as to recommence their business transactions.

Besides his medical works, Mr. Murray sought to extend his connection in bringing out those of a miscellaneous character. He published for Mr. Williams, of Plymouth, his 'Picturesque Excursions,' and for Nathaniel Howard, of the same place, his volume of poems. The latter book was to be sold at 5*s.*, and the author expected that the publisher would receive 1*s.* 6*d.* profit on every copy sold. It was accordingly necessary to undeceive the over-sanguine author. "What you infer might be the case if I sold every copy at 5*s.* But when another publisher wants a copy, I sell it to him at three-fifths the price. He sells it to a bookseller in the country, and he perhaps to another, or to a schoolmaster, all of whom must have a certain allowance. You will find a very satisfactory letter on the subject in Boswell's 'Life of Johnson.'"

Towards the end of 1803 Mr. Murray published the 'Revolutionary Plutarch.' This remarkable work, written by a French officer, but published anonymously, soon passed into a second and third edition. It contained brief memoirs, or sketches drawn by no friendly hand, of all the members of the Buonaparte family, and those who had aided in their rise to the supreme power. It formed, in short, a biographical history of the French Revolution. We gather Mr. Murray's views about the work from his letter to Messrs. Gilbert and Hodges, booksellers, Dublin :—